

A search for wildlife, some of the best scenery on the planet and a decent salad in –

Argentina (and small bits of Patagonian Chile)

30th September to 30th October 2005

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The Plan

Our motivation for visiting Argentina was based on these premises:

- the experience would be relatively inexpensive since the collapse of the Argentine peso about four years earlier (*this was well founded*),
- there are some stunning landscapes (*yes, with a lot of boring country in between*), and
- there are long lists of birds and mammals that I hadn't seen (*we made some inroads into the bird list, but the mammals were a tad rascally*).

Travelling has less value if everything goes exactly according to plan. There must be a few surprises along the way.....

Areas visited

Our holiday time was split between two distinct regions – the humid and subtropical northeast (two weeks) and Patagonia in the far south (also two weeks).

We started our holiday driving in a hire car north from Buenos Aires along the main highways as far as Iguazu Falls and back. We had planned a long anticlockwise circuit but as the roadside landscapes were so incredibly boring we changed our minds and returned along much the same corridor. We stayed at:

Parque Nacional El Palmar (1 night)

Carlos Pelligrini – in the Esteros del Ibera Marshes (3 nights)

Puerto Iguazu (4 nights)

Obera (1 night)

Yapeyu (1 night)

A big town starting with the letter “G” (1 night)

Buenos Aires (3 nights, including one on arrival)

The two weeks in Patagonia were spent in both Argentina and Chile. We flew from Buenos Aires to Rio Gallegos and drove in a large loop that took in:

El Calafate – for Parque Nacional Los Glaciares (3 nights)

Parque Nacional Torres del Paine (2 very expensive nights)

Punta Arenas (1 night)

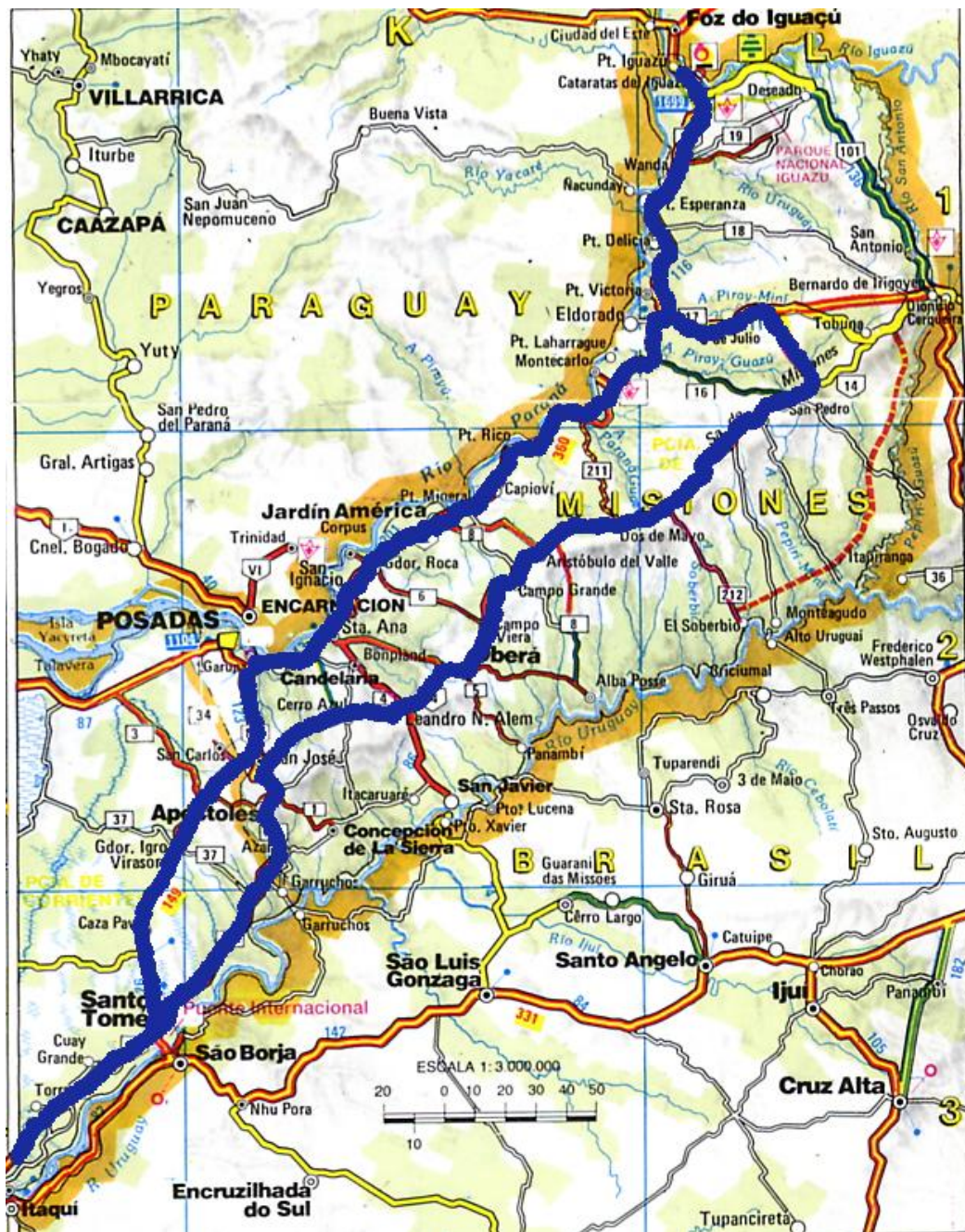
Ushuaia (4 nights)

Rio Grande (1 night)

Rio Gallegos (3 nights, including one on arrival)



joins map below





Patagonia

General comments on sites visited

Buenos Aires and parts north

Buenos Aires

The City – Buenos Aires translates into English as “good air”. Just shows how things can change. The city is enormous and we visited only tiny scraps of it, and these were probably unrepresentative of the city as a whole. I thought Buenos Aires was rather schizophrenic. There were bits and pieces of old and new, tall and squat, filthy and shiny and crowded and empty, all seemingly randomly and endlessly repeated in every direction. If large shopping centres exist we didn’t find any. The corner pub, in any format, was a non-starter.

Heavy traffic, a confusing system of one-way streets and a chronic lack of parking presented sufficient impediment for any exploration by car. It was likely that we would have soon become multicoloured traffic statistics anyway.

The bizarre opening hours, or should I say closing hours, of the eateries and the few endangered bars meant that unlike Alice’s, we could rarely get what we wanted.

Given our lack of interest in the city’s nightlife, I have placed Buenos Aires on the long list of cities that I need not revisit.



Accommodation – Our first digs was the 3 star Days Inn Comfort. This was booked and paid before leaving Australia so that we had something to write on the immigration forms and not have to worry about sleeping in the street on arrival. The hotel was laterally challenged. The building was very high and about twenty feet deep and ten feet wide, or so it seemed. We were to discover that although it was thought at the time to be cheap at about \$A48 per double, far nicer hotels could be found for much less.

We were led to believe that on our return from Iguazu Falls there was a shortage of rooms in Buenos Aires, so we were encouraged to book into the Hostel Inn. This was the only really bad decision of the whole holiday. See diary entry for 12th October.

Finally we hit upon the 3 star Hotel Los Tres Reyes, costing next to nothing (I think less than \$A30), very quiet and well located for our purposes.

Wildlife and trails – We visited the Reserva Ecologica Costanero Sur a number of times. This park represents 24% of all green space in Buenos Aires. It started life as a part of the Rio Plata that was reclaimed in the late 70's by the construction of a number of breakwaters. These were meant to be backfilled to provide more space for lumpy buildings. But it all ground to a halt and the area rapidly became populated with woody weeds and lots of chooks. So now it is a premier nature watching location in the heart of Buenos Aires. So much for urban planners.

Costanero Sur is prime habitat for waterbirds. The numbers and variety are mind-boggling. The park is well-staffed, has an information centre and a good trail network. Just outside is a long promenade (the "costanero"), where you can buy the best beef rolls or other barbecued delights you will ever find from food vending trailers, all for less than \$A1. Come to think of it, this food was probably the best we had in Argentina!

The vibe – The people of the city were just fine – not much else to say.



Coscoroba at Costanero Sur

Parque Nacional El Palmar

Wildlife and trails – This smallish national park is bordered by the Rio Uruguay and preserves a big mess of palm trees. There isn't too much else, but as this was our first stop outside of Buenos Aires we managed lots of new birds and a chance to play with a well fed family of Argentine grey foxes, an animal that seemingly followed us almost everywhere we went over the following weeks.

Accommodation – This was located just outside the park at a facility named Aurora del Palmar. It was a good place to stay with self-contained rooms in converted rail carriages. The helpful staff offered a variety of activities that we had no time to pursue. The food was okay and it all cost very little. They have a website – www.auroradelpalmar.com.ar. You must book in advance.



Carlos Pelligrini - the Esteros del Ibera Marshes

Wildlife and trails – Esteros del Ibera is reputed to be 13,000 square kilometres in size, and the world's largest reasonably untainted freshwater swamp. The village of Carlos Pellegrini, along with the two lakes that surrounded it and the swamp and the patches of various types of wet and dry forest nearby, were full of birds and a variety of easily seen mammals. Many of the birds found here were either absent or very difficult to see elsewhere.

Black howler monkeys were easily seen and capybaras were in numbers so great that they were tripping over each other. Caimans were very well fed, ignoring food located any more than one metre from their gobs. We were also mighty happy to see grey brocket and marsh deer.

Two full days are needed to scratch the surface of what is a fascinating environment. We were thwarted by having some of the heaviest rain and wind yet seen, which washed away an entire day, several hundred kilometres of what was previously perfectly good road, and much of my enthusiasm for the place.

Accommodation – We stayed at the Posada de la Laguna, an expensive but well sited lodge with good food and friendly and obliging staff. We weren't unhappy with our stay but I am sure that the same sort of experience with respect to seeing wildlife and scenery could have been achieved by staying at one of the many less costly competitors scattered around the village.



Puerto Iguazu and Iguazu Falls

THE FALLS – A notice at our hotel gave a schedule of “bus services to the waterfalls”. When I read this it didn't register with me that there were any nearby waterfalls. Iguazu Falls is not a waterfall in the normal sense. It is in its own separate category. Comparisons are meaningless. Our visit coincided with a flood. This made access to some visitor sites at THE FALLS impossible. The advantage for us was to see a lot of falling. I have often wondered what it would have looked like when the Atlantic Ocean broke through at Gibraltar to fill the Mediterranean. Now I know. We have joined the long list of people who nominate THE FALLS as their favourite South American sight.

Wildlife and trails – The bird and mammal watching around the waterfalls and the small number of accessible trails nearby is exceptional. Having made this point, it must be said that seeing it can also be very patchy indeed. An embarrassment of great birds one minute can give way to hours on end of green desert. If you find a mixed foraging flock of birds, never leave it! You might have two birthdays before you see the next one.

Accommodation – The Iguazu National Park Hotel gave us reasonable accommodation for about \$A55 per double. It is excellently located, not, as the name suggests, anywhere near the national park, but adjacent to some primary forest which extends into the hotel grounds

but only if you sneak through a hole in a fence. There were many birds that could be seen from the hotel room windows, which is vital if it is pissing down with rain, as it did for much of our stay. The hotel has free table games and internet access, a good and complimentary breakfast (in stark contrast to the rest of the meals on offer), and its location at the end of town closest to the falls meant that we didn't have to negotiate the town traffic.

The vibe – The number of happy tourists at Iguazu was extraordinary – as you might expect. The facilities at the park are world class, with free shuttle trains to various access points (as a crowd management tool) – in our case restricted to those access points that were above water.



Obera

Our overnight stay in this town represented nothing more than a travel stop. There was nothing fundamentally wrong with the place but nor is there any reason to stop. We stayed at the Hotel El Eden, which offered an unlikely combination of decay and construction for \$A11 per person. Some of the plumbing and electrical wiring had been installed by a blind person operating out of a wheelchair. The owner of the facility, an aged and barely coherent chappy was friendly enough but could have been dealt a better hand when the grey matter was being distributed. It is probably best not to stay at the El Eden Hotel, or anywhere else in Obera.

Yapeyu

Yapeyu is the birthplace of the national hero, Liberator General San Martin. The town is located six kilometres from the main highway and located on the Rio Uruguay. There is a grand and welcoming archway at the edge of town and a couple of very good free entry museums. It is archetypical of sleepy rural Argentina. It is a charming place and well worth a stopover. We even added to our bird list in the riverine forest at the end of town and in the gardens within it.

Accommodation – We stayed at the Hotel San Martin, an excellent basic and clean hotel opposite the town square. Its rooms cost less than \$A9 per person and this included breakfast!

The lovely family that manages the hotel also runs the adjacent store. This business is the most diversified on the planet. As well as having accommodation, they provide meals, grog, groceries, take away food, and a long distance phone, photocopy and fax service. You can also get a repair or service on your portable generator, sound system, concrete mixer, mobile crane or marine radio. And judging by the quantity and quality of the young women employed, you may wish you could have a few other things serviced as well.



The large town north of Buenos Aires that starts with the letter “G”

This was another travel stop that allowed us to get to Buenos Aires during the middle of the following day when hopefully we could return the car without the fun of the peak hour traffic. We wandered the friendly but unattractive and downright grotty town for an hour or so.

Accommodation – The 3 star Hotel Alemain was cheap and good and cost \$A22 per room.

Patagonia

Patagonia is famous for a number of things. One of these is the Patagonian wind, which is said to be at its worst during the time of year of our visit. We hardly had any wind at all

during the two weeks we were there. When we did get a little, it was hardly a wind but a stiff cold breeze.

The landscapes were either mind-boggling beautiful or utterly drab and boring. There was simply nothing in between.



El Calafate and Parque Nacional Los Glaciares

The almost exclusively tourist town of El Calafate is inconveniently located 80 kilometres or so from the attraction that it serves - Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. There are an awesome (or awful) number of gift shops, restaurants and accommodation. This was perhaps the only town we visited where all the businesses did not go into a long hibernation from noon stretching well into the afternoon. It is beautifully located near Lago Argentino.

Accommodation – The chap that rented us our car organised for us a substantial discount at the almost luxurious Hosteria Kalken. This hotel has every comfort and was almost too good for the likes of us. We paid \$A72 per double.

Staff – The hotel staff spoke very good English and were chatty and helpful in terms of booking tours to the glaciers and providing general information. Particular thanks go to Laura and Hernan.

Parque Nacional Los Glaciares contains a number of stunning glaciers, various lakes including Lago Argentino (the country's largest), and areas of beech forest. The glaciers, particularly the Perito Moreno run a very close second to THE FALLS in terms of the wow factor. For mine no other Patagonian attraction came even close. Perito Moreno was calving almost continuously. Trying to sleep anywhere nearby would be difficult.

Wildlife and trails – There is a long list of birds and mammals that are possible. We picked up a few birds but the apparent lack of walking trails and a newfound obsession with glacier watching kept our wildlife list quite short. Not helping was some of the weather, which wasn't exactly brilliant.

black-chested buzzard-eagle



Parque Nacional Torres del Paine (Chile)

This park may be very impressive. I simply don't know. Much of it could not be located on account of it being buried under snow. The whole Chile experience, for us, it must be said, was very ordinary.

We arrived at Puerto Natales, the town in which the national park accommodation must be booked, five minutes after everything shut for two hours for lunch, including all the travel agents!!

Accommodation – We eventually booked the cheapest hotel accommodation we could find at a trifling \$US190 per night for a triple (discounted from \$US312), including breakfast. This was at the Hosteria Las Torres. Our only other choice was to pay \$US46 per person per night to sleep in a rented sleeping bag on a saggy mattress in a dormitory + extra for food.

The hotel was excellent but the view consisted of water in all its various forms. Much of it was suspended in the air.

Wildlife and trails – Aside from feral hares and hundreds of semi-tame guanacos, we saw bugger all mammals and only a few birds. This was because we were restricted by the forces of nature from getting too far from our hotel room. There are many trails in the park judging by the numbers of drowned trekkers that trudged in and out of the gloom each morning and afternoon.



Punta Arenas (Chile)

This town has a serious shortage of accommodation. It took us three hours to find a room. The name of the hotel is not important because Punta Arenas is another of those places that you really need not visit. It had just three things working in its favour:

1. there were a range of good seabirds and shorebirds along the waterfront that could be seen by not getting out of the car, thus without freezing to death,
2. to cross the Straits of Magellan there is a vehicular ferry that leaves Punta Arenas daily for Porvenir from which even more seabirds and sea monsters could be seen, and
3. when you get off the ferry on the other side you need never visit Punta Arenas ever again.

Punta Arenas to Porvenir ferry



Ushuaia and Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego

Ushuaia is billed as the most southerly town in the world. It is actually quite a large city and growing daily. I don't know why. Much time could be spent pondering whatever it is that the locals do for recreation. The scenery is impressive but that hardly means the local folk have something to do.

Our visit coincided with some good weather – little rain and little or no wind.

A gaggle of tourist boats trundle out from Ushuaia harbour each morning and afternoon for almost identical tours of the Beagle Channel.

Two full days with good weather would be sufficient in Ushuaia and Tierra del Fuego National Park. We had three, and were not unhappy to leave on the fourth.

Accommodation – There is no shortage of places to stay in Ushuaia. Mostly they are more expensive than elsewhere in Argentina. We stayed at a strange place a few kilometres away from the main part of the city. This lowered the cost. The 3 star Hotel Los Coihues was not easy to find. There is nothing whatsoever written on the building that indicates that it is a hotel and it is located in a residential area on a minor unpaved road. The owner, Pablo, was rarely seen, and most of the time we had the whole place to ourselves. We paid \$A90 per night for two rooms with attached bathroom. Recommended.

Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego

This park is almost adjacent to the city and has many trails and beautiful scenery. There aren't many native mammals and there probably never was. Birds are abundant anywhere on or next to any water but rather uncommon in the forests where there are few species this close to the South Pole. The most desirable forest bird was fortunately reasonably common here - the Magellanic woodpecker.

Rio Grande

One night was spent to break the long drive from Ushuaia to Rio Gallegos. The town is located at the intersection of the Atlantic Ocean and the rather pathetic river from which it takes its name. The ocean was far more interesting, as the inshore reefs and the cruddy beaches were the home of tens of thousands of migratory and local shorebirds, and a smaller number of seabirds. The tides were enormous so bring jogging shoes to chase the birds down the beach as the tide races out.

Accommodation – We eventually found rooms at the Federico Ibarra Hotel opposite the town square. Rooms were \$A52 per double and okay but a little noisy. Rooms were very hard to get in this town. The heavily subsidised industry sited at Rio Grande attracts lots of business people.

Rio Gallegos

Others have commented on how horrible this town is. We didn't find that it was much different to any other large town in Argentina, and certainly wasn't horrible.

Accommodation - This was another town where rooms were in chronic short supply. We could never get the hotel of first choice during the three nights we stayed. The pricy (\$A72) Hotel Comercio was our pick and probably the best hotel in town, but hardly exciting.

The people of Argentina

I had been given to believe that Argentines were loud and aggressive. Perhaps my judgements were based on watching news reports of soccer fans celebrating when their national team lost a game. We found the people to be honest, obliging and proud to be Argentines. Except for drivers in Buenos Aires we saw no aggressive behaviour of any kind. Women appeared to be happy and well treated (contrary to what I had been told) and officials at police or other checkpoints were patient and friendly. Everyone greets each other with a "hola" or "buen dia", although I drew the line on the same sex hugging and kissing.

We weren't overcharged for goods or services although there was plenty of opportunity.

In the northeast we were surprised by the levels of poverty given the fertile nature of the countryside. There were lots of hovels or pathetic little houses with poorly dressed children. In Patagonia any poor people would have frozen to death or got blown into the sea so poverty is not a problem.

We had no hint of any personal security problems. No doubt there are opportunities for getting into trouble but we didn't find any.

Few Argentines away from hotel front desks speak any more English than I speak Spanish but it didn't seem to matter in terms of getting housed, fed or watered, or processed at borders and checkpoints. Explaining that you didn't speak Spanish only encouraged most people to speak louder, in Spanish.



Roads

The road that connects Buenos Aires and Puerto Iguazu (some 1700 kms long), is sealed, of good quality and by-passes pretty much every town over most of its length. In Patagonia most of the roads were sealed and most of the others soon will be. The unsealed roads were generally able to be driven safely at the 80km/hr mark without killing anything.

Driving in Argentina

One of the oddities of travel is that you can hire a car in a foreign country and drive off having zero understanding of any road laws or traffic signs.

The travel guidebooks suggest that anyone hiring a car and driving in Buenos Aires is insane. I can suggest that drivers need a fully functioning nervous system and a decisive nature and certainly a navigator helps – mainly to scan for one way streets. Traffic moves with a certain beauty without much verbal abuse from drivers or the use of car horns. The national sport in Argentina is changing lanes without giving any prior indication. Cars will change lanes even when there is no traffic to pass or where there is no advantage in doing so. When there is a traffic accident it is a good one.

The most difficult aspect of driving in either Argentine or Chilean towns is that most roads are one way and it is often not obvious which way that is. Whilst each alternate side road is generally trafficked in the opposite direction, there are enough examples where this is not the case to keep you alert to any possibility. Some roads have some form of intersection control whereas others have nothing. It was always fun not to be in a town.

In rural areas there was little traffic and what there was could be recognized in three forms:

1. Very large trucks,
2. Mobile rust that emerged from farm gates and moved very slowly, and
3. Very fast moving four cylinder cars that appeared in front of us having not been seen in the rear view mirror despite constant checking.

I was the first driver since 1948 to drive approximately at the speed limit. There were no traffic police anywhere.

Police Checkpoints and Border Posts

At every regional boundary and at the edge of any large town you could rely upon a checkpoint or two. There was no advance indication of whether you needed to stop. I generally did. This was a constant annoyance to any vehicles behind me. North from Buenos Aires you might expect to stop about ten times a day. Sometimes a full passport, license and car registration check could leave you marveling at the number of uniformed men and the dreary local scenery for twenty minutes or so.

The checkpoint officials would ask a bewildering series of questions. We learnt to state that we had no idea what they were talking about, that we came from Australia, we were driving a rental car and that we were heading for town X. This was generally enough to blunt their interest. If not, a recitation of any entirely unrelated topic that came to mind, in English, was found to sufficiently bore them into submission.

The type of official manning particular checkpoints was often unclear, as was whatever the checkpoint hoped to check. At one, we stood some sort of chance of winning a fridge. We bought a ticket in a police raffle thinking that we needed to pay a toll or something.



Another irritation was the incessant placement of toll plazas. There was no advance indication of the toll charge.

Border posts on our regular crossings between Argentina and Chile were another matter. The paperwork supporting the car registration, insurance and authority to cross borders were a constant source of fascination to myriad officials from both countries. Then there was all the immigration and customs fun. Sometimes someone would fail to furnish us with some document or other which would cause someone else much stress at a different crossing point. We learnt to smile a lot.

Guidebooks

For birds we had both *The Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica* and *The Birds of Argentina and Uruguay*. If better guidebooks existed we would have identified many more birds, especially tyrant flycatchers. The illustrations in either book, but particularly in the latter, showed birds looking more like pointy rocks than living animals.

The 2005 version of the *Rough Guide to Argentina* lived up to its title. Much of the background information proved correct but anything whatsoever relating to accommodation was shown to be a fantasy. For a guide being used in its year of publication, we thought it odd that some recommended hotels simply did not exist, while others had ceased to trade some years earlier. The prices quoted for those hotels that could be located were often wildly inaccurate.

Our trusty road map, *Rutas de la Argentina*, illustrated roads approximately where they were, but there was a strong likelihood that the road standard indicated was either utterly wrong or reflected a time long past. But we didn't get lost, or at least not for very long.

Food

In a word – boring. Sure, an excellent steak costing very little could be found in every second restaurant (the others were just like they are at home – temperamental). But every eatery had almost identical menus and we soon got bored with eating the same fare. Ethnically based restaurants either do not exist or were so well hidden that we didn't find one. Allan claims to have spotted a Chinese restaurant somewhere but I don't believe him.

Argentines have not embraced the concept of vegetables, with no meal seen having more than one type – and almost always this meant potato.

What was described as pizza was always disappointing. We gave up, but continued to amaze at the servings given to others. The pizzas were constructed almost entirely from plastic cheese on a limpid base, with the occasional olive, which the diners often discarded. There is certainly a business opportunity here.

The best food was found in the small street stalls in Buenos Aires. Simple BBQ beef, chorizo or chicken rolls were delicious.



Beer

See "food". Beer is not the beverage of choice in Argentina. All the beers were insipid and reminiscent of US beer. At least they were cheap and readily available.

Wine

The reds were generally very good and inexpensive. Rarely did the labels indicate the variety, which could be maddening, but we bought nothing we couldn't drink. I didn't try any of the whites.

Water

Buy water in bottles. Don't trust anyone anywhere who tells you that the tap water is potable. They tell jokes or lie.



Weather

We were treated with a very mixed bag indeed. In the north, floods either landed on us or followed us after a series of ugly big thunderstorms dropped in and wouldn't leave. This made for a few very boring days gazing out of hotel windows and musing over the likelihood of being trapped somewhere. It also cost us time in travelling with some roads becoming impassable.

In Patagonia it was just the rain or heavy snow that ruined some activities and left me wondering what some of the scenery might have looked like if we could have actually seen it. On the positive side, the famed Patagonian winds were nowhere to be found. We were treated by a number of windless days and rarely did we face anything more than a stiff breeze.

Insects

Iguazu has more than just a big hole in the ground. Some of the smaller forest residents left all of us with interesting skin patterns and something to do with our fingernails for many days. Away from Iguazu there was little to trouble us.

Few insects are silly enough to live in Patagonia.

Wildlife — see lists at end of report

Birds – 346 different birds were identified. This was okay as we really only visited two chunks of a vast country. I am sure that given better weather at some locations we could have achieved 370-380. An extra week with the same itinerary and we would have seen quite a few more.

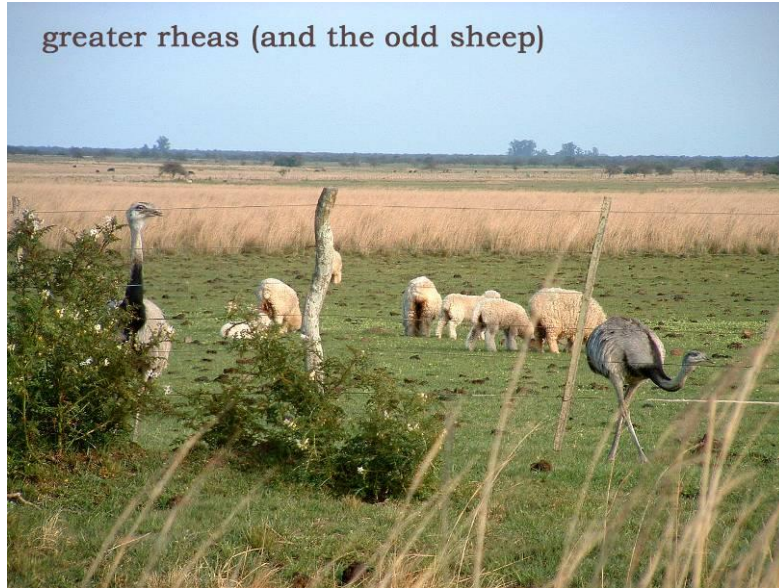
At most places the birds were much more confiding than in other South American countries of my experience – probably reflecting lower levels of hunting. We saw one sling-shot and heard or saw no guns. Needless to say there is probably plenty of duck shooting in the north at least, mainly “off camera”.

Mammals – whilst we managed a few desirable mammals, the list of 18 was disappointing. Mammals are always difficult to find in South America. We were hamstrung by having crap weather when we could have been spotlighting. This activity was further compromised by staying in hotels that were generally remote from any good habitat. In Patagonia, the idea of wandering about at night in the snow or cold did not appeal given the lack of diversity there.

My favourite mammals were Peale’s and Commerson’s dolphins, black howler monkey and marsh deer.



greater rheas (and the odd sheep)



Diary

Day 1 - Friday 30th September 2005

Our Aerolineas Argentinas A340-200 left Sydney via Auckland for Buenos Aires at 1010. The flight was full, the cabin crew surly, the service slow and the food perfectly ordinary. This was the last flight before high season airfares started. Parents with infants had avoided the flight, which given my love for such things, was sensible on their part.

Dinner, a glutinous cold pasta, was accompanied by beer, red wine, whisky and two sleeping pills. I lay on the floor but managed only a couple of hours of restless sleep.

Breakfast was inedible. I would have thought that some of the breakfast items served would have been banned on planes as they could have readily been used as weapons. I pondered the demise of an airline that I had previously enjoyed. I would not recommend Aerolineas to anyone, but there are very few options for getting to Argentina from Australia.

We arrived in Buenos Aires at 1300 on the same day as we left Sydney, after a flight of 15 hours or so, including the stop in NZ. We must have travelled through a stargate. Trying to calculate what was happening to the rise and fall of the sun gave me a headache.

We caught a taxi into the city after negotiating a fare at the airport. The driver produced a receipt for a higher amount on arrival, but my most menacing stare (which is not very menacing at all) made him smile and accept the smaller amount.

Our hotel, the Days Inn Comfort did not have a functioning lift. The narrow staircase occupied us for much of the afternoon as we shuffled up and down the weirdly designed laterally challenged stairwell.

I needed to change some money. The smiling hotel owner represented the currency exchange black market and gave me a higher rate than that of the banks, so I loaded up with pesos @ 2.87 to the \$US.

We adjourned to the Costanero Sur, the nearby wetland and weed forest, arriving a little after 1600. The caring staff of this facility declined to let us enter on the spurious basis that it was too windy. Nothing that grew inside the reserve was big enough to concuss a gnat if it fell. We were never to discover the real reason for the closure but we were kept busy looking at birds that fringed the edge of the park, with water birds and town bums like monk parakeets, cowbirds and thrushes in abundance.

Dinner was enjoyed at a café where a steak with the consistency of ice cream was washed down with a few cervezas. And so ended the world's longest day.

Day 2 - Saturday 1st October 2005

I had feared this day like no other. The plan called for us to pick up our hire car and get it and its crew safely out of Buenos Aires. The comments of yesterday's taxi driver didn't

help. He made it clear that he thought I was loco. The travel guidebooks suggest a level of insanity for anyone that dares drive a car in Buenos Aires.

We spent over an hour dealing with the paperwork for our brand new, never been hired, Brazilian built VW Gol at the Alamo / National car rental agency in the city. The staff were very helpful and we soon found ourselves playing with the traffic and heading for parts north. The freeways started out as massive 8-10 lane jobbies that progressively narrowed until we could finally say that we had escaped when the familiar look of a two lane highway presented itself. We didn't have to travel too far before the traffic dwindled to the point where we wondered where Argentina's millions were all hiding.

We arrived at a lodge named Aurora del Palmar by mid-afternoon to find that our booking for accommodation had not been received. Luckily a cancellation allowed us to stay at this, the only accommodation in the area of El Palmar National Park.

The park is not far from the accommodation and we were soon ticking off birds. It must be said that the park does not contain the very best habitats that could be found but as this was our first full day we were constantly seeing new birds as well as a very obliging family of Argentine grey foxes that had ambushed all cars at a critical intersection. They lived on a steady diurnal diet of biscuits and other un-fox like garbage.



Across the muddy Uruguay River we could see Uruguay but alas no birds to add for that country! Returning to our converted train carriage bedroom we were soon wolfing down beer and food in preparation for a blissful night's sleep. A token spotlight before bed revealed a hog-nosed skunk nosing about without a care in the world. Skunks can do that. Their only enemies have black tyres.

Day 3 - Sunday 2nd October 2005

Aurora del Palmar is located in wonderful wildlife habitat but the fine weather and the chance to see new birds so early in the trip saw Allan and I traipsing around cow paddocks, orchards and Eucalyptus plantations with fair success. Various flycatchers, pigeons, finches, ducks, raptors, woodpeckers and red-winged tinamous kept us scribbling and searching.

We journeyed north and after a drive of almost eight hours we reached the Esteros del Ibera Marshes at Carlos Pelligrini. Lots of fun things happened along the way. These included passport, license and car registration checks and getting bamboozled by the road network in and around the town of Mercedes. Here we must have asked ten people the way to Carlos Pelligrini and the responses varied from pointing vaguely in any direction, shrugging or running away and hiding.

Our map showed that the first part of the road from Mercedes was sealed but it clearly was not, and further, it was not signposted in any way whatsoever. So off we went on what we suspected was the right road. After 120 km of pretty bloody ordinary dirt road we arrived at our fancy lodge, the Posada de la Laguna. Funny thing, I have always thought that when driving along a dirt road it felt better to be on the wrong side of it. This seems to work for all roads in all countries irrespective of which side of the road you are meant to drive on, and it certainly worked here.

The staff at the lodge were friendly, the food good, and there were lots of birds in the grounds, the surrounding swamp and the town streets.



Day 4 - Monday 3rd October 2005

Fourteen new birds were seen before our 0800 breakfast. There appeared to be something new hiding in every bush in the shrubby gardens of houses or along the road's edge. We then hopped in a boat for a guided trip around the marshes. It was quite windy which

restricted our access to some parts of the lake system but wildlife in the form of caimans, capybaras and various water birds kept us entertained. There were few ducks. I think the crocs must have eaten them. The capybaras were in such numbers that they were falling over each other and totally comfortable with all the big ugly reptiles with which they shared their home.



After lunch we followed a local chap in our car, not to the black howler monkey forest, as we expected, but to a dry chaco type forest on his family property. The trees were sagging under the weight of bromeliads, zygocactus, ferns and orchids. His home also harbored yellow cardinals, endangered birds that had decided to make their nests in a giant Eucalyptus tree. The only jabiru of the entire holiday was also seen here.

Towards sunset Allan and I went in search of nightjars on the main road leading to the village. We saw a female scissor-tailed before stopping for a couple of beers and some strangled Spanish conversation with a couple of locals at a small shop on the roadside.

The evening hosted an awesome light show in what we then thought was a passing series of thunderstorms. Pity that they didn't pass.

I don't know how much it rained during the night but no amount of whisky or earplugs could stop me hearing the pounding noise on the roof. My mind flooded with thoughts of being trapped.

Day 5 - Tuesday 4th October 2005

I had trouble distinguishing where the swamp ended and the land started, or, for that matter, where the sky was. We decided that we would hunt for black howler monkeys before the rain became too heavy. This we did. We even managed a short boat trip before the weather turned to mush. The boat trip revealed a grey brocket (deer) and a family of howlers but few new birds.

We soon learnt that the road north was not a happening thing for vehicles like ours, and if it kept raining we might be prisoners of Carlos Pellegrini for some time.

The day ground on in an excruciatingly boring fashion with sideways rain keeping the gale company. Mayette was very cheerful for some reason I cannot adequately explain.

An older Argentine couple, Norma and Pedro, wanted to leave with us the next morning in a “convoy”, in case either vehicle got bogged. Their car, a Fiat Uno, was even smaller than ours. This sounded like a good plan. Howling wind kept me awake for much of the night.



Day 6 - Wednesday 5th October 2005

We arranged for an early breakfast and were on the mud by 0700. Although the road was churned up it wasn't all that scary. We soon waved Pedro on, who slowly slid out of view. The first 20 kilometres or so produced a few good birds that weren't to be seen again like strange-tailed tyrant and black and white monjita. Better still were sensational views of a pair of marsh deer after they had crossed the road in front of us.

It took three hours to get back to Mercedes. This was doubly frustrating as it was in the opposite direction to our destination, Puerto Iguazu. So by the time we made a giant circuit of the swamp, now rather larger than it used to be, we had wasted half a day. It took a further nine hours to get to Puerto Iguazu, making for a long and tiring driving day that I thought would never end.

The scenery en route slowly changed as sub-tropical vegetation became interspersed with the farm weeds and the terrain became hillier but without ever getting mountainous. The rainforest, when we reached it, was not as tall as I expected, and very patchy in its distribution except in Iguazu Falls National Park and the surrounding buffer zone.



We had not booked accommodation as our holiday was during the low season, so we didn't see the need. Nevertheless all the accommodation we tried was either full or we couldn't get consecutive nights. I had checked out a place on the internet before leaving home – the Hostel Inn, a mythical place because it did not display these words anywhere on, or leading to, the property! It did have plenty of signs saying “The National Park Hotel”. So we gained an unwanted working knowledge of a two kilometre stretch of road as went back and forth continually going past the place we were seeking and each time asking someone for directions. A stroke of genius saw us walk into the bloody place and asking where it was. “Here”, they said. Stuff me.

Day 7 - Thursday 6th October 2005

Iguazu Falls National Park does not open until 0800. We arrived just a few minutes early. The infrastructure that supports visitation to the falls is extensive, modern and useful. There were plenty of places to eat, find out about access to different vantage points and, of course, places to waste our money.

The falls were awesome. Vast shit-loads of recent rain made for an incredible experience. This is one of those very rare places you can turn your back on, and then turn round and you can't believe it's still there! The down side was that the amount of gravity assisted water meant that some of the access points were under too much of it and therefore not really access points at all.

We disturbed a tufted capuchin (*Mum – this is a monkey*) next to one viewpoint. A couple of the local tourist guides told us the best trails for bird watching. Happily these were the ones that didn't lead to a lookout and consequently were not populated by tourists walking twelve abreast. We baulked at one visitor booth that had guided birding walks for \$US80

per person for four hours – forget it! We were to see all the advertised birds ourselves so it was a wise choice.



We had to return to the hotel by 1100 to either check back in, assuming there were rooms, or check out. Fortunately it was the former and much better rooms as well.

Back to the park and a walk along the Macupu Trail. Our first bit of luck was to run into Santos, a local bird watching guide doing a “reccy” for a group he was leading the next day. He was happy to share his knowledge and we soon had white-bearded and blue manakins within a few metres of each other. The blue was one of the best birds I’ve seen for a while, with stunning colours and amazing calls. We wandered for three or four hours and didn’t really stop ticking off birds, ending the day with 48 trip birds and 32 lifers. Also seen were good views of Azara’s agoutis, and a troupe of tufted capuchins.

We rejoined Mayette at the park entrance. She told us that a man we had questioned earlier had found the very rare black-fronted piping-guan so off we went and picked it up in the middle of a picnic area.

An absolutely brilliant day in every way. Beer was consumed in moderation.

Day 8 - Friday 7th October 2005

I couldn’t wait to get back into the park and start seeing lots of new things. The hotel grounds added a few squawkers before breakfast but the first law of tropical birding took over from there. The Macupu Trail, which just yesterday was birding nirvana, had turned into a crock. Three hours of searching revealed just one new bird and very few that were seen the previous day.

Our plan to walk the “Inferior Circuit” or the lower falls walk, was delayed through the efforts of an unwelcome thunderstorm. We sat for 80 minutes waiting for it to pass, amusing ourselves with the antics of a number of coatis nosing around, as they do, and going through the rubbish bins. They all had some form of attached plastic identification and would appear to have been well studied. Eventually the rain lessened, so a couple of disposable raincoats were procured from a shop (for rain insurance purposes) and Mayette and I followed lots of drenched people along the walk which had views of the falls that were just as amazing as the main walkway along the top.



The afternoon failed to produce very much in the way of interesting wildlife despite finding some excellent habitat along a trail behind a transmission tower just off the main road back into town.

Dinner was supposed to be in town, a place that we narrowly avoided finding it seems, just like the policeman that I almost squashed in the process of making a U-turn. U-turns are almost always a product of being lost and generally accomplished by doing something illegal. The policeman thanked me for not killing him, or maybe he was giving me some advice – I’ll never know.

So back to the hotel for a dinner of salted toucan. I know there was some kind of bird under the salt, but of the salt there was some certainty. There seemed to be a campaign to poison diners with salt levels that would embarrass the Salton Sea.

A cursory spotlight into the grounds of the hotel next door revealed a tropical screech-owl hunting by the lights of the swimming pool. Allan’s attempt to find the same animal a few minutes later almost had him arrested.



National Park Hotel, Puerto Iguazu

Day 9 - Saturday 8th October 2005

We had renewed vigor and our expectations of seeing more birds were still high but after a promising start – again in the hotel grounds – we were hunted by the return of the rain. By late morning it eased so we revisited the area around the transmission tower where there were some good things, including rusty-margined guan and solitary tinamou. The rain, of course, had conned us and after standing in it for hours trying to convince each other that it was “looking a bit brighter” in some direction or other, we gave up.

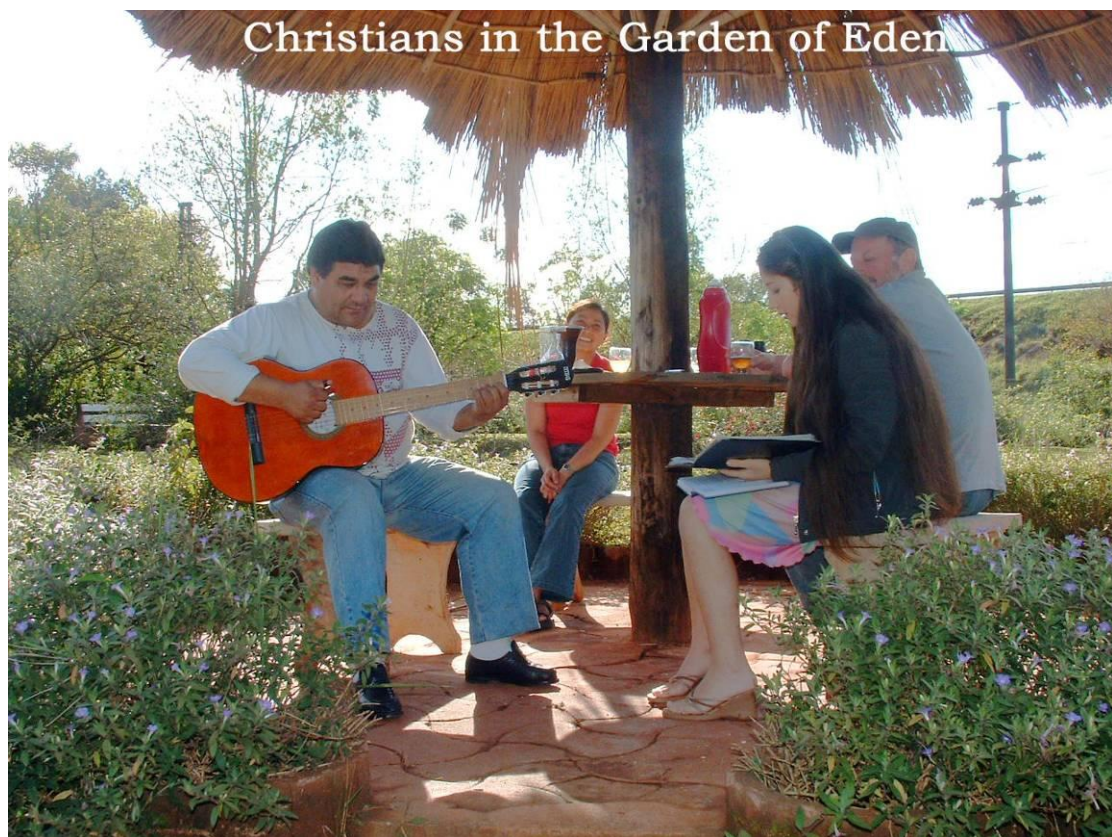
We interrogated the internet at the hotel to check on the weather forecast and wished we hadn't. Very frustrating. It rained all the rest of the day excepting for a very brief respite just before dark. The hotel staff told us that they had just endured two years of drought and that rain at this time of year was almost unheard of. How lucky.

Day 10 - Sunday 9th October 2005

Allan and I managed four new birds along the transmission tower trail before breakfast. We then left Puerto Iguazu and started motoring back towards Buenos Aires. We had originally planned to travel a different route via Resistencia and Chaco National Park in the west but the roads were so incredibly boring and we were getting sick of long driving days. We took a slightly different path that had us pass through the towns of San Pedro and El Viamonte. The landscape was rapidly being altered with deforestation and with poor shanties springing up everywhere. For me it was unexpected in Argentina and rather depressing. We had planned a number of stops along the way but there really wasn't any point.

We arrived in the town of Obera about mid-afternoon but initially couldn't find anywhere to stay. After making a couple of wrong turns we found the Hotel El Eden, a bizarre place in that we weren't sure whether it was falling down or being built. We decided it was both, a rare look when it comes to hotels or anything else. It was managed by an older gentleman who looked like, and acted like, a holocaust survivor. Importantly we could go into town and buy beer and then return to the Garden of Eden and drink it.

I thought I must have been hallucinating when I saw Eve, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, a young and beautiful maiden with long flowing hair singing gospel songs. But as it transpired she was the daughter of an itinerant Brazilian preacher, one of those all-singing guitar playing dudes. Friendly people, with an interesting life ahead of them methinks. Mayette and I then giggled at a Spanish version of Star Wars I – The Phantom Menace on Eden TV.



One of our best meals in Argentina was enjoyed in a restaurant in Obera where we sat regally in a glassed-in first floor box overlooking the town's main intersection.

Day 11 - Monday 10th October 2005

We left Eden to its eccentric residents and travelled southwest via San Jose and Apostoles. Our first bit of interest was generated by an enormous swamp just north of Santo Tome where we picked up a few birds including streamer-tailed tyrant and bare-faced ibis.

Lunch was the day's highlight with a giant pig-out at the El Lazo Parilla Restaurant. Luckily the food was okay because it was the only place in town to eat. The only reason we found it was through noticing more than one car parked outside. Everyone from Santo Tome was there. It looked like something out of a Mexican western movie.

Mayette asked for a menu, but the rather battle-worn old lady that appeared to be the only person locally qualified to serve food, just grinned at her. We motioned at the food remnants scattered about the other diners, which was signal enough for the feast to begin. Quantity substituted for quality but we were to later learn that this was about as good as food got in Argentina.

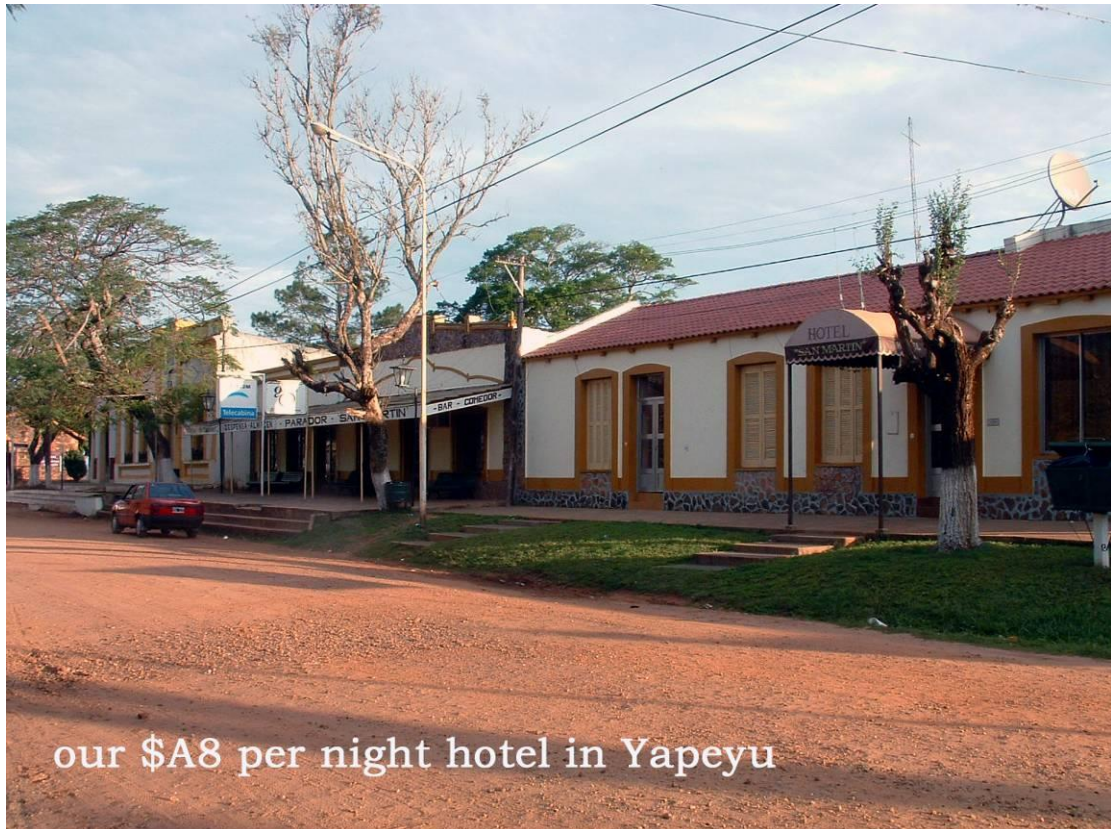


The drive south to our next hotel stop in the sleepy town of Yapeyu only took a couple of hours but we daren't risk going past it because there was lots of nothing further on. The Hotel San Martin was a treat and the best value accommodation in the whole of the Americas. For \$A8 you could get a good clean room, hot shower, TV and breakfast. And that was before you took into consideration the family that ran the place, particularly some of the female staff. A more charming and friendly place is hard to imagine.

We sat out on the verandah of the hotel / store / bar / restaurant / post office etc and watched the very small population go by, many of whom were obsessed with telling us who to vote for in an upcoming election. This they tried to achieve by getting very small underpowered cars, sticking banks of loudspeakers on the back from which emanated distorted Latin American music. Their problems were manifold, chief among them being the low number of volts the speakers were receiving and the fact that most of their audience did not understand Spanish.

We visited two very good museums during our town-and-flooded-river walk. Both were dedicated to the national hero, Liberator General San Martin, who was born in Yapeyu.

Mayette found us the beautiful blue-throated starthroat (which can only be a hummingbird with a name like that) in someone's garden, and a sharp-shinned hawk patrolled the town square. A good day was had by all.



Day 12 - Tuesday 11th October 2005

Allan and I went for a pre-breakfast walk through some scrubby forest at the far end of town. There were a surprising number of small birds flitting about and we managed to see a couple of new spinetails amongst them.

A long boring day followed our goodbyes to the splendid staff of the San Martín Hotel. We ended up at a town with a very long name that started with the letter “G”. We checked into the Hotel Alemain, which was okay and inexpensive. A walk to the plaza was uninspiring, like just about every other aspect of this large town or city. The whole place looked like the local government had gone on strike some time between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the discovery of electricity. A sad place.

Allan managed to buy an English to Spanish and vice versa dictionary during one of those brief opportunities when the shops were actually open. Shopping hours are 0830-1230 and 1630-2030. Someone please tell me what these people do for four hours in the middle of the afternoon?

Day 13 - Wednesday 12th October 2005

By late morning we were back on the ever-widening freeway that led to Buenos Aires. The rental car office could be seen from the termination of the last of the freeways but getting there across the one-way street system was another matter. With much assistance from Allan and encouragement from the back seat we managed to generate only a few irate responses from other drivers and 20 minutes later we exultantly parked outside the office after a total journey of 3500 kilometres. A chap from the rental car place then took us to our hotel.



The Hostel Inn, Buenos Aires, it must be said, was an interesting experience. Firstly, the stunning young lady at the front desk advised that our booking was stuffed up – no surprises here. Hotel booking was starting to become the most difficult aspect of travel in Argentina.

We were shown to our dorms. I should have had the intelligence to bail at that moment – I'm certain that Allan and Mayette would have done so if I hadn't been there. I was feeling euphoric at having not died in a traffic accident and felt nothing could go wrong. I was badly mistaken. Mayette had what can only be interpreted as a dummy spit which I duly ignored, preferring to go to Costanero Sur with Allan, who had manifest his dislike for the Hostel Inn by insisting that he was going to walk to the reserve, a distance of several kilometers. I must say it was a pleasant enough walk and we were to see a range of new birds including a new bird for the park in the form of a Hudsonian godwit. The Spanish-speaking guides at the park were mighty happy with that.



➔ **BUENOS AIRES**
CIUDAD NATURAL



Tortuga de laguna
Lagoon turtle
Phrynops hilarii



Cortadera
Pampa's grass
Cortadera selloana



Ceibo
Ceibo tree
Eriothra cristia-galli



Aliso de río
Aliso tree
Tessaria integrifolia



Lagarto otero
Tupinambis lizard
Tupinambis teguixin

La Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur posee una extensión de 353 hectáreas, que representan el 24% de la superficie total de los espacios públicos para recreación de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, un 5% más que las 201 plazas existentes en la Ciudad. Se han observado en ella más de 250 especies de aves, 9 de anfibios, 23 de reptiles, 10 de mamíferos, 50 de mariposas y 245 especies de flora.

The Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve has an extension of 870 acres, which represent the 24% of the total recreation public spaces in Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 5% more than the 201 square which the city has. Here you can see 250 species of birds, 9 amphibians, 23 reptiles, 10 mammals, 50 butterflies and 245 kinds of flowers.



Colpo
Colpo
Myocastor coypus



Cisne de cuello negro
Black-necked Swan
Cygnus melanocoryphus



Gallareta ligas rojas
Red-gartered Coot
Fulica arnilla



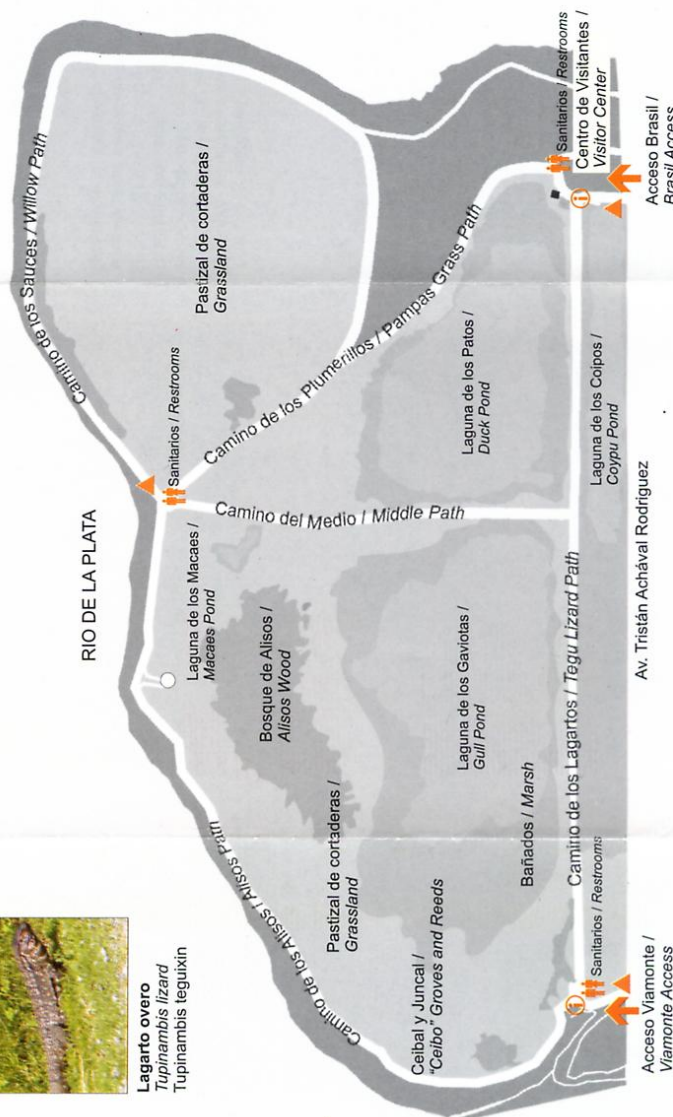
Garza blanca
Great Egret
Egretta alba



Gaviota capucho café
Brown-hooded Gull
Larus maculipennis



Macá común
White-tufted Grebe
Podiceps rolland



➔ **medioambiente BsAs**

📍 Informes / Informations 🚰 Sanitarios / Restrooms 📷 Servicio de Seguridad por Cámara / Sistem of Security Camera

🚔 Policía / Police

Map of Costanero Sur

Sexy waitresses, a common sight in Argentine restaurants, served us some okay food for dinner, just across the road from our “hotel”.

The rock concert outside our dormitory was complete with loud vocals, guitars and drums. The drums were actually improvised with the drummers bashing on anything that would make a loud noise. This could be tables, the walls, each other, or the door of our room. Most of the time I lay awake trying to determine the size of the brawl I would start if I had the guts to waltz out of the room and tell them to shut up. I decided that I would likely not need to reconfirm my flight home if I said anything. The concert finished abruptly at 0230.

Day 14 – Thursday 13th October 2005

Allan was way ahead of me and he had discovered a great little hotel a few blocks removed from where we were. The 3-star Hotel Los Tres Reyes was hardly more expensive than the shit-dump we pointedly abandoned, not that price was ever a consideration in what must be the cheapest city for accommodation anywhere.

It was back to Costanero Sur, where the day was judged by whether the three of us could stay awake. We managed this, and picked up a few birds. We were disappointed not to see the many-coloured rush-tyrant but good weather, the knowledge that we would get some sleep during the next night and the lack of time spent driving combined to make for a pleasant day.

Lunch at one of the excellent parrilla wagons along the promenade was followed by a short earthquake-interrupted nap at the hotel before returning to the reserve. Dinner was at a very fancy restaurant that tried their damndest to over-service us at every turn. The food was okay at best.



Day 15 – Friday 14th October 2005

In the absence of any reasonable alternative we traipsed back to Costanero Sur. I was starting to get sick of the place although we managed one new bird – the relatively boring black-headed duck. I “passed” on the parrilla lunch out of respect for my guts, which had taken a dislike to the previous night’s dinner.

We caught a taxi to the Aeroparque (domestic airport) where we boarded our very full mid-afternoon MD84 flight to Rio Gallegos in Patagonia. There was no boarding announcement so we were amongst the last to board. The plane and its occupants were notable for one thing - there was not a single child anywhere on board.

We noticed that there was a man at Rio Gallegos Airport holding a board with my name on it. This was unexpected and mysterious. Perhaps I had won the refrigerator in the police raffle in Misiones Province? No, it was the Riestra Rental Car guy generously wanting to give us our hire car a day early. So off we went to the office – or a house anyway – to deal with the paperwork. The family that operated the business worked on the minimum of fuss principle. The car, another VW Gol, was a little more battle scarred than the one we had released in Buenos Aires. This was good, except for the amount of air that would suck through a gap in the closed driver’s door due to a previous driver misjudging the strength of the Patagonian wind.

We stayed at the Hotel Comercio, situated in the middle of town, and apparently the best hotel in Rio Gallegos. It was very comfortable. A pizza dinner was not too good.

I looked forward to getting an early start the next day.

Day 16 – Saturday 15th October 2005

The famous Patagonian wind was entirely elsewhere as we made our way to El Calafate. The route is fairly flat for the most part with a few medium-sized hills scattered about. We passed a number of bird-filled lakes and rivers. Ducks and geese were abundant. We also managed to see a number of least seedsnipe sitting on fence posts. Guanacos and puna rheas made their first appearances, as did many ground-tyrants and other birds that we were to see almost every day on the Patagonian steppes. One bird that looked strangely out of place was the Magellanic oystercatcher, which would often appear on the driest steppe, a habitat that supports little vegetation.

El Calafate is a modern tourist town. It is oddly situated 80km or so from the attraction that supports it – Los Glaciers National Park. That said, it is quite pleasant and best of all, the shops don’t close at stupid hours.

Mr Riestra from the rental car company managed to get us a 20% discount at the Hosteria Kalken. This made the room rate reasonable for this very good accommodation.



There is a small lake on the edge of town that is a by-product of the town sewage farm. It is staffed, fenced and interpreted for a small donation. Needless to say it was full of birds, some of which were seen close and well. Flamingoes and the beautiful cinereous harrier vied for top billing, but water birds abounded and I dare say that the site gets its share of rarities.

We patronized the hotel bar before we dined on salt. I had a little lamb with mine. No sign of Mary.



Day 17 – Sunday 16th October 2005

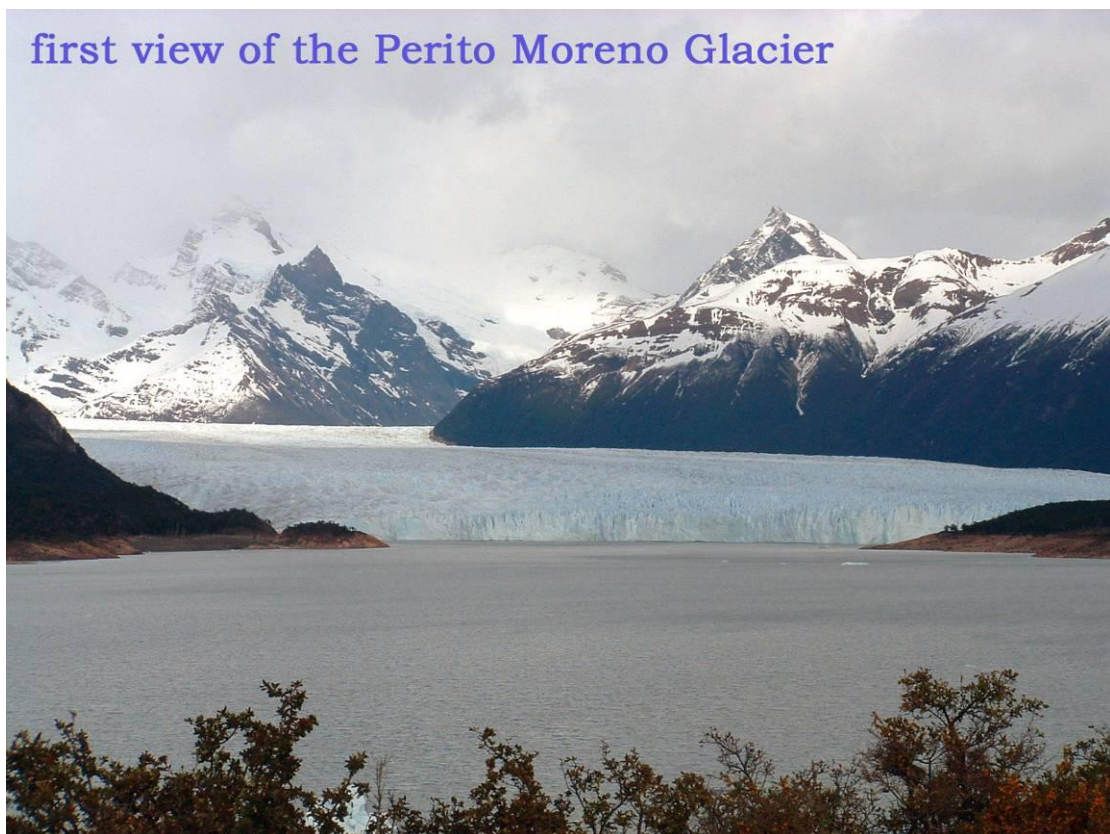
This was the second best day of the holiday. I had never seen a glacier, save for a few distant views in the Himalaya, and the Perito Moreno Glacier left any of those for dead. The sun even came out – something of an oddity during our holiday at times. Bits of glacier kept falling off, belying the general rule that glaciers move very slowly. Ice falling onto other ice and then into Lake Argentina made lots of noise. The bits of ice didn't look all that big but they thundered downhill with a crash. Many people have died from ricocheting chunks of ice.

The glacier had crash tackled the land on the other side of the lake, cutting the lake in two. We took a boat trip to the south face but should have gone to the northern one, as that side was the most active. We didn't know there was a tour boat from there.

Lunch was enjoyed at the only restaurant in the park. We managed to get the last table as all the others had been booked by bus tour groups.

Interestingly, we saw very few tourists in hire cars anywhere in the country.

By the time we started looking for birds with any sort of enthusiasm it was too late in the day, so we went back to the hotel and had a kip. This was followed by a few ales, then a sloth about the town looking in tourist shops but buying nothing. Our fancy restaurant meal of mixed barbecue was fine except for the waiter continually wanting to over-service us, a common theme in some of the better restaurants. When I threatened to walk out the waiter calmed down a bit.



Parque Nacional Los Glaciares



Aprobado por el Instituto Geográfico Militar Exp. N°GG8 2033/5 sept/98



Day 18 – Monday 17th October 2005

Glacier Day. We'd seen glaciers and we wanted more! The hotel made a booking for us on a 320 seat boat that plies Lake Argentina on a 12 hour tour that takes in seven glaciers. Pity that the rain invited itself along. Never mind, we still had a worthwhile experience for our \$A90 per person bus / boat tour.

Our first glacier, Glacier Spegazzini is the highest that is easily accessible in Patagonia and shows no signs of receding unlike most of the others. This was viewed in good light but shortly afterwards the clouds and rain got lower and lower.

The effect of Glacier Day on Allan and I was to minimize the likelihood of either of us ever going to Antarctica. We had icebergs crunching under the bow and more large cold blue-green things than we needed. It sure looked like Antarctica at a fraction of the cost. Bugger-all wildlife though.

A nice practice in Argentina is the lack of profiteering from tour operators for things like food essentials – beer and wine. A beer on the boat cost \$A1.35 and a small bottle of red was \$A2.70. So I sat getting mildly drunk whilst listening to 300+ wet people create a cacophony of totally indecipherable drivel. The day would have been right up there without the rain. The tour is recommended.



Day 19 – Tuesday 18th October 2005

We left El Calafate with our first stop being the famed location for the rare hooded grebe. Needless to say we didn't see it, like just about everyone else that bothers to look. There wasn't too much else to see or do on the cross-country drive along gravel roads until we reached the Chilean border at Dorotea, just up the hill from Puerto Natales, a grotty town on the western side of the Andes.

My first experience with a land border crossing in a hire car was amusing. Aside from the usual immigration stuff there were a splendid variety of bits of paper that were car specific. We had no idea which bits were needed when, so we just handed over the untidy mass of paper and plastic and hoped they could sort it out. Eventually we passed through all the various officials at the Argentine border only to repeat the process a few minutes later as we entered Chile. We never knew whether we had signed and / or kept the bits of paper that would be necessary next time we found a border post.

Our arrival in Puerto Natales coincided with their silly lunch go missing thingy so we moped about for two hours in a town that is best described as a place you wouldn't want to call home. We had to book at one of the town travel agents for accommodation in Torres del Paine National Park. The park was the best part of 300 kilometres away on a largely unsealed road, and the last place you want to be is in a shit-dump town while they stare at you through the window of the travel agency as they siest or whatever they do. We figured that we could waste some time by changing money at a bank – no way, not without an account. A cambio would be fine we were told, but they were all shut for lunch as well.



Do not buy the *Rough Guide to Argentina*. It described prices in the national park as bearable, which they most certainly were not. To stay in a dormitory with a rented sleeping bag + basic food is \$A92 per person! Forget that. The cheapest triple room in the only hotel is \$US312 for a deluxe room per night + food @ \$US45 per meal!!!! We figured the girl at the agency was scamming us when she said that the standard \$US190 room we spied on her cheat sheet was not available during October. While threatening to walk out she gave us the “good” news that it was our lucky day and that the deluxe room could be had for the same price.

The road to the park started off as concrete then through many intermediate stages it ended up as one of the worst mud holes in creation. At one point a bridge had to be crossed. This was barely wide enough to get the Gol through without folding back the rear view mirrors.

We had not had a drop of rain all day until we managed to get our packs into our rooms and then it started. First it was a light drizzle that got progressively heavier, lumpier, colder, lumpier still and by the time it got dark it had transformed into a fully-fledged snowstorm. Mayette was impressed by her first experience of a snowstorm. I wasn't.

We dined at the dormitory.



Day 20 – Wednesday 19th October 2005

The clouds parted a little and encouraged the sun to bother to rise. The famous Torres del Paine peaks took it in turns to be covered in cloud. Everything else was buried in snow.

There were few opportunities for seeing anything around the lodge so we started driving back to the park entry point. This post-breakfast drive tested vehicle, driver and passenger alike. The road from the park entrance to the lodge, which was awful at the best of times, was now buried in 10 inches of snow. This wasn't too much of a worry until we started going up short steep hills. As we had no chance of turning around we had to keep going, even though this brought into play my non-existent snow driving skills. We slipped and slid backwards, fell into big holes and interviewed a few rocks with the sump. We finally arrived to looks of astonishment from drivers of far more capable vehicles who were patiently parked at the park entrance waiting for others to lay a path and cause more of the snow to melt. Some confided in Mayette that I was an idiot. She was happy to agree with them, having spent the first part of her morning panicking away in the back seat.



Allan found us a torrent duck and we quickly checked off half a dozen other good birds, picked out between hundreds of meandering guanacos. A large group of these cameloids were seemingly entranced by a bogged bus.

Like the other drivers we were happy to waste time before attempting the return journey. We scanned all the white hills for pumas, seen by others as recently as the day before, but not by us.

The rain set in by 1130 and ceased just before sunset, allowing a short puma hunt at a site very nearby where a filmmaker assured us a pair lived. Sure.

The only comfort we gained from the weather was to notice that we weren't camping, unlike some others.

Day 21 – Thursday 20th October 2005

It was clear that the weather wasn't going to leave, so we vamoosed.



We travelled to Punta Arenas, arriving a little after 1530. It took three and a half hours to book ourselves and our car on the next day's ferry to Porvenir on Tierra del Fuego and to find accommodation. The whole exercise reinforced the growing suspicion that I would never travel to Chile ever again. What a shambles. A travel agent booked us into some accommodation that wasn't trading – this after confirming the booking and taking our money. Eventually we found a place, probably containing the last available rooms in the whole country. It was just fabulous considering I was resigned to sleeping in the park.

The waterfront at Punta Arenas was very birdy with lots of southern fulmars, giant petrels, dolphin gulls and various cormorants.

Dinner was acquired from a supermarket and eaten at the hotel.

Day 22 – Friday 21st October 2005

In contrast to the last few days, this was a goody. The hotel put on a great breakfast before we took the short drive to the dock. Here we became fascinated with the mechanics of loading the Valparaíso - registered Melinka with anything from semi-trailers, backhoes, bobcats, trucks, cars and people onto what appeared to be a fairly small ship. Our fears were realized when we didn't all fit on and that the piece of paper that indicated we had booked became critical.

The journey across the Straits of Magellan to the island of Tierra del Fuego took two and a half hours. The weather was favorable and we managed to see:

- 8 black-browed albatross

- 3 Magellanic diving petrels
- 10 Magellanic penguins
- 5 South American terns
- hundreds of kelp gulls
- 6 dolphin gulls
- hundreds of king cormorants
- 4 rock shags
- 4 Peale's dolphins, and
- 2 minke? whales



Porvenir, the town at the ferry terminal on the Tierra del Fuego side of the straits is a quaint and friendly little place. We washed the salt water from the car, bought some lunch from a “supermarket” and then drove along the gravel road that took us south. The route is quite scenic as it skirts lakes and an enormous saltwater bay. This was dotted with seasonal fisherman’s huts and not much else. At one stage we drove 80km without seeing another vehicle.

At the island’s Chilean border post we discovered that we were lacking a piece of paper that a nice man wanted. Bad luck. We babbled amongst ourselves meaningfully, making random gestures directed at absent parties. Eventually the patient man must have calculated the cost of feeding us in gaol and gave us a less than royal wave. The Argentine border post was many miles away, less problematic, but still time consuming.

We wanted to stay at the village of Tolhuin but could find no place to stay – they were all fully booked or else didn’t want us for just one night. So we kept driving until we reached Ushuaia. It only took an hour to book and find the Posada los Coihues, an intriguing

facility on the farthest edge of town and unmarked in any way with its name. The price was low-ish on the basis that it was a long way from anywhere and almost impossible to locate.

Mayette and I discovered a smoky “kiosko” where we enjoyed a hamburger and beer for dinner.

Day 23 – Saturday 22nd October 2005

Tierra del Fuego National Park is simply stunning. Here the most southerly forests on earth are fairly extensive and carpet the lower slopes of snow or glacier capped mountains, with many lakes and other waterways interspersed. Don't expect to run over any native mammals though. Rabbits and hares are abundant and there is the odd fox and beaver, and that's about it for furry land things. Forest birds are not all that diverse. Fortunately an English-speaking ranger pointed us in the direction of a pair of Magellanic woodpeckers. A few other more common “new” birds were quickly seen before we hit the wall.



After poking about various trails and inlets we started to lose interest, so we left the park and visited the town rubbish tip. Many would say this is unusual behavior but we are unusual people, and the white-throated caracara likes rubbish tips. We ticked one off before wandering about the town and enjoying an early and delicious steak dinner.

I spent much of the night getting better acquainted with the toilet, having foolishly accepted someone's advice that the tap water was perfectly safe to drink.

Day 24 – Sunday 23rd October 2005

We ventured into the Beagle Channel in one of the many tourist craft that followed an identical itinerary. This included a large rock with a lighthouse on it, various shorebird rookeries and a small islet occupied by South American sea lions. We had perfect windless conditions on board a scarcely maintained craft named the *Yate Kams*. The young lady who acted as a guide was next to useless and it was soon obvious to us that only the schedule mattered, not the happiness of the customers.

It rained for most of the afternoon, thus providing me with the perfect excuse for not doing anything.



South American sea lions



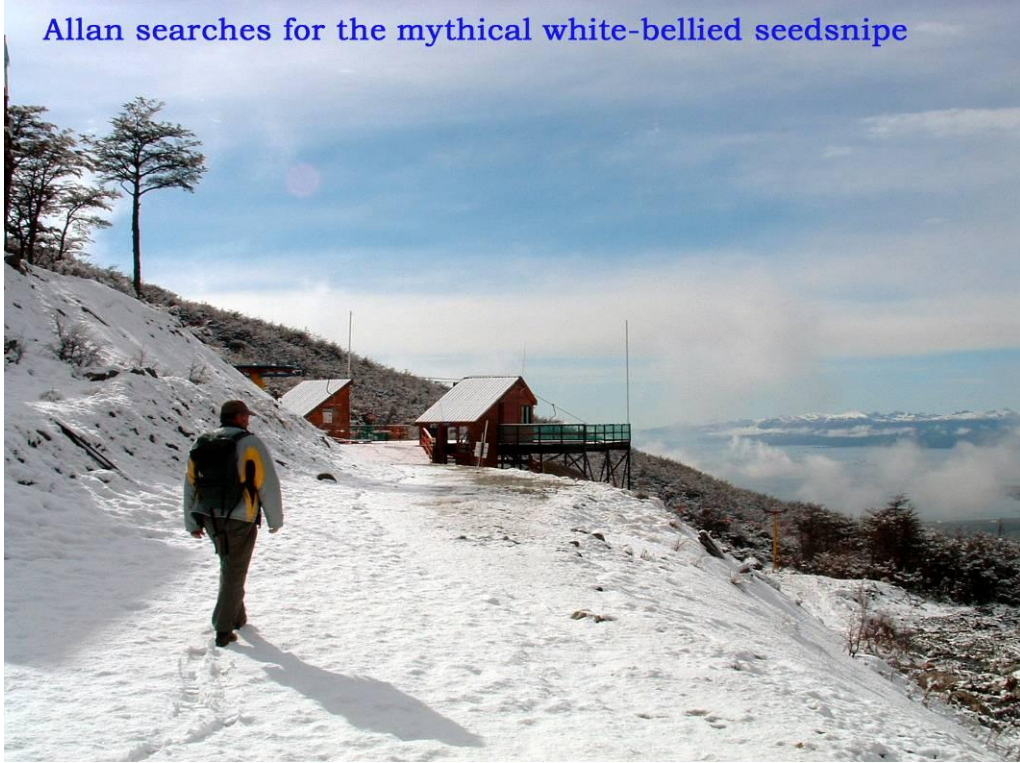
ashy-headed goose



Day 25 – Monday 24th October 2005

There is a small ski-field behind the city. Despite overnight snow it was closed for our visit. The area at the top of the chairlift is allegedly the habitat for the white-bellied seedsnipe. Somebody must have seen it there once and it has since become some sort of pilgrimage site for everyone else, who never see the bloody thing, just like we didn't, but it was all very pretty.

Allan searches for the mythical white-bellied seedsnipe



We then drove around the town trying to jag a few new birds without much success. Post-lunch saw us back in the national park searching for southern sea otters. Like many other wild things we were told they were “not easy to see”, a mantra that was repeated by all manner of people across Argentina when asked any question regarding wildlife. And they were on the money too.



Day 26 – Tuesday 25th October 2005

My 49th birthday started with our departure from Ushuaia for the town of Rio Grande. The journey took in scenery that we had already seen but still impressive, especially nearer Ushuaia.

A gay chap at the Rio Grande visitor center gave us the accommodation rundown and assured us that we would have no difficulty finding a room. He lied. We found ourselves being turned away from hotel after hotel. At one point I was confronted by a very large but friendly dog inside a hotel that was seemingly abandoned. I looked in a few rooms and made an intelligent decision - to leave. Ultimately the Frederico Ibarra Hotel smiled upon us. Just as well too, as this was the last place in town.

We went to the local seafront, attracted by the signs that said that the area was an internationally recognized shorebird habitat. Initially we failed to see a single bird so we drove and stopped, drove and stopped, until we spied a couple of waders zipping past. We slowly scanned ahead and along the beach until our eyes almost popped at the sight of thousands of shorebirds stacked black on the beach. We had a great time sorting through the huge flocks of great knots, Hudsonian godwits, surfbirds, white-rumped and Baird's sandpipers, sanderlings, whimbrels, Magellanic oystercatchers, two-banded plovers and others I can't remember.



Birthday dinner had been on Mayette's mind for weeks. King crab was on the menu at the hotel, and whilst locally expensive it was nice, *but no better than the Georges River blue swimmers that I just ate not ten minutes ago before typing this!*

Day 27 – Wednesday 26th October 2005

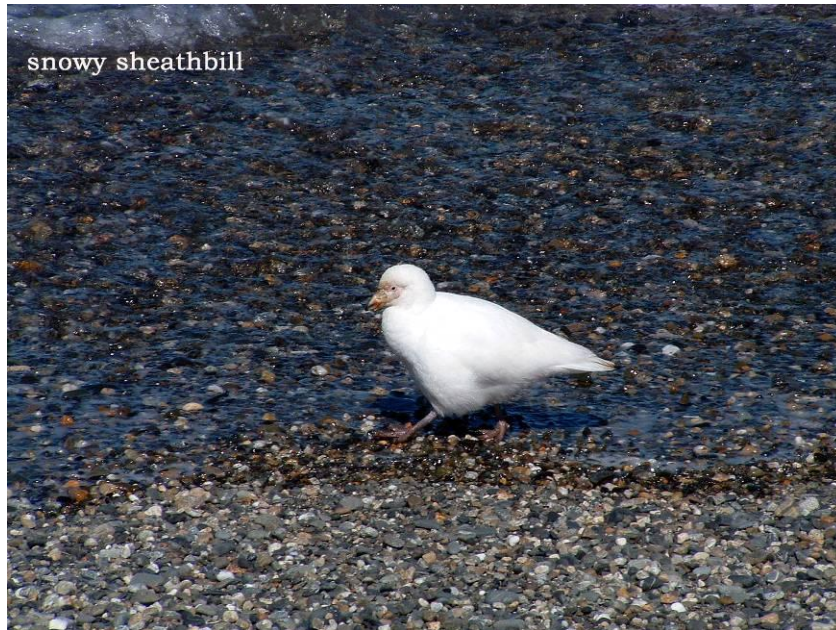
The famous Patagonian wind must have been having its annual holiday elsewhere as the drive north to Rio Gallegos started in a sea fog. Allan soon spotted some rufous-chested dotterel in a sheep paddock. We jumped the fence to get better views and soon discovered that the one car per hour that uses the road happened to be the farmer who owned the sheep. We had a fine old chat about guns, their uses, places to bury sheep rustlers or dead tourists, and the plumage of dotterels. We all agreed to do things differently in the future, now that we had one.



Much of the day was taken up by watching the blank pages on our passports getting filled by entry and exit stamps at border crossings.

The rather grand and impressive Bahia Azul ferry took us back to the mainland across the straits. It was so good that I made an extra couple of crossings. Whilst seabirds were in short supply, there were many Magellanic penguins, shorebirds and a small pod of Commerson's dolphins, a brilliant little beastie if ever there was one. An obliging snowy sheathbill patrolled the shore on the northern side.





We played hotel roulette at Rio Gallegos before finally getting rooms at the rather ordinary Hotel Ovienda. Ordinary also described our dinner. We were staring to crave the delights of Australian food.

Day 28 – Thursday 27th October 2005

We drove 130kms of gravel road to Cape Virgins to visit the 110,000 strong Magellanic penguin colony. We arrived at an abandoned visitor centre where we helped ourselves to some brochures, used the toilets and proceeded to the colony. The walking trail cut through it. Birds were scattered all over, including along the middle of the trail. Lines of penguins could be seen all up and down the beach and in small rafts dotted all over the smooth Atlantic Ocean. A wonderful experience.



From the beach we could see Peale's and Commerson's dolphins, the latter in large numbers. A probable female elephant seal swam slowly along the shore break.

We drove illegally around an oil field to get better views of the beach but nobody seemed to care. We then drove a short distance to the Cape Virgins lighthouse. Whilst there was not a single virgin to be seen, we did get long views to sea with large numbers of shearwaters, albatross and other seabirds massing offshore. Sadly they were too far offshore for us to make any identification.

We returned to Rio Gallegos, which was being visited by an unattractive big black cloud. So we figured that this might be a good time to return the mighty Gol to the friendly hire car folk. Mr Riestra and his team were happy to see us, wished us well and gave us a lift to our hotel.

We managed a little shopping before hitting the turps. We then played our little game of trying to get fed before midnight. Argentines do not eat early. We dined at the El Chino, a Chinese – Argentine restaurant that served the same type of food we had seen for the past month. The buffet meals were very good, and our Carcassonne malbec cab sav sloshed it down perfectly.



Day 29 – Friday 28th October 2005

We flew from Rio Gallegos to Buenos Aires arriving at 1430. A limousine took us to the international airport for slightly less money than catching the bus.

We only had to wait eight hours for our flight home.

The airport contained the usual assortment of airport animals, including a screaming and collapsing woman and those that cannot read the row numbers on their boarding passes.

We were entertained on our way to Auckland by the noisiest brat yet seen. This bundle of fun could produce such inhuman shrieks and howls that we thought that it must surely expire. Sadly this was not the case.

I couldn't quite wrap my brain around whether the sun was rising or falling and out of which window this might occur. I know one thing – we spotted Antarctica, which just goes to prove how poorly Mr Mercator got his projection at high latitudes.

Our plane broke at Auckland, which delayed our flight a bit. I managed to be stranded on one side of the boarding gate with Mayette on the other when boarding was suspended. The Air New Zealand lass told me that the captain was “looking for some sprockets”, which I thought unlikely but what do I know about fixing broken planes?

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22nd November 2005

SS	AU	BIRD	CS	EI	IG	GL	TD	PA	US	*
1	41	Greater Rhea		3						
1	41	Lesser Rhea				16	19			
2	43	Solitary Tinamou			9					
2	43	Red-winged Tinamou								2
3	44	Spotted Nothura		3						
4	46	White-tufted Grebe	1							
4	47	Pied-billed Grebe	1							3
4	47	Great Grebe				16			23	
4	46	Silvery Grebe							22	
5	48	Black-browed Albatross						22		
6	49	Southern Giant Petrel						21	23	
6	53	Southern Fulmar						21		
9	56	Magellanic Diving-Petrel						22	23	
10	40	Magellanic Penguin						22	24	
12	58	Neotropic Cormorant	13	3			20		23	2
12	59	King Cormorant						21	23	19
12	58	Rock Shag						21	23	
12	57	Anhinga		4						
13	60	Whistling Heron		3						
13	62	Snowy Egret	13	3	9					2
13	60	White-necked(Cocoi) Heron	14	3						
13	62	Great Egret		3	8					2
13	62	Cattle Egret		3						
13	63	Striated Heron	14	4					23	
13	63	Black-crowned Night-Heron	13	4						
13	60	Rufescent Tiger-Heron	13	5						
14	68	Southern Screamer	13	3						2
14	67	Chilean Flamingo				16	19			
14	66	Bare-faced Ibis								11
14	66	White-faced Ibis	1	3						2
14	65	Plumbeous Ibis		3						
14	65	Black-faced Ibis				16	19		23	
14	67	Roseate Spoonbill								11
14	64	Wood Stork								
14	64	Maguari Stork		3						2
14	64	Jabiru		4						
15	69	Fulvous Whistling-Duck	13							
15	69	White-faced Whistling-Duck	1	3						
15	69	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck		4						
15	70	Black-necked Swan	13			16	19			
15	70	Coscoroba Swan	1			16				2
15	71	Andean Goose								
15	70	Upland Goose				15	19		23	
15	71	Ashy-headed Goose				18	19		23	
16	70	Kelp Goose							23	
16	75	Flightless Steamerduck							23	
16	75	Flying Steamerduck							23	19
16	71	Crested Duck				16	19		23	
17	72	Southern(Chiloe) Wigeon				16	19		23	
17	72	Speckled Teal	1			16			23	
17	72	Spectacled Duck				17				
17	72	Yellow-billed Pintail	1			16			23	
17	74	Silver Teal	1							
17	73	Cinnamon Teal	14			16				
18	77	Masked Duck	1							

SS	AU	BIRD	CS	EI	IG	GL	TD	PA	US	*
18	77	Andean Ruddy Duck				16				
18	77	Lake Duck				16				
18	68	Muscovy Duck		5						
18	76	Brazilian Teal		3						2
18	74	Torrent Duck					20			
18	73	Red Shoveler	13			16				
18	76	Rosy-billed Pochard	1			16				3
18	77	Black-headed Duck	15							
19	78	Black Vulture			6					
19	78	Turkey Vulture		3					26	
19	78	Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture		4						
19	78	Andean Condor				17	19		25	
20	80	Swallow-tailed Kite			6					
20	80	White-tailed Kite			6					
20	81	Snail Kite		3	7					
20	80	Plumbeous Kite			7					
21	82	Long-winged Harrier		3						
21	82	Cinereous Harrier				16	19			
21	83	Sharp-shinned Hawk	14							11
21	83	Bicolored Hawk								2
22	81	Great Black-Hawk		3						2
22	87	Savanna Hawk		3						
22	87	Black-collared Hawk		4						
22	79	Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle				17	20		23	
23	84	Roadside Hawk	13	3	9					3
23	85	Variable (Red-backed) Hawk								19
25	90	White-throated Caracara							23	
25	90	Crested Caracara	1	3		16	19		23	2
25	91	Yellow-headed Caracara		5						
25	91	Chimango Caracara	14	3		16	20		23	2
26	93	American Kestrel		3		16				2
27	95	Rusty-margined Guan			9					
27	94	Black-fronted Piping-Guan			7					
29	97	Gray-necked Wood-Rail	13							
29	97	Giant Wood-Rail	13	3						
30	102	Common Moorhen	1	4						
30	103	Spot-flanked Gallinule	13							
30	102	White-winged Coot	1			16	19			
30	102	Red-gartered Coot	13							
30	102	Red-fronted Coot	13							
31	96	Limpkin		3						
31	106	Southern Lapwing	1	3	7	16	19		23	2
32	108	Collared Plover	15	3						
32	108	Two-banded Plover				16				
32	109	Rufous-chested Dotterel								27
33	104	Wattled Jacana		13						2
33	105	American Oystercatcher								27
33	105	Blackish Oystercatcher							23	
33	105	Magellanic Oystercatcher				16	19		23	
33	106	Black-necked (South Am) Stilt		3						
34	113	Hudsonian Godwit	13							26
34	113	Whimbrel								26
34	110	Greater Yellowlegs	13							
34	110	Lesser Yellowlegs	13	3						
34	110	Solitary Sandpiper		4						
34	111	Ruddy Turnstone								26
34	109	Surfbird								26

SS	AU	BIRD	CS	EI	IG	GL	TD	PA	US	*
35	111	Red Knot								26
35	111	Sanderling								26
35	112	White-rumped Sandpiper				16				26
35	112	Baird's Sandpiper	14			16				26
36	114	South American (Common) Snipe		3		16			24	3
36	115	Wilson's Phalarope	13			16				
36	116	Least Seedsnipe				16				
37	117	Snowy Sheathbill								27
37	117	Southern Skua						22	24	
37	117	Chilean Skua							24	19
37	123	Black Skimmer	13							
38	118	Dolphin Gull						21	23	
38	119	Kelp Gull				16		21	23	
38	120	Brown-hooded Gull	1			16		21		2
39	121	South American Tern						22	24	
39	120	Snowy-crowned Tern	13							
40	122	Yellow-billed Tern		4						
41	125	Rock Dove	1	3		17				2
41	124	Scaled Pigeon			8					
41	125	Picazuro Pigeon	1	3	7					2
41	125	Spot-winged Pigeon		3						3
41	124	Pale-vented Pigeon			8					
41	125	Eared Dove	1	4	8	17	20			2
41	126	Ruddy Ground-Dove		4	8					
41	126	Picui Ground-Dove		3						
42	128	White-tipped Dove	13	3	7					3
42	128	Gray-fronted Dove			10					
43	131	Blue-crowned Parakeet		4						
43	131	White-eyed Parakeet	14		8					
43	132	Nanday (Black-hooded) Parakeet	1							
44	133	Maroon(reddish)bellied P'keet			9					
44	132	Austral Parakeet				17				
44	132	Monk Parakeet	1	3						2
44	134	Blue-winged Parrotlet			8					
44	134	Scaly-headed Parrot			7					
45	139	Squirrel Cuckoo		5	6					
45	137	Greater Ani			6					
45	137	Smooth-billed Ani		4	8					
45	138	Guira Cuckoo	1	4	6					3
45	138	Striped Cuckoo		3						
46	141	Tropical Screech-Owl			8					
47	141	Burrowing Owl		3						
48	148	Nacunda Nighthawk		6						
49	148	Scissor-tailed Nightjar		4						
50	149	Great Dusky Swift			7					
50	150	Ashy-tailed Swift			7					
51	151	Black-throated Mango			7					
51	156	Glittering-bellied Emerald	13	4						
52	154	Violet-capped Woodnymph			8					
52	156	Gilded Sapphire			9					
53	152	Blue-tufted Starthroat								11
54	158	Black-throated Trogon			7					
54	158	Surucua Trogon			7					
54	159	Amazon Kingfisher		4	8					
54	159	Green Kingfisher		5	7					2
54	160	Rufous-capped Motmot			8					
55	161	Chestnut-eared Aracari			7					

SS	AU	BIRD	CS	EI	IG	GL	TD	PA	US	*
55	161	Red-breasted Toucan			6					
55	161	Toco Toucan			7					
56	168	Ochre-collared Piculet			7					
56	169	White Woodpecker			10					
56	166	Yellow-fronted Woodpecker			7					
56	166	Checkered Woodpecker		4						
57	167	White-spotted Woodpecker								2
57	164	Green-barred Woodpecker	1	3						
57	163	Chilean Flicker				17	19			
57	163	Field (Campo) Flicker		3	8					2
58	169	Lineated Woodpecker			8					
58	170	Magellanic Woodpecker							23	
59	173	Olivaceous Woodcreeper			7					
59	172	Narrow-billed Woodcreeper	14	4						
60	174	Common Miner				19			23	
60	175	Short-billed Miner								27
60	175	Scale-throated Earthcreeper					20			
61	178	Bar-winged Cinclodes				16	20			
61	178	Gray-flanked Cinclodes					20		23	
61	177	Dark-bellied Cinclodes					20			
61	179	Rufous Hornero	1	3	7					2
61	182	Thorn-tailed Rayadito				17			23	
62	189	Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail					20			
62	187	Rufous-capped Spinetail			9					
62	186	Sooty-fronted Spinetail								12
62	186	Pale-breasted Spinetail	14							
62	187	Chicli Spinetail								12
62	181	Sulphur-bearded Spinetail	14							
62	181	Yellow-chinned(thr) Spinetail		4						
63	181	Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail	14							
64	191	Freckle-breasted Thornbird	13	3						
64	190	Greater Thornbird		4						
64	179	Firewood-gatherer		4						
65	193	Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner			7					
65	193	Black-capped Foliage-gleaner			10					
65	191	White-eyed Foliage-gleaner			7					
65	193	White-throated Treerunner				18			25	
66	194	Tufted Antshrike			10					
66	195	Variable Antshrike		4						
67	197	Plain Antvireo		4	7					
67	198	Rufous-winged Antwren			9					
67	198	Streak-capped Antwren			7					
70	237	Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet								2
70	236	Gray Elaenia			7					
70	234	Yellow-bellied Elaenia			7					
70	234	Large Elaenia		5						
70	235	White-crested Elaenia				17			23	
70	235	Small-billed Elaenia	14	4						
71	232	Sooty Tyrannulet		4						
71	233	Tufted Tit-Tyrant							23	
72	230	Bearded Tachuri	14							
72	229	Mottle-cheeked Tyrannulet								2
73	228	Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant		4						
73	225	Southern Antpipit			7					
73	227	Yellow-olive Flycatcher			7					
74	224	Tropical Pewee			7					
74	224	Traills (Alder) Flycatcher		5						

SS	AU	BIRD	CS	EI	IG	GL	TD	PA	US	*
74	230	Vermilion Flycatcher	15	4						3
75	211	Fire-eyed Diucon				17	20		23	
75	210	Black-and-white Monjita		3						
75	209	Chocolate-vented Tyrant				16			22	
75	208	Gray-bellied Shrike-Tyrant					20			
76	213	Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant				16			25	
76	212	Cinnamon-bellied Grd-Tyrant				19			26	
76	212	White-browed Ground-Tyrant					20			
76	213	Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant							25	
76	213	Rufous-backed(Austral) Negrito				16			23	
77	214	Spectacled Tyrant	13			16				
77	218	Pied(Black-backed) Water-Tyrant	14							
77	218	White-headed Marsh-Tyrant		4						
77	215	Strange-tailed Tyrant		3						
77	215	Streamer-tailed Tyrant								11
78	219	Yellow-browed Tyrant	14	4						
78	219	Cattle Tyrant	13	4	7					3
78	223	Swainson's Flycatcher		4						
78	223	Short-crested Flycatcher		3						
78	220	Great Kiskadee	1	4	7					2
79	221	Tropical Kingbird		5						
79	221	Fork-tailed Flycatcher	13	4	7					2
79	217	Variegated Flycatcher			7					
79	220	Boat-billed Flycatcher			9					
79	220	Three-striped Flycatcher			7					
79	217	Streaked Flycatcher			7					
80	207	Black-crowned Tityra			7					
81	204	Rufous-tailed Plantcutter					20			
81	205	Swallow-tailed(Blue) Manakin			7					
81	204	White-bearded Manakin			7					
81	243	Plush-crested Jay			7					2
82	241	White-rumped Swallow	1	4						
82	241	Chilean Swallow				16	19		24	
82	240	Brown-chested Martin	15							
82	242	Blue-and-white Swallow		4						
82	242	Tawny-headed Swallow								11
82	242	Rough-winged Swallow								2
82	239	Barn Swallow		4						
83	244	Black-capped Donacobius		5						
83	245	House Wren	1	4	7	17			23	
83	251	Creamy-bellied Gnatcatcher			7					
83	251	Masked Gnatcatcher	13	3						2
84	250	Eastern Slaty-Thrush		4	9					
84	249	Rufous-bellied Thrush	1	3	7					
84	249	Austral Thrush				16			23	
84	249	Pale-breasted Thrush			7					
84	249	Creamy-bellied Thrush		3						2
84	248	Chalk-browed Mockingbird	1	4	7					
84	248	White-banded Mockingbird	13							
85	294	Common Starling	1							
85	246	Correndera Pipit				16				
85	247	Hellmayr's Pipit				16				
86	252	Rufous-browed Peppershrike		4						
86	252	Red-eyed Vireo			10					
86	252	Rufous-crowned Greenlet			7					
86	255	Tropical Parula		3	9					2
86	255	Masked Yellowthroat	1	5	9					

SS	AU	BIRD	CS	EI	IG	GL	TD	PA	US	*
86	254	Two-banded Warbler								2
86	254	Golden-crowned Warbler		5	7					
86	253	White-rimmed(browed) Warbler								2
86	255	Bananaquit			9					
87	261	Fawn-breasted Tanager			7					
87	257	Purple-throated Euphonia			7					
87	257	Violaceous Euphonia			7					
87	257	Blue-hooded(Golden-rumped) Euph			7					
87	258	Chestnut-bellied Euphonia			10					
87	258	Blue-naped Chlorophonia			8					
87	259	Green-headed Tanager			7					
87	256	Blue Dacnis			7					
88	260	Ruby-crowned Tanager			7					
88	262	Red-crowned Ant-Tanager			7					
88	262	Hepatic Tanager								3
88	261	Sayaca Tanager	14	3	8					2
89	260	Magpie Tanager			7					
89	258	Guira Tanager			7					
89	260	Black-goggled Tanager			7					
89	256	Swallow-Tanager			7					
90	265	Red-crested Cardinal	13	3						
90	265	Yellow-billed Cardinal	14	4						
90	281	Red-crested Finch		4	7					
90	265	Black-throated Grosbeak			8					
90	265	Grayish Saltator		3						2
90	264	Green-winged Saltator		4	7					
90	264	Golden-billed Saltator	13							
90	268	Ultramarine Grosbeak		4						
91	266	Saffron-billed Sparrow		3						
91	267	Yellow Cardinal		4						
92	268	Blue-black Grassquit	14							
92	270	Rusty-collared Seedeater		4						
92	270	Double-collared Seedeater		4						
92	271	E White-collared Seedeater		6						
93	284	Black-capped Warbling-Finch								2
93	275	Grassland Yellow-Finch	1	3						
93	275	Patagonian Yellow-Finch								27
93	275	Saffron Finch	14	4	7					3
93	285	Great Pampa-Finch	14	3						3
94	284	Black-and-rufous Warb-Finch	1							2
95	282	Rufous-collared Sparrow	1	3	8	16	19			2
95	282	Grassland Sparrow		3						
95	279	Gray-hooded Sierra-Finch				16	20			
95	279	Patagonian Sierra-Finch				17				
96	288	Red-rumped Cacique			7					
96	288	Golden-winged Cacique		4						
96	289	Solitary Cacique	14	4						
96	290	Epaulet Oriole		4	7					3
96	291	Yellow-winged Blackbird	1							
96	291	Unicolored Blackbird	14	4						
96	289	Austral Blackbird				16	19		23	
96	289	Chopi Blackbird			7					
96	290	Bay-winged Cowbird		4						
96	290	Screaming Cowbird								2
96	290	Shiny Cowbird								2
96	289	Giant Cowbird			7					
97	294	House Sparrow	1	4	8	16				

SS	AU	BIRD	CS	EI	IG	GL	TD	PA	US	*
97	286	Hooded Siskin	14		7					3
97	287	Black-chinned Siskin				17	19		23	
97	293	White-browed Blackbird	1							
97	293	Long-tailed Meadowlark				16	20			
97	292	Yellow-rumped Marshbird		3						
97	292	Brown-and-yellow Marshbird		4						
97	293	Scarlet-headed Blackbird		4						

The number in the columns to the right of the bird name refers to the first day number of the holiday that the bird was seen in each location

SS - plate number in the Birds of Southern South America

AU - plate number in the Birds of Argentina and Uruguay

CS - Costanero Sur

EI - Esteros del Ibera Marshes

IG - Iguazu NP

GL - Los Glaciers NP

TD - Torres del Paine NP

US - Tierra del Fuego

* El Palmar NP – day 2

* en route to Esteros del Ibera – day 3

* en route to Yapeyu – day 11

* Yapeyu – day 12

* Puerto Natales – day 19

* Rio Grande – day 26

* en route to Rio Gallegos – day 27

Mammals seen		CS	EP	EI	IG	GL	TD	SM	US
Black Howler Monkey	<i>Alouatta caraya</i>								
Tufted Capuchin	<i>Cebus apella</i>								
Argentine Grey Fox	<i>Dusicyon griseus</i>								
Coati	<i>Nasua nasua</i>								
Hog-nosed Skunk	<i>Conepatus chinga</i>								
Southern Sea Lion	<i>Otaria byronia</i>								
Commerson's Dolphin	<i>Cephalorhynchus commersonii</i>								
Peale's Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>								
Minke Whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>								
Marsh Deer	<i>Blastocerus dichotomus</i>								
Gray Brocket	<i>Mazama gouazoubira</i>								
Guanaco	<i>Lama guanicoe</i>								
Guinea Pig	<i>Cavea aperea</i>								
Coypu	<i>Myocastor coypus</i>								
Agouti	<i>Dasyprocta azarae</i>								
Capybara	<i>Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris</i>								
Rabbit	<i>Lepus capensis</i>								
Hare	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>								

CS - Costanero Sur
 EP - El Palmar NP
 EI - Esteros del Ibera Marshes
 IG - Iguazu NP
 GL - Los Glaciers NP
 TD - Torres del Paine NP
 SM - Straits of Magellan
 US - Tierra del Fuego