

Iguassu Falls

Written by Julie Kerr Tecau

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Useful Tips for Experiencing Iguassu Falls – one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature

Why Should I Go to Iguassu Falls?

If you are planning to travel to Argentina and/or Brazil and are looking to add to your itinerary a 1-night/2-day stopover in another location, I would highly recommend selecting Iguassu Falls for that coveted spot. You will not regret it.

Iguassu Falls ("Iguazú" in Spanish and "Iguaçu" in Portuguese) - situated on the border of Argentina and Brazil - is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of the Seven Natural Wonders of South America and one of the New7Wonders of Nature. The waterfalls span over 1.5 miles and consist of more than 250 waterfalls reaching almost 270 feet in a subtropical rainforest setting. In a word - breathtaking. The sheer force of more than 1000 cubic meters of water per second tumbling over the cliffs is simply spectacular. (See my video below.) The national parks of Argentina and Brazil which are home to the falls provide excellent walking trails with a plethora of views of the falls and even a train to take you out to the top of the falls, making this experience doable for even the most timid adventurer.

Iguassu Falls is actually wider than the more famous Victoria Falls, but because Iguassu is split by islands and other natural barriers, Victoria takes the prize for being the widest. I have not been to Victoria Falls, but I have been to Niagra Falls on the border of the US and Canada, and I can say that Iguassu blows Niagra away based on the overall impressiveness of the falls but also because Iguassu is located in a large, protected national park therefore reducing the cheap tourist feel that many feel has ensnared Niagra.

When Should I Go?

Spring or Fall are considered the best times as the flow of water is still high but temperatures are more moderate. Being a tropical rainforest, the humidity is extremely high and temperatures average in the 90s in summer (December - March). We visited the falls in mid-October and found the weather to be pleasant (highs in the low 80s), the volume of water substantial and the crowds reasonable.

How Do I Get There?

You can experience the falls from either the Brazilian side or the Argentine side. Each offer different perspectives and boast their own "bests". The general consensus is that the Argentine side is somewhat superior to the Brazilian side. I think which you choose (or both) depends more on which country you are visiting for other locations as well – and be sure to consider any entrance fees and/or visa requirements.

In the case of my husband and I, we were visiting both Argentina and Brazil on the trip that included Iguassu but decided to experience the falls only from the Argentine side. We used Delta miles to obtain a free flight on Aerolineas Argentinas from Mendoza (wine country) to Iguassu

(Aeropuerto International Cataratas) with a connection in Buenos Aires. We arrived in the early afternoon and used the airport's official taxi stand to secure a quick cab ride to our hotel. (If you

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decide to stay on the Brazilian side, there is a Brazilian Iguassu airport as well.)

Where Should I Stay?

While there are many accommodations available in each of the country's Iguassu towns, I recommend staying in one of the two hotels located within the National Parks. The Brazilian side

has the Hotel das Cataratas, and the Argentine side has the Sheraton Iguazu Resort & Spa. We stayed at the Sheraton and were able to use Starwood points to stay for no cost, which made it an

even better choice. (Note: we accumulated the Starwood points by obtaining a Starwood credit card in advance of our trip. We follow "The Points Guy" for excellent tips on accumulating points to reduce the cost of travel.) If you have seen the reviews on Trip Advisor, you know that this hotel does not get the greatest of reviews. Having just come from the Park Hyatt Mendoza (a Conde Nast Traveler "Gold List" hotel), I can say that the Sheraton Iguassu was definitely a significant downgrade; however, if you want to stay in the best location on the Argentine side, this is the only choice. When you walk into the lobby, you immediately see a portion of the beautiful waterfalls in the distance – instant gratification, if you ask me.

Some of the advantages of staying at the Sheraton Iguassu are:

1) you are only a 5-minute walk to the waterfalls, allowing you to get there early and beat the crowds. This alone makes staying at this hotel absolutely worth it;

2) you can request a room with views of the falls;

3) the patio of the lobby bar and restaurant affords views of the falls;

4) there are several restaurants (including a lovely breakfast buffet) from which to choose and the room service was actually quite tasty as well;

5) electrical outlet adapters are available upon request;

6) a very nice gym is available for use in the spa.

A few downsides to staying at the Sheraton Iguassu are:

1) the décor feels a bit outdated;

2) the water pressure in the showers is not as great as a typical Sheraton, but it is certainly acceptable (and I have very thick, long hair);

3) The rooms and bathrooms feel more like a Holiday Inn than a Sheraton Resort & Spa.

What Should I Wear?

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The wardrobe you choose will somewhat vary depending on the time of year you visit Iguassu, but in general, I recommend the following:

- Dress in lightweight layers as much as possible. It can get quite hot, but there are also mosquitoes (some carrying Dengue fever) in the rainforest, so it is best to cover your skin as much as possible.

There is nothing glamorous about the dress code here, and I am not one who likes to be underdressed. Wear something sensible that will allow you to walk long distances, be comfortable and keep you protected from the sun and insects. I wore workout gear – exercise bra, shirt and pants – and running shoes.

Use insect repellent. We brought with us from home OFF! Deepwoods Dry, and neither of us incurred one insect bite to speak of in the 2 days we were there.

Use sunscreen and sunglasses.

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Ponchos are not really needed unless you do a boat ride under the falls where you will get drenched. If you take the park train to see Garganta del Diablo (Devil's Throat), you will get slightly wet when you get up close the falls (which I highly recommend), but if you are wearing lightweight clothing, you will dry out very quickly in the heat of the sun.