

MUST SEE ARGENTINA



And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsman came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea. *Edgar Allan Poe*

La Recoleta Cemetery – the #1 tourist attraction in Buenos Aires!

Don't believe me? It's Lonely Planet's *Top Sight*, Fodor's *Choice* stop and a Frommer's three star – *must see*. A cemetery as the #1 tourist attraction? What's that say about a destination?

Heading for the mountains of Argentina on a winter in August ski trip recommends a layover in Buenos Aires before hitting the slopes. Buenos Aires is known for the tango, steaks - and its cemetery.



The mausoleums of Cementerio de la Recoleta will remind you of New Orleans. But these vaults are more elaborate in ornamentation and feature rather creepy observation windows of the coffins housed within. Dating back to 1822, its

6,400 tombs cover four central city blocks on 13 plus acres.

Argentines look for the names of their historic politicians, national military heroes, famous writers and others as they walk its narrow "streets".



But foreigners are drawn largely to the resting place of Eva Perón, wife of thrice elected Argentine president Juan Perón. Her life was immortalized by the 1978 biographical, Broadway musical titled under her nickname – *Evita* – “Don’t Cry for Me Argentina”.



You'll hear others' haunting stories as well: the girl who was buried alive, the eternally feuding couple whose sculptured heads will forever face in opposite directions.



(Check out the Buenos Aires episode on Netflix of *Somebody Feed Phil* for an advance look.)





Take in a tango show or, if you have the time, sign up for a tango class. You'll find a number of options on Viator and Expedia. We couldn't squeeze in a lesson, but fifteen minutes in a show's cheaper balcony seats satisfied our curiosity.



Make a reservation online well in advance for grill restaurant – Don Julio Parrilla - Michelin starred in Argentina, the land of grilled meat.

Even reserved guests line up around the corner to be seated. (The “meat” of our journey to Argentina will be detailed in a later article.)



If you hang around Buenos Aires longer, you can find other things to see and do. Watch a soccer game or visit the Campo Argentino de Polo known as *The Cathedral of Polo*. And of course, there are museums, historic buildings and a



Chinatown, but nothing that the guidebooks seem to find of particular note.

So, if you have a couple of days, splurge a bit and spend one on a truly not to be missed side trip to Iguazú Falls.



Our morning started early with a 5:30 A.M. pick up and transfer to an hour-and-a-half flight to Argentina's northern border with Brazil and Paraguay.

Mid-August temperatures in Buenos Aires were in the high-40s to low-50s which must be cold for its citizens who were dressed more warmly than the two of us. We arrived at the airport in shorts and short sleeves ready for a day closer to the Equator and temperatures predicted in the 90s. (Our fellow passengers looked bundled up for a trip south rather than north - a lot of coats that would need lockers or carrying.)

Yet it was a bit shocking on exiting the Iguazú Falls airport to be thrust back into the heat and humidity we'd left behind in Boston.

I'm sure a more leisurely, overnight visit to the Falls could be booked for less money. But turning around in six hours made the convenience of being met at the airport and escorted through the park by a private guide worth the added expense. (Tour options are available through Viator and Expedia.)



The guide saw to our entrance tickets and led us through the Visitor Center complex to the narrow-gauge railroad that shuttles visitors to the interior of Parque Nacional Iguazú. No time wasted asking directions and stumbling about.

We took the train to its second and furthest stop at the beginning of about a mile of metal trestle catwalk that crosses intersecting river branches and leads to the precipice of the Falls' *most dramatic view* – the Devil's Throat.



(Be sure to look down into the clear waters below the pathway as you walk out in order to see a shoal of enormous Argentinian catfish – they run five feet long and over 100 pounds.)



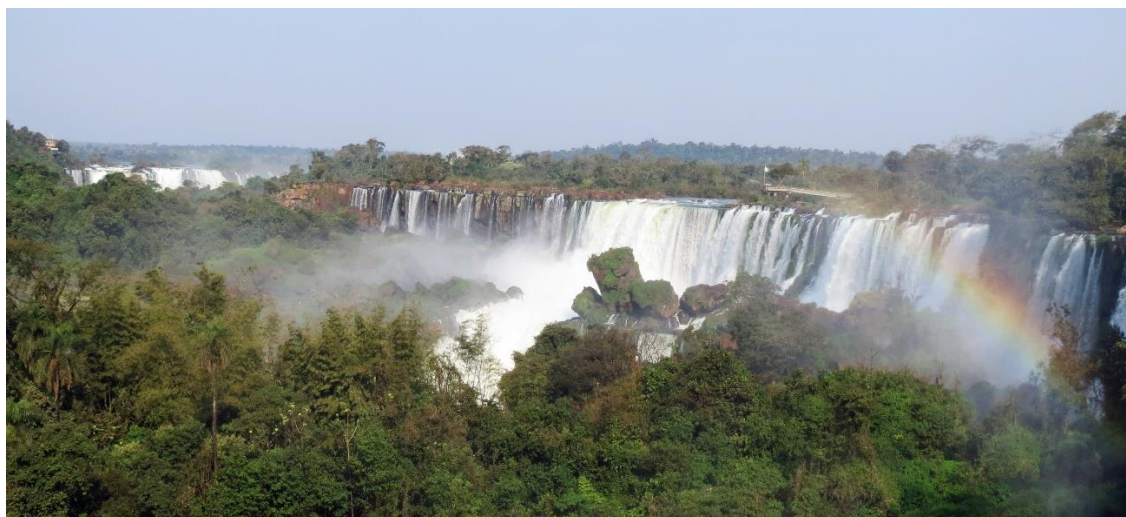
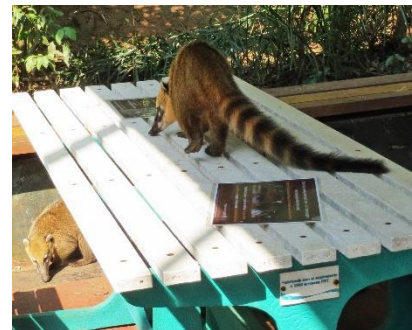
Nestle in along the rail just above the falling water for the best view and photo opportunity: that's a lot of water! (Did I check for leaky faucets before we left home?)



Shuffling back along the path to the train station in the midday heat, I thought I'd seen it all. Impressed, satisfied with our visit and ready to relax over a late lunch before heading to the airport.

(Beware: packs of scavenging, native raccoons bedevil the picnic tables.)

More likely than not, without a guide we'd have missed the *most beautiful view* of Iguazú Falls – its chain of smaller falls seen on the path leading from the first train stop. (A big thanks (and tip) to our congenial guide who nudged along this tired, sweaty traveler without spoiling my surprise over a view that she knew couldn't and shouldn't be missed.)



Various other hikes, watercraft ventures and crossing over the border to Brazil for additional views are available on an extended stay.

But having seen the best, our guide led us back to the Visitor Center where a waiting car whisked us to the airport for the flight back to Buenos Aires and return to the hotel we'd left 15 hours earlier.

Two - *must see* - stopover days in Argentina.

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