

### **Sustainability Guidelines: Argentina**

You are about to embark on a trip to the culturally diverse country of Argentina. The country is heavily influenced by its Italian and Spanish immigrants, giving Argentina wonderful food, dance, and lifestyle. In addition to having a rich culture, Argentina is also one of the twenty five most bio-diverse countries in the world. The geography of the country with the Andes in the west and the Atlantic Ocean on the eastern coast provides for rich species diversification.

#### **Environmental Issues:**

Argentina's natural beauty is, however, threatened by environmental challenges. The main environmental struggles that Argentina faces are the following:

- Poor air quality due to industrial and vehicle emissions
- Water issues include the poor quality and lack of water. Due to deforestation, the water is no longer captured in the forests when it rains; thus there is a large amount of water that is runoff and is not absorbed by natural sources. This water is wasted. In addition, Buenos Aires has depleted its aquifer and now relies on a water source that Uruguay also uses. Lack of water is also causing a 40% decline in crop output production.
- At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Argentina was covered by 100 million hectares of forest. That number has been reduced to 20 million hectares because of deforestation. The major cause of deforestation is logging by international companies. Forests are also dying due to water shortages and are being replaced with soy plantations, Argentina's main export crop.

#### **Environmental Initiatives:**

While it seems as though the environmental issues are overwhelming, Argentina has taken very pro-active measures to combat climate change and environmental degradation.

In terms of agriculture, soy is a key crop and a major source of income for the country. The cultivation of this crop is planned to expand further in coming years, meaning more deforestation. To insure that this does not happen, NGOs, government agencies, and businesses are working together to develop responsible alternatives. One example of this is the promotion of palmito (heart of palm). In Argentina, wild grown palmito can be sustainably harvested while increasing forest value and its productivity as well as the landowners' income. Therefore, the soy market would be replaced with the developing palmito market that can be canned and sold. The *World Wildlife Fund* has partnered with *Fundacion Vida Silvestre Argentina* to develop the palmito market as a viable alternative to forest clearing.

Argentina has also taken steps towards renewable energy. In the region of Patagonia, a wind project has provided renewable energy to over 300 rural villages. The villages receive small wind turbines which provide them with light, communication, and power for domestic electric appliances. The project is run by the Regional Centre for Wind Power. Patagonia, about 890 miles south of Buenos Aires, is an ideal place for wind energy due to the strong and constant wind. Villagers are able to power their homes and schools despite their remote location.

As a visitor to this beautiful country, you can help to preserve the natural beauty and not further environmental problems. Be mindful of your litter when in National Parks or anywhere on your trip. Make sure to dispose of it in the proper receptacles. You are very fortunate to be staying in many eco-lodges that promote sustainability and environmental consciousness in Argentina. Be mindful of your water usage while you are abroad. Water is a precious commodity in Argentina, so use it wisely. Do not leave the water running in the sink, shorten shower time, and follow the conservation practices used by your hotels.

### **Guide to Eco-Lodges in Argentina**

**Hostería Rincón del Socorro** is located on a 12,000-hectare former cattle ranch on the edge of the Iberá wetlands in Northeastern Argentina that has been made into a nature reserve. Guests and visitors obtain a good understanding of the local ecosystem and build an appreciation for the importance of wetlands and savanna landscapes during their stay at Hosteria. The main house on the property is the original house from when the land was a ranch; it has since been remodeled but it is still the original structure. The vegetables and fruits come largely from Hosteria's organic garden, picked just before they are prepared. Using only organic farming techniques, the gardens provide the Hosteria and all the people living at Socorro with fresh and healthy vegetables.

**Hotel la Comarca** is situated in beautiful Purmamarca, heart of the mythical ravine, Quebrada de Humahuaca, included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site List. It is a mere 50 km distance from the City of Jujuy and 180 km away from the City of Salta. The Hotel's singular architectural style is inspired in the region's landscape and culture, harmonized with the special natural surroundings. Its warm interiors are built using materials obtained from the area such as cactus wood, stone, hand-hewn timber wood, quebracho and poplar wood, canes and clay resulting in a modern uncluttered design.