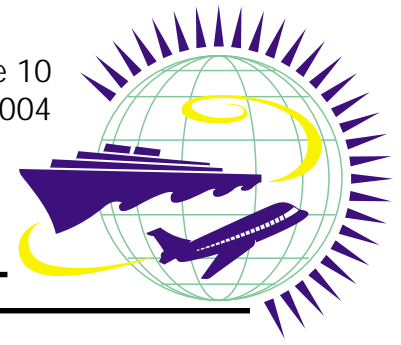


Routon's **ROUSING** Reports

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A Routon's Romantic Reservations Publication – not for resale

For those of you who emailed or called asking what happened to your copy of the July, 2004 issue of RRR, HERE it is! And I am going to date it July – maybe I'll date it "Late July"? As I write this (actually in July), the year is half gone. Where did it go?

Of course, the first three months we were either in the UK or on the "tapering off" cruise around South America. If you recall, we were going to taper off the long winter cruises with 50 days around South America from and to Ft. Lauderdale. Then Cunard offered 75 days from and to Southampton but via Ft. Lauderdale for a pittance more. Since "Bargain" is my middle name, we decided to taper off a bit longer, but still goodbye to the long, world cruises – right!

The trip from England was rough but the arrival in Ft. Lauderdale seemed smooth. And then things got interesting. Apparently there was a major misunderstanding between Cunard in Miami and the US Coast Guard about scheduling the mandatory inspection. It seems this was quickly made worse by someone demanding immediate attention. And "attention" we received. The ship got the inspection of the year! In the meantime, the 450 people who were due to embark had to be put into hotels as they were not allowed to board until the inspection was completed – a full day later. How did this affect us? Not much really, except we also were given the \$183 per person on board credit and the 25% discount coupon for a cruise in 2004-5. Now the longer the cruise, the greater the value, right? Remember also that "Bargain" is my middle name. 'Nuff said (and hello to QE 2 World Cruise 2005).

We did have one other effect from the delay. We had made prior arrangements to have lunch with some friends. They would pick us up that morning, we would go to a nearby hotel for lunch, and Mark (Helen's son) would pick us up there in mid-afternoon. It turns out the hotel was one being used by Cunard to hold the



Breathtaking beauty in the Beagle Channel of southern Chile

unhappy, new embarkees. As we walked through the lobby, one of the hostesses rushed over and asked, "Are you sailing on the Caronia tonight?" I quite truthfully said, "Yes" (and for once Helen said nothing). At this, the lady pressed two vouchers for lunch into my hand and rushed away. A discount coupon worth thousands, onboard credits, AND a free lunch – not a bad day's work!

But back to the trip. The cruise was great, southern Chile beautiful, Buenos Aires a delight, some great new friends, and brief but wonderful visits with old friends in the UK. Even good weather most of the time. Yes, even in England. This was my first week or longer visit to the UK since the mid 1990's and a first ever for Helen. Many things seemed the same. Even the 16th century, stone tea cottage with the outstanding scones is still there in Llanrwst, Wales – but, it was a Monday and, alas, it was closed. Our friends – amazingly – don't look older, and I can still drive on the left just fine. Just one shocking change – the prices! OUCH! Where they used to be 50% more than the US, this time they seemed to be at least double. A fraction of this is due to the weak dollar, but I

noticed that the pub lunch of fish and chips or a ploughman's that I remember at three pounds has now been renamed to something more exotic and is six pounds – no dollar conversion here. So, if you go, prepay using bargains offered here in the US and take a credit card with a large limit. And to you Brits, you'd better come to see us – but be sure to bring an extra suitcase for the bargains.

For me, the two high points of the cruise itself were southern Chile and Buenos Aires. I had been to Buenos Aires – or BA – before and knew it was *THE* premier city of all South America. But this visit exceeded all expectations thanks to Ariana Kaplun, a guide recommended by a friend who was there the year prior. We had organized a small group of 10 for the day and a half we were in port. Everyone said – some repeatedly – that Ariana had made BA the highlight of the trip. (Don't fail to contact me for her address if you are going.)

Buenos Aires is a city of 8 million and is like no other in South America. It was built to emulate Paris. It has wide avenues, narrow cross streets, much French architecture, parks and plazas everywhere, and trees and trees and trees and more

trees. Every street seems to be lined with trees, the parks are full of trees, mature and beautiful green trees in every direction you look. They are everywhere. And, here's the big surprise, *none* of them are native. The area was, until 1860 or so, totally treeless. Now there are literally tens of tens of thousands of trees. It was the President at the time who decided to give the city and the area the beauty of trees ala Paris. And he certainly succeeded.

For a brief background, Argentina was a Spanish possession from the 16th century and might have continued for some time but for the British. Did the British liberate – of course not. A smallish British expeditionary force decided to see what they could do and were having some success in outlying areas. Then in 1806-07 they tried to take Buenos Aires. Did the Spanish forces repel them? Again, of course not. But the locals organized and stopped the British cold, corralled them in a church, and the British sued for peace and escaped. This episode made the people realize they could organize and fight and on May 25, 1810, they did just that and took over the Spanish headquarters. This started the revolution, but it wasn't until July 9, 1816, that a local "congress" in the remote city of Tucuman formally declared independence. Thus the name for the widest avenue in the world, Avenida 9 de Julio. And wide it is, almost the length of four American football fields. Believe me, one change of the traffic light does not get you across.

The "girls" look for customers in the Carmenito district of Buenos Aires



Typical street scene in modern Buenos Aires

We saw as many of the sites of the city as Ariana could squeeze into six hours with squeeze being the operative word. La Recoleta cemetery is famous for being the burial site of Evita (but not her husband and she's in the "basement", 3 floors down in a fairly modest tomb). But La Recoleta should be known as a monument to the rich and prominent Argentines from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is their city of the dead and is reminiscent of the City of the Dead in Cairo with shoulder to shoulder, elaborate multistory (above and below ground) mausoleums. It even has a "slum" district on one side with crypts in a tall, apartment like structure.

Overall, interesting but sad – an attempt to take your prominence into the next life?

The sights included the Washington Monument like obelisk in the center of Avenida 9 de Julio, which

replaced a church from which they first flew the new Argentine flag in 1812, and the old Buenos Aires in the San Telmo district. Another stop was Carmenito, the immigrant slum and red light district of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Now it's a touristy area full of tango bars, art vendors, and colorful buildings. And, of course, we saw the Casa Rosario and the cathedral. There was even time for a coffee at the famous Cafe Tortoni, a cafe and coffee house a century and a half old and in the best Parisian style of that day – good coffee and a beautiful atmosphere. (And between the tour and dinner there was the leather shop – a tailor made leather jacket for Helen overnight, no problem.)

However, the piece de resistance on our first day was the tango show and dinner that night at the Esquina Carlos Gardel. The dinner was fine and the beer and wine (included) flowed freely, but **the show!!!** Fast like a flash, graceful as a pair of soaring birds, unbelievable precision, utterly graceful bends and lifts, sensuous and artful, and all to music that was just slightly eerie in its harmonics. Simply put, it was the most impressive dance performance I have ever seen. It must be seen. It defies description. Over two hours was not enough for Helen or me. All I could say at the end was "WOW".

Then, after a few hours sleep, we were off to complete our whirlwind tour with



From the 25,000 buried under the Monastery of San Francisco

a visit to the nearby countryside and the Tigre Delta. This delta is full of low islands formed by the sediment washed down and into the Rio Plata, a very wide and very short river that seems more like a very large bay. Our group of 10 had a long boat intended for maybe 80 as we were piloted to the Gato Blanco (White Cat) for a magnificent luncheon on its flower bedecked terrace. On our way in on the “streets of water” were little houses next to minor mansions, all recessed in trees and foliage heavy in its green beauty and with private docks in place of drive-ways. The only way in is by boat. With no roads, they have bus boats, building material delivery boats, garbage pick up boats, and even “supermarket” boats. Watching the boats go by, watching the private yachts bring their owners to the Gato Blanco, and having a lovely lunch on the sun filled terrace was certainly another high point of a wonderful two day visit - a visit at least two weeks too short.

The other well known South American city is Rio de Janeiro. Sadly, Rio was a disappointment. For starters, our blessings with the weather disappeared for our two day visit. One of the two big things to do in Rio is to be up for the “sail in”. First come the beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana, then Sugar Loaf, next is the magnificent Christ statue on top of Corcovado Mountain, and then past the whole city on your way to the port. We were up at 5:30AM just for this. And what did we find? Pouring rain. You could see Sugar Loaf as the ship passed but that was about all.

The other “biggie” in Rio is to go up

to the Christ Statue – a statue that simply must be seen up close. And there are tremendous views of the whole city from the top of the 2,300 foot mountain. We did go up the mountain on the cog train but the magnificent views were limited to occasional glimpses as the clouds around and below us blew by. Too bad, because this really can be so memorable.

We arrived in Rio on the last day of the pre-Lenten Carnival for which Rio is famous. We were too late for the parades, but we did see many of the floats and went to the samba show at the Platorama Club

to get the image of what the parades would have been like. I had expected the show to feature couples doing intricate sambas – similar to the magnificent tango shows in Buenos Aires. Not so. With minor exception, the show consisted of alternating numbers, one with girls and costumes and then variety acts to give the dancers time to change costumes. An example of the variety acts were some truly wonderful acrobats. But the main show vignettes, the “samba” ones, consisted of some dancers in elaborate and magnificent costumes mixed with gals with almost no costumes (brief bras and thongs). The elaborate costumed dancers moved around gracefully showing the costumes while the others concentrated on wiggling their ass cheeks vigorously to music that was mostly just drums. Seemingly, this is a Brazilian adaptation of the African culture brought to Brazil by the slaves of earlier centuries. I rather quickly got “drummed out”, but it was an experience.

Rio is a large modern city of six million with a fifth of that living in the favelas, slums known for both poverty and rampant crime. The beach areas of the city are reminiscent of South Florida and seem to bustle. The beaches are broad and full of volleyball courts and an occasional soccer field (in the sand!!!). However, crime is

Street scene in La Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires



high. Three people (at least) from our ship were robbed during our brief visit. It is not a city on my “must return” list.

On the other hand, Lima, Peru, and Peru in general are now on our priority list. We were only in Lima for a short day, but we had a great day, again thanks to young lady “guide”. Actually, Julia is the daughter of the van driver eight of us chartered for the day. She had ridden along to help and for a chance to practice her English. (What does Julia normally do? She’s a student with a night job in a Japanese karioke bar! Unfortunately, we sailed before we could see her at work – Japanese karioke in Lima, Peru???)

Lima, the capital of Peru, is a city of eight million people – of the 29 million in all of Peru – but seemed surprisingly clean. To be sure, crime is high and the people are very poor. But they are also friendly and their city is modern and interesting. In the center of the old city is a beautiful and very large plaza, the Plaza Major. It is also sometimes known as Pizarro Square for the Spaniard who took Peru and the Incas for Spain – a man revered by some but who was incredibly ruthless and cruel, and one not to be trusted by anyone. This large, flower filled plaza is surrounded by the Palace with its costumed guards (no changing of the guard – it was Sunday), the cathedral and Spanish style buildings in a bright yellowish color. It is really quite impressive.

Nearby is the Church of San Francisco, a monastery still standing from the early part of the 17th century. Helen and I toured the monastery, its lovely cloister, and the crypts underneath filled with the bones of the 25,000 people who were buried there over a couple centuries. Very eerie and very interesting. Among the piles of skulls are some old Indian ones interesting because of the misshapen crowns. It seems each of the local tribes tried to reshape the childrens’ heads to make their tribe unique – to each his own, I guess.

While Helen and I rested from our tour of the crypts and “investigated” Peruvian cerveza (beer), the rest of our group toured the gold museum and reported it fascinating, with many gold masks, etc., etc., plus ancient Inca armor, artifacts and costumes. We ended the day with a Peruvian lunch and a stop at an excellent Indian craft market. The latter stop was a



Rio's Copacabana Beach

Helen's Corner

Cruising around South America for the first time was truly exciting. I share completely Jerry's enthusiasm about Patagonia, Peru, and Buenos Aires, particularly the “Tango Show”. It was spectacular, an unforgettable evening. But the port that really intrigued me was not in South America at all. It was Ponta Delgada, one of nine Portuguese volcanic islands in the Azores, 900 nautical miles west of Portugal and our last stop before Southampton. Ponta Delgada is a fascinating island with a volcanic past – but not totally past. There is still enough fire to cook food in the ground, literally.

We arrived on a Sunday morning and the island appeared to be deserted. All the shops were closed. Perhaps everyone was at church. We did, however, find a cab with a driver who spoke English. First, he drove us up the mountain to the lakes in the crater of an extinct volcano. The scenery on the trip and throughout the island was beautiful, so peaceful and the air so pure, everything green, with wild flowers everywhere. Neat hedgerows separated the fields with just a house here and there as we journeyed to the top of the mountain. The lakes in the crater were gorgeous. It was so quiet and still with not a sound,

like being on another planet.

Next we visited a tea processing plant surrounded by “hedgerows” of tea bushes – all this on a scenic high bluff overlooking the sea – and the tea samples were good, too.

The driver then suggested going to the Valley do Furnes, a village surrounded by geysers, and maybe having lunch at a local restaurant there. That sounded interesting. As we neared the village we suddenly noticed mists of water (steam) shooting up through the ground. I couldn't believe what I was seeing – geysers everywhere, some big some small, many dozens, too numerous to count. We stopped at the side of the mountain where cold water was pouring out of a crack. I leaned over to drink the refreshing, ice-cold water, and suddenly I felt something very hot on my ankle. I jumped back – hot steam was coming out of the ground while I drank ice cold water from the mountainside. WOW!!

Nearby is the Lago de Furnes, a lovely lake of bath temperature water surrounded by a park area for picnics and fun and “island cooking”. This area is full of eerie, steaming holes known locally as “nature's kitchen”, and the local dish cooked is Cozido. Cozido is cooked by burying sealed pots of meat and vegetables in round holes dug in the soil. You can

great success with a full 30 minutes to shop before we had to rush to the ship. A great day but so much more to see in Lima alone plus Machu Pichu and much, much more in the countryside. To sum it up, as we were having our Peruvian lunch, Helen raised her pesco sour (local drink, tastes like tequila in a whiskey sour mix) and I raised my Peruvian cerveza to a toast, "Peru, may we soon return".

Staying with cities for the moment, there were some interesting small cities as well. Montichristi in Ecuador was full of colorful sights. The church with its reported visions of the Lady gives the town its name. The church is small but charming, the buses look like they were used in a psychedelic art contest, vendors from children to aged were gracious, and Helen got her Panama hat. This is also the home of the Panama hat. Now why is

Montichristi, Ecuador, the home of the Panama hat? Well, this is where they were invented and still made in quantity. They are very durable, serviceable, can be rolled and packed, provide shade, etc. Why are they called Panama hats? The workers on the Panama Canal in the early 1900's needed head coverings and shade for their necks and faces. Boatloads of these hats were imported for their use. From there they made their way for fashionable summer, straw-hat wear into the US. Since they "came" from Panama, voila "Panama" hats – but made in Ecuador. (See the things you learn by reading RRR regularly!)

Arica in northernmost Chile is another interesting little city – it even has a church designed by Eiffel of the tower fame. After making the short walk into town due to confusing the courtesy

(free) vans into town for taxis, waiting 10 minutes in the wrong line at the post office, and then struggling with Spanish only ATMs, it's become apparent that I must learn more Spanish. But not knowing Spanish and improvising with a lovely lady in a card kiosk was a delightful experience. Once we got across the concept of a birthday card for a 17 year old boy, she smiled widely and out came the perfect card – one with a very sexy girl on the front. We don't know what it said, but we figured Jeff (Helen's grandson) could figure that out for himself.

Arica proved to be an interesting small city, pleasant and full of energetic people who appear to be reasonably well off – quite unlike many of the other small South American cities. It is the driest area on earth with the town getting a half inch of rain *every 6 years*. Just inland is

"spot the pots" by the mound of dirt on top with steam coming through. Natural heat slowly cooks the stew. No charcoal required.

After visiting "the kitchen", we headed for Tony's Restaurant (Yes, Tony's). We arrived at Tony's as parishioners were leaving the nearby church and entering the restaurant for Sunday dinner. Some were chatting in the streets in Portuguese. They wore very basic attire—no fancy

Sunday-best here. I would like to have chatted with them but undoubtedly they did not speak English. The restaurant was full, but no problem – Tony escorted us upstairs to the fine-dining area where we were the only patrons. He then asked if we would like to order from the menu or would prefer the traditional dinner prepared "in the ground". Traditional dinner, of course. (Interesting – the locals seemed to be ordering fish and chips!) A

large platter of Cozido appeared with ribs, chicken, sausage, veggies of all kinds, plus a side dish of rice. Except for the rice, all had been cooked in a large covered pot buried in the ground for 4-5 hours, cooked by the heat from the old volcano. And it was really delicious.

Visiting Ponta Delgada will stay in my memory forever – a very fascinating place and the most peaceful island I have ever visited.

Helen watches as the pot (underground) boils in Ponta Delgado



Our driver helps Helen eat a platter full from an underground pot



the all out desert. Some of our fellow passengers played golf. There were white stones to border the fairways and black greens, sand with some kind of oil coating to give it a firmness. But they do grow olives and wine grapes with irrigation. Arica is also the port for the entire country of Bolivia. Actually, it was Bolivian at one time, then taken by Peru, and later by Chile. A nice stop, but not a place to live!

And there were others that left memories: Montevideo in Uruguay where Helen went to a posh hotel shop for a hair cut – cut, oil treatment, and blow dry for \$11! And this was for the services of two people: the hairdresser plus a receptionist to translate. (Must learn more Spanish!) For internet services, Valparaiso is the place – lots of internet cafes and only 60 cents an hour! But don't try to find a post office unless you can speak more Spanish than I! And the Falkland Islands, where Port Stanley is the home of a very specialized, niche market newspaper, the *Penguin News*. I didn't realize that penguins could read!

Buenos Aires was wonderful, but *THE* spectacular portion of the cruise were the days in southern Chile, the Patagonia area. Glaciers, fjords, narrow inland waterways, green mountains cut by waterfalls, jagged peaks with caps of white snow in mid-summer. Patagonia started with the Skua Glacier. Impressive, much like Alaska, but insignificant compared to later sights. Next was Puerto Chacabuco (called Cha Cha Buco by the English Captain!!!) and the countryside out of Puerto Chacabuco is lovely. Snow clad peaks (in their "August"), lush valleys with grazing sheep and cattle, jagged cliffs, and rushing and beautiful rivers. Not spectacular but very nice indeed.

Then into the Straits of Magellan to Punta Arenas – the southernmost city of Chile (and if you listen to the Chileans, southernmost in South America). The Straits have their own beauty with chain after chain of islands, each with their own snow-capped peaks. Located about half way between the Atlantic and the Pacific, Punta Arenas is a surprisingly nice city despite its remote location and the heavy

military presence to make sure the Straits stay Chilean and not fall victim to the Argentines. Here the land is more open and flat but with Sounds and waterways all around, and snow capped peaks visible in all directions – peaks as far as 100 miles away. (Punta Arenas also has an excellent barber named Domingo Soto if you need a haircut as I did. Domingo speaks no English at all, but this time I was prepared. I had had our wine steward write out instructions in Spanish.)

After visiting the penguins on Otway Sound and seeing rheas (South American versions of ostriches) and fox on the way to the Sound, we left Punta Arenas to wend our way through the islands enroute to the notorious Cape Horn. And our route took us into the Beagle Canal or Channel.

The best had been saved for last. The weather was perfect, as spectacular as the scenery it enhanced. And the scenery! Breathtaking beauty just off the port side – or the starboard side. Glaciers you could almost touch sliding down from the sheer faces of the cliffs high above, glaciers and waterfalls cutting slowly through mountains carpeted in the lush green of summer, snow capped peaks reflected in the still water, skies so blue they made your heart sing, the majesty of God in nature. Thrilling to see – to feel – but humbling and never to be forgotten. The most magnificent and impressive country I have ever seen with the exception, perhaps, of Antarctica.

The fjords, glaciers, islands and channels of Chilean Patagonia from Puerto Montt south during the Austral summer is something you simply must include in your "must see" list of world sites – and right near the top, I'd suggest. Bring lots of film.

Our good weather lasted all the way to the notorious Cape Horn; the Cape known for terrifying seas, strong gales, and ship wrecks. This time Cape Horn was a pussycat with no wind and only a gentle rolling sea. Cape Horn is actually an island and the weather was so nice the captain decided to sail all the way around the island. It was at cocktail time but so comfortable. We were all outside

in formal wear with a light jacket for warmth. It was a great finish to our trip down the west coast of South America.

Back home, the second quarter of the year was almost as hectic as the first. Helen made three trips with two for me. One trip we jointly made (well, sort of, our planes both took us via Detroit) was to see Mark (Helen's son) graduate from law school. The other trips were to see family and friends, most notably the newest grandchild, Will, who was born two days before we left in January. After seeing Elizabeth Grace and Will, Helen headed for Akron and I spent two weeks with David and Paula doing bookkeeping work. I still remember how – and why I quit that!

The rest of the year looks just as busy, but we are looking forward to some English guests in October. And there are some open days for the fall color season for you, too – if you hurry and book. Yes, we are busy and things are sometimes hectic, but God has willed us good health – my heart has been in sinus rhythm for over a year now – and we have no complaints.

Let us hear from you – email, card, letter, or telephone, one way or another. And 'til next time my traditional and sincere prayer for all of us, *may a kind and loving God walk with us and with each of you.*

Amen.



The Christ Statue looms over all Rio de Janeiro

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