



John Collinson's Blog – Part IV

Jan. 17 – Today in Mendoza I had a pretty easy relaxing day, doing homework, organizing the trip gear, and getting together some laundry. Willy, on the other hand, went out rock climbing with Charlotte, spending all day out there. Not much happened today, except Fernando had a barbeque. The barbeques down here are so much different than in the states. There is no burgers and 'dogs, here they cook steaks, and pork, and sausages, a full course of each, it fills you up big time. Later we went to a friend, Martin's, house for another barbeque, Willie was almost falling asleep when he was eating. Charlotte came along, and everyone was in good spirits, chilling, and talking about wine and Aconcagua.

Jan. 18 – We slept in today, it felt pretty awesome. So after we woke up, we headed out for some breakfast. We had to bring Charlotte to the airport at about noon, so after we said our final goodbyes, she was off to the US, and we were off to lunch. I was then informed that Charlotte had paid for a massage for both me and Willie. After learning that I couldn't refund and get the money back for something else, I conceded and we went for it. I don't think I'm going for another massage anytime soon. Then, (I forgot to tell you) we have a bus ride to Patagonia today leaving at 8:00, to go visit Willie's family. So we headed to the bus station, and tried to get on the bus with no ticket, because we didn't have a printer to print out a ticket. I thought Willie and Damian were about to get into a fight with the guys at the counter, because they were telling us they didn't want to help us. But, we got what we wanted with no violence, and we wished luck to Damian, who has a huge trip ahead of him, and we got on the bus, the start of a 20 hour ride.

Jan. 19 – Waking up on the bus, looking forward to about 8 more hours, I decided to look at music on my iPod, which had about 12,000 songs on it. It then proceeded to blow up in my face, which bummed me out big time. So I listened to Spanish movies for the rest of the time. We arrived at the bus terminal, and one of Willie's brothers was there to take a taxi with us, because he doesn't have a car. It's the thought that counts though right? Anyways, we arrived at Willie's mom's house, and I met her, what a nice old lady, she is from America, so she spoke English. That night we went to one of his other brother's houses for a barbeque, and I met most of the family. Dora, his mom, Rafa, his oldest brother, Alex, a brother, Sophia, his younger sister, and many other nieces and spouses and things. They are all really really nice, and it was an awesome dinner, I felt right at home with them.

Jan. 20 – We got ready to drive out the Peninsula this morning, where all Willie's siblings have work. The Peninsula is an ocean paradise, with a little tourist community,

and seasons of whale watching, and the more just beach season. Right now it's the beach season. Shortly after arriving we headed out to go sea kayaking, Sophie runs a sea kayak business, and it was amazing. We cruised the coast, paddling into caves, getting lost in mazes of water and rock. After about an hour we reached a seal colony. There were huge males with harems of females, just hundreds of seals, everywhere. We paddled in, and you could get within 20 feet of the animals, and sometimes they would roll into the water to come swim and play with us. After a beach lunch, we went back to town, and traded in the sea kayak gear for scuba diving gear. Another of Willie's brothers, Juan, runs a scuba business, so he took us out. I learned the basics, then we dove down, exploring cave systems, and playing with sea anemones and huge crabs. It was crazy, from the top of the western hemisphere, so the very bottom within a few days. We returned to the beach, and then played a game of rugby on the sand, it was pretty fun, with all the guys that work for the family, and the family, it was all like a big family.

Jan. 21 – We didn't do too much today, just hung out on the beach, I went for a little run/fossil hunt, and we were hoping to go out and go scuba diving where a ton of wildlife was, but Juan was busy, so that didn't go through. We just went cliff diving instead. You could jump off the cliffs, then either climb a rope, or try to climb the cliff. Climbing the cliff was really really hard, but fun because you could just fall off into the water. Later that night we had another game of rugby, and then the whole family, and me, went out for pizza at a local pub.

Jan. 22 – I woke up today, not looking forward to the ahead bus ride. I went to talk to Willie about it, and up until the last minute he forgot to tell me that no, he wasn't coming with me, his brother had bought him a ticket right from Puerto Madrynn, (where his mom lives). So I was to ride the bus alone, and etc. he then informed me that I am to bring his luggage from Mendoza as well as mine. No big deal. I said my goodbyes to the family, and to my homey and climbing partner. Sophia then drove me an hour to the bus station, and I loaded up, and headed out.

Jan. 23 – We arrived at Mendoza this morning at about 10, and I had no idea if Willie had remembered to talk to Fernando about picking me up. By the looks of the bus station, and lack of people I knew, it looked like something didn't work out. So I waited about 30 minutes, and then decided to try to take a taxi. Bad idea. After a huge confusion, and arguing with the man who apparently didn't want to speak Spanish with me either, I was promptly dropped off in the ghetto of Mendoza. I started to walk through the slums, regaining my internal compass. I then recognized a certain step on a building, and figured out the direction I needed to go. After wandering through Mendoza, quite an adventure in itself, I finally reached Fernando's house, it was 11:30. I guess he had arrived for a taxi to pick me up at 11:30, when the bus was supposed to arrive. So everything worked out, and I took a shower, and started packing and repacking. I got everything together, and at 4:30 caught a taxi to the airport. Everything went well, until my flight was delayed. I waited and played cards with another guide from Aconcagua that was on my flight. The time crept on, and I thought I was going to miss my flight from Santiago, but finally they announced that we could board, and it worked out perfectly. Such is the end of my adventure in Argentina, and amazing place with an amazing mountain.