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Table of Contents

- Patagonia Express
 - South Patagonia Report—Fish, Ecology, Water, Environment and Real Estate Bargains
 - Bombs and Missiles!
 - Welcome to Paradise...on a Caribbean Island
 - England: Bottoms Up English Pub Tour
 - Argentina Wines—"Yum-Yum"
 - Iguazu
 - "Visit My Favorite Links"
-
- Your Yap Dive Adventures

Welcome! to **Psssss.....t!**—Your Flight To Quality eZine—Your One-Stop Information Center. Here is everything you need!—"Click" on most resources mentioned in the following articles...



Patagonia Express

by
Vivian Lewis

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When Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid wanted to get away from it all, they naturally headed for the back of beyond, the foothills of the Andes, figuring the cops would never catch them there. (They were wrong; after starting a local crime wave because they just could not resist bank heists, the Pinkertons came after them even in western Argentina and eastern Chile.) Cassidy and the Kid took a ship to Buenos Aires, then the railroad as far as it went, and then road on horseback to Patagonia.

We had it easier. We flew in summer to Bariloche, a ski resort in the Argentine winter, and then rented a car to drive south along the gorgeous crystal clear deep lakes to El Bolson under a snow-covered mountain in the "pre-cordillera".

You drive past Lago Nahuel Huapi (a national park) and go past the top ski resort and the Hotel Llao Llao. Then you head for the mountain pass to Lago Gutierrez, which is less developed but a center of skiing too. You cut through the Cathedral mountains along this lake, then go through another hairpin-curved pass to Lago Mascaradi which has almost no tourism, and then Lago Guillermo. The mountains when we were there (February) were covered with grey pallid colors. Then you cross two rivers, Villegas, and then Foyel. Finally you reach El Bolson.

The area is the center of extreme and adventure sports, but because it is full of lonesome valleys and empty areas, you should not wander off on your own. Patagonia is still very under-populated. So you can make arrangements with the locals at the crafts fair or by visiting special travel agencies in the town.

El Bolson is a wild west cow town, with wooden houses and dirt streets, quite a contrast to the Tyrolean look of Bariloche and the lakes. It is also a sort of hippy heaven, a declared nuclear-free zone, center of opposition to metal mining in the hills and war in Iraq, full of craftsmen and artisans with flourishing beards and braids. And, oh yes, talent. There are craft fairs twice a week, on Thursdays and Saturdays, and the quality of what's on offer is very high. People come from Bariloche by bus and over the border from Chile just to shop here.

Goodies include leather work, knitwear, homemade jams, carved wood, clothing, paintings, candy, beadwork, pottery, carved wood and stone, patchwork, dried flowers, cheeses, sausages, and also fresh fruits and vegetables, at least in the Argentine summer when we were there. This is quality merchandise at incredibly cheap prices, not like the tacky Tlaquepaque goods one associates with other Latin countries.

When they are not making art, the locals make music. They have a medieval music group called Languedoc, which performs mystery plays and troubador music of the Middle Ages in a local theater.

The best climbing is in the Piltiquitron, the local mountain which looms over the town. It is snow-covered year round.

We stayed at the marvelous Morada del Sol ranch run by Luis and Mercedes Ramos on the outskirts of El Bolson. The Morada is a nature preserve and organic farm where you can fish, and ride horses most of the year, Or mountain-climb, abseil, swim in the pool, or ski depending on the season. Or white water raft if that is your pleasure. It is a haven of silence and serenity. Mercedes, called Mirsa, is Paraguayan and produces magnificent meals using the natural products of the ranch, all grown organically in the foothills of the Andes, and washed down with Yerba Mate or coffee and splendid Argentine wines.

This being Argentina, that healthful regimen was interrupted by a parrilla, a barbecue, of a locally butchered side of beef (actually more like veal in age), roasted until just right and then served in enormous portions only an Argentine can eat. The Ramos family and their visitors dug in and we kind of gasped after one round and watched them. The wife of the barbecue man and butcher, who did not speak a word of English, was a direct descendent of the Pinkerton man who had come to these hills to capture Butch and the Kid.

We ate in most meals and did not eat more than snacks at El Bolson, because Mirsa's cooking was so good.

We stayed in a cabin complex just off the main house. Everything is in impeccable taste. Bedrooms have cable TV if you cannot live without it. You can also stay in your own cabin if you have a larger party or a family with children, but we were just a couple. There are only 20 rooms, each with its own bath, soon to be upgraded with Jacuzzis. The farm has horses, cows and calves, free-range chickens, sheep, and a couple of dogs.

To carry out the theme of healthfulness, Luis and Mirsa are building a spa complex in a separate area of the property where they will offer treatments using a local spring. Because of the Argentine crisis, this plan had been delayed. But I hear that in the coming Argentine winter, they plan to resume work building the spa, which will cost \$350,000 and greatly enhance the already excellent facilities.

The ranch is very hard to find, located on the Camino Cerro Perito Moreno, past an Indian settlement. It is about 16 kilometers from El Bolson.

For more information phone 54 2944 49 3201 or visit the ranch website—(www.InterPatagonia.com). Charges are US\$150 per person per night for full pension (breakfast, packed lunches, and dinner) with the only supplement charge by the ranch for wine and spirits.

The prices of excursions has to be added, of course. If you want to float or raft in the river, or rent a horse for the day, this costs about \$75.

Although we did not go south to his ranch, we met at the Morada, Martin O'Farrell, who despite that name is an Argentine, and a champion fly fisherman. He came by to help the Ramoses deal with the gringos, since he speaks good English. Martin runs another ranch about 100 miles south of El Bolson near the town of Esquel. His ranch offers fly fishing and lessons in nabbing trout. In light of the environmental awareness of the locals, once your catch has been measured, you throw it back into the rushing waters. Catch and release. If you are an angler, this is as close to heaven as you can get.

The fly fishing vacation scheme is different, costing \$4,500 per guest per week (\$600/day) with no singles supplement. The normal stay is a week to 10 days. Guests pay their fare only as far as Buenos Aires, after which they are taken in charge by Total Patagonia, which has staff in the capital to handle everything from their arrival.

While the focus of the Total Patagonia vacation is fly fishing, it does offer skiing, hunting, or riding for vacationers or their spouses.

Both Martin and Luis are interested in spreading the word about Patagonia's charms. Both are available on a consultancy basis for anyone wishing to buy a tract of land and build on it, either to extend the ranch network, or to create a southern hemisphere haven far from pollution and terrorism. Having built charming holiday facilities with all the conveniences of the 21st century, their advice and supervision would greatly help anyone interested in building in the foothills of the Andes. We are talking about million-dollar homesteads.

Please contact Vivian directly at— [Vivian Lewis—Global Investing](#) —if that figure does not scare you.



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Editor Note: *The following article by Martin O'Farrell has been edited only for more clarity. These are his own words!*

South Patagonia Report

Fishing, Ecology, Water
Environment and Real Estate Bargains
by
Martin O'Farrell

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"I been lucky and fortune to be born and raised under the Education of an Irish/English family traditions in Buenos Aires...Argentina. Reason for that was specially due the fact my GrandFather Mr George Alexander was born in England, fought in the 2nd World War as a Pilot for the Royal Air Force flying the magnificent Spit-Fire machine. (There is one in the Telluride, Colorado Airport I visited in 1995). After the War, he was sent to PATAGONIA so as to manage and be in charge of Several of the Ranches/Estancias all through this vast territory."

The Southern Land Company of UK, had those years well over 5 million acres of Land...located in what is known today famous for the Angling/Sport of Kings...Trout & Salmon. As well today what we call the Sea-Run Brown Trout trophies that grow up to 20 kilos in the Oceans and then migrate to the rivers to spawn in their nesting areas up-stream. You can imagine how much inside my soul was all of this with my GrandFather and family when we started to visit and fish all these places—rivers like the Chimehuin, Malleo, Caleufu, Collon Cura, Chubut, Corcovado and then into Tierra del Fuego...where the Ranches are well over 200.000 acres of land and bigger with the best trophy Fisheries world-Wide concerns. In fact, I just arrive from those areas, escorting and hosting one of our groups of Anglers/Guests that come every year and some twice a season. AWESOME is the only word I can use to describe the experience and I do this yearly several times...

Please keep in mind that where Trout or Salmon habit, is a quality Environment. Other way they can not support or be able to grow up to the conditions they do down here at Patagonia. No other place, except Russia Kola Peninsula or New Zeland you can probably find such a resource...Quality Water and Quality Oxygen are the most important resources for LIFE existing of any kind... nothing new but something that not every body keep in mind. The report of the Month and probably of the Year as well to come on the future will be not very Polite with several of the People that habit these Planet Earth, but is Sincere...and if We keep in mind that **SINCERITY is The HIGHEST WAY of LOVE**...we will All appreciate these words. Imagine what the Future will be like and more or most IMPORTANT...Where the Future will take Place. Probably some of You Folks had read about the Apocalipsis in the Bible...Well we are about to see and start the last Stage of the movie if the Irak, US and the World moves into these Nuclear/Bio-technology/Crazy stuff that will create the major disaster on Earth we ever seen. (I will not go into detail on something and items we already know...)

But, I would like to say, that there is a Promise Land and as well with Noe's Arc...Life, Humans and Animals will survive in smaller proportions. The key of this will be Where and When...??? So Folks, Friends, and Loving Families, just keep in mind something or a few words that a Crazy Angler with a not bad Perspective of the World Planet Earth from a place like PATAGONIA is writing and spreading with you...**No Water, No Life...**

Today we are under the 3rd World Water Forum, in Kyoto, JAPAN...(www.WorldWaterForum.org). In todays world, only 2% of the Water on Planet Earth is Mineral and Drinkable. From that statistic, 1 % is in Patagonia areas (Ice- Fields/Lakes/Rivers/etc...) Another Significant issue is the Mineral Water Bottling Business, that today is about u\$80.000.000.000 dollars, with a future increase demand for the world in the next 10 years of another 180.000.000.000 dollars

Another clear example is like in many places in the world the problem they are facing already. (In the last month or so there were more than 3 articles in the New York Times newspaper (www.NYTimes.com), about the problem I am mentioning, or read (www.ULI.org) a world-wide corporation that is already telling you and all of us about the next future resource we will all be fighting for...) imagine how much can be done and where the resources are going to come from-??

Gold has increase the value in only one last month to double in price due the stock markets and all that issues because they do not have a solid strong Asset behind them. Gold is found in areas like Patagonia due the Geological formation and natural conditions...in great quantities...(Asset)

And talking about Asset/Solid and that you can see and know is not going to be stolen or bad management by the Insurance or Leading Banking Companies world-wide so as to be sure Where you put your FUNDS/MONEY. We trust and believe in LAND/REAL ESTATE/RANCH and ESTANCIAS.

Read—

- www.Forbes.com
- www.RanchWeb.com
- www.FullerWestern.com
- www.Sothebys.com
- www.Christies.com
- www.HallHall.com
- www.JHRealty.com
- www.EstanciaAlicura.com
- www.PatagoniaLandTrust.com
- www.TurnerFoundation.org
- www.FlyFishArgentina.com
- www.TheFlyShop.com
- etc, etc.



I can provide some more if need.) You can learn, check on numbers/budget and or Prices they request for a peace/track of land own here in Patagonia or world-wide in places like New Zeland and others... plus learn about some of the first to Invest in Land/Real Estate down here, why they did so and if you think might be some reasons for you to Invest in a place where the Future will be or at least will Go THROUGH...!!!

An acre of land in any place like Montana, Wyoming, United Kingdom or Similar in the world if you find a good one with quality Resources...will cost to you and your Funds about u\$ 150.000 per acre/average price...

In PATAGONIA prices are as you can check in some of the web pages I mentioned above like for 12.000 acres of Land, beautiful Ranch u\$7.200.000 (u\$600 dollars per acre of land you buy)...

Only during the last week of March, for been here and connected with all the general areas of Interest in PATAGONIA we been offered places like the following:

- 140.000 acres of Land with the most pristine Natural Resources at a price of u\$3,750.000 (about u\$27 dollars per acre of land)...
- Another small Ranch of about 8.600 acres @ u\$450.000 (about u\$52 dollars per acre of land)...

- Another Ranch of about 69.300 acres of Land @ u\$950.000 (about u\$13,5 dollars per acre bought)...
- Today after a very extensive Re-search and exploration through out the last 3 years we have accomplish and envision what is happening today...We have in File probably well over 500.000 + Hectareas = 1.190.000 acres, of private land. ALL of Them with top Best Quality Natural Resources (Glaciars/Rivers/Spring Holes /Lakes)...

Please keep in Mind, you can buy or Invest along the People already bought and Increase the price or Raise the price of the same Ranch so as to do a big difference of money. Or You can Invest in a new Trust/Fund that can be structure from this small but efficient/low profile and lowest PRICES of the Market today... The Difference is amount of Funds to be spent, Advisory and general Knowledge of Foreign Countries like Arg & Chile...Experience is all and in Patagonia we know how. Please call us for any consultancy or advise...

Well, people, you got the last report/newsletter from the Patagonia areas for the Today's World... All my best and looking forward to see you all in the rivers and visiting Patagonia, the land of the Future or PROMISE LAND...

Tight loops and always yours,

Martin O'Farrell

Credo—*"To treat our lands and water
the treasures therein
each other and yourself with respect"*

Contact Martin at— [Martin O'Farrell—Total Patagonia](#)

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Bombs and Missiles!

by
Marilyn King

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Bombs are falling and missiles are flying in Iraq! Anyone who says they know what is going to happen next with air travel is talking through their hat.

Making some intelligent guesses about the state of travel in a world where attention is focused on war—following is my best stab at about air travel in the days and weeks to come. It is hardly complete and subject to almost immediate change as the news from Iraq becomes clearer.

Decisions

If you're taking your vacation, are self-employed or work for a small business, you may make your own decisions on when, if, or where to fly. If you're employed by a large corporation, however, the decision may rest with your firm's travel department. Your company may impose a temporary ban on some or all kinds of travel. You may be told not to fly on U.S. flag carriers on international routes. (You may be asked to avoid U.K. flag carriers, too.)

Of course, few travelers are booking flights to the Middle East right now. The U.S. State Department issued a new Worldwide Travel Caution on the Middle East—as well as specific warnings for travel to bordering regions such as Turkey, Pakistan and East Africa.

Schedules

Throw away your itineraries! Airlines around the world are slashing routes and schedules. More changes and cancellations will happen each passing day we are at war. Cuts and cancellations can come without advance notice—often without public announcement—and are usually effective immediately. Reconfirm **every** flight to every destination before departing for the airport. On your new bookings for future travel, make back-up plans. Flights listed on today's schedules—may not be operating when you are ready to fly.

What flights are most vulnerable to cancellation? Obviously those to the Middle East and East Africa. Flights to Europe and Latin America—where many flights are available, are also being cut due to reduced demand. Asia-Pacific service is the least likely for swift cancellations—but some airlines have already dropped or cut service. No region is immune.

Domestically, your Big Six airlines, all of whom are already losing lots of money, will reduce schedules first—then begin deleting cities off their route maps. The longer the war lasts, the faster the pace of the cuts. Low-fare airlines Southwest, AirTran and JetBlue have been more careful with their existing schedules, but an extended war will impact them, too.

Most airlines have implemented "peace of mind" policies. You can change flight dates and destinations with little or no penalty. However, rules vary—so check with your airline and understand the conditions completely before changing. Your "rights" are even "cloudier" if your airline cancels your flight and unilaterally rebooks you. However, you are under **no** legal or financial obligation to accept what your airline assigns you if your airline has canceled your flight. If you cannot arrange a suitable replacement, contact your credit-card company and contest the charge. By law, credit-card firms cannot bill you for services not delivered. A canceled flight is an undelivered service.

Security

Major changes at domestic airports have already happened—the Homeland Security Agency upgraded the nation's terror-alert status to "code orange".

Expect a random search of your vehicle, when entering airport grounds. Most vehicles will be stopped and at least visually inspected. Close-in parking, usually within 300 feet of passenger terminals, is restricted or prohibited. Once you are inside the terminal, expect more demanding procedures at security-screening checkpoints and more aggressive measures to examine your checked bags. Have your boarding pass and identification available at all times. You are likely to be asked to produce them several times and at random locations.

If the war drags on or if there are incidents of terrorism, expect security to be increased more dramatically. Curbside check-in may be suspended and random, at-the-gate, secondary security searches may be revived. No-parking perimeters around passenger terminals may be widened. Some airport access roads may be closed. Some airports may completely ban vehicles from approaching airport terminals. Passenger pick-up and drop-off would then be in remote locations at distant edges of airport grounds.

Airport amenities will also diminish as weeks drag on. If passenger traffic drops steeply, some airport clubs will close and hours of operation at other lounges will be reduced. Some food and retail facilities will close or reduce operations. In extreme circumstances, some airports will close terminals and flights will be concentrated at fewer gates and concourses.

Welcome To Paradise... On a Caribbean Island

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ENGLAND: BOTTOMS UP ENGLISH PUB TOUR

A fascinating tour of wonderful Olde English Pubs through breathtaking scenery. Explore exciting towns and villages such as Cambridgeshire, Duxford & Leicestershire while trying some excellent real ales and local cuisine. England's oldest inns such as the Cock Inn dating back to around 1250 are a must see. You will also experience the beauty and charm of the Cotswolds and visit Stratford on Avon and stop at The Dirty Duck, frequented by the actors from the nearby Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. This is a unique vacation combining a wonderful mix the English countryside, villages and towns through the charm of Olde English Inns and taverns.



SUGGESTED ITINERARY

	Accommodation
DAY 1	Leicestershire
DAY 2	The Wordsworth
DAY 3	Cotswolds
DAY 4	Cotswolds
DAY 5	Woodbridge Inn
DAY 6	Royal Berkshire
DAY 7	Depart

PRICING

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Detailed Day By Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive London / Cambridgeshire / Duxford / Leicestershire

Pick up Car Rental and drive to Duxford. Stop for lunch at the John Barleycorn Pub. Visit the American Aeronautical Museum at Duxford Aerodrome. Continue to Leicestershire and overnight at a local country Pub for some excellent Real Ales and local cuisine.



Day 2: Sibson / Nottinghamshire / Derbyshire

In Sibson have morning coffee at the Cock Inn one of England Oldest Inns dating back to 1250. Continue to Nottinghamshire and visit Ye Olde Trip Inn, dating back to 1070 AD, frequented by King Richard and the crusade soldiers. Continue in to Derbyshire and overnight at a 200 year old Inn.



Day 3: Derbyshire / Cotswold

Head south to Cotswolds. Stop for lunch at The Dirty Duck in Stratford on Avon, frequented by the actors from the nearby Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Continue south to some fine pubs for your 2 night stay. Explore the honey colored stone villages and their many lovely old pubs.



Day 4: Cotswolds

Explore the Cotswolds. Stop for lunch at the Swan Inn in Bibury and have a picnic in the picturesque courtyard, and afterwards stroll along the river to feed the ducks and the huge trout.



Day 5: Cotswold / Chipping Norton

Visit the charming Chipping Norton. Afterwards stop at the village Great Tew at the Falkland Arms. Continue to Wiltshire and overnight at the Woodbridge Inn, North Newton, a 16th century country inn situated between the ancient stone circles of Stonehenge and Avebury.



Day 6: Chipping Norton / Thames Valley / Royal Berkshire

Drive along the Thames Valley and possibly stop at the Blue Boar Pub in Chieveley. The "Blue Boar was left at the pub by Cromwell's men prior to the Battle of Naseby in 1644 and to this day sits outside on the plinth! Continue to Royal Berkshire for your overnight stay at a country Pub.



Day 7: Royal Berkshire / Depart London

Drive back to London. Don't forget to drop off your rental car! cheers !!!



LOCAL SIGHTS INCLUDE

London, Cambridgeshire, Duxford,
Leicestershire, Sibson, Nottinghamshire,
Derbyshire, Cotswolds Chipping Norton,
Thames Valley, Royal Berkshire

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- All taxes and service charges
- Concierge service in England while traveling
- Touring Map of England
- Travel Documents and Personalized Itinerary

Reserve now—

[Bottoms Up English Pub Tour](#)



Argentina Wines—

"Yum—Yum"

by
Vivian Lewis

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Martin, our host, married into a family of wine distributors in western Argentina. Yet, to be polite, he kept offering us ice-cubes to add to our glasses of the excellent red wine he was serving from the family cellar.

And he is actually rather sophisticated compared to some wine-drinkers in this country. At a restaurant in the provinces serving up the usual huge parrilla (barbecued steaks), we watched fellow diners adding to their wine not just ice, not just bottled water "con gaz", but also Coca Cola!

Argentine vintners are clearly not appreciated by their countrymen.

Yet the wine they produce is of exceptional character and quality. I am not going to talk about white wines, although Argentina produces a fine Chablis-style wine, not as flinty as the French originals but not marred by sweetness as in California. It makes Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. It makes rosado (rose) and cava (bubbly). I will talk about Malbec, a red wine.

Malbec accounts for more acreage under the grape here than any other variety. And we are talking about a lot of wine. Argentina is the 5th largest wine exporter in the world, putting about 16 million hectoliters out per year.

Malbec is a European grape still used legally in the Bordeaux region of France and in parts of Italy as a "wine-doctor" to add character to vintage red wines. But it is not now grown on its own in the prestige vineyards of southwestern France.

This is in contrast to the history of Malbec a few centuries ago. Then the inky-black wine had a tremendous following in, of all places, the palaces of the Czars. It was then the main grape variety used to make the wines of Cahors, which were best-sellers in the Russian Court and also used as consecrated wine in the Russian Orthodox Church.

Today the Malbec of Cahors has largely been uprooted and replaced with Merlot. Merlot is better at resisting damp winters than Malbec. But it has achieved a new success in South America, mainly Argentina but also in Chile. There some of the advantages of Merlot are reduced by different climate conditions. And of course, Malbec is an easier product to sell in a world awash with Merlot. It is rich and fruity and high in alcohol (about 13 1/2%) which means it is nice to drink relatively young and can be stored to improve with age. It has a generous taste in the mouth, with lots of fruity overtones. It smells wonderful.

Argentine wine production is centered on the Mendoza province. This is at 33 degrees latitude south of the Equator, approximately the same level as Bordeaux and the Chianti fields, except it is south of the Equator, not north. The altitude is 600 to 1200 meters in the foothills of the Andes, with the whites grown at the top of the slopes and the reds below. Key to the difference is that the area of Mendoza is much drier than the vineyards of Europe or California, cut off from rainstorms by the high Andes.

Argentina is in a financial crisis and this even affected its ability to export wines. It also has given it a potential edge against the much pricier Chilean Malbec. In 2001-2 (Argentina's vintages take place in the spring), wine sales fell sharply because the currency crisis discouraged export efforts. Last year, most exports went to Brazil, which doubled its demand for wine from its Mercosur partner, and to a lesser extent to Paraguay, the local smuggling center. This year's vintage, on the other hand, will take place under more stability and go further

afield. The grapes are already being harvested now.

It is still early days, however, on wine promotion, and Argentina also needs to educate its own population about wine. It has created a body to do this, called la Fundación Export.AR, which plans to participate in fairs and tastings in the countries where its exports are admitted most freely: The U.S., Canada, Britain, and northern Europe (Britain, Sweden and Holland). And Argentina itself. (Southern Europe restricts imports of wines competing with the native products.)

While we were in Buenos Aires, we benefited from a promotion for Malbec, not by the semi-government body, but by the Trumpeter brand, an excellent Malbec. Restaurant Orviedo (Beruti 2602, near where we were staying, tel 4821 3741, restorviedo@interlink.com.ar) offered a set 3-course "Trumpeter" menu with 4 choices for each course, including a bottle of Malbec wine and bottled water. This cost all of pesos 37 per head, about \$12. This is a gastronomic haven amidst the grill restaurants, serving classic Spanish-Argentine food in a classic site. Trumpeter is also the selected Malbec of the Holiday Inn hotels in Argentina.

But even among restaurant Malbecs, Trumpeter has competition. We also like Bodegas Norton and Bodegas Trapiche Malbec.

Because of its pricing edge, and because so little has been done to promote Argentina's wines so far, we think this could be a long-term winner. Argentina has just launched a plan called "Vitinicola 2020" and if it works, the country expects to exports \$2 billion of wine by that date and snatch 10% of the world market for flat wines.

Trumpeter is sold in the U.S., imported by Billington Imports of Virginia, a specialist in wines from the southern hemisphere. (7536 East Fullerton Court, Springfield VA 22153, (www.BillingtonWines.com). In New York, it sells for about \$6.95 per bottle, with a discount for a dozen.



It is produced in Mendoza province in Argentina at La Rural, by the descendants of the 19th century founder of the firm, Don Felipe Rutini.

The family run a wine museum in Maipu, in Mendoza province, which they claim is the largest wine museum in South America. It is open Monday to Saturday 9 to 5, and Sundays 10 to 2. It is free. The place has anything and everything connected with wine-growing and wine-making. Attached to the wine museum is another collection, of religious images and carvings from around the world, also started by Don Felipe and maintained by his family. Incorporated in the museums in the palatial home Don Felipe and his family from about 1850. The museums are at Montecaseros 2625, 5513-Maipu, Mendoza, Argentina.

Please contact Vivian directly at— [Vivian Lewis—Global Investing](#)



Iguazu

by

Vivian Lewis

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The three-country border zone where Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina come together is a center of drug trade, contraband, and terrorism. Right now most of the visible smuggling seems to be by Paraguayan Indians

hitting the Argentine supermarkets to benefit from the cheap Argentine pesos, but there are more sinister goings on too. Many of the Indians seem to finance their grocery shopping by selling woven handbags, carved animals, straw work, bead jewelry, and feather headdresses. Yet this seeming backwater is where the murderous bombing of the Jewish cultural center of Buenos Aires was plotted, the largest anti-Semitic attack since World War II (not counting attacks on Israelis), apparently financed by Iran.

And it is also the site of South America's most spectacular waterfall. The falling waters take your mind off Bin Laden's agents in the area. Iguazu Falls, also called Las Cataratas (Sp.) or As Cataratas (Port.) beats Latin America's alternatives hands down. To be sure, Angel Falls in Venezuela is higher. But that only is true when the waters are running, about 4–6 months in the year. And Kaieteur Falls in Guyana is higher, but also simpler, just one big dump of water, so high that you cannot see or hear the bottom. What makes Iguazu so spectacular is that there are about 200 separate waterfalls and you can take them in and hear them.

Moreover, unlike the Guyana site, you can get to Iguazu relatively easily, at least if you are willing to stay on the Argentine side. We flew from and to Buenos Aires, on one of 6 daily flights. The cost is 656 pesos per person return, on either Aerolinas Argentinas or LAPA. We used a Buenos Aires travel agent who speaks English to book everything.

Right now Americans have to get visas in advance (not at the border) to cross over to Brazil, which kept us from both the Brazilian and Paraguayan coasts (because unless you charter a boat the only way to get to Paraguay is by crossing Brazil.) Yet even staying on the Argentine side we had a glorious adventure. Had we been able to visit the Brazilian side, we learned from some French tourists at our hotel, we would have been able to stand above the falls and look down 200 or 300 meters to see them in all their glory. We would also have visited a hydroelectric plant, which the French people thought was ho-hum.

The Iguazu River, born high in Paraguay, crashes down multiple steep falls to the lower Iguazu at the border of Brazil and Argentina. The river winds up in the River Plate, just as Niagara Falls winds up in the St. Lawrence.

We stayed, as you should too, at the Sheraton within the national park on the Argentina side. This is the best way to get your fill of Iguazu. It is the only hotel inside the park. If you stay in town you will spend a lot of time taxiing or bussing to the park, and you will have to pay admission (30 pesos, about \$10) each time you enter the park. The hotel costs pesos 330 (\$110) per night double occupancy, including all taxes and breakfast, and you only pay park admission once, so it works out cheaper.

While there are guides and jeep safari expeditions on offer, in all known languages (including Arabic, presumably for the terrorists; the 3-state region is a center of Latin American Arab life) you can almost certainly do it yourself.

There are four trails to see the falls from the Argentina side. The upper (circuito superior) trail, which takes about 30–45 minutes (depending on how long you stare at the waters with your mouth open), gives you a good overview of the site. You walk along well maintained metal bridges and paths which are all level. This path is fine even for wheelchairs or baby carriages.

The lower (inferior) trail, more difficult since you climb up and down paths to get closer to the rushing waters, takes about an hour to 90 minutes. A side trip will take you by Zodiac raft to an island, Isla San Martin, improbably located in the midst of the cascades, from which it is a tough hike to the bit of the island opposite the largest number of falls. It closes about 4 p.m. because the boatmen want to leave you enough time to get to the front and back before the park closes (7P.M.) On nights of a full moon the park remains open later.

A different path runs to the Gargutas del Diabolo (Gargutas do Diabolo in Portuguese). It is quite a walk, about 2.2 kilometers, but you can also take a free train there, which still leaves 1.1 kilometers you have to walk. We walked one way and took the train back. This is a spectacular horseshoe shaped falls. It used to be part of the main causeway system but the river undermined the paths. With the mist and spray, you get the feeling that the falls are hole in the earth, because you cannot see the ends of the horseshoe.

There is also a mirador, a viewing tower, near the park entrance by the Sheraton, but it was closed. Alongside it, Indians sell handicrafts. The quality is good and the prices are lower than in the shops or the town.

We spent only one night at the Sheraton, which we found enough. That meant we had to ignore the drizzles (this is a semi-tropical rain forest after all) and just walk on regardless. The water was warm enough that it did not bother us. You can buy plastic raincoats but in the heat they would have been more uncomfortable than a bit of rain. Take a light raincoat, insect repellent, and sunscreen to cover all eventualities.

If you insist on spending more than one night at the Sheraton, you will have to do more than the falls. You can go on nature walks through the forests, or go a bit further afield to visit the Jesuit Missions on the Argentine side, featured in the movie Mission.

Although we did not do a nature walk, we did spot lots of wildlife just hitting the falls. Best were the coatimundis, a sort of Argentine raccoon. They are practically tame. We also saw salamanders and an iguana, which were not as cute, and a tapir and some great birds of prey (condors?) lunging at their victims at the bottom of the falls. These were definitely not cuddly like the coatis. And, oh yes, a toucan with a brilliant yellow beak.

At the hotel, we had the set menu dinner (pesos 39, about \$13) while a harpist played. Most Argentines there refused the set menu in order to gobble up steaks, but we preferred the local ingredients of the set menu. The first course was palm hearts and palm leaves in a salad, followed by a fish from Iguazu called the surubi, which was excellent.

Less interesting was lunch at El Tio Rucki, the second best restaurant in Puerto Iguazu, the local town. The best one is closed at lunch. This was Lebanese owned and managed, mainly serving huge portions of grilled beef and, a special touch, offal. The local Brazilian town is Foz de Iguazu, off limits to us this time. You can also see across the river to Ciudad del Este, the Paraguayan city.

Puerto Iguazu, apart from its role as a tourist center for those not willing to stay in the Sheraton, is a Graham Greene town, full of stray dogs, dead kittens, and lots of Arabs. According to our taxi driver (pesos 60 roundtrip to and from the hotel for up to 4 passengers), Paraguay is worse.

The hotel has a gift shop, run by a Portuguese, where we bought coati dolls for our grandchildren. The cross-border game is big here. A few years ago, after the Brazilian real was floated, Argentines stayed on the Brazilian side where their pesos went further. Today, all the Brazilians are on the Argentine side.

Our travel agent was Claudia of Target Agency, 4814 0962 in Buenos Aires, address Calle Callao 1062 (corner Santa Fed). She speaks English.

Please contact Vivian directly at— [Vivian Lewis—Global Investing](#)

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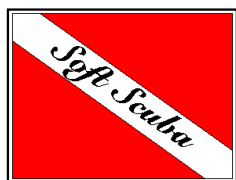
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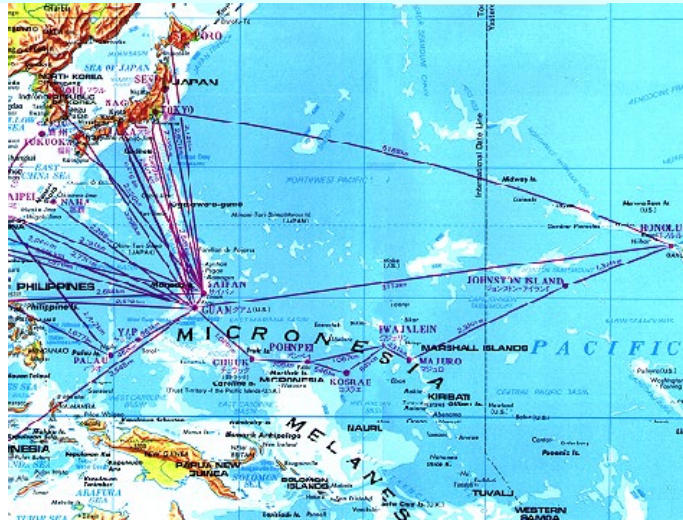
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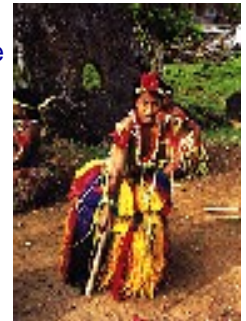
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Your Yap Dive Adventures

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Yap—Of all Micronesian islands, Yap is most intriguing. With island culture intact, the people do things the same way their forefathers did. The stone money is a good example. Yap is the only place in the world where huge, carved stones became a traditional form of money.

Stone money dates back 1,800 years. Ancient Yapese navigators sailed outrigger canoes across hundreds of miles of open ocean, exploring neighboring islands. On Palau, they discovered caves containing sparkling light brown material known as crystalline calcite. Using hand tools made of shells and sticks, they quarried and sculpted stone disks ranging from 2 to 12 feet in diameter. Each piece has its own legend with its value directly related to the degree of difficulty in obtaining it. Stone money banks lie deep in the jungle where villagers store their wealth in neat rows, propped up in impressive displays.



A trip to the outlying districts is stepping back in time. Men's meeting houses are built of huge logs and palm thatch. The biggest treat is a traditional Yapese stick dance. Islanders perform this ancient art in their finest dress.

Photo by: *Fred Altrieth*—12/2000



Manta Rays—Yap is the unchallenged leader of Manta Ray diving. Divers see mantas on more dives and more mantas per dive than anywhere else in the world. Most encounters occur in depths of 25–50 feet, usually inside channels that lead from the lagoon to the open sea. The mantas line up single file in groups of four to six, taking their turns being cleaned. They appear unafraid of divers. Sweeping past the divers, they execute a tight U-turn and come back toward the divers—hovering just a few feet above the corals. These gentle giants have wingspans of 10–20 feet and weigh 1,000 pounds or more. A close

the corals. These gentle giants have wingspans of 10–20 feet and weigh 1,000 pounds or more. A close

encounter with these magnificent creatures is one of the most exhilarating experiences a diver can have.

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Yap Dive Sites—Yap offers a wide range of superb diving experiences. On literally hundreds of places around Yap, the diving ranges from superb to absolutely outstanding.

Gilmaan Wall—A vertical wall dive at the southern tip of Yap where the reefline juts out two miles from shore. Surrounded on three sides by open ocean, it is usually a drift dive. The wall begins at 20 feet and plummets straight down to 160 feet. Underwater visibility ranges from 150 to 200 feet. The face of the wall is covered with hard corals, gorgonian fans, Daisy Corals and bright yellow crinoids. The wall is honeycombed with small caves and crevices occupied by exotic reef fish. With exposure to the sea, Gilmaan Wall is the site of encounters with Dogtooth Tuna, turtles and Eagle Rays. Sailfish, Manta Rays, sharks and Whitetail Stingrays, also can be seen.

Photo by: **Fred Altrieth**—12/2000



Lionfish Wall—Another exciting vertical wall begins at 18 feet and plummets straight down to 160 feet. Drifting this wall feels a little bit like sky diving because of the 200-foot visibility. The most outstanding attraction is the large community of Lionfish that lives in small caves and crevices on the face of the wall. There are literally dozens of these spectacular creatures—each of them adorned with lacy fins and slender spines.

Yap Caverns—A unique combination wall dive and coral grotto swim—through, this site is marked by a sandy coral shelf that cuts into the reef, forming a natural amphitheater. The shelf at a depth of 30 feet is surrounded by vertical coral that rises up to within 10 feet of the surface. Running off the north side is a series of caverns, caves and passageways that tunnel beneath the reef.

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