

OutThere

Experiential journeys for men of distinction



TRANCOSO

MARRAKECH

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GOTHENBURG

ANDEAN
LAKES



Crossing borders

Globetrotter DAVID DURAN is on an emotional mission to fulfil a promise he made to a dying friend as he crosses South America's great lakes from Chile into Argentina.



The Andean Lake Crossing + Isle Margarita

I'm no stranger to Argentina, having had the opportunity to visit various times before. However, I have never spent much time in the Southern part, Patagonia, so when an opportunity to travel to just a small piece of this gigantic mass of land arose, I jumped at it. All I really know of the area is that Patagonia covered most of the southern parts of Argentina and Chile; and that nearer to the south, it is possible to be up close and personal with glaciers. My itinerary is to cross an infamous glacial lake from Chile to Argentina, so I am excited to say the least.

It's really very hard to pack for such a trip. The temperature drops dramatically down South in comparison to both countries' capital cities. As I am also spending some time further North of my destination on this particular trip and it is also summertime in the region, I had failed to pack the appropriate amount of suitable layers, cold-weather wear and jackets. Now I realise that although it isn't actually snowing, it is still rather cold and will only get colder out on the lake.

What I couldn't help but pack was my broken heart; memories of a friend I had quite literally watched pass away in front of me just a few months ago. I thought that this trip would be a good opportunity to spread some of Erin's ashes, something I had started doing during my travels across the world, since her passing. All of her closest friends were given small amounts of her ashes, something she had asked for, so that she'd be forever in our hearts. For those of us who had trips planned, we were tasked with spreading her ashes all over the world in her memory. Since I travel for a living, I'm cautious about spreading them all at once and am very strategic about each place I opt to introduce her to. At times, while I had had every intention of doing so, thinking it would be a place she'd absolutely love, on arriving at a destination I found that something just didn't feel right and I would wait. But something tells me that this time will be the time.

To get to Bariloche, I'm opting to take the so-called 'long way in', which incidentally is also the most beautiful way to see the area, encompassing a full day of lake crossings. Puerto Varas in Chile is the starting point to the journey – a lush, green rurality that like so much of Patagonia was colonised by Germans at the turn of the 20th century. With this, comes displaced architecture and a laid-back, but efficient way of life to match. It is also where, after many mocking jibes by the trip leader, I find a shop to sell me a rather overpriced cold-weather jacket.

From the shores of the sultry Lake Llanquihue, you understand why magic happens for those who come here,

Charles Darwin included. This enormous and imposing lake was formed by successive piedmont glaciers some two and a half million years ago, the geological proof being the two imposing volcanoes – Osorno and Calbuco – that dramatically flank the lake and look down on the small village of Ensenada. It's almost desolate, yet breathtakingly beautiful. Light fills the sky with an indescribable quality as it meets an enormous army of evergreen trees that flank and cover the rolling hillsides down below.

Our goal is to get to the Vicente Pérez Rosales National Park, home to the ever flowing Petrohué Falls – a geological battle between water and fire. We hike a short trail that leads us to a scenic viewpoint overlooking the rapids and waterfalls that were formed long ago by cooling lava from the volcanoes. The volcanoes here are still active and the otherwise clean, crisp mountain air is tinted by what I can only assume is sulphur and volcanic ash. I think for a second about leaving a bit of Erin here, near the volcano. After all, she was always such a fiery character, but

something made me wait; I am anticipating something more.

Incidentally, a few days after my visit, the volcano we were just metres away from erupted spectacularly. I'm glad that I had not scattered some of Erin here, as I would have most definitely attributed the eruption with her presence there and it would have played on my mind as to whether she was happy or angry that I did so.

We continue onwards to the shore of Todos los Santos Lake where we board a modern catamaran at Petrohué Pier. Todos los Santos Lake is so called because of the Jesuits who were the first Europeans to see it on All Saints

Day way back in 1670. It is also known as the Emerald Lake, due to its deep green colours.

As we cross the magnificent water, I look back at the majestic Osorno, Puntagado and Tronador volcanoes as I also capture vivid, green images of the lake on my camera. At one specific moment, the sun hits the water and the sparkles from the emerald green hues catch my eye. Emotion overcomes me. Erin had always loved deep greens. At times when she would wear the colour, the green in her eyes sparkled just like the water, especially in contrast to her bright red hair. I instinctively reach for my vial of ashes as the boat rocks gently towards a small island in the distance – a lone, solitary, beautiful mound of land in the middle of this open, expansive lake.

I ask what it is called. I'm told that the name translates to 'Margarita Island' and I immediately know, that Erin, or at least part of her, is home. Erin and I weren't shy when it came to sharing cocktails together and something about all these happy coincidences and combinations of names,



colours and sublime beauty just felt right. I've not told anyone who is travelling with me what I'm doing, nor did I ask for permission to do so, I don't feel the need. I walk outside onto the deck, calmly. The sunlight suddenly disappears and rain begins to drizzle a tearful cry. And just as I have done three other times before this, in three different locations around the world, I let her go.

Travelling here is extraordinary enough – it's every photographer and nature buffs' dream, let me tell you that. But for me, this trip is special as I am able to have a little

moment where I can say goodbye to a dear friend. Even though I had already done it various times before and I will still continue to do so, it made this Andean crossing into Bariloche even more incredible.

David's Andean lake crossing was made possible by Borello Travel & Tours, often recognized for being among the best tour operators in Argentina, although they cater for the entire South American continent with various types of luxury travel experiences. www.borellotravel.com



GET OUT THERE

DO...

...pack appropriate adventure gear. There's definitely a price-fixing game going on in the local villages as I think many people forget, judging by the cost to buy kit on either side of the crossing.

...take the opportunity to be adventurous and navigate the Limay River by inflatable boat. Here you'll view volcanic rock formations, a natural habitat for bird species, deer and guanacos.

DON'T...

...forget your bathing suit; luxury properties on either side of the lake offer thermal pools and hot-tubs with spectacular views. Warm-blooded visitors may consider taking a dip in the lake.

...worry if you are too short on time to do the crossing, you can still visit the 'twin cities' of Puerto Varas and Bariloche. Both are accessible by flying from Santiago and Buenos Aires respectively.