

Ushuaia, Argentina - Skiing the End of the Earth! By Ross Baker

Our fabulous trip began with an overnight flight to Buenos Aires. We met with **Dan Griffith** of *Endless Turns* who was our local guide and ski guide for the entire trip. The arrival morning began with a quick city tour of BA including the city square, Evita Peron's tomb site within the Recoleta cemetery with some 4800 architecturally-rich crypts. The *9 of Julio* is the widest street in the world measuring 460 feet. That night, we were treated to an entertaining Tango dinner at the opulent theatre named after the famed Tango singer *Carlos Gardel*.

Twelve of us took the pre-trip extension to El Calafate where we hiked near the Perito Moreno glacier. We heard the thunderous cracking sound and saw the calving of ice chunks off of the glacier into the water. The next day, we took the all-day Todos los Glaciers boat excursion to visit three different glaciers along Lake Argentina. **Al Smith** commented that we transited breathtakingly close to absolutely fantastic icebergs and glaciers.

Next, the pre-trip group flew to Ushuaia where they met up with the main trip group. Ushuaia, a coastal, cruise destination on the fjord-like Beagle Canal, boasts itself as the southernmost city in the world. **Al** and **Sue Ann Smith** raved about their dinner at the *Bodega Fuegina* consisting of lamb with peppercorn sauce.

Monday was our first ski day at Cerro Castor (Beaver Mountain), a moderately-sized resort with a 195m base and 1057m peak mostly above tree-line. **Shari Clark**, **Zack Harper**, **Robert Kramer** and **Ross Baker** joined Dan to tour the mountain. The groomed runs were good, the off-piste runs were ice-crusts but skiable. **Marcin Nowicki** and **Gayle Dale** had separate collisions with snowboarders. Gayle was hit so hard, it broke her rental binding. **Dana Dale**, an avid boarder, rented skis and skied well even though it was his first time in 20 years. **Manolo Valle** took lessons so that the instructor could steer him away from avalanches (joke). Afterwards, he enjoyed plenty of fine Argentinian Malbec wine.

Tuesday had light snow with high winds at the top of the mountain. Some welcome snow puddles existed in the edges of some valleys, otherwise, the powder was blown off. **Mark Wottlin** and **Tor Lileng** joined Shari, Ross and Dan for some off-piste runs. At 11am, Tor decided to return to base. Tor's terrible detour allowed him to return to the resort about 8pm, after dark! Later, Dan took Shari, Zack, Robert and Ross for a nice fresh run out of bounds but ended with lots of trees. **Madhu Moza**, a never-ever skier, took two days of lessons.

Wednesday, the ski weather featured no wind but an ice fog iced goggles especially at elevations. Later, the ice fog added what Dan described as a "rime" layer of ice to the powder base where it existed. The skis were sometimes reluctant to carve the rime depending upon the thickness. After a long lunch, the weather changed again. A difficult whiteout at higher elevations forced skiing "by Braille" or escaping to lower levels.

That night, the group went for a dinner/dog sled ride and snowshoeing adventure at the kennels of a famous musher who had entered the Iditarod seven times. Gayle and Shari especially enjoyed the friendly and exuberant dogs which were in high anticipation of the event. The handlers showed videos and explained the breeding and care of the dogs as well as the history of mushing. At dinner, **Frank Yu**, **Ash Moza**, Marcin and Manolo were excellent conversationalists with many fine stories. Frank tried to convince Ross to run a ski trip to the indoor resort in Dubai.

Thursday featured a trip to the Tierra del Fuego National Park with a short scenic ride on "El Tren del Fin del Mundo", a cute recreation of a small-gauge steam train with decorative coaches. An announcer explained the history of the region. Afterwards, there was a scenic hike in the park with superb views. That afternoon, the group took a picturesque catamaran tour of the Beagle Canal passing by Sea Lions Island, Birds Island, the Les Eclaireurs lighthouse. We also took a short hike on Bridges Island.

Friday was a free day to tour the city. Some went to visit the historical Presidio and Maritime Museums. **Tom Huzzey**, Tor, Ash and Mark went skiing and reported great conditions.

Many, including **Sue Ann Chu**, **Gosia Jurczynska** and **Bruce Baird** commented that Dan, being very fluent in Spanish, was a very attentive and helpful guide. Everyone returned home with great memories of the trip to the *End of the Earth*.

