TOUR CODE

CL9

ADVENTURESABROAD

ARGENTINA & CHILE

'The Classic Combo'

13 days

Updated 01/11/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in Buenos Aires*

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Nearly 40% of the country's 33 million citizens live in Gran Buenos Aires (Greater Buenos Aires), which at first makes the city almost as imposing as New York or London. However, after a brief orientation, you will find that the compact city centre is accessible and easily explored on foot, by bus, taxi and underground.

* NOTE TO 'LAND ONLY' PASSENGERS: In order to qualify for a regional air pass on which this tour is based and priced, you must be ticketed on LAN Argentina or LAN Chile, or any 'One World' carrier. If your international air does not conform to the above, a surcharge (approx $200) may apply.

Overnight in Buenos Aires. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Buenos Aires: City Tour*

Today we see the sights of this cosmopolitan city. In the early part of the 20th century, Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world. The grand public buildings of Buenos Aires reflect this opulent era. The city is known as the "Paris of South America" because of its wide boulevards and European-style architecture. Buenos Aires was founded for the second time in 1580 by Juan de Garay, just north of Mendoza's encampment. In accordance with Spanish law, he laid out the large Plaza del Fuerte (Fortress Plaza). It acquired its present name of Plaza de Mayo after the month of revolution in 1810. Our tour focuses on the major public buildings.

Catedral Metropolitana, built on the sight of the original colonial church was not completed until 1827. Not only is it considered a major religious landmark, but also a historic site of great importance. Here lies the tomb of Jose de San Martin, the man who (along with Simon Bolivar) liberated South America from Spanish rule in the early 1800's. The Plaza de Mayo is also home to Museo del Cabildo, the Presidential Palace (Casa Rosada), and the National Congress (Palacio del Congreso).

We also visit the Recoleta Cemetery where Buenos Aires' richest citizens are buried in magnificent marble tombs elaborately decorated with statues. The most internationally-famous person buried here is "Evita" Peron. Later this afternoon you may choose to visit in the artists' quarter of San Telmo.

Ask your Tour Leader about the possibility of seeing an optional Tango Show this evening.

Overnight in Buenos Aires. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Buenos Aires: Continued*

Today we have a half-day WALKING tour.

Our first stop is the Centro Naval, one of the city's most exquisite buildings and a masterpiece of cast stone architecture. It's not generally open to the public, but sometimes they let you into the circular lobby.

The Kavanagh Building, at the time of its construction in 1936, was the tallest building in South America, standing at about 120 m (400 ft) with over 30 stories. Designed as a residential structure, it took more than 16 years to sell the apartments in this Art Deco building.

Palacio Paz is perhaps the most beautiful of the Beaux Arts mansions in Buenos Aires; the Circulo Militar looks plucked from the Loire Valley. It was the home of the Paz family and took almost 12 years to build; the patriarch who commissioned it died waiting.

The General Jose de San Martin Monument celebrates General Jose de San Martin, who battled against Spain in the wars of independence and is known as the founder of the Argentine nation. The Palacio San Martin is another of the grand mansions that line Plaza San Martin, this was the home of the powerful Anchorenas family whose prestige dated to colonial times in Argentina. The Islas Malvinas-Falkland Islands Memorial honors the more than 700 Argentines who died in the war over the Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands chain in the brief war with Great Britain in early 1982.

The Torre Monumental (British Clock Tower) is a 1916 gift from the British community in Buenos Aires, along with all other things British, was renamed in response to the Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands War and is called the Argentine Big Ben by some. Decorated with British royal imperial symbols, the base was partly destroyed by an angry mob during an Islas Malvinas-Falkland Islands memorial service. Inside the tower you'll find a small Buenos Aires City Tourism Information Office, as well as an elevator that you can ride to the top for an excellent view of the city.

Retiro Station was opened in 1915 and was built with British technological assistance. Four British architects designed it, and the steel structure was made in Liverpool, England, and shipped to Argentina to be assembled.

Our tour ends in the Galerias Pacifico in time for your lunch break. This is the most famous shopping mall in Buenos Aires, opened in 1891. The building was designed to recall the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, with its long halls, glass cupola, and several tiers of shops.

Overnight in Buenos Aires. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Buenos Aires - El Calafate*

Early this morning we fly south to El Calafate, a resort town on the impossibly blue Lago Argentino situated at the entrance to the Glacier National Park.

Calafate's name is derived from a little bush with yellow flowers and dark blue berries that is very common in Patagonia. Ice cream featuring the calafate berry is also very common in the many little shops that line the town's one main street. Though this is one of the most developed towns in the region, one can still appreciate its remoteness and rugged beauty.

Overnight in El Calafate. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Calafate: Perito Moreno Glacier & Glaciarium*

We leave the shores of Lago Argentino and ascend through sub-Antarctic forest which marks the gateway to Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. Its centrepiece is the Perito Moreno Glacier which, because of unusually favourable local

conditions, is one of the world's few advancing glaciers. Huge icebergs on the glacier's 60 m (180 foot) high face calve and collapse into the Canal de los Tempanos as it advances about 100 m (300 feet) a year. The roar of the gigantic ice wall as it crashes into the surrounding channel is an unforgettable experience.

The geography at the nose of the glacier is also unique, in that it is possible to stand on a hill with spectacular viewpoints directly opposite the huge imposing wall of ice. The hope, of course, is to witness active calving, which results in a thunderous noise and oooo's and ahhhh's from its spectators. We will have plenty of time to stroll and enjoy fantastic views from every angle, and the unique plant and bird life.

While in the Calafate area, we will also visit the Glaciarium, a modern interpretation glaciological centre, and one of the few glacier museums in the world. The understanding of glaciers and environmental awareness are our main subjects. The exhibits include models, dioramas, photographs, screens, interactive representations, and a 3D documentary.

NOTE: Though weather may seem fine in Calafate, the weather near the glacier can be completely different. Generally the nose of Perito Moreno is characterized by cold wind and highly changeable conditions. You should be prepared with layered clothing and a warm hat.

This afternoon we return to Calafate.

Overnight in Calafate. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Calafate: Upsala Glacier*

This morning we depart early from our Calafate hotel to drive the short distance to the boat dock at Puerto Bandera at the western end of Lago Argentino. Here we board our boat for a picturesque trip across the pristine, exquisite turquoise waters to the Upsala Glacier, the other famous glacier near Calafate, only accessible from the water. At fifty kilometers long, ten kilometers wide, and many hundred meters thick, it is classified as one of three major glaciers in the park. Visitors are greeted with breathtaking vistas of crystal blue ice meeting vast blue skies and towering Argentinean mountains in the background.*

There are several outside decks that offer excellent views. Cold weather clothing is suitable today.

* The closeness of our approach depends on winds and the number of icebergs in the vicinity.

We return to Calafate late in the afternoon.

Overnight in Calafate. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Calafate, Argentina - Torres del Paine, Chile*

Today we have a +/- 6 hour drive to Torres del Paine. We drive across the steppe following parts the legendary Route 40, to get around Sierra de los Baguales, an impressive range in between Calafate and Paine. We cross the Argentinean Chilean border at Cancha Carrera / Cerro Castillo, and soon thereafter the open steppe gives way to rolling hills stretching to the Paine massif that eventually looms above the horizon.

The Torres del Paine (Towers of Paine) are spectacular granite pillars which soar almost vertically more than 2000 m (6,000 feet) above the Patagonian landscape. The park in which the high peaks sit may be considered the finest national park in all of South America. With turquoise lakes, roaring waterfalls, rivers and creeks, dense forests and sprawling glaciers, this is an unequalled destination.

We'll stop in the Lake Nordenskjold and in Salto Grande viewpoints for short walks.

Overnight at Torres del Paine. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Torres del Paine National Park*

Today we spend the entire day at Torres del Paine National Park.

Some say "Paine" come from the name of an early settler. Others say the name comes from an ancient Indigenous word meaning blue -- hearkening to the intense blue of the area's lakes. Whatever the name comes from or means, this is a spectacular park, comparable to Yellowstone or Yosemite in the US. Founded in 1959, Torres del Paine takes in 180,000 ha (450,000 acres). In 1978 UNESCO gave the park World Heritage status, recognizing it as a biosphere especially worthy of international recognition.

The park is part of the Paine Massif, which lies east of the high central Andean spine. These medium high mountains emerge suddenly from the plains of the Patagonian steppes. The mountains are granite, capped by crumbly sedimentary rock that used to lie on the valley floor. Before the park was acquired by the Chilean government, it belonged to ranchers who overgrazed and also burned down forests to increase pasture area.

The park is still recovering from this devastation, but it's a chance to see what nature can do to fix itself if given a chance. The glaciers of the park are in quick retreat -- up to 17 m (56 ft) a year for the last 90 years, creating a fascinating study of plant succession and soil build-up from bare rock to forest. The flora of the park ranges from grassland to southern beech forests. Many parts of the park were too remote for the cattle ranchers and exist today in a pristine state.

The animal stars of the park are the guanacos and the rheas. Rheas are an ostrich-like bird; guanacos are wild South American cameloids, related to the domesticated llama and alpaca. Native peoples hunted both across the plains, using every part for food and sheltering hide and feathers. When the Europeans came, the guanaco were slaughtered to make way for cattle, and almost became extinct.

We will travel through the park in our coach stopping at various points of interest and scenic viewpoints. We will also have an opportunity to walk one of the many easy-going trails that afford expansive views of the mountains, glaciers, and waterfalls for which Patagonia is famous.

Overnight at Torres del Paine. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Torres del Paine - Punta Arenas*

Today we travel by road to Punta Arenas, located at the foot of the Andes on the western side of the Straits of Magellan, facing the island of Tierra del Fuego. This port attracts commerce and shipping from all over the South Atlantic. Founded in 1848, the city was originally a military garrison and a penal settlement; port facilities soon became established as a stop over for shipping en route to California during the Gold Rush. The population increased and the town developed as a result of the wool boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Immigrants from all over Western Europe were attracted to the area, bringing with them major developments to fishing and farming.

While not the most interesting town for visitors, our drive to get here is extremely scenic, and it possesses the only airport in the area. The locals are also very friendly and welcoming.

Overnight in Punta Arenas. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Punta Arenas - Santiago*

Today we fly to Santiago de Chile, the capital of and largest city in Chile. Santiago basks in one of the most spectacular settings of any city in the world. A glance through the downtown blocks reveals a mighty circle of mountains -- the snowcapped Andean peaks to the east, and a smaller coastal range to the west.

Overnight in Santiago. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Santiago: Vina del Mar & Valparaiso*

Today we travel out of Santiago past the vineyards, farms, orchards and olive plantations of the Curacavi and Casablanca valleys. At the coast, we drive along the beaches of Las Salinas and Renaca to Vina del Mar, a town Chileans refer to as Ciudad Jardin due to its parks, flower beds and gardens. The beach is the resort's main draw, however, and visitors and locals alike make use of Costanera Avenue and the oceanfront promenade in the shadows of the imposing Casino Municipal.

We follow Espana Avenue to neighboring Valparaiso, a port christend by the Spanish in 1536. The tour proceeds to the heart of the city, the Plaza Sotomayor, a pleasant sanctuary, opposite the Maritime Authority. Inside the plaza is the Monument a los Heroes de Iquique, a memorial for those killed during the War of the Pacific. Just beyond this is Muelle Prat, the pier complete with small crafts market.

This afternoon we visit La Sebastiana, another of poet Pablo Neruda's homes-turned-museums, and ride one of the city's many elevators, an effective mode of moving about this largely vertical port at the turn of the century. Ascendor Artilleria, built in 1898, is one of the oldest still in operation and offers a beautiful view of the ocean.

Finally we enjoy a drive through the financial and commercial districts before setting out for Santiago through the Curacavi Valley, where traditional Chilean sweets and snacks are for sale.

Overnight in Santiago. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Santiago: City Tour*

Today we have a tour of central Santiago.

Founded in 1541 by Pedro de Valdivia, Santiago was attacked and overrun by Mapuche Indians just six months later. Spanish troops fortified the summit of Cerro Santa Lucia, and made immediate plans to rebuild the settlement. For almost 2 years, Santiago remained all but a settlement under siege. By the end of the 16th century, the settlement was made up of just 200 houses, with a population of no more than 2,000.

We will visit Santiago's Plaza de Armas. As the midpoint of the Spanish settlement of 1541, the square was once a military training ground -- hence its name-- but with time it became the focus of Santiago's social and commercial life with some of the nation's most accomplished architecture.
Today Santiago is a large cosmopolitan city although its central core is relatively small. This afternoon is at leisure for independent exploration.

Overnight in Santiago. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Departure*

Today is free to explore and enjoy Santiago. Departure from Santiago (most flights depart Santiago in the evening).

BUEN VIAJE! Meal plan: Breakfast.