

Iguazu, World's Largest Waterfalls



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Ir. Chin Mee Poon is a retired civil engineer who derives a great deal of joy and satisfaction from travelling to different parts of the globe, capturing fascinating insights of the places and people he encounters and sharing his experiences with others through his photographs and writing.

The Aerolineas Argentinas' Boeing 737 landed at Puerto Iguazu Airport at 1:30p.m., 85 minutes after leaving Buenos Aires. Back in the Argentinean capital after our cruise to the Antarctica, my wife and I decided to visit Iguazu Falls, the largest waterfalls in the world. It was the height of summer, 11 years ago.

Our guide came in a car and whisked us off to our hotel for a one-hour rest. Then we were put in a van with other tourists for our visit to the world-famous waterfalls.

Situated on the border between Argentina and Brazil, Iguazu Falls comprises a basalt escarpment across the 1.5km-wide Iguazu River, 23km upstream from its confluence with the mighty Parana River. Islets along the edge of the 2.7km-long, reversed J-shaped escarpment, have split the water curtain into a series of falls, numbering 150 to 300, depending on the height of water in the river; 80% of the falls are in Argentina and 20% in Brazil.

The Iguazu National Park in Argentina was created in 1934 and 50 years later, it was admitted to UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. The adjoining Parque Nacional do Iguaçu in Brazil, formed in 1938, was admitted to the same list 3 years later, in 1987. Together, the two national parks cover a total 67,620 hectares for the protection of Iguazu Falls, voted as one of the Seven Natural Wonders Of The World, in a global poll in November 2011. In the language of the Guaranis, the original inhabitants of the region, who are skilled hunters, gatherers and boatmen, Iguazu means "big water". When she visited the Iguazu Falls, former US First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was reported to have exclaimed "Poor Niagara!".

After going through the Argentinean border control, followed by the Brazilian immigration across the Iguazu River, we bought our entrance tickets and boarded a double-decker electric bus to a resort. This was where we started to walk along a cliff to view the falls from Brazil side. We had only 1 1/2 hours to soak in the magnificent views.

The following day, however, we had all the time we wanted to enjoy the falls on Argentinean side. We arrived at the main entrance of the Argentine Iguazu National Park at 9:45a.m. From the Visitors Centre, we



followed a green trail to the Cataratas Station and boarded a green-coloured train to the starting point of a trail 2.3km away which led to Devil's Throat, a long and narrow chasm into which almost half the river water fell in a dramatic, thunderous roar. The 1.2km walkway, constructed of galvanised steel over the Iguazu River, went close to the Devil's Throat. The viewing platform at the end of the walkway also offered a superb view of the falls on both Argentinean and Brazilian sides.

Back at the Cataratas Station, we walked to the Upper Circuit, a galvanised steel walkway with 5 viewing platforms for spectacular views of the Salto dos Hermanas, Salto Bossetti, Salto Bernabe Mendez falls as well as some unnamed ones.

After lunch, my wife and I left the group to explore the falls on our own. We descended to the Lower Circuit. This was more than just viewing the falls from different angles. We came to a platform barely 6m away from the thundering Salto Bossetti and were drenched by the mist from the water curtain. The mist refracted the sunlight into a beautiful rainbow. It was a most exhilarating experience!

At the landing below, we could see a line of tourists waiting for a boat that would take them really close to the falls. We joined another queue of people to cross the channel to the little San Martin Island. From there, a flight of steep steps brought us back to the Upper Circuit and we finally returned to our hotel by bus at about 6:00p.m.

With this trip, I have visited the 3 most spectacular waterfalls in the world: Iguazu Falls in South America, Victoria Falls in Africa and Niagara Falls in North America. ■



We are pleased to announce that a travel coffee-table book, published by IEM, is now available for purchase at the Secretariat:

"A Globe-Trotting Engineer's Footprints"
by Ir. Chin Mee Poon

The selling price is as follows:
Members : RM50
Non-Members : RM55

All proceeds will go to the IEM Building Fund.

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Thank you.