

When the Road Changes Your Plans – Detour to Paraguay

After leaving Mendoza and the Uco Valley, our plan appeared simple and straightforward: drive north to Córdoba for a few days and eventually make our way toward the giant metropolis of Buenos Aires, or the Paris of South America. It was not fully decided when we would do the next border crossing into Uruguay, as we want to discover as many Argentine corners as possible, but eventually we would go to Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil.

But as this journey has demonstrated time and time again, and as cliché as it may sound, the old saying turns out to be true: life is what happens when you have other plans.

Instead of reaching Buenos Aires, we found ourselves in Paraguay. Yes, if you're looking at a map, this makes absolutely no sense. To reach Buenos Aires, we somehow decided to drive farther north, so that later we could turn around and drive south again. Rest assured, we are not skipping Buenos Aires, nor Uruguay. We simply took a scenic detour in the opposite direction of our intended destination.



Really? Had Mafe's legendary sense of bad direction and failed geography, which landed her in Seattle rather than Washington D.C., had finally rubbed off on Scott?

Well, the short answer is no, the culprits are Starlink and Taco Libre. If you care about the long answer, keep on reading.

Sticking with the original plan, we started driving toward the city of Córdoba and made a quick stop at San Luis for the night. The next morning, we decided to take the longer and more scenic route. The drive carried us through a series of small, charming towns tucked among the hills and valleys of Córdoba Province. More than once, we were tempted to stop and explore, but we kept moving. This changed when we stumbled upon a place that felt completely out of context: La Cumbrecita.



Hidden in the mountains of Córdoba Province sits a tiny Bavarian-style village where alpine architecture, wooden cabins, and beer, make you feel as though you accidentally crossed into southern Germany instead of continuing through South America. Check out our YouTube video [la Cumbrecita](#).

La Cumbrecita is pedestrian-only, which immediately changes the atmosphere. Cars stay outside the village, and the town is explored on foot through cobblestone paths lined with pine trees, cafés, and chocolate shops. It felt peaceful, charming, and it called on us to stay for a few days.

We spent our time hiking and enjoying the charming feeling of being in a Bavarian village. But just as we were preparing to leave La Cumbrecita and continue toward Córdoba, reality hit in. Our Starlink two-month limit was rapidly approaching.

One of the great gifts of technology, and one of the main reasons Mafe has been able to continue her mediation practice while driving across Patagonia, fjords, mountains, and remote villages, has been Starlink. In many places where even a phone signal is not available, this small satellite dish that sits on top of TL provides internet out of the sky and makes work possible in the middle of nowhere.



But this modern magic comes with restrictions. Starlink only allows roaming within a country for about two months before requiring a reset in another country. Because we didn't want to gamble with losing connectivity in the middle of the journey, we made the decision of heading towards Córdoba and detouring into Paraguay instead of continuing directly to Buenos Aires.

After so much wilderness, Córdoba felt energetic and youthful. The city is filled with parks, plazas, students, cafés, and public spaces constantly alive with people. Compared to Mendoza, it felt younger and more social.

Part of that youthful energy comes from the city's strong university culture. Córdoba is home to many Argentine universities and, according to locals, the best universities in the country. With large "facultades" or *university departments* spread throughout the city, students seem to be everywhere, giving Córdoba a constant energetic feeling.



One place that caught our attention was Parque Sarmiento. Located near the center of the city, the park feels a bit like Córdoba's version of Central Park in New York. Its winding paths, lake, old zoo turned into a garden, and countless open green spaces make it easy to forget that you are still in the middle of a major city. It is the kind of place where you can wander for hours and feel temporarily removed from the traffic and noise surrounding it.

Beyond Parque Sarmiento, Córdoba seems to have plazas everywhere with statues and monuments to commemorate key figures in Argentina. In fact, its history doesn't go unnoticed throughout the city. One mural in particular immediately drew our attention: a massive tribute declaring "Las Malvinas son Argentinas." It was the largest expression of that sentiment we have seen anywhere in Argentina, detailing specific combatants and planes.



Nearby, other murals and photographs depicted important moments in Argentine history, including references to the military dictatorship that began in 1976. Like much of Argentina, Córdoba wears its history openly, not tucked away in museums but displayed on walls, plazas, and public spaces where daily life continues around it.

The combination of history and youth is a reminder that history continues to be a part of our present.

That sentiment was also true when we saw young people participating in something that brought Mafe memories from her younger days in Colombia when the World Cup was at center stage: The FIFA sticker album.

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association – *International Federation of Association of Football*, yes football, not soccer as it is not FISA – has a sticker album during the months approaching the World Cup, that contains hundreds of empty spaces, each page assigned to a specific player, team logo, stadium, or tournament image. People buy sealed packs containing a handful of random stickers and then try to complete the album. Because the packs are random, duplicates quickly accumulate, creating the need for trading, something we witnessed first-hand.

As we continued to explore the energetic Córdoba, we found the historic Jesuit neighborhood or Manzana Jesuítica, a UNESCO World Heritage site that brings together colonial architecture, quiet courtyards, and the legacy of one of the earliest university systems in South America. Just a short walk away, the skyline shifts suddenly as the Iglesia del Sagrado Corazón (often called the Capuchinos Church) rises in full color and detail. Its ornate façade, with spires, and sculpted figures, feels like Córdoba briefly decided to dress in celebration – its colors and depiction of animals on the façade reminded us of Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia.



Córdoba also became an important logistical stop for Taco Libre. We needed to change oil, change tires and do other maintenance. As we did our research, we learned that tires, mechanical parts, and maintenance in Paraguay are significantly cheaper than in Argentina, which combined with crossing a border to keep Starlink alive, made the detour north feel even more justified. The journey toward Paraguay was no longer simply about resetting Starlink, it was also about preparing Taco Libre for the road ahead. Specially since one of the destinations ahead is Salta and the Puna Route – a route that requires Taco Libre to have good soles to keep us going on all fours.



One of the unexpected pleasures of Córdoba was meeting Marcelo, a prosecutor, and his wife Carolina, a criminal defense attorney. We shared dinner together and spent hours exchanging stories about law, travel, Argentina, Colombia, and life in general. It turns out, Marcelo, like Scott, loves to fly and has a pilot's license. He also shares our passion for boating, and SCUBA diving. One of the things we continue to appreciate about overlanding is how often the journey introduces us to people we otherwise would never have met.

At Marcelo's recommendation, we made a short drive to Villa Carlos Paz, a popular vacation town in Argentina. Nestled among the Sierras de Córdoba and overlooking Lago San Roque, the town feels like a place designed for a nice escape. Families strolled along the waterfront, cafés spilled onto the sidewalks, and the surrounding hills created a backdrop that made it easy to understand why Marcelo had recommended this spot. It offered a different side of Córdoba Province, one that balanced the energy of the city with the tranquility of the mountains.

We left Córdoba with new friendships, good memories, and yet another reminder that some of the best parts of travel are the people you meet along the way.



As Taco Libre rolled north toward Paraguay, we knew our time in Argentina was far from over. Buenos Aires still awaits, as does Uruguay and many more corners of the country we hope to explore.

For now, we are following the detour. After all, this journey has taught us that the road rarely cares about our plans, and more often than not, that is exactly what makes the adventure worthwhile.

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