

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Buenos Aires, Argentina (English Version)



Buenos Aires is truly a feast for the senses, visible in the architecture, through the romance of the music and of course, the tango, and in the last 10 years, in their diversity of their cuisine.

After our trip to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil my husband, Ed, and I flew **Varig Airlines** (www.varig.com) Executive Class from Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Our wait in the Varig Airlines lounge was certainly one of comfort, with a large spacious lounge, computers with Internet access for its passengers, and even a piano bar that opens up at 5:00 pm in the evening, which we missed, since we had an afternoon flight. Service during our flight was professional and courteous. After a short flight (less than 3 hours), we arrived in Buenos Aires, where I could almost hear the strains of tango music.



We arrived at the **Caesar Park Buenos Aires**, Posadas 1232, C1011ABF Buenos Aires, (Telephone: 54 11 4819-1100), (www.caesarpark.com.ar), a 152-room, 18-suite luxury hotel located in the exclusive Recoleta district. After checking in, we went directly to **The Lounge**, where we had a refreshing coffee before heading to our deluxe room. Our large king-size bed was decorated with a beautiful collection of luxurious pillows, and our marble bathroom consisted of 2 rooms, one room with a large sink, coffee maker, lighted make-up mirror, and hairdryer, and the other room which had a deep soaking tub with lovely bath salts, and a large variety of amenities, walk-in shower, toilet and bidet. We appreciated our ample closet, since Argentina is a shoppers' friend, as well as the large safe. Shoppers will be interested to know that is located directly across the street from **Patio Bullrich**, an upscale shopping mall. After 10 minutes in **Yenny**, a CD store there, Ed was the proud owner of 3 more CDs for his collection.

For our first evening in Buenos Aires, we decided to dine at **Restaurant Agraz** at the hotel, since we had heard wonderful reviews about the restaurant. **Chef Germán Martitegui** presides over this sophisticated yet comfortable restaurant with richly polished dark wood tables, crisply starched white linens, sofas, upholstered chairs, and banquettes. The atmosphere is like being in the home of a friend, with a window view into the kitchen where guests can watch the chef creating.

Our evening began with a glass of champagne, followed by an entrée of roasted quince with Serrano ham, blue cheese and arugula salad. The quince, which was grilled, was an interesting mix of fabulous flavors. Our appetites were getting excited now, especially when we sampled the paper-thin triangle bread with cheese and herbs that just melted in our mouths. Our next entrée was an upside-down tomato cake with goat cheese, and a red tuna tartar with warm sweetbreads and a tuna and caper mayonnaise; both of which were excellent. Next came a carrot crème brûlée with Brie cheese and Portobello mushrooms, which was another wow! We loved the creaminess of the carrot puree, combined with the meatiness of the Portobello mushroom, the slightly biting taste of the Brie, and the crackling sweetness of the brulee topping. We selected a Luigi Bosca Reserva Malbec 2000 to accompany our main courses, the "bagre de mar" (Sea Bass) with a shrimp crust and oyster mushrooms and mache salad, followed by a creamy polenta with bleu cheese, mushrooms, and walnut oil topped with a poached egg, and Patagonian deer with a mushroom

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crust, “Cuartirolo” cheese and “Humita.” The Malbec nicely complemented our selections. Although we were now pushing the limit on our ability to sample another morsel, we did sample one dessert, the lemon grass and vanilla soup with a mild coffee meringue, which was a sweet ending to an incredible meal. (See our **Chefs' Recipes** where **Chef Germán Martitegui** shares 3 of his innovative recipes with Luxury Experience.)



Our next day began with a lavish breakfast buffet at **The Lounge**, which was amazing that we were hungry after everything we ate the night before. After breakfast, we took a tour of the hotel, and were pleased to know that there was a Fitness Center with state-of-the-art Universal equipment, a relaxation room, massage rooms and a swimming pool with a large skylight for natural lighting, separate men’s and women’s saunas, just in case we did not get enough exercise walking around the city. In addition to the **Restaurant Agraz** and **The Lounge**, the hotel also has an English Pub-style bar, called the **Cheers Bar**, which is decorated with dark wood walls, black leather chairs, and polo pictures on the walls, as well as **La Patisserie**, which offers a delectable selection of breads, cookies, and pastries by Chef Beatrice Chomnalez. **La Guarda**, the hotel’s wine cellar room, features wines by Terrazas, Rutini, Luigi Bosca and Navarro Correas, and is used for special dinners and wine tastings. Business Travelers will be pleased to know that there is a Business Center. This beautiful hotel features grand white marble stairs, a foyer with luxurious beige marble floors and a hand-painted sky ceiling. Outside the hotel, there is a garden with ivy-covered walls, where a gazebo and fountain provide a bit of tranquility in the middle of this bustling city.



After our informative hotel tour, we spent time with Susana Oshiro, Concierge at the hotel, who helped us plan the balance of our stay in Buenos Aires. Susana is a true professional with a wealth of knowledge. With Susana’s information and a map, we strolled through the streets of Buenos Aires. We walked through **Recoleta**, past the **Recoleta Cemetary** where Eva Duarte de Peron is entombed, and the **Basilica Del Pilar**. We continued to Florida Street, the shopping district, to the **Galerias Pacifico** mall to see the latest in Argentine fashions, where I purchased a fabulous orange sweater and a black pashmina. From there we made a stop at **Freddo**, which is famous for their ice cream. Satisfied, we walked back to the hotel to get ready to go to dinner.

For us, travel is always more special when we have the opportunity to see old friends. We spent a delightful evening having dinner and reminiscing at **La Bistecca**, with our friend Alicia, her daughter Florencia, son-in-law, Alejandro, and their 2 young sons, Lucas and Joaquin.

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We awoke with a full-day planned for us: breakfast at The Lounge, an interview with Chef Beatrice Chomnalez, a 3-hour City Tour, lunch at Restaurant Agraz followed by an interview with Chef Germán Martitegui, a wine tasting sponsored by Joy at La Guarda, and a tango show as the grand finale! We enjoyed a quick breakfast before interviewing Chef Beatrice Chomnalez, the bread and pastry chef of La Patisserie. She is a bread and pastry wizard, creating delectable beauty out of flour, sugar and eggs. She is a charming, dedicated professional who generously wanted to include her staff, Claudio and Patricia, in a photo. (See **Chefs' Recipes** for the interview.)

With sugary confections dancing in our head, we went to meet our Caesar Park Buenos Aires driver, Osvaldo, and Teresa Riccardi, our guide from **Eternautas Viajes Historicos (www.eternautas.com)** for our City Tour. Teresa, an Art History PhD Candidate, showed us the highlights of Buenos Aires, where the Spaniards came in 1536, in their search for silver. We passed the **Obelisk** in the **Centro**, which commemorates the 400th anniversary of the founding of Buenos Aires, a port city, whose residents are called "portenos." Today, more than a... of the Argentine population lives in Buenos Aires, with 4 million "portenos" living in the Federal District, and another 8 million who live in the outskirts.



We took a walk through **Montserrat** past **Casa Rosada, (The Pink House)**, House of the National Government, built in the academic eclectic style. We went to **Catedral Metropolitana**, with its Greek Temple-like exterior and Baroque interiors, and saw the mausoleum of Argentine General San Martine, where an honor guard stands watch. We strolled the cobblestone streets of **San Telmo**, passing the rows of antique shops, and **La Botica de Vicky**, looking at the old tango shoes, gloves and soda siphon bottles, and the **Iglesia de San Pedro Telmo**. On Sundays, there is the famous



San Telmo flea market, with antiques and tango exhibitions. We drove through **Puerto Madero**, which was renovated in the 1990's, and now has exclusive shops and restaurants. We drove through **Retiro**, past the train station, and the **Torre de los Ingleses (Englishmen Tower)**, which is now called the **Monumental Tower**, a gift from the English to commemorate the centennial of the May revolution. We then drove to **Palermo Chico** – a very exclusive area, with many embassies and Beaux Artes homes. We passed by the **Zoo**, and then went to **Palermo "Hollywood"**, a very hip, trendy area, where many films are made.

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It has also many restaurants, boutiques and “La Chorizo” houses. Our 3 hours quickly passed, and suddenly it was time to return to the hotel for lunch.

Restaurant Agraz features a Formula Agraz menu, where diners can select from the 2-course Express Menu, or the 3-course Executive Lunch. The menu changes every Monday, and is available from Monday – Saturday, and includes a glass of wine, water or soda, and a tea or coffee. Ed selected the 2-course Express Menu with an entrée and a main course, and I selected the 2-course Express Menu with a main course and a dessert. Ed began with a crispy eggplant and zucchini salad with “Parma” cheese, which was layered on a bed of lettuces. The eggplant and zucchini were nicely seasoned, delicately crisped and enhanced by shaved “Parma” cheese. For our main courses, Ed selected wine leaf wrapped chicken with sun-dried tomatoes and feta cheese, and I selected the phyllo spinach and mushroom roll with bleu cheese and hazelnut sauce. The chicken was beautifully presented, and phenomenal to taste. My phyllo roll was incredible, with golden pastry filled with a heavenly mix of spinach, raisins and mushrooms, with hazelnut sauce swirled on the plate with pieces of bleu cheese. We selected a Tobiano Merlot 2003 to accompany our lunch selections. My dessert, warm dark chocolate cream with caramelized oranges, arrived seconds before



Chef Germán Martitegui, joined us for an interview. Imagine trying to focus my attention on this charismatic chef, when chocolate was calling! He asked me to please go ahead and try my dessert, so I dipped in a spoon and tasted pure ecstasy. He smiled, and we proceeded with the interview, as we discussed some of his favorite ingredients – quinces, and his own restaurant, **Olsen**. (See **Chefs' Recipes** for the interview.)

With a few hours to spare before the Wine Tasting, Ed and I went to do a little shoe shopping, since Argentina is famous for leather. With an insider tip from our friend Alicia, we went to **Boniface**, San José 559 (and Venezuela) (www.boniface.com.ar) where I purchased a beautiful pair of soft black leather boots, and a pair of sandals, and Ed purchased a pair of loafers. From there, we walked up the street to **Navarro**, where I found a hip pair of black loafers.

The Wine Tasting at Caesar Park Buenos Aires sponsored by **Joy** at **La Guarda** was very interesting, although for our taste, the 3 new vineyards presenting a Syrah, a Merlot and a Cabernet, all needed a little more aging.

We spent our last evening in Buenos Aires at **Esquina Carlos Gardel Cena & Tango Show**, El Chanta Cuatro S.A, Carlos Gardel 3200, (www.esquinacarlosgardel.com). We dined watching a black-and-white film about the history of the tango, and Carlos Gardel. The tango show was well executed, from its tango singers to its dancers who wore period, as well as present day costumes, and danced a variety of tango styles.

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On our last morning, we took a last walk around the city, before joining our friend, Alicia, and her daughter, Barbara, for lunch at **Olsen**, Gorriti 5870, (restaurantolsen@netizen.com.ar). Chef Germán Martitegui owns Olsen, a trendy, Scandinavian restaurant, located in **Palermo Viejo**. We celebrated with frozen Passion fruit, Mint and Absolute cocktails, and sampled the warm crusty bagels. We then tried the 5 smørrebrød, and accompanying vodkas. The shrimp and cucumber canapé was served with a Cassis flavored vodka, a salmon and cream cheese canapé was accompanied by straight vodka, a deer and red cabbage canapé was enhanced with blueberry vodka, a pear and smoked cheese canapé was offered with Aquavit, and a ham canapé was complemented with a tea flavored vodka, which was Barbara's favorite. For our main course, Alicia and I selected the vegetable roll with goat cheese, which she later told me that Chef Germán Martitegui had created especially for her.



How exciting to have lunch with the now famous "Alicia." Barbara and Ed selected the open-faced scrambled egg and salmon sandwich. Selections were artistically presented on stylish plates, and were served with mouth-watering roti potatoes, perfectly crispy on the outside and creamy on the inside, and a steaming cup of pumpkin soup with chopped apples. We finished our most enjoyable lunch with the Lemon Crème and Fruit Canoli and the Chocolate Terrine and Cookies. We hugged our friends goodbye, and went back to the Caesar Park Buenos Aires to checkout of the hotel. Service at this outstanding hotel ended with Osvaldo driving us to the airport.

Varig Airlines (www.varig.com) whisked us through the check-in, and we proceeded to the Varig Lounge, where they had a selection of beautiful pastries and sandwiches available for their passengers, along with coffee, wines, juices, liquors and sodas. We soon boarded the Varig Airlines MD-11, where we flew First Class to São Paulo, Brazil. The first class seating had a moveable ottoman, and a table large enough for 2 to work or share dinner. The spacious seat reclined and met with the ottoman to create a flat bed. Although the flight to São Paulo is only 2 hours, after dinner, I decided to sample the flat bed and fell fast asleep. Refreshed, we went to the Varig Lounge in São Paulo, where we had a glass of wine, and caught up on email using the Lounges complimentary Internet. We had a smooth and comfortable flight to New York from São Paulo in Varig Airlines Executive Class. After passing through Customs in New York, we waited only moments before our luggage appeared on the carousel, a perfect ending to a wonderful trip.

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