



CHILE

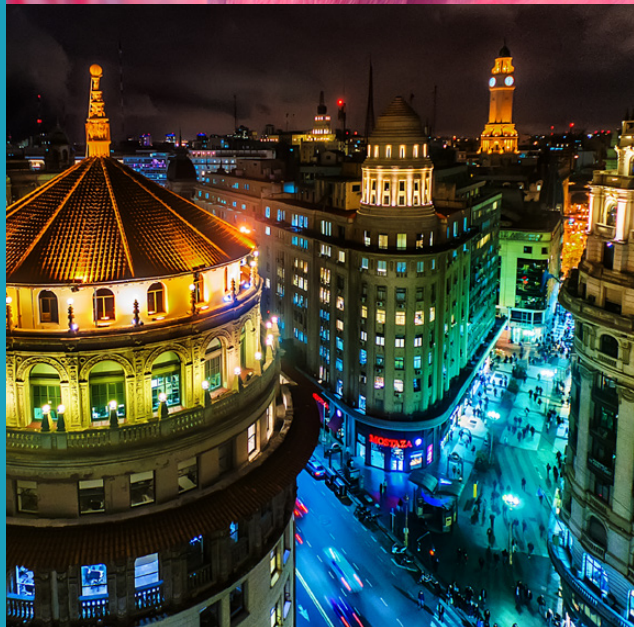
ARGENTINA

BRAZIL

WITH FLAMBOYANT CITIES, LUNAR LANDSCAPES
AND PASSIONATE PEOPLE, THESE INCREDIBLE
COUNTRIES BEGUILLE AND AMAZE WITH THEIR
DIVERSITY AND ENERGY.



Samantha Wilson describes her journey through
these three contrasting countries – from
tango dancers and gaucho cowboys, to glacial
wilderness and serene vineyards.





30€ 30€ 30€ 30€ 30€ 30€

For every snow-
capped Andean
peak there is a
cosmopolitan,
free-spirited city.

30€ 30€ 30€ 30€ 30€ 30€



SAND IN THE TOES: FROM PACIFIC BEACHES TO ARID DESERTS



Chile flies somewhat under the radar compared to its more flamboyant neighbour Argentina. But how can you not love a country whose capital city is towered over by jagged peaks dusted in snow, or where the wilderness is among the most extraordinary on the planet? From the colonial buildings of Santiago, to Viña del Mar beach resort, it was a tantalising taster of what lay ahead.

Chile stretches like a long finger down South America, its 2,653 miles traversing every imaginable landscape, from stark desert to Antarctic tundra. In its northern reaches, the Atacama Desert stands as the highest in the world, a harsh and forbidding environment where the sun shines in a cloudless sky and winds whip past volcanoes. The landscape is fantastical and more reminiscent of Mars than planet Earth. I watched wisps of smoke drift out of conical volcanoes, the steaming Tatio Geysers bubble, and lakes of red, green and blue lure Andean flamingos to their thermal waters.



BUENOS AIRES



WINE AND TANGO: THE BEATING HEART OF ARGENTINA

The Andes create a formidable natural border between Chile and Argentina, and the journey across them was an adventure of jaw-dropping views. In the unexpected way of South America, the harsh beauty of the Andes suddenly gave way to serenity. Rows of immaculate vines led to Mendoza, the capital of Argentina's wine country.

I had long associated Mendoza with wine, and a tour of the Maipù vineyards brought to life the skills involved in creating world class varieties in difficult terrain. Yet it was Mendoza itself which came as the biggest surprise. Laid-back and cosmopolitan, it had leafy plazas and a sophisticated nightlife. Departing the city, I crossed the green fields of the Pampas grasslands, tended to by the legendary gaucho cowboys. And once again, the landscape changed.

Buenos Aires needs little introduction. This big-hearted, free-spirited city shows the rest of the world what passion truly means. The buildings are iconic, and the Casa Rosada had me humming 'Don't Cry for Me Argentina', while Recoleta Cemetery, where Argentina's political greats are watched over by stray cats, stirred an eerie fascination. In funky La Boca, I sipped mate (a caffeinated drink which is the cornerstone of social life) in bohemian cafés. And it's true what they say: in Buenos Aires, people really do burst into tango in the streets.

BRAZIL: WHERE IT'S CARNIVAL EVERY DAY

If there's one city which gives Buenos Aires a run for its money, it's Rio de Janeiro. While the Argentine capital is seductive and sultry, Rio is cheeky and wild. I wasn't there for the legendary Carnival, but Rio and its residents seem to do everything with the same enthusiasm all year round. I lounged on Copacabana Beach, where beautiful people strutted their stuff along the sand, and looked down on the same beach from the lofty heights of Sugar Loaf Mountain. I headed into the clouds to stand beneath the Christ the Redeemer statue, looking over a jumble of neighbourhoods below.

Gritty, fascinating and exuberant, Rio was everything I'd imagined.

Towards the end of my trip, there was one last surprise in store: Iguaçu Falls. The long Paraná River ends abruptly as it reaches Argentina, and the water tumbles dramatically over the Paraná Shelf creating 275 separate waterfalls, the largest of which is the ominous Garganta del Diablo (Devil's Throat). I spent the day wandering the suspended walkways, protecting my picnic from cute coatis, and getting soaked as I stared into the abyss of smoky mist.

I headed into the clouds to stand beneath the Christ the Redeemer statue, looking over a jumble of neighbourhoods below.

NEXT TIME...

It had been a journey of contradictions, where the energy of these countries soared over mountains and deserts, and exploded in cities in fiery pizzazz. Yet in the far south a different world awaits. Chile's Torres del Paine National Park is a maze of granite peaks, turquoise lakes, blue glaciers and golden grasslands, while a cruise along the wild Última Esperanza Fjord promises 1,000-year-old glaciers and barking sea lions. But that will have to wait for my next trip.

3 countries you can't overlook...

CHILE, ARGENTINA & BRAZIL

14 days from £3449

Departing Mar 2020 to Mar 2021

REF: LCAB

CHILE, ARGENTINA & BRAZIL SPECIAL DEPARTURE - RIO CARNIVAL WINNERS' PARADE

15 days from £4149

Departing 8 Feb 2021

REF: LCABR/LCABRA

THE ATACAMA & PATAGONIA

11 days from £3799

Departing Feb 2020 to Feb 2021

REF: LCHL

SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN



IGUAÇU FALLS

