



JUST BACK FROM: ARGENTINA

El Calafate & The Perito Moreno Glacier –by Rachel Robar

JANUARY 2010



What strikes you most when you arrive are the distances and scale. This practically uninhabited landscape overwhelms you with space: rolling hills of uninterrupted pampas, a lake that changes from milky turquoise to steel grey and jagged peaks scoured by the constant movement of glaciers. Reaching the small town of El Calafate is easy with daily flights from Buenos Aires, Bariloche, or Ushuaia, Argentina or overland from Torres del Paine National Park in Chile.

One of the highlights of visiting *El Calafate* is the opportunity to *hike on the Perito Moreno Glacier*. The Perito Moreno Glacier is one of the three glaciers in Patagonia that are not retreating. The face of this glacier is 3 miles wide and soars about 24 stories above Lago Argentina

with 300 feet still hidden below the lake.

In terms of physical fitness, it is the equivalent of ascending 5 flights of stairs. However, it is not the energy expended that is the challenging part; it is walking in the crampons attached to your shoes. As you hike, you encounter various ice formations, crevices, tunnels and canyons. There is ice for as far as the eye can see. The glacier, covers about the same area as Washington DC. For those that take the challenge, it is certainly an exhilarating experience. It is important to note that you must be less than 60 yrs of age to hike on the glacier.



If trekking is not your cup of tea, then I would certainly recommend a cruise on Lago Argentina to see the Spegazzini & Upsala Glaciers. As you sail, it would be extremely rare to see another boat. You have the entire



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lake to yourself with only your fellow sailors to keep you company. This cruise was actually a highlight for me. It was an opportunity for me to get to know my fellow passengers and read a book. For you Kindle users, yes, it worked even here. The first two hours are uneventful. In the next hour, you see icebergs. The myriad of colors, range from white to ice blue with streaks of black. The black deposits are the evidence of its violent journey as it scraped over mountains to break off at the edge of a glacier. These are glaciers are receding at a disconcerting pace; lonely monuments to Global Warming. My advice is to hurry here before it is too late.



The best time to visit is November – March. There are a variety of places to stay:

Eolo Lodge - a Relais & Chateaux property located in the middle of the pampas with views of Lago Argentina. Individual rooms with wonderful public areas accessible by interior corridors. Great for couples, families and friends.

Los Notros - has a wonderful view of the Perito Moreno Glacier from all rooms. The rooms are located in 3 buildings. Easy access to Perito Moreno Glacier.

Los Sauces Casas Patagonicas - a Virtuoso property located in town. Well decorated 3 & 4 bedroom units are spread across the property. Perfect for multi generational families and friends traveling together.

