

2. MESOPOTAMIA REGION

The Paraná and Uruguay Rivers border the Argentine Mesopotamia. Until just a few decades ago, it was a peninsula whose only “dry frontier” was Brazil. Today, Mesopotamia is connected to the rest of the territory by great bridges and a tunnel under the Paraná River. The region is characterized by the variety of its landscape, from the gentle hills of Misiones; and by its mild climate and different people. The secret places, local mythology and physical peculiarities of the region lend Mesopotamia a tangible magical air. You can visit this region all year round; although there is no lack of places where you might refresh yourself, Corrientes and Misiones are a little too warm, humid and rainy in summer. Mesopotamia is the ideal region to fish dorado and roast it over coals, do some water-skiing or take a boat along a river, buy Guaraní crafts, take a swim, visit the Falls and go to the Devil’s Throat by ecological train, dance the Chamamé, go to the most impressive ruins in Argentina, watch butterflies and humming-birds or simply abandon yourself to the charm of this red-earthen land.

2.1 Province of Misiones



The Great Waters Rain Forest

In the northeast of Argentina, the Iguazú Falls roar unceasingly. This is the region of the great rivers, of the red earth and the magnificent jungle, a virgin jungle full of gigantic trees and extraordinary flora and fauna. Iguazú River, meaning Great Waters in the Guaraní language, falls down with a roar in one of the wonders of the world, the Falls of Iguazú. It is an area of exuberant beauty, which extends through the Iguazú National Park, the Falls of Mocona, the Pilcomayo National Park, El Palmar de Colon National Park, the Ibera Marshlands or the Chaqueñas Plains. The presence of man remains amongst all this glorious nature in the ruins of the Jesuit missions, which have been declared a Natural Heritage for Humanity by UNESCO.

Iguazú Falls

You have never seen a sight like this before, anywhere in the world. Nature blessed the Argentine, Brazilian and Paraguayan border with a show of her splendid talents. Iguazú Falls leaves every visitor speechless. Imagine standing a few meters (that’s right, a few meters) away from a volume of water dropping over 70 m (230 ft) through 275 falls over 2,7 km (1,7 mi) at a rate of millions of cubic litres per second. 18 km (11 mi) from Puerto Iguazú you enter the National Park of the same name where the famous cataracts are.

The frontier with Brazil goes through the Garganta del Diablo (Devil’s Throat) where the falling water gives the illusion of magic rainbows. The National Park is full of exotic subtropical vegetation, which surrounds the falls and has 2000 plant species – giant trees, ferns, lianas, orchids – 400 bird species – parrots and toucans – jaguars and caimans.

Argentine falls

Visitors of the Iguazu National Park, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984 owing to its beautiful landscapes and large biodiversity of the subtropical forest, are able to walk by the falls using the secure, modern catwalks of the Upper, Lower, and Garganta del Diablo Circuit. In addition, a train service has been installed, bringing tourists through the forest to the various trails and paths of the park. The train travels between 3 stations: the “Central Station” is located at the Visitors Centre, from which trains depart to the waterfalls; the second “Cataratas” station is situated meters from the start of the Inferior and Superior Circuits; the third “Garganta del Diablo” station is the final stop for trains. Use of the Ecological Train of the Jungle is included in the entrance fee to the Iguazú National Park.

Brazilian falls

Enjoy the falls on the Brazilian side! There are a panoramic elevator, footbridges and belvederes, all strategically placed in order to permit guests the best view and allowing them to see each and every fall. Guests also may have a helicopter over-flight for a bird's eye view over the falls, a really exciting and unforgettable spectacle.

Iguazú Falls - Excursions

Argentine side Falls (from Melia Hotel approx. 6 hours – from other hotels Argentina side and from Hotel Das Cataratas approx. 7 hours – from hotels Brazil side approx. 8 hours)
Departure from the Hotel for Iguazu Falls. Arrival to the Visitors Centre and the Iguazu National Park Entrance. Board a gas-propelled train at the Main Station, that take visitors to the upper falls circuit and the Devil's Throat (Garganta del Diablo), the most prominent and one of the highest falls. Be surprised by a strategic lookout point resting on the side of the gorgeous Devil's Throat. Then, visitors can walk more than 3 km (2 mi) along the Iguazú river canyon, via the lower circuit and the upper circuit to appreciate the flora and fauna, always feeling the almost 270 individual cataracts up close.

Half day Brazilian side (From Melia Hotel approx. 4 hours – from other hotels Argentina side approx. 4,5 hours – from hotels on Brazil side approx. 3 hours – from Hotel Das Cataratas approx. 2,5 hours)

Go through the road that leads to the falls, crossing the National Park as far as the Brazilian Falls. Walk along the paths following cascades and then walk along the catwalk that leads very close to the bottom of the Devil's Throat. One can be impressed by the first panoramic views of the falls on the Argentine side, like the Two Sisters, Bozzeti, superior circuit and San Martin Island, where the movie "The Mission" was filmed. The promenade shows a complete and panoramic view of the falls.

Remarks: as clients are crossing to another country (Brazil), some citizens need Visa.

Native Village "Fortín Mbororé"

It is a unique opportunity to make contact with the guaranies and with their ancestral culture. M'BYA GUARANIES of the Mbororé Bunker open the doors of their community to divulge the secrets of the forest, their natural medicine, their culture, songs, dances, crafts, philosophy of life and beliefs. It is the opportunity to discover the "Spirit of the Trees" with the guaraníes. It is a stroll through the forest, guided by native experts. The stroll begins in the entrance of the village where you will be received by a "native guide" who leads to the group to traverse of footpaths by the forest which they surround and they furrow the village. During the route the native explains his beliefs, his myths, his legend as also he describes the virtues of the medicinal plants and their uses. He introduces the tourist in the world of its beliefs while visiting the temple, located in the heart of the forest. He also explains the rituals of initiation and baptism of the small ones of the tribe. Afterwards, to continue with the route, the guide demonstrate the plantations, the houses and the traps of hunting for different types from animals which were used in ancestral times. The tour ends with a presentation of hadnycraft products, made by the inhabitants, using resources like wood, lianas, seeds etc. A unique stroll of encounter of two cultures.

Bird Park (approx. 2 hours)

Bird's Park is located 300 m (985 ft) before the entrance of Brazilian National Park. It's an area that combines ecological tourism and preserves the species. The aviary houses more than 500 different species of birds, local ones and from different continents. The walking tour

goes through a trail of 1000 m² in native woods. Visitors will have the opportunity to get in close contact with the birds.

Remarks: open daily from 08:30 to 17:30 hs

Wanda Mines (approx. 2 hours)

Upon arrival to Wanda (name given by polish settlers), you will visit the quarry where in a short walk these minerals are observed in geodes encrusted in the basalt rock of volcanic origin that forms the soil of the region. Then proceed to the shops where stones like amethyst, quartz, agate are sold. Generally this visit is combined with another tour, for example, Iguassu Falls Argentinean side or Jesuit Ruins.

2.2 Province of Corrientes



Ibera Wetland

The Iberá lagoons and marshes are one of the biggest wildlife wetlands of the world. Located in the province of Corrientes, this ecosystem is the largest controlled area of the country covering 13,000 km². It shelters a vast variety of fauna and flora. The marshes have a great capacity to retain water, regulating the amount of rainwater - between 1200 and 1500 mm per year. About one quarter of the water flows to River Paraná through the only superficial drainage system, River Corrientes.

The marshes are real floating islands (80% of the reserve) formed in the terrain when water cannot drain away from it. They are several feet thick and have trees and bushes that grow due to the nourishment of the soil. The wetlands are composed mainly of marshes, lagoons, and pluvial streams. The firmest parts can support trees -laurel, coral tree, curupí- although straw prevails -totorá, pehuajó, espadaña, paja brava-. The marshes are water deposits that are 1 or 3 metres deep covered with aquatic plants; they may also be floating formations that hide the surface with large communities of water lilies or in the form of dams. They are composed of floating plants like the aguapé, the irupé, the repollito and the water lentils. The marshes are possible to be visited from Mercedes or Colonia Carlos Pellegrini. The area is protected as Natural Monument and Natural Reserve.

Ibera Lagoon

One of the over sixty lakes that compose the Ibera Marshes is Laguna Iberá, which in Guaraní – the language of the natives – means sparkling waters. It's a unique starting-point for excursions through the reserve. For any lover of wildlife Iberá is just as overwhelming as for photographers and natural scientists. The intact environment is home and paradise to hundreds of species of birds, caimans, capybaras, marsh deer, otters, maned wolves, wild cats, howling monkeys, skunks, anacondas, piranhas and many other animals. If one dreamt of escaping civilization, getting in contact with untouched nature and being face to face with wild animals – Iberá will make anyone's dreams come true.

Carlos Pellegrini

It is called the "entrance" of the Ibera Marshes. It is located 130 km (81 mi) from Mercedes via unpaved road and 360 km (224 mi) from Corrientes (also via Mercedes).

Mercedes

Mercedes is located at the heart of Corrientes Province and usually is the meeting and departure point for a journey to the Marshes.