

CLASS OF 1965 TRAVEL FORUM -- USER GUIDE

DOWNLOADING

When this User Guide is displayed on your screen as a PDF file, following selection from the TRAVEL FORUM, you can copy all or part of it from the remote server into a folder on your computer by using the “download” feature of your web browser. Copying it into your computer by a using a “cut-'n'-paste” method, rather than downloading, is NOT recommended.

QUICK START

Refer to Pages 2-3 of this Guide to begin using the Travel Forum quickly.

The mission of the **Travel Forum** is to allow Classmates to share the details of travel experiences they have enjoyed, as well as personal expertise on interesting travel destinations resulting from periods of full or part-time residence at such destinations. Whether you are describing a weekend trip to the other end of your state of residence, or a far-flung journey to a continent, river or island at a remote corner of the globe, this is the place to document your experiences, and to find out about the adventures of others that someday may lay the groundwork for a similar adventure of your own. Facilitating collaboration between Classmates about travel issues is a key objective.

This **User Guide** explains how to locate a travel article you would like to read, dealing with a destination or route of interest in a specified geographical region of the globe ... or even a multi-day cruise in a blue ocean expanse ... or perhaps along a river or canal. The **Guide** also explains how to prepare and submit your personal travel story, along with (optional) photos with captions to illustrate it.

In this Guide, the general term “travel article” includes both the traditional description of a trip itinerary away from home and back, and also an article offering the author's expertise on a particular travel destination, where such expertise results either from full or part-time residence there, or from repeated short visits to that destination over a period of years.

Navigating through the Travel Forum is generally quite straightforward and intuitive. However, it is recommended that you read ALL of this Guide carefully at least once before attempting to navigate through the Travel Forum. This familiarization will help you avoid pitfalls along the way.

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Part 1 -- **QUICK START** Guide

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This **QUICK START** Guide briefs you on the quickest way to search for a **travel article** of interest in the **TRAVEL FORUM**. It also shows you a streamlined procedure to prepare and submit an article based on your own recent travel experience, or upon your expert knowledge of a destination.

Navigating most features of the TRAVEL FORUM is quite intuitive. However, when you need more details, the complete **USER GUIDE** is available also online. Remember that when you have displayed the COMPLETE USER GUIDE for review, on the **pu65.org** website, you can also download it as a PDF file into your computer by using the “download” feature of your web browser. After you download the full GUIDE and save it in a folder on your computer, you can view it or print it out.

NAVIGATING TO THE TRAVEL FORUM -----

Upon entering the Class of 1965 website at **pu65.org**, you must first log in with your User ID and Password to have access privileges for the TRAVEL FORUM section of the site.

Across the top page of pu65.org, there are eight links. Selecting the **NEWS** link produces a drop-down menu in which you click on **Travel Forum** to open up this section.

On the top page of the TRAVEL FORUM, you can click on the **USER GUIDE** button to open a separate browser window containing the entire text of the detailed TRAVEL FORUM USER GUIDE for your review and/or downloading if desired.

LOCATING A TRAVEL ARTICLE OF INTEREST -----

On the top page of the TRAVEL FORUM, there is a global map with text descriptions of geographical areas of the world, and types of cruising (ocean, or river/canal).

1 – Click on the **text description** for the category of article you seek. This opens up a page listing the available articles for that geographical region or cruise category.

2 – Click on the article of interest. If you want to return to the global map, click on the **BACK** button.

3 – When the article displays, you can read it online, or alternately you can copy all or part of the article into a file on your own computer. Use the standard “copy-'n'-paste” procedure to highlight and then copy the article text into a new file you create on your computer.

4 – Following the end of the article, you can enter and leave your comments about the article for others to read. (These comments are subject to review and editing by the Travel Editor.)

5 - You can also send a private email note directly to the **Travel Editor**, using the button provided.

6 – If you want to select another travel article, use the **BACK TO ... ***** button to return to the article list, and then click on the **BACK** button on the article list page to return to the global map.

PREPARING AND SUBMITTING YOUR OWN ARTICLE

FIRST – you should write your report and store it in a plain text file on your computer. Two types of reports are welcomed: (a) a **traditional** travel article about your travel experience, and (b) a “**destination expert**” (“DE”) article, where you simply offer to share your knowledge of a particular destination or region. Traditional travel articles should preferably be based on a trip you have taken within the past ten years, and you can include photos if you want. Information that is more current is obviously more useful to classmates considering travel destinations. DE articles can simply offer information based on a period of residence (full or part-time) in, or repeated travel to, a city or region that others might consider an attractive destination, whether in the USA or elsewhere. Overall, the TRAVEL FORUM seeks to encourage personal contact (phone or email) so that classmates can share experiences and information easily.

Before you write your travel article, it is recommended that you read the section **Tips for Creating a Useful and Engaging Travel Article** in the complete TRAVEL FORUM USER GUIDE online.

1 – On the top page of the TRAVEL FORUM, click on the **Enter New Trip Report** button. This opens the **TRAVEL REPORT** page where you can enter your article text and related information.

2 – In the **Region** box, enter the category (geographical region or cruise type) in which you wish your article to be listed, using the drop-down list.

3 – Enter brief text describing your final **Trip Destination**, plus the **beginning/ending dates** of travel. For a DE article, name the geographical region of which you have wide personal knowledge.

4 – Copy your article text from the file in your computer into the **Report** box, using the usual cut-'n'-paste procedures. Then enter your **Ratings**, **Recommendation** and **Cost** into the specified boxes for travel articles. This information is not needed for “destination expert” articles; leave blank.

5 – Click on the **submit report** button. If all is received properly, the **Confirmation Page** is displayed with the message “**Your Submission Has Been Received**”.

NOTE that your article will NOT appear immediately in the TRAVEL FORUM for viewing by yourself or others. All submitted articles are subject to review (and editing if necessary) by the Travel Editor, which may take from several hours to several days of elapsed time following your submission, depending on the backlog of articles to review. However, every effort will be made to process your submitted article as quickly as possible. The Travel Editor will send you an email notification as soon as your article is available for viewing on the website.

7 – **PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS** – You may optionally provide up to nine JPEG format photos and captions to illustrate your travel article. In the final editing process, these photos will be positioned at the end of your article text. If you plan to provide one or more photos, first read the complete USER GUIDE section titled “**Submitting Your Travel Article, Along With (Optional) Photos**”.

END OF QUICK START DIRECTIONS

***** NOTE THAT IF THERE IS NO ACTIVITY (KEYBOARD OR MOUSE) FOR 30 MINUTES, YOU WILL BE LOGGED OFF AUTOMATICALLY, AND MUST THEN LOG IN ONCE AGAIN TO CONTINUE USING ALL TRAVEL FORUM FEATURES.**

Part 2 -- Locating an Article by Geographical Region or Type of Cruise

Across the top of the main page of the Class website are these eight links ...

Home - Classmates - News - Events – Reunions - Giving – Photos - Search

Click on **News**, and then click on the link **Travel Forum** on the drop-down menu to enter the **Travel Forum** section of PU'65.

Upon entering the **Travel Forum**, you see the global map with overlaid **text descriptions** of the various continents and regions from which you can select travel articles previously submitted by Classmates. However, cruising by ship, boat or barge may in some cases cover multiple continental areas or geographical regions. Multi-day cruise adventures are therefore segmented by type of cruise (**ocean or river/canal**) rather than by geographical region.

Click on the text description of the particular **geographical travel segment** in which you would like to search existing articles. This selection links you to a new page presenting a list of articles in that segment. Each article title contains the name of the submitter, a brief description of the travel destination or type of cruise, and the date by year of the travel. If you prefer to search another segment instead, click the “**BACK**” button at the top of the article list. **DO NOT USE THE BACK ARROW OF YOUR BROWSER.**

To read an article, click on its title.

After reading the article, return to the article list ONLY by clicking on the “**Back to -(segment)-**” button, located at the beginning of the article. A **CLASSMATE COMMENTS** box is located following the end of the article, in which you can enter text documenting your reactions to the article for any Classmates who may visit this page. After you start typing text into the COMMENTS box, a **Submit** button appears near the lower right corner of the box. Click on this button to record your comments, and to open a new COMMENTS box below your entry. Once you have Submitted your comments, you cannot return to delete or modify your comments; but you can submit additional comments in a new box.

Your name and a time/date stamp is added automatically with your comments, which will then be immediately available to others who read the same article.

Of course, Comments are expected to be polite. While the Comments submitted are not read and edited by the Travel Editor in advance of publication, they are subject to later editing and even removal if deemed objectionable.

Additionally, you may send email with private comments, questions or suggestions directly to the Travel Editor, by clicking on the “**Email the Travel Editor**” button at the bottom of the article page.

Also, should you wish to contact the Classmate who submitted the article, perhaps to gain further information about his travel experience, then if contact information has NOT been included at the end of the article, search for the Classmate by name on the PU'65 **Classmate Directory** section.

COPYING MATERIAL FROM THE TRAVEL FORUM

By submitting travel article text and images for display in the TRAVEL FORUM, Classmates have agreed to allow copying of their material by others for personal use.

You may copy travel article text to load into your own computer by highlighting the text with the cursor, and then executing the standard copy-'n'-paste process to load the highlighted text into your own file for later viewing.

Likewise, a digital image illustrating an article may be downloaded into your computer through the standard image file download process. On a Windows® computer, right-click on the image at the end of the travel article, then select the option “Save picture as ...” and specify both your folder name for storing the image, and the file name for the stored image file. A similar process is followed on Apple computers.

Part 3 -- Submitting Your Travel Article, Along With (Optional) Photos

Want to submit an article describing your own travel adventure, or your expertise about a particular destination, for enlightenment of your Classmates?

From the top page of the Travel Forum section, below the global map, you can click on the “**Enter New Trip Report**” button to display a page which will lead you through the submission process.

Prior to linking to this page, you should have already drafted the text of your article on your computer, from which you can digitally cut-'n'-paste the article text. **Please refer to Part 3 of this Guide, containing tips for creating an article useful to Classmates, prior to drafting your article.** DO resist the temptation to use fancy formatting or typefaces in your article, as most of this type of formatting will NOT be supported in the final published article. And DO separate each paragraph with an extra line space, which enhances readability.

CAUTION ABOUT ADVANCE PREPARATION OF ACCOMPANYING PHOTOS: All of your digital JPEG photos – if any – which are planned to accompany your article must be in a folder in your computer, ready for uploading immediately after uploading your article text. **You CANNOT return later to upload photos for your article.**

Here are the steps in filling out the **Article Submission** page ...

Region -- From the pull-down list, click on the section (geographical region, or type of cruising) into which category your article content belongs.

Destination -- Type in here a concise description of the location of your travel adventure, plus the general time frame. Here are some format examples, related to several different types of travel:

- a) Major city destination: **Rome, Italy - Spring 2012**
- b) Small region within a country: **Tuscany - Fall 2008**
- c) Railroad Train trip: **Canada Coast-to-Coast by Train - 2008**

d) Sports destination: **Skiing the Andes, Portillo Chile - July 2007**

e) River Cruise: **Rhine Cruise from Basel-Bonn - October 2009**

f) Ocean Cruise: **Cruising Miami to L.A. Through the Canal - May 2008**

g) Destination Expertise: **Destination Knowledge Offered About Maui**

Dates -- Enter your travel's beginning and ending dates in the specified format (mm/dd/yyyy). Entry of dates for a Destination Expert article is optional, but may be entered if you wish to indicate the beginning and end of your residence (for example) in the destination region.

Article Text -- From the text file on your computer where you drafted your travel article, highlight, copy and paste the text (**only plain text**; with no embedded images or non-text items).

AUTHOR CONTACT INFO – At the end of your article, it is recommended that you list your phone and/or email contact information, which will facilitate collaboration between the reader and article author. Example ...

AUTHOR CONTACT: Phone XXX-XXX-XXXX or Email author@domain.com

PHOTO/CAPTION LIST - Immediately following the end of the text you have copied into the text entry box, add this special additional text to alert the Travel Editor about the accompanying digital photos to be uploaded, if any...

“ * Accompanying photos - X “

... where “X” is either “**None**” or the **number of photos** accompanying the article. The maximum number of accompanying photos allowed is nine. This “extra” text will be erased by the Travel Editor, and will not appear in your article as it is finally displayed on the website.

Immediately following this statement of the number photos, list each photo with its brief text caption, as shown in this sample listing ...

- 1 - Shipwreck Beach
- 2 - View of Hamilton from the harbor
- 3 - Fort St. Catherine

... and remember: Do not copy the image files themselves; list only the text captions.

NOTE: You should be aware that your uploaded article text, along with any related digital images, will not appear instantaneously on the Class website for viewing by others. All submitted articles are subject to review (and editing as necessary) by the Travel Editor, which may take from several hours to several days of elapsed time following your submission, depending on the backlog of articles to review. However, every effort will be made to process your submitted article as quickly as possible. The Travel Editor will send you an email notification as soon as your article is available for viewing on the website.

RIGHTS TO SUBMITTED TEXT AND PHOTOS. By your submitting your article on this website, you agree that Classmates may copy this material, including photos, for their personal and non-commercial use; and further that your submitted material is offered without any previous copyright restrictions that would prevent this type of copying. If you copy text and/or photos from the Website, please provide a source attribution if you should share them with anyone.

NOTE: Entries in the following sections (**Ratings** and **Trip Cost**) are not required if your article is a Destination Expert type.

Ratings -- Here you have the opportunity to rate your overall travel experience in these seven categories: **Travel to destination; Travel throughout destination; Sights, Food, Lodging, Accommodations, Side Tours and Service**. Your opinion of each of these categories can be stated in any of five quality levels, selectable via pull-down menu -- **Excellent, Good, Average, Poor** and **Unacceptable** -- as well as the non-committal "N/A" and "**No Opinion**".

The following drop-down menu offers you the opportunity to recommend the overall travel adventure to others via these selections -- **Yes; No; Possibly, but it's not for everyone** -- or, you can leave the box blank if you wish to withhold your recommendation.

Trip Cost -- And finally, please estimate the entire cost of the trip (travel, lodging, side tours and food) in round numbers. Merchandise purchases during shopping expeditions should not be included here, as this can vary widely and doesn't relate to the basic travel costs. This figure should be the aggregate of all travel costs for one traveling solo, or for all persons in your traveling family group. Your article text should clearly state if you are traveling solo, or otherwise how many people are traveling in your family group, so that the average per-person cost can be calculated from the trip aggregate total.

Although you have the option of not revealing the trip cost, by leaving the entry box blank, consider that this "cost" information can be quite useful to a Classmate budgeting a similar trip, and comparing your trip with other alternative travel opportunities.

DO NOT proceed to the next step until you have any and all digital photos for illustrating this article residing in a folder on your computer, ready to upload!

Submit or Cancel -- At the end of this Article Submission page, you can click the "**submit report**" button to upload the article text and other information you have provided on the Submission page.

Or alternatively, you can click the "**cancel**" button to eliminate what you have entered on this page, and start over by returning to the top page of the **Travel Forum**.

If you click "submit report" and all is received properly, you then view the **Confirmation** page which appears automatically. This message appears on the Confirmation page ...

Your Submission Has Been Received

The choices of how to proceed from here depend on whether or not you have one or more JPEG digital photos to upload, to illustrate your travel article. Any photos (up to nine maximum) that you upload -- each with a brief caption -- will appear only in the space immediately following the end of your article

text. There is no provision for positioning them throughout the article. Remember that you can refer to each photo in the body of your travel article, by its caption, thereby allowing the reader to correlate each photo to the related section of the article.

If you have photos stored on your computer, ready to upload, then you must do so now, as you will NOT be able to return to this page later to do so.

While the **CONFIRMATION** page is displayed, your choices are ...

Click on the “**return to travel page**” button, which will return you to the top page of the Travel Forum section of the website. Or alternatively, click on the “**upload photos**” button to begin the photo and caption upload process.

NOTE: It is suggested that you DO NOT upload digital photos that are larger than 600 pixels in the longest dimension. For any of your photos larger than this, please reduce to 600 pixels or less using appropriate image manipulation software before uploading.

All submitted travel photos are automatically reduced in size if necessary, and published with your article at a size that does not exceed 195 pixels in the horizontal dimension, and 300 pixels in the vertical dimension. Photos with dimensions 1:1 and 4:3 will look best, while photos in other H:V ratios will be allowed.

UPLOADING ONE OR MORE DIGITAL PHOTOS WITH CAPTIONS

The **Upload Travel Photos** page appears automatically; the displayed title of the page is ... **Add a New File to Uploaded Travel Photos**. This process allows you to upload one or more digital photo files to an internal folder named **Travel Photos**.

Click the **Browse** button to open a new window: **Choose File to Upload**. Then find the folder on your computer with the first (or perhaps only) digital photo file to upload, and click on the photo file name to highlight it. Then click on the **OPEN** button at the lower right in the window.

When the photo file has completed uploading, the newly uploaded digital photo appears in a new window, below which is an empty text box into which the photo caption text can be typed. Type a brief photo caption into this box, using “**ALL CAPS**“ format. Example: “**BARBADOS BEACH SCENE**“. Limit captions to a maximum of 6 words whenever possible.

Then click on the **Save** button to save the photo and caption in the **Travel Photos** folder, from which it will later be selected by the Travel Editor in the process of preparing your related travel article for publication on the PU’65 website.

A window appears automatically, displaying the contents of the **Travel Photos** folder, in the form of “thumbnails” of the photo and caption you have just uploaded, along with other photos that may have recently been uploaded by you or others.

You now have two choices for proceeding. If you have additional photos to upload, click on the “**Add New Item**” button, and you will return to the point where you can “browse” and select the next photo to upload from the photo folder on your computer. Otherwise, with no additional photos to upload, you have **FINISHED** submitting your travel article! To proceed to another part of the pu65.org website, select one of the non-Travel-related links on the page.

Part 4 -- Tips for Creating a Useful and Engaging Travel Article

Your travel article should be based on a travel adventure you experienced within ten years or less prior to the date you are submitting the to the Travel Forum. Of course, your more recent travel experiences can usually provide more accurate information about what will be encountered in upcoming travel.

Destination Expert articles can be based on your experiences with a particular destination region, either in the USA or around the globe, that may have begun even decades earlier.

Here are guidelines on what to include (and not include) in an engaging article on your travel experience, plus suggestions on structuring such an article

- * Avoid “fancy” formatting features in your text (multiple type fonts, font sizes, bold, italics, etc). With a few exceptions, these features will not be supported in your published article, due to production limitations in the underlying Travel Forum system software.
- * Include the beginning and ending dates of your travel (month/day/year).
- * Tell your story in the “first person” voice, which is usually more intimate and engaging than in the voice of a “third person observer” .
- * Avoid commercialization through overtly promoting any product or service. Comments perceived to be strongly commercial or promotional will be edited out of your article prior to publication on the Website. **This rule is not meant to prevent honest positive and negative critiques of various suppliers of travel services which you encountered, including restaurants, lodging, entertainment, travel agencies and transportation.**
- * The readers of your article(s), your Classmates, will appreciate honest criticism in the way of particular likes, dislikes and true disappointments related to various aspects of your travel. In other words, if possible include much more than just a bare recitation of where you traveled and when. (Of course, if your trip was an overall disappointment, you probably don’t want to document it at all.)
- * Be clear whether your entire trip -- if other than a cruise -- was a “packaged” tour, or whether you organized the itinerary yourself, and perhaps with the help of a travel agent.
- * Include some specifics on the commercial carrier (airline or whatever) you used to travel to your destination, including a critique on the quality of service.
- * Specify (by name, if possible) where you stayed overnight in commercial establishments, including a critique (likes and dislikes about the pricing versus ambience, service and amenities).

- * Provide critiques in a similar fashion for local “packaged” tours, restaurants and shopping experiences.
- * For cruises, either blue ocean or river/canal, include similar critiques for the cruise line, plus information about side trips and tours throughout the cruise itinerary.
- * Be specific about your mode of traveling either solo, or with friends, spouse and children. Mention the total number of people traveling with you. If traveling in a family group, what did the other family members think about various aspects of the trip? Include their point of view along with your own, if appropriate (e.g., did your accompanying young children or grandchildren find any activities especially engaging?).
- * Quite personal family anecdotes are typically not useful to include, unless they relate clearly to the “travel environment” that others on the same trip would experience.
- * Readers of your article will be interested in the ball-park cost of the trip you are describing. So try to estimate the total cost of all transportation, lodging, meals and side tours. As personal shopping expenditures can vary widely, there’s no need to include these costs … but certainly mention if any shopping experiences or market venues were especially memorable.
- * Please write as much or little as you wish. But any travel article less than 500 words is most likely inadequate to convey much useful information to your Classmates. A sample travel article is included below. It’s best not to draw any conclusion from the length of this sample article about the correct or desirable length of your article submissions. Your travel article could be shorter or longer.
- * Your Destination Expert type of article could be quite brief, as information identifying the city or region about which you have special expertise is all that is necessary to impart to your reader.
- * Include your phone and/or email contact information at the end of your article, as a convenience for readers who may wish to contact you for further information about your travel experience or destination knowledge.

Please do not feel that you must follow exactly any article presentation format. Be creative!

A SAMPLE Travel Article Begins
On the Following Page

SAMPLE TRAVEL ARTICLE

Jeff Gorin's Trip to Buenos Aires, Argentina - Spring 2003

Dates ... Arrival at Destination - 13 April 2003

Departure from Destination - 28 April 2003

My first travel south of the equator was in the springtime of 2003, after becoming fascinated with this region as described in travel articles on Argentina and Buenos Aires, its capital city. Buenos Aires is unique in South America as both a quite large metropolis -- about 13 million inhabitants in the entire metro area -- and the most "European-flavored" city on the continent. A large percentage of the population is descended from Spanish and Italian immigrants to the area over the past 400+ years.

Today, Buenos Aires is located where the first permanent settlement by Europeans was established in 1580 by the Spaniard Juan de Garay, who sailed down the Paraná River from Asunción (now the capital of Paraguay). Garay called the city *Ciudad de la Santísima Trinidad y Puerto de Santa María de los Buenos Aires* ("City of the Most Holy Trinity and Port of Saint Mary of the Fair Winds"). The short form "Buenos Aires" became the common usage during the 17th century. It is also frequently referred to by the even more abbreviated "BA".

Access by commercial air travel to this part of South America is most direct from by non-stop flights from Miami in the USA. I arrived for a fortnight visit on April 13 from Miami on a quite comfortable non-stop overnight United flight (4400 miles in about 9 hours on a B767 aircraft). My RT airfare from Miami to BA was roughly \$600; today, a decade later, the best flight deals are 50% - 60% more expensive.

International flights from the USA to BA arrive at the city's international airport, about a 45 minute drive from the city center. Tip: As with any international flight into a large city, visitors should be careful to select ONLY known-reliable public transportation into the center city. If you plan to stay at a hotel with its own arrangements for airport pickup (fee-based), use it! Likewise, ask your hotel front desk staff to call a cab when you need to take one. By following this formula, I had no bad taxi experiences. In most situations you won't want a rental car in BA, as city parking can be problematic and expensive, while public transport is both economical and very reliable.

In planning my visit to BA, I was interested in both managing my expenses to stay in the low range, and improving my Spanish language skills. Internet research showed that among Spanish language schools in BA, at least one (ILEE Argentina) offered an economical approach to a combination of half-day language classes, along with low-cost lodging in a very nice nearby hotel in the center of the BA business district. I elected two weeks of morning classes, which with a max of only six students per class allowed plenty of personal interaction with the instructor. The morning classes were Monday-Friday only, leaving plenty of time for sightseeing around the city.

Another attractive feature of Argentina for economy-minded tourists, at the time of my visit, was the quite favorable exchange rate at 3 Argentine pesos to 1 US dollar. In 2003, Argentina was in the early stages of recovery from a recently collapsed economy, which resulted in relatively low prices for tourists from the USA. Consequently, a decade ago I found that most goods and services of interest to tourists cost about a third of what we would pay in the USA. Though the exchange rate is now hovering

around 5 pesos (or more) to 1 dollar, and recent inflation has pushed prices up, today's tourists will still find very attractive bargains in BA and throughout Argentina.

My BA hotel was **Republica** (now called "Hotel Globales Republica), in an excellent central location at Obelisk Plaza on **Avenida 9 de Julio**, which is possibly the planet's widest urban avenue at 9 lanes in each direction! (Its name honors July 9, the Argentine Independence Day.) The major cross street near the hotel is Corrientes, a principal avenue for cultural and entertainment activities. The hotel staff was multilingual Spanish/English, and very helpful. From the internet, it appears that the hotel has been remodeled and upgraded since my visit, but is still moderately priced for the BA business and pleasure tourist market.

As with other BA hotels, Republica hotel rooms can be reserved either with or without the breakfast buffet; the buffet is a good value for the additional fee. If you stay at the Republica, or another high-rise on 9 de Julio, I recommend a room on the higher floors to mitigate the street noise. The city view from upper floors, including that of the iconic Obelisk -- a miniature Washington Monument -- and of the wide avenue below, is outstanding.

Staying at a central location in BA affords quick access to the local subway system, which is known locally as the SUBTE, short for "subterranean transport". Economical and efficient to use, the BA subway system is celebrating a century of operation in 2013. Three of the six subway lines intersect in proximity to the crossroads of Corrientes and 9 de Julio.

Known worldwide as the birthplace of Tango, Buenos Aires offers numerous studios where Tango dance lessons are offered. Even if you're not interested in brushing up on your Tango skills, take in an evening dinner-and-Tango show at one of the traditional clubs offering professional performances. I can vouch for the quality of both the cuisine and the show at "El Querandí", a club that dates from the 1920s.

Worthwhile attractions around the city include ...

* **Casa Rosada**, the official seat of the executive branch of the Argentine government. It is located at one end of the Plaza de Mayo, where significant political demonstrations have occurred through Argentina's history.

* **Teatro Colón** (Columbus Theater), an internationally renowned opera house opened in 1908 and venue for outstanding classical musical performances. Even if you don't attend a performance, try to take a daytime guided tour to enjoy the remarkable architecture.

* **Recoleta Cemetery**, which includes graves of many of Argentina's historical figures, including Eva Perón (aka "Evita"), plus several presidents and scientists, as well many among Argentina's influential families.

I highly recommend a half-day English-narrated bus tour of BA early in a visit to the city, to achieve a general orientation to the key neighborhoods and attractions of the metropolitan district. A hotel concierge can arrange such a tour on short notice, most likely with pickup at your hotel or a nearby pickup point.

Short side-trips away from BA can add variety to an Argentine visit. I can recommend two from personal experience: A day trip to the **Santa Susana Estancia**, and a quick weekend trip to experience the Iguazú Falls in northeastern Argentina. In medium or large hotels in BA, the concierge or front desk personnel can help you set up such excursions, or point you to a local English-speaking travel agent.

Santa Susana Day Trip -- *Estancia* is the Spanish word for a large ranch estate. The purpose of this day trip is to experience a typical “gaucho fiesta” at Estancia Santa Susana, a gaucho ranch of almost 3000 acres located in the district of Campana, just an hour’s drive by tour bus from central Buenos Aires.

This visit affords an experience of the authentic traditions of the Argentine cowboys and their typical gaucho skills, including a folkloric performance of typical gaucho dances, Tango and other traditional rhythms, plus a full gaucho barbecue luncheon meal that includes the best Argentine beef, salads, drinks and much quality Argentine wine! A horse-drawn carriage ride through the pampas is even offered. During the estancia visit, one can gain an understanding of how the cowboys of Argentina, who made up the majority of the rural population during the 18th, 19th and early 20th Centuries, made a living from hunting and from herding cattle.

Iguazú Falls -- To say that my weekend visit to the Puerto Iguazú region of NE Argentina was awe-inspiring would be an understatement. The Falls on the Rio Iguazú can be viewed in a beautifully-organized national park, located along the river which forms the boundary between Argentina and Brazil.

It's amazing to think that an AVERAGE volume of water passing over these cataracts is well in excess of 150,000 cubic feet per second, and that after a good rain, the volume can easily increase to 230,000 cu ft per sec. Compare this to the average of 65,000 cu ft per sec over Niagara Falls. There are over 270 separate cascades throughout the overall horizontal extent of the Falls!

These Falls are like a Niagara on steroids -- but in a sub-tropical rain forest setting that has a lot of other interesting aspects besides the cataracts themselves. The flora and fauna are also a feast for the senses. For example, it is said that there are over 50 species of wild orchids that grow in this rain forest; I noted a number of them myself during hikes. There are also numerous bird species that like the sub-tropical forest and river environments ... including toucans, hummingbirds, kingfishers and egrets which I viewed during the visit.

All features of my weekend mini-tour to the Iguazú region were arranged by a local BA travel agent after my arrival in Argentina. The tour included round-trip commercial air (a 2-hour flight) from the small "city airport" in BA, hotel lodging and an all-day escorted tour of the national park with numerous different views of the Falls. The tour guide picked me up in a minibus at my hotel, and dropped me off there at the end of the day.

I stayed for two nights in the **Hotel Esturion** in the town of Puerto Iguazú, which itself has a significant point of interest while being a 20-minute drive from the national park. This well-appointed but not extravagant hotel looks down on the Iguazú River from approximately 75 meters above the river level. The hotel has an excellent restaurant, with good food and service, as well as a large outdoor swimming pool.

Puerto Iguazú is located a short distance downstream on the Rio Iguazú from the Falls, at the confluence of two mighty rivers: Iguazú and Paraná. Since these rivers form national boundaries between the countries of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, the point in the middle of the confluence channel where the boundaries meet is in itself a point of interest.

Five hundred meters from my hotel is a beautiful little park on a bluff overlooking the point where the rivers meet. It's called the *Parque de Las Tres Fronteras*, or the Three Frontiers Park. Beautifully planted with numerous samples of the native sub-tropical flora, the park provides an interesting vista of three countries. So while I actually planted my feet in Argentina, I simultaneously "visited" (at least visually) both Brazil and Paraguay across the river channels.

In summary, my two weeks offered only a taste of the amazing variety of social, cultural and visual experiences offered by Argentina. For myself traveling solo, the cost of the entire trip from Arizona through Miami, then to BA and return, did not exceed \$3,000 in 2003 dollars.

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* Accompanying Photos = 5

- 1 - Obelisk Plaza Along Avenida 9 de Julio
- 2 - Casa Rosada Beside Plaza de Mayo
- 3 - Iguazu Falls
- 4 - Tango Dancers
- 5 - Gauchos at Estancia Santa Susana

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CORRECTIONS & IMPROVEMENTS

Using the “**Email the Travel Editor**” feature at the end of each article in the Travel Forum, please advise the Travel Editor of recommendations you may have for corrections or improvements to this TRAVEL FORUM USER GUIDE.