

Episode 110: Iguazu Falls

Summary

Nick and Wendy visit Iguazu Falls for the second time and have a much better experience than on their disappointing first visit. They talk about the wonders of both the Brazilian and Argentine sides of the falls.

Note: Iguazu is the Portuguese (Brazilian) spelling. The Spanish (Argentine) spelling is Iguazú. The English spelling is Iguassu but we don't like it!

Transcript

Nick: Today Wendy and I are talking about Iguazu Falls, the world famous waterfalls on the Brazil-Argentina border. And we spent a couple of amazing days there this week as we're travelling around Brazil. But this wasn't the first time that we went to Iguazu, and the first time didn't go that well.

Wendy: No, it was a big disappointment, actually. We first went there about nine years ago on an earlier trip, umm, mostly around Chile and Argentina. And it turned out to be really foggy¹ and we couldn't see hardly anything. And the little bit of the falls that we were able to see were really brown and dirty. So not at all the way that I had imagined it and the way that I had seen it in the pictures that I had seen.

Nick: Right, so we were really excited to go. We'd just arrived in Argentina, so we went to stay on the Argentine side of the falls. And then we crossed the border and went to the Brazilian side for a day. Like you said, we could hardly see anything, so it was a huge disappointment. And then the next day, we went to go to the Argentine side, and in the end we actually didn't even go in.

Wendy: No.

Nick: Because it was still foggy and we couldn't really see anything. And they told us that the viewpoint which is called the Devil's Throat, which is the most famous part of the Argentine side, was closed anyway. And so we decided it wasn't even worth it because we were just going to have the same kind of disappointment that we had the previous day. And I think we might have waited around at Puerta Iguazú, the town on the Argentine side, for a couple of days, hoping that the weather would get better, but it just didn't.

¹ foggy: covered with low cloud, misty

Wendy: Yeah, yeah. It was a big disappointment, I have to say, because we had heard so many great things about it. Umm, and we didn't really know what we were missing. Like, I remember, you know, walking on this - they call it the *pasarela* - like this, umm, raised² walkway. And you can hear that there's water pounding all around you, but you can't see it. Umm, so this time we finally saw it, which was great.

Nick: Right, so now we're focused on Brazil for this trip, umm, but we decided that we would come down and try again. And it's funny that it's almost exactly the same time of year, so I think we were a little bit worried that maybe the same thing would happen. And the forecast³ didn't look that good, initially, so we actually delayed it for a couple of days. And so we were in Curitiba and we decided to stay a couple more days there because it looked like it was going to be a bit sunnier later in the week in Iguaçu. And that turned out to be a good decision because basically those were ... the two days that we went to Iguaçu were really the only two sunny days that we've had, umm, this whole week.

Wendy: Yeah, yeah, that's true. Uhh, we wanted to get it right this time, so we scheduled ... you know, moved our schedule around so that we could give ourselves the best opportunity. And it worked and it was absolutely spectacular. Definitely the best waterfall that I've ever seen. And I think it's probably the best one in the world.

Nick: Yeah, I think that's generally what people say. We went to Victoria Falls last year, which is, umm, on the Zimbabwe/Zambia border in southern Africa. And we were there during low season so there wasn't the same volume of water - umm, dry season, I should say. There wasn't the same volume of water. Umm, but we still really liked it, but it wasn't like this.

Wendy: No.

Nick: So there are two sides to it. So the border between Brazil and Argentina is, uhh, on the Iguazú River, which is basically in the middle of the falls. And there's falls going into that river from both sides. And so the general feeling is that Brazil is the best side to kind of get an overall view of the falls, and then the Argentine side is the better side to get close up to some of the individual falls.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm.

Nick: So we went to the Brazilian side first, and we really liked it.

Wendy: Yeah, it was amazing. And so we went back to that same spot and I could, you know, I had these kind of vague⁴ memories of, 'Oh, yeah, I remember walking

² raised: elevated, above the ground

³ forecast: weather prediction

⁴ vague: unclear, not detailed

out here,' and, like I said, I heard all of this, you know, these sounds of tons and tons of water crashing down around me but couldn't really see it, and now I could hear those same sounds, I was standing in the same place, but I had this incredible panorama of waterfalls and greenery all around me. And, umm, yeah, it's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

Nick: Yep, so we went all the way to the end of the Brazilian side. Basically, once you get into the Brazilian side, there's a bus that takes you to various stops along the way. So we went all the way to the end, and we were there quite early and there was basically no one else there.

Wendy: Yeah, 'cause that was another thing we were worried about, was the crowds, it does get very crowded. So we specifically avoided the weekend and, umm, then, so we would have been there probably early in the week, around a Monday or a Tuesday. But then, like you said, we wanted to delay it because the weather forecast looked like it would be better weather later in the week. So in the end we were there on a Thursday and a Friday, so the Brazil side we were there on a Thursday. And, umm, yeah, I think that was a really good call⁵ to go all the way to the end, because most people get off at the previous stop and they walk along this path, this little walking trail, umm, where you can see the waterfalls as you go along, and then you get to that end point, uhh, where we were, at the end of the trail, after walking that whole way. But we just took the bus straight there and then we walked the trail backwards, umm, and, yeah, there was hardly anyone there. So I really didn't expect that. I thought that we would have to deal with a lot more crowds.

Nick: Yep, so we had a great day on the Brazilian side. The next day we crossed over to Argentina and visited the falls again. And the first thing we did that day was we took a boat trip on the river where you go to the base of the falls and you get very, very wet.

Wendy: Yeah, absolutely soaked⁶. There was, yeah, not an inch on my body that was not completely drenched.

Nick: But that's the whole point of it, it's this big adventure. They could take you just to get this nice kind of viewpoint of the falls from pretty close, and not get wet. But the whole purpose of it is that you get soaked and you have fun doing it and they call it a shower that you're going to get. But, yeah, you get absolutely drenched, there's no chance that you can avoid that in any way. And so, you know, you have all your belongings⁷ in a dry bag and you just try to ... I don't know, people have different strategies, whether they wear ponchos or they wear waterproof jackets, or some people just don't even bother and they just get soaked and they bring a change of clothes and change later. Umm, but that was

⁵ good call: good decision, good choice

⁶ soaked: completely wet, drenched

⁷ belongings: things that you own. In this case, things like phones, hats, sun cream, cameras etc

amazing. So you go right to the bottom of some of these falls, and you're basically right in them, and, uhh, it's just an incredible ride, really.

Wendy: Yeah, it really was. It's, first of all, a very different perspective, just the view that you have of the falls when you're down on the water level and looking up at them is completely different from any other viewpoint that you have. And, yeah, just the adrenalin rush⁸ that you get of being right there in the middle of it. It was, yeah, that was definitely the highlight of the whole experience for me.

Nick: Yeah, it was really kind of a once-in-a-lifetime type of thing. So we'd ... (we) weren't sure if we were going to do it, umm, because, you know, you have to pay extra and it's a bit expensive, but it really added to the whole experience and just gave this new perspective, and so I think it was well worth doing, even though we got very, very wet.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm.

Nick: Umm, so also on the Argentine side, there are some trails that you can walk, and as I said earlier, this gets you really up close to the falls, so again it's a different kind of view and a different perspective. And that's what makes the whole falls so great, is that you have all of these different aspects to it. And you have some, uhh, very wide-angle kind of views, sometimes you're up very close and you get some mist onto you, and as we said you can take the boat and get completely soaked. And so you really can spend two whole days there, uhh, and continue to enjoy it and continue to see new things or different perspectives as you go.

Wendy: Yeah, and it's such a huge area. I mean, there are 275 waterfalls - I've read different counts, but something around that number. Umm, so it's not just one fall, umm, it's a whole bunch of⁹ different falls in different areas and so there's really a lot to see and a lot to explore.

Nick: Yeah, and we said as we were walking along that even some of the lesser falls, if it was just that one fall by itself in another area, that could be a tourist attraction in itself, to go and see this nice waterfall, right?

Wendy: Yeah.

Nick: Umm, but then here there's nearly 300 of them, and some of them are much, much, much bigger and more powerful than even those ones. The other thing that you really liked, especially, were ... that there were a lot of little animals that we saw while we were there.

Wendy: Yeah, that was a great surprise, uhh, 'cause it is in the rainforest, essentially, and so when you're walking on these trails, there are lots of animals

⁸ adrenaline rush: feeling of excitement or stimulation

⁹ a whole bunch of (informal): a lot of, a large number of

around. The one that you are absolutely guaranteed to see is what's called the *coati* in Spanish or a *quati* in Portuguese. And it looks kind of like a racoon, perhaps, and has a big, long, bushy¹⁰ tail and a long, pointy nose, uhh, that he uses to dig in the ground and dig up insects and things. Umm, but he also likes human food. They've (be)come very accustomed to humans and so you have to watch out when you're eating around them because they will try to steal your food. Uhh, but they're really cute, they're a lot of fun. And we saw other animals that we've never seen before. We had a really fantastic sighting of a toucan, umm, and we also saw a *cutia* which is ... that's also a Portuguese name, I don't know what the name is in English, because I'd never seen it before, until we came to Brazil. Umm, yeah, other animals as well, so that was a lot of fun.

Nick: Alright, so finally nine years after our first disappointing experience at Iguazu, we've come back and done it properly and, uhh, we're really happy with the experience.

Wendy: Absolutely.

¹⁰ bushy: thick and shaggy (for hair or fur)

Comprehension Questions

1. According to Nick, what is the benefit of visiting both sides of Iguazu Falls?
2. Why did Nick and Wendy wait a few extra days before visiting the falls?
3. Why does Wendy say you have to be careful around the animal that's called a *quati* or a *coati*?

Exercises

Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.

1. We were going to go to the beach this weekend but the _____ calls for rain, so maybe we'll go to the movies instead.
2. He lost his wallet, phone and some other _____ when his bag was stolen at the train station.
3. In the Harry Potter books, and in the first film, Hermione Granger has very _____ hair.
4. I tried to get more details out of her but she was quite _____ about it. I don't think she wants anyone to know what's happening.
5. I was in the park without an umbrella when it started pouring, so I got absolutely _____. I had to walk home in the rain and the next day I got a head cold.
6. It was a _____ day when we started hiking, but as we climbed up the mountain, we eventually made it above the clouds and it was a beautiful day.
7. Since we last went into town, _____ new bars and restaurants have opened up. We'll have to go and check some of them out next weekend.
8. We had planned to go on a picnic but cancelled it after seeing the forecast. And it turned out to be a _____ because it rained all day.
9. They're an odd couple. For example, she loves the _____ that you get from going on rollercoasters, but he's too scared to go on them.
10. After a pedestrian was hit by a car while trying to cross a busy road, the government built a _____ footbridge. Now it's much safer to cross the road.

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. What is the best waterfall you have ever seen? Why were you impressed by it?
2. Have you ever been disappointed by a major attraction the way Nick and Wendy were the first time they went to Iguazu Falls?
3. Would you take the adventure boat trip to the base of Iguazu Falls even if you knew you would get drenched?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. On the Brazilian side, you get a wider view of the falls, while on the Argentina side, you get closer to them, offering two different perspectives.
2. Because the weather forecast was better later in the week, and they wanted to make sure they had good weather at the falls after their first disappointing visit.
3. Because they will try to steal your food.

Exercises

1. forecast
2. belongings
3. bushy
4. vague
5. soaked (or drenched)
6. foggy
7. a whole bunch of
8. good call
9. adrenaline rush
10. raised