



UNLEASHED IN ARGENTINA ITINERARY

DAY ONE

BUENOS AIRES

By mid-morning, our group will meet up in the Argentine capital of Buenos Aires at its newest hotel, the Faena Hotel and Universe. This unique property designed in 2005 by the maverick French designer, Philippe Starck, has met with rave reviews in Town and Country Travel, Conde Nast Traveler and the New York Times. With an effect that is part “house of fashion meets house of worship” with an old-world new-glamour vibe, the Faena will be our home base during our three day visit to Argentina’s cosmopolitan capital, home to 12 million portenos as its residents are known as. The elegant city of Buenos Aires has long prided itself on being “the Paris of South America”. We will have lunch and spend the afternoon in San Telmo, a colorful, semi-bohemian area dotted with cafes, antiques shops, cobblestone streets and colonial architecture. Today, as on every Sunday, “the Best Antique Flea Market in the World” fills the Plaza Dorrego and performers, including tango dancers, take to the streets. A welcoming dinner will be served at El Bistro, the Faena’s formal restaurant, “a Surrealist’s dream complete with ten oversized white unicorn heads with blazing ruby eyes”. A busy first day discovering this very cosmopolitan city, the glamour and elegance of its European roots interwoven with its undeniable Latin American essence.

DAY TWO

BUENOS AIRES

Today’s schedule will include a visit to former first lady Eva Peron’s grave in La Recoleta Cemetery and to Casa Rosada where Eva bedecked in diamonds and Dior appeared on the balcony with her husband to celebrate their victory with the adoring masses on the Plaza de Mayo below. We will tour the plush Italianate Teatro Colon, one of the world’s great opera houses and have a behind-the-scenes tour of its costume, set and dressing rooms. We will visit La Boca, the picturesque neighborhood of brightly painted zinc shacks, wrought-iron doors and fabulous artisan shops and visit Patio Bullrich, the century-old historic building and former cattle-auctioning house, now home to Argentina’s most sophisticated stores. Buenos Aires is indeed a shopper’s paradise thanks to its still-recovering economy and its bounty of treasures from attractively priced leather goods and splendid silver to antiques, gorgeous sheep wool products and fine art. Late in the day, we will don our high heels and red lipstick for a private group tango lesson. Born in the brothels of Buenos Aires in the late 1800s, this sensual dance form is alive and well among the portenos of Buenos Aires. With its basic eight-step movement under our belts, we will finish our day at one of the city’s all-night traditional tango parlors, locally known as milongas, for a chance to interact with the local people and perhaps participate in this stylized strut.

DAY THREE

THE PAMPAS

After breakfast we will head out to the Pampas to the traditional colonial town of San Antonio de Areco, a 1725 stagecoach stop, some 80 miles northwest of the city considered to be “the capital of the gaucho culture and traditions”. Upon arrival at the 150-year old La Bamba estancia, we will be met by Isabel Aldao, the great granddaughter of the ranch’s original owner. Isabel is looking forward to sharing her family’s history with us, the first all-women’s group to take over La Bamba. The estancia is filled with family heirlooms and dotted with portraits of past Aldaos in heavy Victorian attire mounted on thoroughbreds. After a traditional lunch of empanadas and other Argentine delicacies prepared by the ranch’s gaucho cooks, we will spend the afternoon either relaxing poolside, horseback riding or hiking on the grounds. After enjoying a merienda - the Argentine version of the 5 o’clock tea where cakes and homemade jams are served -we will tour the local gaucho museum on the outskirts of town and visit with several artisans in their studios, including silversmiths of international acclaim. Certainly for some, the highlight of this day may be our stop at La Olla de Cobre Chocolateria, the infamous chocolate shop known for its to-die-for Alfajores, the traditional Argentine cookie made with Dulce de Leche and dark chocolate. Back at the ranch, dinner will be followed by moonlit horse-drawn antique carriage rides to the nearby Rio Areco. Tonight we will feast on some of the best beef in the world, bequeathed by one of Argentina’s 50 million alfalfa-fed, free-range cattle and always served with rich Argentine “vino tinto” (red wine).

DAY FOUR

THE PAMPAS

It's time for polo! After breakfast at La Bamba we will transfer to El Rosario de Areco where we will be warmly welcomed by the Guevara family. El Rosario is an official Polo Club with two fields, a necessity for this family of nine children, three of whom are international polo players. This traditional pony ranch offers a rare glimpse into the Argentine polo lifestyle. The estancia will be open to us alone but in the afternoon our guests will include two teams of polo players who will play a demonstration match for us. Those of us interested may have a personal polo lesson or enjoy horseback riding or a swim in the pool. Both lunch and dinner at El Rosario are feasts of plenty cooked by skilled gauchos dressed in traditional costume, served by gracious servants and accompanied by several members of the Guevara clan. In the evening a local troupe of folkloric singers and musicians will serenade us on the veranda.

DAY FIVE

PATAGONIA

An early morning horseback ride or walk will be followed by breakfast and departure from El Rosario. We will transfer to the airport for our 3-hour flight to El Calafate, in the Province of Santa Cruz, deep in the heart of Patagonia. Eolo is our destination, a brilliant luxury eco-lodge in one of the world's most spectacular environs. It is indeed a treat that we will have this sprawling lodge for our use exclusively, our "base camp", for some serious Patagonian adventure activity. Located on the eastern side of Mount Frías, Eolo provides vistas of Lago Argentino towards the north, La Anita Valley towards the east, and the Torres del Paine and the Rico branch of the same lake towards the south. This afternoon we will set out on foot to explore just a small patch of this 7,500 acre property and in the evening we will explore the heavens via telescope, observing the vast and unobstructed Southern Hemisphere night sky.

DAY SIX

PATAGONIA

We spend the entire day today in Los Glaciares National Park, declared by UNESCO as World Heritage in 1981 and home to 47 glaciers. We will transfer by boat across the Rico branch of Lago Argentino and arrive at the spectacular Perito Moreno Glacier, the world's third largest advancing glacier, a natural phenomenon the size of Buenos Aires some 15 miles at its widest point by 54 yards high at the front. This nautical "safari" provides an up close view of this majestic beauty as we travel along its full extension from a carefully calculated distance providing safe haven from the ice chunks that break off during the spring and summer thaws. Once we arrive we will put on crampons and begin our ice trek across the glacier, a four-hour other-worldly experience. Surrounded by friends we will explore its surface with its small cascades formed by ice melting, a field of icicles, narrow crevices and small lagoons and even stop to sip whisky poured over a chunk of ancient glacial ice. This renowned glacier is a gorgeous bright, cobalt-blue color and is advancing its way across land and water at a rate of five yards a day. Often, a low-level rumbling emanates from deep within and from time to time, the noise builds up, the glacial beast awakens and chunks break off with a thunderous crack. Back at Eolo we will enjoy a celebratory dinner and perhaps a moonlit trek across the plains.

DAY SEVEN

PATAGONIA

Today will be spent exploring the vast wild Patagonia landscape on foot, horseback and mountain bike; a full day of heart-pumping physical activity. Here at latitude 49, the southern Andes begin to curl around the end of the continent, mountains are enfolded in permanent mantles of ice, and 200 miles of rolling plain lie between the Andes and the Atlantic. This majestic playground with its endless vistas and abundant flora and fauna is ours to discover under the skillful leadership of talented local guides of the highest caliber. At day's end, a soak in the giant Jacuzzi pool, a relaxing sauna, or deep tissue massage might be on order. Tonight we will celebrate our final evening in Argentina in full style with a fabulous Asado dinner of Patagonian lamb, a Dulce de Leche specialty for dessert accompanied by an abundance of Argentine red wine.

DAY EIGHT

PATAGONIA

Early risers may want to ride horseback or trek before enjoying breakfast. Midday we fly back to Buenos Aires where we will connect to our international flights home.

DAY NINE

HOME

We arrive home with so many memories of Argentina and a deep desire to return as soon as possible.