

Argentina Trip with Rob & Donna Reiley - 2/28/19-3/11/19

An Experience in Culture, Food, and Wine

By Cindy Crane

February 28-March 1, 2019 ~ After my big 70th birthday party, we finished cleaning up, and had a great lunch with Maureen Welch, our house guest, at Paradise Found in Goodland. Tom & Leslie Doherty, who will be house guests while we are away, came by and Eddie gave them a tutorial on how everything works in the house. Maureen left with Mary Ann Cassidy to go to the Star Bar, and we left for our trip. We drove to Miami and the place to park our car. We arrived easily, but at the parking place we were told that the reservations previously made and paid for by Rob Reiley were no good as the company who made the reservations was not paying the parking lot, so we had to pay again. We had an easy trip to the airport and an easy check-in and went to KuVa Restaurant for Pacifico beers and Queso dip. Our flight to Buenos Aires left @ 10:45pm. The flight was VERY bumpy...Eddie slept through it, Cindy did not. She had a big soccer player sitting next to her who took up his seat and half of hers. It was a tough landing, but we got through customs easily. It is now March 1st. At the airport Eddie tried to get some pesos...\$500 worth, but could only get \$50 worth and there was a \$10 fee! We easily booked our Tendio (taxi ride) to our apartment. Rob & Dona were there to meet us at the restaurant downstairs as was Ezequiel Martin Di Caro, the owner. He was very nice and checked us into room 304. The small but nice apartment is located at 1817 Jorge Newbury Street. This turned out to be an excellent location. We had drinks downstairs with Rob & Donna @ Bedford Station.

Rob & Donna started their trip several weeks earlier when they flew to Santiago, Chile, boarded a cruise ship and sailed down the west coast of Chile, South America around the tip of Cape Horn, through the fiords of Tierra del Fuego where they saw Ushuaia (known as the southernmost city in the world, could not get to the Falkland Islands because of high seas, then sailed up the east coast of Argentina to Uruguay and then into Buenos Aires. I am sure that they had some great adventures on this cruise.



We met for a walking Architectural Tour starting @ Plaza San Martin in the Retiro section of Buenos Aires. We started the tour at the huge statue of San Martin on a horse. Our guide, Alexa was excellent. She showed us many palaces built for the uber rich using materials from Europe. The first settlers of Buenos Aires were 40% Italian and 20% French. The buildings were mostly of French design and were very beautiful. We walked quite a bit and we went into the Recoleta section where we saw many beautiful palaces. One palace had rooms you rent for \$800/night. We saw a building where plastic surgery was performed for a low price. Alexa said that the most popular plastic surgery was breast enhancement. We saw a

monument to the Heroes of the Maldives (Falkland War). She said that every town has a street named for the Heroes of Maldives. It seems that the Argentinians have never forgiven England for the war and have removed almost all English on signs, etc. Every city also has a street and monuments to San Martin who helped free most of the countries in South America. It seems also that every town has a Jorge Newbury Street. I will have to find out what he did of importance. After our great tour, we came back to our room to freshen up, then we walked down to Sarah & Max's condo where Rob & Donna were baby-sitting for Lucas and Theo tonight. They are absolutely adorable kids! We had a nice dinner of salad, Empanadas, and pizza with lots of beer and wine. Their condo is on our same street, only 2 blocks away...great location. We walked home and got to bed for a good night's sleep.



Saturday, March 2, 2019 ~ This morning we met Rob, Donna, and family and our driver to go into the country to an estancia (ranch). We stopped at San Antonio de Areca, a cute little town that reminded me a little of Mexico. Here we walked around the square, through the park to the Rio Areco. Next, we journeyed to Estancia el Ombu for our "Día de Campo". We traveled down a very long dirt road where we passed a gaucho riding his horse with two

dogs running alongside. We finally turned into the beautiful ranch where there were many horses, cows, sheep, and very friendly dogs. The main

house was beautiful with a large front porch covered by vines. There were many huge trees that had been there since the early 1800's. Tables were set up

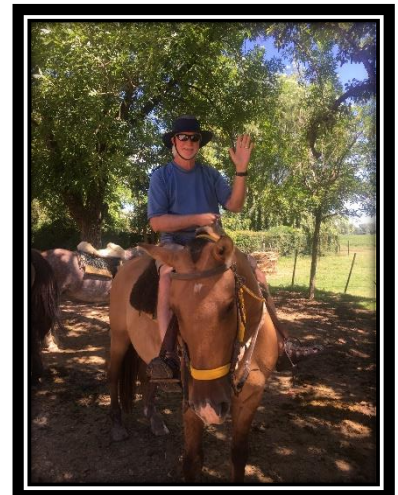


for our lunch under the huge trees and we were greeted with wine, beer, and delicious Empanadas as our first



course. After the refreshments, Eddie and I took a horseback ride through the property. My

horse's name was Pedro. The others went for a carriage ride. The horse ride was scary for me at first since I have not ridden before, but it was fun. The gauchos rode along with us and were very friendly. We rode down the dirt road and across a huge field. This was a picture-perfect day for this big adventure. After our ride we enjoyed our lunch, an "asado", which is multiple courses of grilled meats with bottles of wine...delicious! After lunch, we had free time to wander around the estancia. There were two pools and the kids went in along with so many other cute kids. The owner of this property, Pedro, was a very young





man and he introduced his little son, an adorable little blonde-haired boy as the next owner of the estancia. The workers who had helped us with the horses and also served us the food, were very handsome with beautiful eyes. After lunch, they also provided the entertainment, which was gaucho dancing and a gaucho horse demonstration. On our ride home, Eddie slept most of the way. Back in Buenos Aires, we went out for a light dinner at Lo De Beer Restaurant. We had beers, wine, Empanadas, and burgers which were all very good. After dinner, we were all sated and went home to



bed.

Sunday, March 3, 2019 ~ We met Rob & Donna for café con leche and a light breakfast at Havana Restaurant. After breakfast we took a taxi to the Historical Quarter where we saw the beautiful pink palace of Peron, Casa Rosada, which is the government house where Eva Peron spoke to the masses. It is said that cow's blood was used to create the pink color. We walked through Plaza de Mayo and went into Cathedral Metropolitana, which was a very beautiful church. They were beginning to start the mass, so we left before lightning struck! We walked through the Cabildo Museum and then down the avenue towards the famous obelisk. We went over to the Teatro Colon, one of the most beautiful theatres in the world, but it was closed. (We will try to join a tour later in the week.) We



stopped at Petite Colon, which was a lovely old traditional Argentinian café. Here we had beers and a "medialuna", which is a delicious croissant. We walked past Cafe Tortoni, the oldest café in the city and where we might catch a tango show later. There was a long line of people waiting to get in. We next walked up to the San Telmo area, famous for the



Sunday market and antique fair. Once we arrived, we saw a demonstration by people wanting the right to work. We browsed through the streets. Donna and I both bought some beautifully-made jewelry...blue onyx, a very rare stone mined high in the mountains of Argentina. Eddie bought a "Bano" sign. We stopped at Lumpen Bar where the guys had Lumpen Mundo beers and the ladies had a bottle of Saint Felicien Malbec wine. We had a wild taxi ride back to rest for a



while. Dinner tonight was at La Colorado, which very good. We had a very nice waitress. The Argentinian people eat dinner VERY late, usually starting after 9-10pm.



Monday, March 4, 2019 ~ Today we were supposed to take a ferry boat over to Uruguay, but it was raining so we cancelled the trip. Instead, we met for breakfast at La Nuevo Argentina and planned our full day of adventure. We first took a taxi back to the Historical section and bought our tickets to the Tango show. We walked to

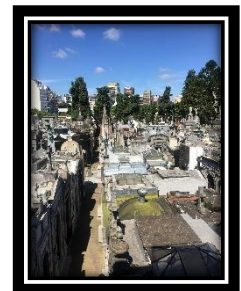


Casa Rosada Museum which had many beautiful and interesting pieces about the history of Argentina and especially about Eva and Juan Peron. The museum is located in two historical buildings which underwent a rigorous process of restoration, the Aduana Taylor (former Customs Office) and the Fort of Buenos Aires, originally built in the 18th century. This is where the Government House has been located since the end of the 19th century. There was also a very interesting art piece called Ejercicio Plastico.

This mural, considered a masterwork of Latin American art was restored and recovered as part of Argentina's National Heritage. It was commissioned by Natalio Botana and painted in 1933 by Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros in the basement of Mr. Botana's mansion. We walked down to Teatro Colon to see if we could do a tour, but they were all sold out. Next, we walked to a beautiful bookstore, The Grand Splendid in the old opera house. We had some beers at Buenos Aires Grill, just outside the bookstore and then we took another taxi to San Telmo. There we went into Plaza Dorrenge Bar for beers. We walked over to Republic Bar for a great dinner. All the restaurant owners are so friendly. We took a taxi to Borges Cultural Center for our Tango Show where we had front row seats. This was great except that Eddie slept through the entire show!! I was mortified as the dancers came right up in front of us on the stage and saw him sleeping. I woke him up long enough to get into a taxi and home, where he snored all night long!



Tuesday, March 5, 2019 ~ This morning we met again for breakfast at Nuevo Argentina and then took a taxi to get our tickets to Teatro Colon. Luckily, we were able to buy tickets before they sold out again. We took a taxi over to the famous cemetery. There was no tour today, but we walked around on our own and were able to find Evita's tomb. We went to the church next door and toured through the cloisters, which was very interesting. There was a great view of the entire cemetery from one of the cloisters windows. Right next door was the



Cultural Art Center, the building that was painted with murals differently for each art exhibit. We went inside, but we couldn't find the art exhibit, only small





studios where art classes are taught. Oh well...we took another taxi back to Teatro Colon for our tour. Our guide, Guido, was excellent and the tour was worth waiting for. It was truly a beautiful and interesting building. We took a taxi to the Japanese Gardens, which was extremely crowded and a



little underwhelming. There was nice performance by Japanese kids and drum players. We took another taxi back home to pack and cleanup for tonight's dinner. We went over to the So-Ho area and the Restaurant Don Julio. This was a very nice steak restaurant with the best meat dinner so far. Max ordered the entire meal "estancia style" and everything was delicious. What a lovely night to celebrate Donna's birthday!

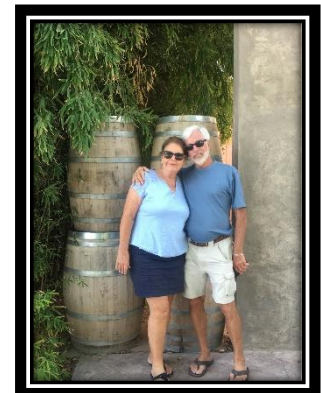
Wednesday, March 6 2019 ~ We walked back to Nuevo Argentina, our favorite breakfast place, with our bags. After our café con leche and medialunas, we had a crazy taxi ride to the airport. We checked in, went through security, and boarded our Norwegian Airlines flight to Mendoza. It was a very smooth flight and the plane was not full, so I had a full row to myself. I looked out the window for part of the trip and saw the snowcapped Andes mountains. We procured a remis ride to Chacras de Coria in the



Mendoza area. We checked into Posada Boutique El Encuentro, a very quaint and rustic B&B. We walked around town a little and had lunch at Bianca & Nero. Pretty much all the shops were closed for siesta. We walked over to one of the wineries and made reservations for the next day's tour. On the way back home, we stopped for more big beers at a Beer Garden. This made us all very sleepy. We found a grocery store, bakery, and fruit store for supplies for dinner in tonight. We all went back to our rooms and rested for a while, then we met and had a delightful dinner in the main room of the lodge of wine, cheese, bread, apples, and desserts. A good night's sleep followed.



Thursday, March 7, 2019 ~ We had a nice breakfast in the small dining room of our B&B. We walked over to Clos de Chacras Winery (Bodega) for our 11am tour. Our guide was Mayra and she was delightful. She had lived in Kissimmee, Florida for a while, so she spoke very good English. She gave us a great tour of this exclusive winery and then we had a great wine tasting. She taught us about tilting the glass 45 degrees and looking for the "horseshoe" of different colors on the side of the glass. Next,



you should swirl the wine to get the most aromas, and only then take a little sip of the wine. We had a delicious lunch, very gourmet style. Donna was not feeling so well, so she went home. Rob, Ed, and I lingered and bought some wine and walked over to the other winery, Bodega Pulmary,

but it was too late for a tour. We met the young owner who spoke with us and booked a special tour for us for Saturday morning @ 9:30am. We walked back and stopped at Jebb's Bakery for more bread and then shared 2 big Andes Beers, red ale and bock beer. Back at the B&B we rested a little before meeting again for a delicious meal of bread, cheeses, apples, wine, and desserts. We all had a good night's sleep again.

Friday, March 8, 2019 ~ After another lovely breakfast at our B&B, we embarked on our great adventure to Valle de Uco with Fernando, one of the owners of our B&B, as our driver. It was a beautiful drive south on Route 40 with the Andes Mountains in the distance. Our first stop was Salentein Wineries where we had a great tour and wine tastings. Our guide was Juan Pablo. The buildings were amazing...very modern and with beautiful art everywhere. We saw a brief film first about wine making in the area, then Juan Pablo walked us to the main building which was designed like a cathedral. Everything was pristine with 92 stainless steel tanks on 3 floors. There was even a baby grand piano in the center of the bottom floor. The floor was beautifully painted. This bottom floor also had the French oak barrels full of wine beautifully displayed. There were such great acoustics here that if you stood in the very center of the floor and spoke it was like an amplifier. They have concerts here and I could really see why. We had our wine tasting in a room down here. Juan Pablo, who really knows his wines, described the many aromas and flavors of each. He said that wine tasting is like meeting someone new. If you just quickly drink the wine it is like just saying "Hi" and walking away. You should linger over the tasting of wine, just like asking questions of a new friend when you first meet. First you should look at the wine's color by tilting the glass 45 degrees. See if you can see your two fingers behind the glass. Look for the "horseshoe" change of color. Then swirl the glass and sniff the aromas. Then a big taste which you swirl around in your mouth to get the flavors on your tongue and the roof of your mouth. Next you take a second sip to really taste the wine. Juan Pablo gives new meaning to the term wine tasting!



Our next stop was to Casa Petrini where we had an excellent wine tasting by our guide Carolino. We tasted 5 wines, first an excellent dry Rose, which was nicknamed "The Lie" because it was in a smaller bottle, like a water bottle, and could be drunk like water but was actually an excellent wine. Our second wine was a red, not so great...100% Tannet grape (a French grape). The third wine we tried was a 100% Malbec grape wine and then we tried two premium wines. The first one grown in volcanic rock (only winery that does this). This wine was excellent. The last wine was a blend and was also excellent. Our guide here at Casa Petrini, Carolino, was extremely nice. She had lived in the Orlando area for 13 years as a child and spoke excellent English. Of course, we had to buy some wines here as they were all so good. Casa Petrini was the only winery that has volcanic rock where they grow the grapes.



Our last stop today was Tupungato DiVino, where we had an excellent gourmet lunch. The owner was a very nice man and we bought some wines from there. Our drive back home was nice but we all got very

sleepy, probably due to all the great wine and gourmet food. Fernando, our driver, was very pleased with our generous tip.



Saturday, March 9, 2019 ~ We had another great breakfast but Donna was not feeling well and slept in. Three of us walked to the Pulmary Bodega for our 9:30am tour. Florencia was our delightful tour guide. Ramiro was the owner. This winery is the only organic winery in the area. We got to taste a Malbec directly from the concrete vats which were 150 years old. The grapes were grown in Salta, up in the Andes Mountains and shipped here to do pressing and fermentation right in these vats. This was a “young” wine and therefore was delicious but without many aromas or extra flavors. Next, we went down into the cellars where wines were in French oak barrels. We were accompanied by Hector, the cat. Florencia gave us a tasting directly from a barrel. This wine was standing in a used barrel for one year. This had more aromas and flavors than the

first wine we tasted. Then we tasted another wine which had been in a new barrel for 2.5 years. This wine had the most aromas and flavors. We went back upstairs and she opened a bottle of this last wine for us and we tasted this. Pretty cool to taste wine from a 150-year-old cement vat, directly from a wooden barrel, and then from the bottle. Our wine tasting is finished, but now we got to do a beer tasting! Florencia explained the very interesting process of bottling, and showed us the two big machines, one which holds many beer bottles, and shifts the bottles from side to side to get the sediment to the neck of the bottles, and the second machine where they place each bottle’s neck, freeze it to -25 degrees for a minute or two and then take off the cap and the pressure of the beer pushes the sediment out of the bottle so that they can recap it. This was a pretty cool process! We bought a large bottle of beer which we took back to our place to drink before our remis ride back to the Mendoza airport. Back at our B&B, we said a fond farewell to Lisandro, one of the owners of Posada Boutique El Encuentro, with his brothers Fernando and Mauricio, and his sister, Deborah Berlin. Our remis ride to the airport and our check in at the airport was very easy. We had a delightful flight back to Buenos Aires on Norwegian Airlines. After getting settled back in our apartment on Jorge Newbury Street, we met Rob, Donna, and family for a visit to Vilma and Jorge’s (Max’s parents)



apartment, where Max grew up. They were extremely gracious and served us drinks and light afternoon snacks of little sandwiches. Vilma was so sweet, and she gave both Donna and me a book as a reminder of our trip to Buenos Aires. Then Rob, Donna, Ed, and I left to walk a few blocks to Las Cholas for dinner. We got Empanadas, cheese flamed in Tequila, and shared a plate of Lomo (beef loin). Delicious! The place was pretty empty when we arrived and really started filling up after 11pm. We got home around midnight.

Sunday, March 10, 2019 ~ This morning Ed and I packed and then took a cab over to visit Walcott and Shula Hamilton, friends we had known when we lived in NH. We had a delicious lunch of salmon, potatoes, zucchini, and flan prepared by Shula. We had a wonderful visit and enjoyed viewing their



beautiful home and reacquainting with them both. It felt like we had just seen them yesterday but we really hadn't seen either of them for many, many years. It is always so interesting to talk with Walcott & Shula about politics and their years of experiences in Argentina. We bid a fond farewell to Walcott & Shula and got back to our apartment around 6pm. We walked down to meet Rob, Donna, and family at The Williamsburg where we had a beer as they finished their dinner and then ice cream at Luciano's. We went to bed early because we need to get up very early tomorrow.

Monday, March 11, 2019 ~ We all got up at 5am, caught our ride to the airport, had an easy check-in, spent some time in the lounge, then boarded our plane. We had an uneventful flight back to Miami, an easy arrival procedure, and an easy ride back to Marco.

Some random thoughts on our trip...

Buenos Aires is a very beautiful city with lots of parks and beautiful sculptures. The city seemed pretty clean, at least the areas we visited. There was a strong police presence, but they never seemed to be doing much. The taxi service was excellent! They were always available and very cheap. Food and drinks were very reasonably priced. However, it was very difficult to get pesos from the ATMs, which charged \$10 each time you used one and you could not get much money out each time. Thankfully Max and Sarah helped us out by bankrolling our spending and then we repaid them at the end of the trip. The Mendoza area and Chacras de Coria was a lot of fun and we really needed more time there.

The best part of the trip was getting to explore a new area and seeing how the local people live. Everyone we met was extremely friendly. The food was excellent, especially the meats. Loved café con leche and medialunas, Empanadas, and of course all the excellent wines that we tried. But the very best part of all was exploring this great new area with our good friends Rob & Donna and getting to know Sarah, Max, Lucas, and Theo better...what a lovely family!

