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Second part of Sébastien Rossel's 10-month sabbatical leave



By Sébastien Rossel

Here is the second part of Sébastien Rossel's story who left for a 10-month trip around the world with his girlfriend (www.tourdesaignard.com).

30th April 2008, Kathmandu airport

"Hello, I can't find your reservations!" "This is unbelievable,

we spent several hours with the airline company trying to solve the problem. They ensured us that everything was in order!" "Hang on, I think that I have found 2 reservations, but the names are not right, they must have made a mistake when recreating the files. It's OK now, have a nice trip".

Right, this time we wanted to understand what has gone wrong with our flights. About 12 hours of telephone calls with our airline companies later, sending faxes from the other side of the world and a load of time wasted listening to the nerve-wracking hold music, we understood that it was the cancellation of our first flight which had caused us all this hassle for nearly 4 months. Fortunately, we would soon be changing continent and

company and that should put an end to all this.

A few hours of flight, returned us to the civilization of Hong-Kong. After 4 months of Asia, the mere fact of seeing a motorway with traffic signs appeared strange to us. We rediscovered the joys of air-conditioning, shopping centers, museums, etc.

3rd May, Hong-Kong airport

"Your tickets please. Thank you, have a nice trip."

Finally, a flight without problems! After a 23-hour flight, we arrived in Guadeloupe where we had reserved a bungalow with swimming-pool and a small car. It was fabulous, we spent 2 weeks unwinding, visiting the island and planning our next months.





We began our visit to South America with Ecuador. We took the opportunity to explore Quito and take some Spanish lessons. We reserved a plane for a week in the Galapagos Islands. We dived for 4 days. We saw whole schools of hammerheads, rays, and millions of fish. We also reserved a small 4-day cruise to explore several islands and especially the local fauna (sea iguanas, blue-footed boobies (a kind of gull), giant tortoises, etc.).

Ecuador is known for its volcanoes and landscapes, but also for its colonial architecture. The great difference from Asia, is the temperature. Even in Ecuador, in the depths of winter, the weather is not as hot as we had thought.

A culinary specialty of these countries is the cuy (guinea-pig). It has very fine meat, but there is not much on it to eat.

In the south, we visited our first Inca site. This empire developed from Ecuador to Chile with Cusco, its capital, in Peru. The north of Peru is not at all touristy. Groups prefer to go and see Machu Picchu and the Cus-

co valley. However the north of the country abounds in very important archaeological sites.

We of course visited Nazca and its lines and the famous Inca capital, Cusco and Machu Picchu. We reserved a 4-day tour to get to Machu. On the first day, we cycled several kilometers downhill on tracks. The second day was rather difficult with a long walk on the Inca track. On the third day, we followed the railway track to the village at the base of Machu. In the afternoon, we climbed the mountain opposite Machu for an unbeatable view (the climb was very long and painful, but the view was breath-taking). On the fourth day, we were up at 3 am to foot it up to the much-coveted site. We spent all day strolling around the site.

For our next visit, we went to the Atacama desert in Chile. This area, one of the most deserts of the world, is fantastic to visit. We discovered a salt desert with its pink flamingos, geysers and natural swimming pool (35° C in the water, -5° C air temperature), splendid volcanoes

and the rock formations of a lunar landscape.

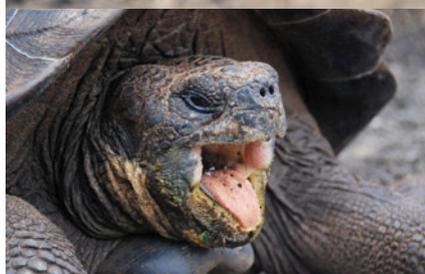
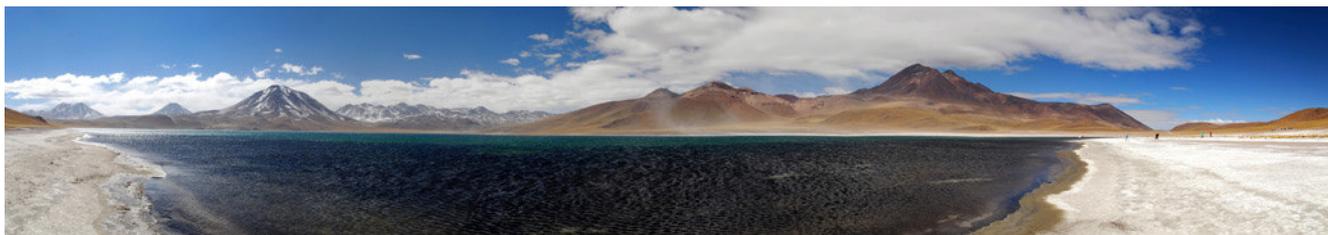
Next, we went to the capital, Santiago. We spent a few days with a friend there and took the opportunity to go skiing.

28th July, Santiago de Chile airport

"Passengers Rossel and Giordano are requested to present at the counter as soon as possible"... "Hello, your tickets please...."Here are your new seats, you are now in first class"

At last, a bit of luck with our tickets, we flew to Easter Island first class in a plane of the latest generation, great luxury.

Easter Island thrilled us. The landscape with its giant statues, Moais, scattered all over the island are one of the enigmas of our century. The nursery is a volcano where the Moais are cut. One can see hundreds of more or less successfully carved



statues there. We set out again in the plane for Buenos Aires, Argentina.

After a few days visiting this very charming city which resembles the Paris of the 1900s, we took a bus to the Brazilian border to see the Iguazu falls. We loved this area with its lush vegetation, full of toucans and where the weather is hot. To reach our next stage, we traveled by bus for 23 hours to Salta, a city in the north-west of the country surrounded by very beautiful rock formations. We descended the west of the country going through Jujuy, Cordoba, the vine-growing area of Mendoza, and on to Bariloche, a small village in the north of Patagonia which resembles Swiss tourist villages with its little houses, mountains, ski-lifts and chocolate (a treat after 8 months of forced abstinence) and its St. Bernards!

After some chocolate indigestion and a beautiful day's skiing, we crossed the border to visit the island of Chiloe in Chile and to take a ferry for a 4-day cruise to Puerto Natales, all in the South of the country. We tried to

set out on a 5-day hike in a park, but that was not very pleasant because it rained and our 10-kilo back-packs weighed a little too heavily. Back to Argentina, and a visit to the superb Perito Moreno glacier at El Calafate before taking the plane to the southernmost city in the world, Ushuaia.

On the way back to Buenos Aires, and before returning to Switzerland, we visited the Peninsula Valdés reservation. There, we discovered hundreds of whales, 350,000 penguins (give or take a couple), toninas (black and white dolphins), killer whales and elephant seals.

Back in Buenos Aires, we visited a last park full of birds and crocodiles and did a bit of last-minute shopping before taking the plane home. It took us about 4 or 5 days to get over the jet-lag and then back to work and our colleagues on October 1st. Most of that day was spent recounting our adventures.

You can read our travel log, and see some photographs on our site www.tourdesagnard.com (French only).

