

Animal rehabilitation work in Posadas, Argentina

Project Overview

Want to work with animals?

Argentina may not be the first country that springs to mind when you think of South American wildlife havens, but it actually boasts larger natural contrasts than any of its neighbours; the frozen landscapes of Patagonia to the south and tropical northern heat create a perfect recipe for a diverse natural world. El Puma Ecological Park in Argentina's laid back provincial capital brings you face to face with the results as it nurses sick and injured animals back to health before releasing them back in to the wild. The project also runs a breeding programme to increase animal numbers so there's a lot to keep you busy, before you head off to discover the rest of the continent's hottest destination.



Trip Highlights:

- Helping to look after some of Argentina's indigenous wildlife
- Soaking up the culture and lifestyle of this laid back small city
- Sampling Mate - one of Argentina's most popular drinks

Project details:

El Puma Ecological Park is an animal breeding and rehabilitation center near Posadas that aims to promote the welfare of wild animals that are native to Argentina. Their objectives are to help sick or injured animals that have been captured by forest rangers by nursing them back to health and to raise the numbers of native species by breeding them while in captivity. The animals are rehabilitated at the center and then once ready released back to their natural habitat, if possible. Animals include monkeys, birds, wild swine, jaguars, toucans, and other native animals. El Puma works with the Ministry of Ecology of that province and depends on them for funding.

Why the project needs volunteers:

Due to the lack of financial resources, the expertise and funding provided by private groups and international conservation agencies is essential to supplement what the Ministry of Ecology provides. This centre needs assistance in taking care of the animals, and volunteers will make up a substantial proportion of the labour force. It is also important to help highlight the importance of protecting Argentina's wildlife, which has long been victim to trafficking.

What kind of skills you need to go on this type of project:

The biggest requirement for this project is a strong love of all animals, as well as the readiness to be involved with the more basic duties that will be required. Volunteers should be committed and willing to help out wherever needed as the work is hard and can involve long hours. A love of the outdoors is also essential. As the staff at the project do not speak any English and so volunteers should ideally have a basic conversational level of Spanish or take lessons before arriving into the country and be willing to work on this while at the project. It is suggested that you take the add-on lessons offered when arriving into Posadas, ask your desk officer for more details.

Your role as a volunteer:

Current duties may include feeding the animals, cleaning and repairing all animal enclosures, building new enclosures, giving guided tours of the centre to any English speaking visitors, observation and data collection of the animals for research. You may also travel around the province with the staff who look for injured animals. It is strongly recommended that volunteers speak at least basic Spanish for this project.

Where the project is based:

El Puma is located in the small town of Candelaria which is approximately 12 miles from the city of Posadas. Candelaria, located on the Rio Parana, is known for its mystical Jesuit ruins, eucalyptus and pine plantations, and is the location of a lovely park that has a waterfall, canyon and campsites.

You will be staying in a homestay or guesthouse located in Posadas, a lively city of 250,000 and travel to your placement each day. Posadas boasts interesting markets, friendly cafes, cinemas and museums, and there will be plenty to do on the weekends. Volunteers should fly into the airport at Posadas (PSS) on the

specified arrival date. If you arrive early it is possible to arrange an early pick up at a small extra cost, please contact i-to-i for more details.

Fast Facts

Project Information

- Project Duration: Min 2 weeks - Max 6 weeks
- Project Costs: £699.00 for 2 weeks, £140.00 for every week thereafter
- Location of project:Candelaria, approximately 12 miles from Posadas
- Arrival Airport:Posadas (airport code PSS)
- Activities:Various types of work with animals, including helping with feeding and facilities maintenance
- Working Hours:Flexible; Monday to Sunday in rotating shifts, all other time is free
- Getting to the project:Approximately 1 hour bus ride (budget approximately US\$15 per week)
- Requirements:Minimum Age 18
- Other:Semana Santa (Latin America Holy week) will be from March 26th to April 4th 2010 and April 15th to April 24th 2011, you may have some disruptions to the placement during this time

What's Included

- Accommodation:Shared room in homestay or guesthouse
- Food:Breakfast and dinner
- Airport Pickup:Included on arrival date. Ask us for details if you're arriving early!
- Training:In-country orientation
- Support:Pre-departure helpdesk, Local in-country team and 24hr emergency support

What's not included

- Flights, Insurance, Visas, Return Airport transfer, Local Transport, Food (lunch not included)

Country Guide - Argentina

A little bit of history...

Settled by indigenous groups since around 10,000 BC, Argentina was marked as an Inca civilisation from the 1480s when the Inca's conquered the northwest part of the country. In the northeast, the Guaraní tribe flourished while the Pampas and Patagonia regions were home to nomadic cultures, including the Mapuches. The foundations for the Spanish conquest of Argentina were laid down in the early 16th century which culminated in the founding of colonial cities, most notably Buenos Aires as a major trading port. Argentina became fully independent of Spanish rule by 1816 and by the 1860s the country had built itself up as an attractive destination for migrant workers. Buenos Aires' economy was in full swing and the city's population ballooned with European immigrants including Italians and Germans. These prosperous times were not without calculated tragedy. In 1879 the minister of war, General Julio Argentino Roca, carried out a process of extermination against the indigenous people of the Pampas and Patagonia regions. This became known as the Conquista del Desierto (Conquest of the Desert).



With not enough industry for the growing population combined with the effects of the Great Depression, the country's booming economy could not be sustained into the 20th century. It was in 1946 that one of the country's best known leaders came to power, Juan Perón, who, with the support of his wife Eva (Evita), strove to give greater political rights to the working class and women. But a grim economic landscape could not prevent him from being ousted from power. The 1960s saw social and economic unrest in the shape of political kidnappings and guerilla warfare. In 1973, Perón briefly returned to power before dying of illness the following year. A wave of violence erupted in the country during 1976-1983, a period that is referred to as the Dirty War, whereby the military government sort to rid the country of its opposition and

leftist groups using harsh tactics. It's thought that around 30,000 people 'disappeared' during this time. Following its defeat by the British over The Falkland Islands War, democracy returned to Argentina and a civilian government came to power.

A period of seemingly economic well-being during Carlos Menem's term as president from 1989 to 1999, where the middle classes were comfortable and the peso was pitched against the dollar, was a slight calm before the storm. He was accused of corruption and by the end of his presidency the country was in economic crisis. The country has since been steadily bringing itself back from the brink and toward long-term stability.

Best time to go...

The seasons in Argentina are reverse to those experienced in the northern hemisphere, with January and February the hottest months while jumper and jacket weather is usually July to October. Buenos Aires is best visited when the temperature is mild and the streets are comfortably full; the city's best suited to autumn (March-May) and spring (September-November), while summer (December-March) sees its streets deserted. During the summer months, beaches and resort towns are busy and Patagonia and the southern Andes are ideal destinations as the days are longer and warmer. A good time to head northwest is during winter (June to August) or spring when it's drier and cooler. The ski season, meanwhile, runs from mid June to mid October and the slopes are at their busiest during July and August.

January, February and July are the big vacation months in Argentina so expect a healthy flow of visitors to popular tourist spots during these times, together with higher travel and accommodation prices. There are several festivals that are worth experiencing. Carnaval (Mardi Gras) takes place the week before Lent and is celebrated throughout the country and the Gaucho Parade in Salta in June sees Argentina's own cowboys in full regalia.

Getting around...

Flying is the most attractive option especially for long distances in what is Latin America's second largest country after Brazil. It's best to shop around the country's major airlines for the best fares available. For frequent flyers, national airline Aerolíneas Argentinas offers an air pass with discounted domestic flights but it must be purchased outside of Argentina. Most domestic flights are linked to Buenos Aires; flights from Buenos Aires depart from Aeroparque Jorge Newbery (AEP), 20 minutes from the centre by taxi and some domestic flights leave from the international Ezeiza (EZE) airport, which takes around 45 minutes to get to from the centre.

Buses are the most popular mode of transport and there's a variety of bus companies to choose from like Andesmar that serve major and remote destinations in air-conditioned comfort. Security is good and overnight services are available for long haul journeys. Sometimes two classes of service may be available, común and diferencial, with diferencial the better class. Local buses, known as colectivos, are efficient and can get you from A to B in good time. These are usually numbered and the final destination is in prominent view but it can be confusing as the same numbered services may travel different routes so it's a good opportunity to use your Spanish and check with the driver. Depending on the city, buses may accept coins, prepaid cards or tokens only so it's best to check before you board.

Car rental is a good possibility for getting around, if on the expensive side. The roads are generally good; like anywhere, it's the other drivers that you need to look out for. Police checkpoints occasionally stop drivers so it's good to have registration, licences and insurance details close at hand. Tolls also exist on some highways.