

March 30, 2016

It is time to go, finally!! Mary Neale and Gwendolyn Deas left the United States on two different overnight flights that landed in Santiago, CL within an hour of each other.

March 31, 2016

We met at the luggage rack and got a taxi to the Hotel Galerias, which was 15 miles / 20 minutes from the airport. We gave our luggage to the concierge and started our exploration of Santiago.

The hotel was located 3 blocks from one of the Turistik Hop On Hop Off Tour Bus stops. We asked several people for directions. Most of the Chilean people that we talked to during the day spoke English. They were very helpful and friendly. There were 13 stops on the bus route.

We decided to take one complete trip around Santiago. The tour was great, and the narration gave a good insight into the history of the area, the early settlers and the



buildings. The first complete trip took 2 hours and gave us a much-needed rest. On our second trip around Santiago, we got off at a few of the stops that looked interesting. Other stops included Santa Lucia, Providencia, El Golf, Costanera Center, Plaza de la Constitución and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes seen above.

As evening approached and our energy levels declined, we decided to have a Chilean dinner in the hotel. The day was interesting, but very busy, so we both welcomed the comfort of our beds!!!!

Gwendolyn T. Deas

We had lunch during the day at a cute restaurant called Like Water for Chocolate and here are some sights from the bus.





Mary Neale

Hotel Galerías
San Antonio 65
Santiago,
Región Metropolitana, Chile

April 1, 2016

Gwen and I have breakfast at the hotel and take a taxi to reunite with the group at the airport. We find our travel companions from FF and board the flight to La Serena.

We landed and made our way to the small airport luggage pickup area. We could hear the excited tones of welcome from the people of La Serena club. I have never felt more welcome than when our host group - complete with club jackets and signs on cards with each of our names being held by our home hosts with smiling faces. My host stepped up to greet me. She was warm and excited to see us. My hostess Sara and I departed the airport for her home where I would be her guest for the week.

My hostess spoke better English than I spoke Spanish. Sara told me she needed to stop at the Lider Store on the way home to get cigarettes for her husband. We pulled into the parking area of a blue and white store. Somehow it had a familiar look. I asked to go in with Sara. As I walk around this smallish variety store I found canned goods labeled *Great Value*. Wow – I was in Walmart.

We arrived at Sara's home on a hill with 4 other houses. All the homes have electric gates and 10 foot high walls around the property. The house was built on another hill so you had a view of beach apartments and hotels about 4 miles away.



I met Sara's husband and daughter. The table on the indoor patio and den was set in beautiful bright colors of blue, yellow, green and red. Sitting at the table we viewed Sara's yard of plants and her small

inground bright blue pool with the mountains as a backdrop. After a wonderful lunch of local fish, browned potatoes, salad and wine, we all took naps.

We dressed and went to meet the La Serena FF and the other ambassadors at a restaurant on the beach. Everyone was gathered in a room with a band

and costumed dancers. I learned later that many of



the dancers were members of our host club. It was a delightful event. Many of our group were invited to dance with them. When the dancing was over we went to another room to have cocktails (pisco sours) and hors d'oeuvres. Margarita, the La Serena ED, made a toast. Lucie gave a greeting in Spanish and English. The conversations were happy and spontaneous. After dinner and continued conversation we ended the evening to ready ourselves for the next day.

Mary Neale



April 2, 2016

Today, the day of our boat trip, it was overcast and cool. As we traveled by bus to our destination, the weather cleared up and we had beautiful weather for the day.

Along the way, we saw wild guanaco in the open fields. George, our guide, said the guanacos are not domesticated like the



llama or sheep because, they are difficult to train, very free spirited and don't do well corralled.

Upon arriving at our destination, we were given life vests to wear as we boarded the little boats and off

we were on our ocean adventure. Three islands—Chañaral, Damas and Choros—form a special natural complex known as the **Humboldt Penguin National Reserve**.

This location offers stunning beaches of white sand and turquoise waters, the natural habitat of the animals that attract many visitors to this place.

Las Damas was the only island where people could explore the island. The island was small, we hiked over a little crest and on the other side was a bay where I assume one could snorkel and swim. The beach and water was beautiful. After we hiked around the island, we boarded the boat and were off to see the wildlife on the other island.

We saw penguins, seals & sea lions basking in the sun. On the way, we were greeted by dolphins that playfully followed our boat. The dolphins swam close to us where I observed a couple w/ part of their dorsal fin gone & gashes probably caused by a predator. The time spent in the area whetted our appetite, we were ready for lunch.

The restaurant was ready for our hungry group. We had empanadas, a choice of soup or salad, chicken breast or fish, grilled or fried with a batter and dessert. Everything served was delicious. Chile has delicious seafood. On the way home, the bus driver stopped the bus for photos. We saw wild kit



foxes that were hungry and would come close to the bus to retrieve tossed food. We also made a quick stop at a little olive shop for those that were interested in shopping and then headed back to La Serena. *Paulette Edmonston*

It was a two and half hour ride by bus and boat before reaching Choros Island. We all put on life jackets before getting in the boat. It was windy and lots of water spray over the sides of the boat. Kitty made Lucie a special hat out of paper! We saw lots of animals: Peruvian boobies, penguins, walrus, schools of small fish and lots of dolphins in the water swimming alongside the boat. We then went to Damas Island and spent 1 hour walking around. Everyone made it back to the boat on



time for the return trip back to land. On the bus again for the trip to where we were to have lunch. At 3:15 we arrived and had a delicious lunch. After lunch we were walking around and Karin tripped and fell into the lap of a fellow who was resting in a hammock!! We left at 5:00. Arrived in La Serena at 7:35. Mirna picked us up. She had snacks and dinner prepared. Lucie,



Carmen and Betta (Carmen's sister) ate with us. It was a delightful dinner. They left at 9:30. The next day, we ran into the girlfriend of the fellow whose lap Karin fell into. She had pictures. Small World! *Sue Trout*

April 3, 2016

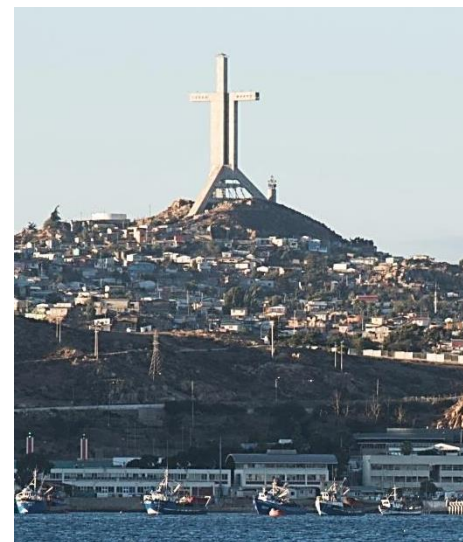
The waters of Coquimbo City haven't always been quiet even though the name Coquimbo means Place of Quiet Waters. In Sept. 2015, this port city was extensively damaged by a tsunami resulting from a massive earthquake near the Coquimbo coast.



As we strolled through the fish market, it was difficult to visualize the devastation. Friendly fish mongers posed for photos, briefly pausing from filleting the day's catch.

Cruz del Tercer Milenio is Spanish for

Third Millennium Cross. This massive concrete structure was



completed in an impressive ten months. At 83 meters it is perhaps the tallest monument in South America, sitting 197 meters above sea level, sited to provide magnificent views from the sea to the mountains.

The Cross commemorates the 2000th year following the birth of Christ. Symbolism is an integral part of the design, such as the 10 columns representing the Ten Commandments. The elevator provides access to the museum, chapel and an exhibit of photos documenting the construction. Of course, the Fitbit wearers had the option of taking the 2,000 steps.

Fort Coquimbo was built in the nineteenth century, originally to protect the port from possible attack by Spanish ships. Later Carlos Lambert had a new fortress constructed on the same site for protection from Peruvian ships during the War of the Pacific. The fort was restored and expanded in 2005.

We enjoyed a brief stroll along the beach joined

by pelicans swooping in to feast on the local seafood. At the end of the tour, our bus driver took us back to La Serena to be met by our hosts for dinner at home.
Mary Kinsey



April 4, 2016

Up at 7:30 AM. Ate a good breakfast, made by Mirna Torres our host. Left house to meet the bus at the parking lot in La Serena; we left at 9:35 on our way to Vicuna. We passed many grape vineyards in the Elqui Valley. Grapes are used for pisco sours of which we had many! There are several dams on the Elqui River used for irrigation of the grape vineyards. The overlook used for scenic viewing from



the dam could not be entered because it is closed on Mondays. The Coastal Andes Mountains were on both sides of the valley where lush-looking agriculture/grapes were being grown. There was lots of netting used as windbreaks between the rows of growth. The mountains are very dry with lots of cactus and low undergrowth. On our way, we stopped at 10:45 to purchase tickets for the Observatory but Margarita was told that because of the overcast conditions today, tickets would not be sold yet and she would be contacted if conditions improved for viewing the night sky later in the day. We arrived in Vicuna at 11:50 AM. Walked to the outside of the Gabriela Mistral museum and observed the monument that was raised in honor of the poet who spent most of her childhood in Vicuna. Because it was a Monday, the museum was closed. All the



royalties from the sale of her poems and books are sent back to support the school where local children – only 20 at a time – are housed and schooled. The area was/is very poor. We visited the church and walked around for 40 minutes with not much to do or see. Boarded the bus at 12:25. On the way back home, we stopped at Pisco Elqui Restaurant for a delightful lunch. Sat with Mary Allan, Lucie, Joan and the driver, Franco Carvajal. Next to the restaurant, we walked thru a small park in front of Our Lady of

Rosario Catholic Church. Back on the bus at 2:45 PM. At 2:55 we stopped at the Los Nichos Winery to see how wine is processed. The tour started at 3:30 PM in Spanish! The winery was established in 1868 by Rigoberto Rodriguez Rodriguez and is the only organic winery in the area. Muscatel grapes are picked in March and April. A machine separates the skins and seeds from the juice which are then left to ferment for 30 or so days and used as fertilizer. The juice used for sweet wine is put into barrels for 8 months. The juice used for pisco is kept in tanks for one month and is 14% alcohol. The distillery and corking machine were viewed and we watched labels being put on



bottles by hand. The guide gave a history of their wine – it was hard to understand! We were given tastes of 35% and 40% pisco wine. The 40% was smooth. Back on the bus at 4:50 PM. At 5:45 PM we stopped at Hosteria de Vicuna for sandwich, tea/coffee and cake. Margarita was contacted and told that the weather was too cloudy and rain was predicted for tomorrow so we will not go to

the observatory. It was a great disappointment. Back on the bus at 6:35 PM and arrived in La Serena at 8:15 PM. Mirna picked us up and we were back in Coquimbo at 8:40 PM. Sue Trout



April 5, 2016 Visit to La Serena City

Today we had a relatively late start: We met in the middle of Francisco de Aquire Avenue which leads from the surrounding highways and beaches to the center of La Serena City. The avenue on both sides is flanked by statues donated by the Italian government as an acknowledgement of La Serena's generosity by taking in refugees and settlers from Italy during the formation of the city. Most statues are reproductions of Roman and Greek works. On the South side of the avenue lays the old part of the city with its adobe structures which are under historical protection.. The North side is flanked by various municipal buildings, foremost the Educational complex, almost a block long, constructed



with local stone. The height of the newer buildings throughout town is restricted to three stories.

As we turned to the center of town we passed the Regional Theater on our way to the Archeological Museum founded in 1880. The first room showed petroglyphs of pre-historic eras. In another section of this room we



saw a collection of artifacts which came from all of South America, for example beads from ancient Indians from the Equatorial region. Other items represented examples of the Inca culture which merged with local tribes along the long coast of South America. In the next



room we found various burial sites displayed. The earlier ones have a circular shape and the deceased seemed to have been accompanied by animals. Later and deeper graves are rectangular and were lined with stone walls. We saw some early copper utensils and swords, copper being a dominant metal found in the Chilean mountains. As we were leaving the museum's last chamber we found there a huge mummified Easter Island corpse; we were glad to leave him behind.

Our next stop was La Recova - the city market, which is filled with all kinds of locally made souvenirs, locally produced fruits and eatery establishments. Some of our travelers bought post cards and some colorful trinkets there. I found it difficult to choose among the many beautiful gift options.



From there we visited the Cathedral in the town center built in 1844 in a Romanesque style with an expanse of sixty by twenty meters. Its colorful windows were imported from France. We also briefly looked at St. Augustine's



church, one of more than a dozen churches of La Serena.

We rested our tired feet and legs at lunch in a private club where our hosts joined us. It is located at the edge of town center and very close to the Japanese Park, which was our next and final stop of the planned city tour. This beautiful garden reminded me of a Japanese Garden I had



visited in Kyoto, Japan: various plantings of flowering shrubs defining the undulating paths, waterways with little bridges, a pond ordained by restful swans and an arced bridge allowing



visitors to view the garden from different angles. Friendship Force of La Serena



made it a tradition to have visiting clubs plant a tree in this garden at a designated area. OUR tree, *pino radiata*, was waiting for us along with the gardener who had already dug the hole for its planting and who had brought along a wheel barrel filled with wonderful dark top soil. So, the ceremony of planting was ready to go forward: Each host along with his/her ambassador was given a chance to put a shovel of dirt into the hole in which the tree had been lowered. Several group pictures were taken with both club members standing in front of the Friendship Force insignia. The hosts sang some songs in a little pavilion.



Thus the planned day ended and our hosts were free to spend time with their ambassadors as they wished. A group of us decided to meet at 8:00 PM for dinner to which our hosts were invited as our guests. They chose one of their favorite eateries, Martin Fierro Restaurant. Five hosts and six ambassadors enjoyed an evening of fun, good food and lots of laughter. It was interesting to note that the ambassadors from



New Jersey enjoyed the Chilean seafood while all of our hosts ordered steaks which they loved. Thus our day in La Serena came to a very satisfying close. *Karin Sannwald*



April 6, 2016 Free Day

No alarm this morning and we slept in until eight o'clock and enjoyed a leisurely breakfast. We did a few loads of wash and hung it out on the clothes line to dry. About eleven o'clock Mirna, Sue, and I went to the restaurant where the Farewell Dinner would be held, so Mirna could make final arrangements. Then we rode along the bay in Coquimbo and stopped to enjoy the view. We tried out some exercise equipment. What a great idea to have exercise equipment along the bay and work out with a great view. At the open air market, we purchased a Chilean charm. The market is all new because on September 16, 2015, a tsunami wiped out the market and some surrounding homes and businesses. We drove past the apartment building where Mirna's sister and mother live. At one o'clock we drove to La Serena to walk to the La Recova market where we purchased some Chilean



pins. Later we walked around Plaza de Armas, where we took pictures of us with the Chilean flag in the background. We had to use the restroom and paid two-hundred pesos to use the bano. Next we went to the Post Office and purchased stamps, and then to an office supply store to have Sue's and Larre's pictures enlarged. Our final stop was a coffee shop in La Serena called Trento Café, where



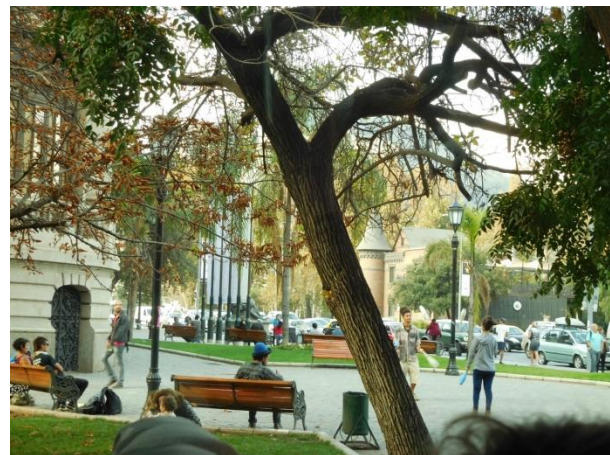
we met Anna and Karin for coffee and cake. Back at Mima's house we took down the wash, folded and did some packing to get ready for the next morning to begin our trip back home. Mirna took us upstairs to her balcony to see a view of Coquimbo, the Pacific Ocean, and the Cross of the Third Millennium, build on Vigia Hill. Sue put Larre's and Sue Hoke's pictures on sticks, so they could travel with us. We took showers, dressed for dinner and for about fifteen minutes read the book on La Serena that Mirna

gave us. We left for dinner at six PM. Everyone else arrived at seven PM. The dinner was held at the Bucanero Restaurant in Coquimbo with a lovely view of the bay. The tables and chairs were covered in an apple green color and the chairs had big bows on the back. We took pictures and the ED's made speeches and exchanged club gifts. A very nice evening of friendship and conversation. A great way to end our home visit. Thank you, La Serena Friendship Force. *Joan Markovic*



April 7, 2016

Our departure from La Serena was delayed for three hours due to the plane's mechanical difficulty; consequently, our tour of Santiago, capital of Chile, was cut short. It was 5:00 p.m. before we were on our way. Santiago, founded in 1541, is a lovely city of many museums, parks, and other places of interest. We rode and took short walks until it was dark.



Santiago has long been a haven for immigrants, including Koreans, Chinese, and Arabs as well as other ethnic groups. About 400,000 Arabs came to Santiago during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of these were of Catholic or Orthodox faith; they were labeled "Turkish" because of the way their passports were prepared. Many of the more recent immigrants came due to conflict in their countries. Generally, street

names reveal which group settled where; for example, Barrio Lastarria was settled by Italians.

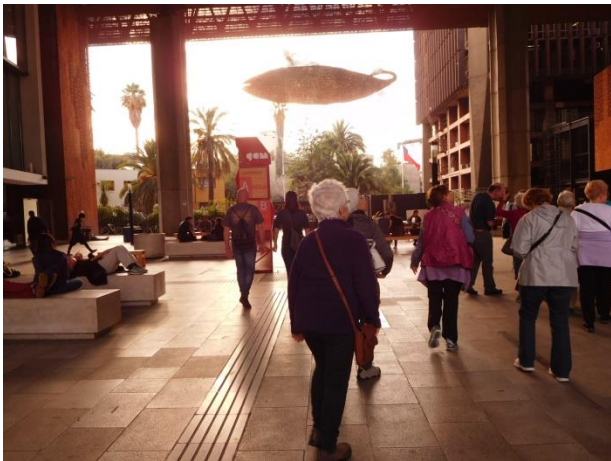
We drove by the former U. S. embassy, previously occupied by a private family but now occupied by the Chamber of Commerce. Later we passed by the current embassy—not at all attractive.

The oldest building in Santiago is a church; it was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1976. Its most interesting ceiling is made of tiles; the colors have worn off its flooring.

One of our first stops was outside the Gabriela Mistral building, a 1970's building used as a meeting place for 1-1/2 years by the United Nations. When the military dictator, Pinochet, took over in 1973, it was used as a meeting place. Following the overthrow of Pinochet, this cultural and performing arts center (GAB) was renamed for the Chilean poet, the first Latin American woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature.

There is a community known as Paris on one side of the street and London on the other side; this reflects the French and English architectural styles. The Human Rights Building is the site where more than 4000 political prisoners were tortured and 266 were executed before the dictatorship ended in 1990. Many of those executed were quite young; their names, ages, and dates of death were recorded in the white tiles of the walkway; the other tiles are black. A statue of Salvador Allende, the highly-respected Chilean president prior to the coup, stands in the Plaza de la Constitución. Our guide told us that Chile has not been involved in warfare since 1990.

We viewed the former 18th century presidential palace from across the street, but the guards would not let us come closer. Later we had a group photo taken with other male and female guards in their spiffy white uniforms.



Santiago has lovely parks which continue for miles, separating lanes of traffic. At any time that we passed by, people were always enjoying these wonderful places. On one side of the roadway was a fierce, fast-moving river with many large rocks; it is generally considered to be non-navigable and also continues for many miles.

In summary, Santiago is a lovely city with a long history and many points of interest. It is a great place to visit. *Marie Peak*

April 8, 2016

After an early breakfast our group left our hotel on a bus tour of Valparaiso and Vina del Mar about 70 miles north of Santiago. We traveled towards the Pacific Coast and through the valley of Casablanca which is known for its vineyards and famous for its white wine. They also produce olives. The town of Valparaiso is nestled around a



beautiful port. The houses are very picturesque with its multitude of colors on the hillside. Valparaiso was founded in the XVI century and was named by a Spaniard who settled there for the town he was born in back in Spain. The oldest part of the town was recognized by UNESCO in 2003 as a World Heritage Site. The



town has the honor of having the first telephone, telegraph,



newspaper, synagogue and non-Catholic churches. It still has working trolley cars. We visited La Sabastiana Museum, the home of the poet, Pablo Neruda. We visited Sotomayor Square by the Port and rode the funicular up the side of the hill to a small village with little shops for tourists. We then had a delicious lunch of crab and lamb at Jaiba y Cordero restaurant.



After lunch we spent some time in Vina del Mar which started as a resort town for the rich people of the City of Valparaiso to go to on weekends and holidays. After a stroll around town, we walked on the beach and it

was time to head back to Santiago and a good night's rest. *Fay Harrison*



April 9, 2016

After breakfast, we all got on a bus to the Santiago airport for a flight south to Puerto Montt. Everyone was on time and we rode along a fast moving river to the airport. With our guide Sergio's help, we went through ticketing easily. Our flight was 15 minutes late, no big problem. We recognized one of the LAN crew, Oscar, from a previous flight. It was hazy over Santiago



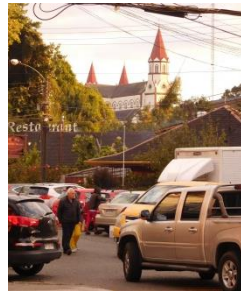
with ice capped Andes to the west. Our two hour flight took us east over coastal mountains toward the Pacific Ocean.

We were met in Puerto Montt by our guide Charlie who grew up in Mt. Holly: he was informative and very droll. Charlie was accompanied by our driver Carlos.



We were now in the Lake District which was settled by German immigrants where we had a city tour. In 1963, this area had a severe earthquake but has recovered nicely.

We then drove on the coastal road to the fishing village of Angelmo for a seafood lunch, visit to the fish market and a visit to a local handicraft market featuring many hand knit woolen goods.



We followed the Pan American Highway (Route 5) to our hotel, Cabanas del Lago, in Puerto Varas. The hotel, constructed of local woods faces a lake and then the Andes, a most beautiful and welcoming sight.



Mary Allan

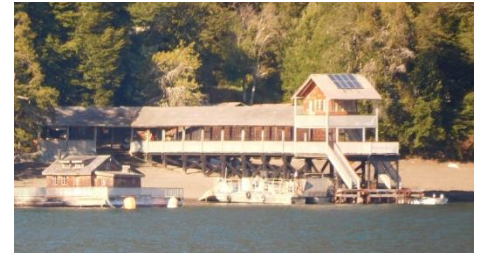
Sunday, April 10, 2016

We began this day's adventure early in Puerto Varas, with a bus ride along its Lake Llanquihue. The third largest lake in Chile, it is over 1100 feet deep and is filled with crystal blue water.

Our guide Charlie explained that in Chile, geologically speaking, two plates come together in such a way as to form a fault line, allowing volcanic eruptions along this fault line. On Road 225, we stopped to observe the Calbuco volcano, which most recently erupted in April of 2015. The residents of the area received a scant one hour's warning in advance of the eruption, whereas Chile's scientists usually are able to alert people a day or days ahead of an eruption. The eruption lasted 90 minutes and sent a plume of volcanic ash 10 kilometers into the sky. The ashes that were observed "falling out of the sky" eventually provided a two foot layer of ash covering everything.



As we drove away from Calbuco, Charlie pointed out a valley that became narrower and narrower as glaciers were squeezed through the vertical mountains, leaving scrape marks on them. He showed us the Cerro Puntiagudo,



meaning sharp point. Aptly named, it's a sharp-pointed volcanic mountain covered by snow. Next we traveled to the Vicente Perez Rosales National Park, which is the oldest national park in Chile. Its acquisition was heavily influenced by Teddy Roosevelt. Here we parked our bus and followed a short, scenic trail toward the beautiful, layered and energetically spraying Petrohué waterfalls, flowing out from Lake Todos Los Santos via the Rio Petrohué.



Now for the main event of the day—a nearly two hour catamaran cruise on the lake's emerald green water traveling from Petrohué to the very small village of Peulla. Good luck accompanied us that day as the weather was perfect, with sunshine playing on the water and mountains and no rain or chill to detract from our experience. As our *barco* (boat) moved along the lake, the scenery we encountered was



brehtaking. The lake is surrounded by steep mountains. Three snow-capped mountains are famous: the Osorno volcano to the west, the formerly mentioned Puntiagudo to the north and the mighty Tronador to the east. Small picturesque islands enhanced our views, which were stunning no matter which way we turned.





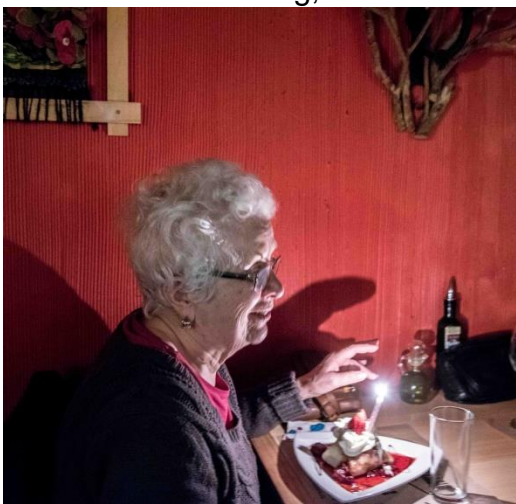
After our catamaran docked at Peulla, some members of our group enjoyed an additional adventure on a “buggy” (all-terrain vehicle) sightseeing side trip. The rest of us went to the hotel with stunning views of the mountains and ordered lunch. The preparation and serving of lunch did take rather a long time and some of the food was “interesting.” After eating, we walked around the grounds of the hotel a bit and then walked or rode in a shuttle down the scenic road to the dock.



The return trip was equally as beautiful and interesting as the ride had been going to Peulla. We learned that this boat (which travelled along its route only once a day) served as a “school bus” for the local children. As there are no through roads on this route, the children who live along the way are regularly picked up and carried to and from school on this large catamaran. Midway on our trip back, we spied a motor

boat drawing alongside our catamaran. The small boat was driven by a man and carried a woman and child. With delicate maneuvering and timing, the motorboat and the catamaran paused as the woman and child climbed a ladder on to the catamaran. Apparently they were going to town on this Sunday evening. Soon we docked at Petrohué and disembarked after a near perfect day.

That evening, back in Puerto Varas, we celebrated our final get-together as a group with a farewell dinner that was held at a local “Charlie recommended” restaurant. We said our good-byes to Marie Peak and Mary Allan who would be leaving us to return home on April 12. The restaurant staff collaborated with us to surprise Mary Allan with two fabulous, candled desserts and individual spoons to share them all around. Then it was time to walk through the charming town of Puerto Varas and along its beautiful lake back to our hotel. *Lucie Lenore*



Monday, April 11, 2016 Puerto Varas to Chiloé Island

We have an early start today - must be on the bus by 7:30 am. Today Charlie Gaunt, our guide, has an assistant, Carlos, who is in training to become a tour guide, originally from Venezuela, he came to Chile for better opportunities. It's a lovely sunny day and we make good progress traveling on Route 5 (the Pan-American Highway) westward from Puerto Varas toward Puerto Montt. Charlie gives us a lot of information about



Chiloé Island, one of the largest islands in Chile; it's about 100 miles long with a population of 200,000 people. In 1967 it was said to have no electricity or indoor sanitation. We arrive at Pargua, port on the Gulf of Ancud, where we, plus the bus, board the ferry for the crossing to Chiloé.

The trip takes about 30 minutes. The sea is very calm today which is not always true since this is the ocean. Loading the ferry is an art- there is a specialist on board to see that the cars, large trucks and buses are properly balanced. Charlie tells us that Hyundai, the Korean car co., is subsidizing construction of a bridge between the mainland and the island - some of islanders oppose this project stating it will destroy their way of life.

We land in Chacao, the main port, and follow Rte. 5 down the middle of the island before turning east and north to the more colorful area. The area around the port was once heavily forested and it was here that a giant tooth was unearthed. It was determined that the tooth came from an ancient mastodon. On subsequent digs a peat bog with human remains dating back to 12,000 BC was discovered, since this predates the settlements in Clovis, New Mexico it throws the origin of people in the American continents into debate. In any event people have existed on this island for centuries, the Spanish invaded in the 16th century and intermingled with the Mapuche natives - who

remained loyal to the Spanish king - even now the islanders think Chile doesn't do enough for them and they would be better off under Spanish rule.

Today the island has electricity, cell phones and plumbing but it is still heavily wooded in some areas. As we approach Castro, the largest city on the highest part of the island we see a tidal fjord with many colorful

houses on stilts, palafitos.



We stretch our legs in Castro walking through the park to visit the cathedral, a World Heritage site. The Jesuit influence is very evident in the island, the priests offered



gifts to the natives to allow them to baptize their infants. Subsequently the natives, who were skilled boat-builders, built wooden churches and cathedrals. As we enter the church we admire the workmanship of the majestic structure, but we find ourselves in the middle of a funeral service – the building is filled with children & parents and the priest is finishing the rites. We exit and walk to the bus, but



leaving the town is slowed by the large funeral procession for the dead child.

We leave the main highway, traveling northeast to Dalcahue where we stop for lunch in a hostel. It's a lovely spot very quiet and peaceful with brightly painted boats in a serene harbor and charming gardens.



Charlie told us that Marnella Tours sent a representative to here to train the hostel operatives for three years before opening. All the produce is grown in the gardens which surround the house and the food is excellent, king crab and lettuce salad, fresh homemade bread, salmon and blue potatoes etc.



Unfortunately the owner of the hostel, the mother, is not at home, but her sons prepared a great meal for us. This enterprise provides jobs for three people - something which is needed in Chiloe. It is interesting to note that the women are frequently the head of household on the island, because the men are away fishing and the women must assume the leadership role. Reluctantly we board the bus for the return trip. We travel north for a short distance before turning west to catch the ferry which leaves at 7 PM. We stop on the way back to walk across a long wooden bridge leading to small island where there is a cemetery, and oyster and mussel farms in the waters below.



We rush to catch the ferry & we're actually the last vehicle on the boat. We watch the glorious sunset from the upper deck and talk to a young guitarist who is serenading us, but we finally retreat to the bus as the wind picks up and it gets cold.



We return to the hotel in Puerto Varas around 9 PM and decide to

have a snack in the hotel dining room, Lucie and I share a ravioli order and try to get some chocolate ice cream with chocolate sauce. The waiter insists there is only vanilla and banana ice cream and no chocolate sauce - only raspberry. However when

the order comes it's vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce!! Ah well it's been a very long, but thoroughly wonderful day. *Jean Sedar*

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Puerto Varas - Puerto Montt - Punta Arenas - Puerto Natales

It's a very pleasant day at the Cabanas del Lago Hotel which is situated on a rather steep hillside overlooking a lake - quite a picturesque setting. We enjoy the area; Puerto Varas is a tourist town - small enough to traverse easily with many small shops and restaurants. Following a leisurely breakfast, Lucie and I stroll into the village stopping at the post office and the pharmacy before locating an interesting jewelry shop where both of us purchase small gifts. Having spent our allowance, we trudge back to the hotel. We gain entrance to the ground level of the hotel with the key card, but the inside door to the elevator doesn't work so we must climb up the outside stairs and hill to the main entrance on the 6th floor.

Once in the lobby we are just in time to bid Marie Peak and Mary Allan farewell - they are leaving to return to the USA. We go to our room to pack and check out at 1-1:30 PM

leaving our bags in storage until we depart for the airport at 2 PM. Charlie Gaunt, our excellent guide, is on hand to expedite the flight procedure and everything goes smoothly.



For me a small contretemps occurs when we board Lan flight #285 departing at 3:40 pm from Puerto Montt to Punta Arenas. I have my passport and boarding pass in one hand, and I'm struggling to put my carry-on in the overhead bin. After the bag is stowed and I'm seated in the window seat, I realize that I no longer have my passport - panic ensues!!! We explain the problem to the stewardess, but she can do little against the influx of boarding passengers. Suddenly Mary Kinsey, seated at the end of my row directly under the overhead luggage bin, stands up and hands me the passport which had fallen into her seat!! Whew!!!

The plane departs on time and we head south over the gulf of Ancud and the Golfo del Corcovado leading from the Pacific into Puerto Montt. We're flying at a low altitude and remote islands and uninhabitable areas are clearly visible. Veering eastward the snow covered Andes come into view below us - a spectacular sight with the sun glinting off the mountain tops - like giant dollops of whipped cream.



We land in Punta Arenas on time and are met by Walter (Wally) our guide for this segment of the tour. He's of Italian origin with long black hair, dark rimmed glasses, an enchanting accent and a no nonsense efficient manner. He and Tito, the driver, load our luggage into a van, we climb in and take off in the waning daylight bound for Puerto Natales which is about 3 hours away. Route 9, the only road into Puerto Natales seems rather featureless, little sign of

habitation and we're soon enveloped in darkness. Meanwhile Wally is giving us a lot of information about the Patagonia (Big Foot) region - there is evidence of human existence here dating back 10 to 12,000 years. The Spanish influence began about 200 years ago. Magellan actually used the Magellanic Straits when he circumnavigated the globe in 1519. I'm afraid I missed much of this information - the heat of the van and the darkness took their toll. We arrive in Puerto Natales around 9 PM - check in, grab a bite in the bar and fall into bed. *Jean Sedar*

Costaustralis

Pedro Montt 262

Puerto Natales XII Magalanes y Antartica Chilena, Chile



Wednesday, April 13, 2016 Torres del Paine National Park

We're up at 6 AM and have a substantial buffet breakfast, meet Wally and Tito at 8 AM. The day is pleasant with no wind. We follow Route 9 into the Torres del Paine National Park which is a huge UNESCO World Heritage site encompassing over 200,000 hectares - the largest in Chile - it was founded in 1977. In the 1980's most of the visitors were trekkers or



mountain climbers - not tourists, by the 1990's there were about 50,000 tourists per year. In 2015 there were 140,000 tourists.



As we ride along we see herds of guanacos on the estancias which border the increasingly rough road which deteriorates from asphalt to rock to gravel and finally mud



for a few miles. As we enter the park we are surrounded by huge snow-covered mountains and glaciers, and the road skirts lovely blue lakes and streams. We stop for a short 15 minute walk to view the magnificent Salto Grande Waterfall - the roar of the rushing water reminds me of Niagara. Back in the bus, Wally announces that Marnella (the tour company) is treating us to a special lunch in a hotel which is much superior to

the canteen where we were originally scheduled to eat.

Following lunch we drive a short distance to the Cueva del Milodon Natural Monument which is located near the Cerro Benitez glacier. Here the most notable feature is the huge Milodon Cave - it's probably 100 ft.



high and maybe 700 ft. long. At the mouth of the cave is a replica (life-size I think) of the Milodon, a prehistoric herbivore which stood about 10 -12 ft. tall with a substantial tail which helped it balance. Relics of this creature were found in the cave as well as remnants of other animals - dwarf horses, saber-toothed cats etc. which existed during the Pleistocene Era 10-12,000 years ago. Human remains and evidence of human existence in the cave have also been discovered. Many of our group walk through the cave - I decide not to do so because of the

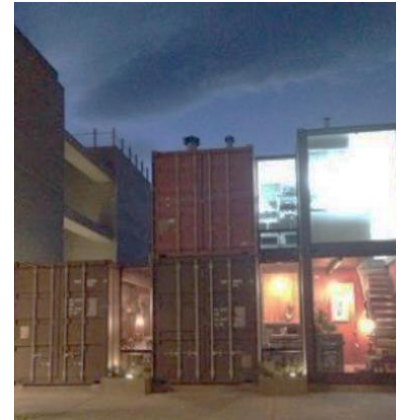


rocky footings and absence of side rails.

We arrive back at Puerto Natales in early evening and most of the group decide



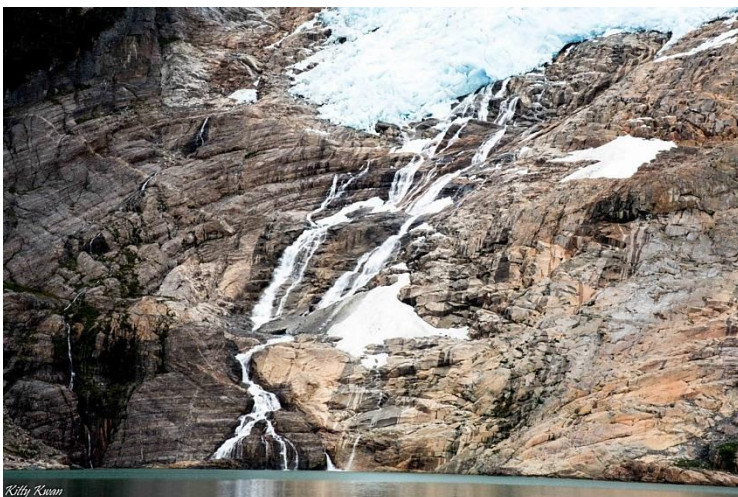
to go out for a crab dinner. Wally gives them directions to an excellent restaurant. Lucie and I decide to join them later, however neither of us listened carefully to the directions which Wally had given. Undaunted and assuming this is a small town we should have no problem finding the restaurant even without knowing the name, we tramp up and down the streets



encountering very few people. Of course it's much too early for Chileans to even think about eating dinner. Finally Lucie asks a store owner who points us in a certain direction, but we see nothing - no lights or signs- suddenly across the street we see someone wildly beckoning to us - it's Sue Trout who leads us to the restaurant which is just down the street - no signs or lights- and entered through a small almost secret doorway. This cozy restaurant was actually built from two huge shipping containers, Wally was right the food was excellent and we're the only diners, other customers arrive as we are leaving. The restaurant is called Santolla and its address is Magallanes 73 B, Puerto Natales. We stroll back to the hotel and make an early night of it anticipating a lot of activity tomorrow. *Jean*

Thursday, April 14, 2016

We're up early today - it's raining - some people were awakened by hard rain during the night- not us! We assemble at the van at 7:30 AM. Wally and the driver take us to the port and the catamaran however they do not accompany us on the boat. The catamaran is fairly large and there are maybe 40 other passengers in addition to our 12. It's still raining lightly as we cast off at 8 o'clock but THERE IS NO WIND Everyone tells is it's the wind which makes things difficult in this region. Within the next two hours it grows warmer and the sun starts to break through, more people venture up top to



view the magnificent scenery surrounding us. We see condor and cormorant look-out spots, but there is little activity due to the lack of wind. As we sail on the mountains of the Bernardo O'Higgins National Park come into view, edging closer to the mountains and the Balmaceda glacier, we notice waterfalls cascading down the surface of the glacier and rushing into the fjord around us. We're told that the

Balmaceda actually extended down to the water's edge in 1969, but global warming has caused a marked recession of the ice.

Once we reach the Balmaceda we turn to starboard, round a point and go a short distance before docking. The Serrano Glacier looms in the background as we disembark and divide into two groups. The larger - more venturesome group take the one hour elevated hike to the Serrano and those of us older and less agile walk fifteen minutes along a wooden path to the base of the glacier. As we come into the clearing of the forest at the base of the Serrano, I gasp and stop, transfixed by the stunning image off the ice confronting me!! Small icebergs are cleaving from the glacier base and crashing into the blue green water in front of us. It's a magnificent spectacle- spectra of color sparkling.

As we stand there in awe, suddenly a young man appears carrying a green plastic pail in one hand and a stainless steel

gadget resembling an ice pick in the other hand. He hops nimbly from rock to rock while filling his pail with ice from the glacier, turns, waves to us and disappears. I assume he's a naturalist probably testing the purity of the ice. We continue to admire the scenery around us and discover two varieties of mushrooms and several bushes which are familiar. Karin is particularly enchanted by the aroma of the damp forest floor which evokes childhood

memories.

About an hour later we board the boat and set off for lunch - suddenly the crew appear with trays of glasses filled with whiskey on the rocks!! Now it all makes sense - the rocks are the ice the young man collected from the glacier! Purity indeed - from one of the largest sources of fresh water on the planet. We tie up for lunch at the Estancia Perales where barbequed lamb (cow in Wally speak) and chicken are served with wine - very nice.

We return to Puerto Natales around 5 PM. Wally and the driver meet us and we start the 3 hour bus ride to Punta Arenas. This return ride is much better - it's still light so we can see much more although there's not a lot to see - the land is pretty flat and little evidence of people but we pass vast estancias with huge herds of sheep- somewhat like

western Nebraska. We make one rest stop about an hour into the trip, and find a large beautiful white dog and her adorable puppies there - hard to leave.



Continue the journey into Punta Arenas arriving at the Cabo de Hornos Hotel shortly after 9 PM. Lucie and I must have nabbed the penthouse suite - it's a huge room on the 8th floor with easy chairs and an American style bathtub so I don't break my neck trying to bathe. What a nice way to conclude a very memorable day and the end of an outstanding exchange. *Jean*

Everyone was up early this morning, looking forward to another highlight of our tour. We would be going on a sightseeing cruise to get a close look of the Balmaceda and Serrano Glaciers! Luggage was out and breakfast was taken. However, our guide seemed to be more excited than usual – given allowance that he is Italian. Something was wrong with our bus. He had to make arrangements for another bus to get us over to the pier before the sightseeing boat sails without us. All went well and we were the first ones at the pier.

The boat can take 70 passengers but they had almost a full boat so we were assigned two long benches seating 6 each with 3 on each side. Everyone settled down and the boat set sail!

The weather had been uncharacteristically nice to us. This was our seventh day of bright sunshine and no wind. Most people started moving outside of the cabin to take in the full view and enjoy the feel of being on the fiords. The boat passed by Frigorifico Puerto Bories Refrigeration Complex. In 1913, the majority of farm produce from Chilean and Argentinean Patagonia was shipped out of here.



After about 30 minutes of sailing along the Senoret Canal, we reached the mouth of Fiordo Eberhard. This was where cattle ranching started in the Ultima Esperanza area in 1887 by the German Captain Hermann Eberhard.

An hour later we sailed by the Estancia Margo Cattle Ranch. The fiords are their only means of access. Calm weather has one single disadvantage for us as we didn't get to see the condors. That is because condors have a wing span of 10 feet. They can only jump off cliffs and glide as a takeoff. There is a sea lion colony where they spend two months of the summer here. While the young learn to swim the adults pair off and mate for the next season. We arrived during the season of fall and didn't get to see any of them either.

As we sailed further into the fiord, the majestic Monte Balmaceda and the glacier leading off its eastern slopes appeared in front of us. The mountain is 2035 meters high. The glacier has been retreating. In 1981 the foot of the glacier was at sea-level.

At around 11 A.M., we docked at Puerto Toro, from where we walked the last kilometer to the base of the Serrano Glacier. The glacier pours into a lake and we walked through a wonderful indigenous forest along the shore of the lake. We heard the breaking and falling of icebergs from the glacier on our approach and departure but we missed seeing the actual break off! The scenery resembles the Glacier Lagoon in Iceland, but at a smaller scale. Both Balmaceda and Serrano Glaciers are in the Bernardo O'Higgins National Park.



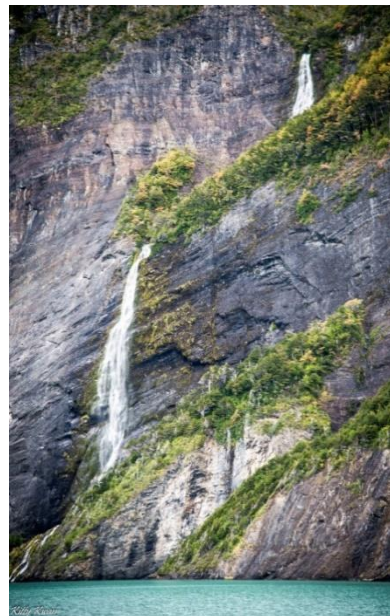
Our return journey began with a delightful serving of whiskey on ice. Around 2:30 P.M., we stopped at the Estancia Perales Ranch for a barbeque. A large plate with different kinds of meat was our lunch/dinner. The boat finally docked at where we started in the morning. Our guide greeted us and loaded us onto our bus for a three hour journey to Puerto Natales, where we would spend the night and catch our early morning flight home.

On our way driving into Patagonia area on Tuesday, April 12, it was dusk and we saw about 30 minutes of the beautiful scenery en route. On our way leaving the area today, it was dusk too but we were glad that we managed to capture an hour of great scenery off the highway. *Kitty Kwan*

Up at 6:00 AM. Good breakfast. Still dark out when we boarded bus at 7:30 AM for 10 minute ride to our boat/yacht, the Alberto De Agostini to view the



Balmaceda and Serrano glaciers. Our group was the first to arrive and we picked the two middle tables in the boat, six at each table. Started off at 8:10 AM after taking on lots more passengers to fill the boat. There is still no wind yet. Most of us stood out on deck for about 45 minutes before coming in for coffee at 9:00 AM. It was hot and served with cookies. About a half hour



later, the boat slowed down so we could take pictures of a cormorant colony on a cliff used as a breeding ground. This AM it is still very



cloudy and damp. Sky started to clear up around 9:30 AM. Still no wind. Pictures of Condor Cliff with water fall. Because there was no wind, the birds were not flying. Small and large water falls were passed before the Monte Balmaceda glacier finally came into view at around 10:40 AM . After docking at 11:30 AM, some of us took a

walk to the Serrano glacier. The walk took about 1½ hours and was very interesting. Icebergs break off approximately every 1 to 1½ hours. The two loud booms we heard while walking were the glacier cracking. The walk took us thru a path along the side of the mountain and we got fairly close to the glacier so we could see the crevices. In the river were many bergs that had already broken off from the glacier. Back on the boat at 1:00 PM we were served scotch-on-the-rocks that had iceberg ice cubes in it. About 1:45 PM the sun finally came out for a little while and we could see the trees and vegetation on the mountains. The wind did not blow the entire day; for this region, it was very unusual. Some very dark clouds returned and we thought it would rain, but the sun broke thru at 2:15 PM. We docked and walked to lunch at Estancia Perales. We were served wine right away. Lunch consisted of lamb and chicken with boiled potatoes



and lettuce/carrot salad. After lunch we boarded the boat at 3:45 PM for our ride back and were served coffee. Most

everyone took a nap afterward! Walter and Quito met us at 6:00 PM for the ride to Punta Arenas passing through Puerto Natales along Route 5 – the International Route. We passed the



border road to Argentina and passed the official Border about 1 ½ miles down the road. No one is stopped because there is nowhere to go! Arrived at Cabo de Hornos Hotel in Punta Arenas at 9:00 PM. Checked in, took luggage to room and went down and had a really good club sandwich and glass of Sauvignon Blanc. Took shower and to bed at 12:15 AM. *Sue Trout*

April 15, 2016

We had breakfast at 7 AM at our Hotel Cabo de Hornos. We left for the airport at about 8:30 AM for our 10 AM flight from Punta Arenas airport to Santiago. We saw a little of the town as we drove to the airport.

Kitty and Mary Kinsey went into Santiago for a quick visit to the Museum of Pre-Columbian Art which was missed on April 7 because of the delayed flight. Kitty took beautiful pictures there.





Our connecting flight to Houston, Texas was not until about 10 PM so we had a long time at the airport. There were no seats, so Mary Neale and I had lunch for about 4 hours (the only seating arrangement to be found.). At 7 PM we checked in, went to security and finally found seating at the gate. Plane left at 10 PM and we were on our way home.
Val Bolan

Larre and I were so sorry to have missed this adventure but thank you for making us a part of it in pictures. *Sue Hoke*

FF Southern New Jersey, USA

FF La Serena, Chile



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FF Southern NJ **FF La Serena**



Larre & Sue Hoke **Margarita Valenzuela, ED**
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