Jesuit heritage in South America is overwhelming. At the core of the Jesuit foundation are the principles of Education and Missionary activity. As Spain developed the majority of South America in the 16th and 17th centuries, it was only natural then, that the Jesuit philosophies of Education and Missionary work flourished here at the same time. The Jesuits, in the 17th and 18th centuries, achieved this bold experiment in religious colonization. The Reducciones encompassed the vast zone of today’s Argentina, Paraguay, southern Brazil and Uruguay. These 30 thriving cities were one of the most ambitious creations of Catholic missionary activity. The remains of the Reducciones are all that is left today of this most interesting period of colonial history, with some of the most remarkable examples 17th and 18th century art in South America.

The California Jesuit Province is pleased to announce this incredible opportunity to visit and explore further the remnants of the Jesuit endeavors of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries in Argentina and Paraguay, namely “The Jesuit Reductions.” Led by our own Fr. John Mossi SJ, with Argentinian Jesuit Province host Fr. Michael Petty SJ, this will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and one that will forever be a part of your personal cultural and spiritual journey. Come be a part of a select group who experience up-close and personally this astounding chapter in Jesuit history.
February 18 – 21

CÓRDOBA

The industrious Jesuits made the central province of Córdoba their South American headquarters in colonial times, so it is appropriate that we begin our exploration of the Jesuit Reductions here in Córdoba. When Buenos Aires was a colonial backwater, Córdoba was a center of learning thanks to the Jesuit order. The Jesuit legacy is still reflected in a famous university tradition here, and Córdoba continues to produce the country’s best graduates. Córdoba is widely considered Argentina’s “first cultural city”.

Córdoba province’s cultural primacy dates from its early history as a Jesuit ecclesiastical and educational center, setting it apart from Argentina’s other provinces. Neat, tidy villages with majestic Jesuit ruins are scattered throughout the province, whose rolling mountainous backcountry, barely an hour from the city, is one of the country’s favorite year-round playgrounds.

The next time you sip a satisfying glass of Argentine wine, thank the Jesuits of Córdoba. These resourceful priests planted South America’s first vineyards in Córdoba in the 16th century to produce wine for celebration of the Eucharist. They also trained indigenous priests, and for this reason, they established a college in the city, one of the earliest on the continent. Córdoba soon became the headquarters of the entire South American arm of the Jesuits.

To fund the expansion in South America, the Jesuits operated six flourishing estancias, cattle ranches and plantations, around the province – three near the town of Jesús María. Produce from their orchards, farms, and vineyards not only paid for students’ tuition but funded a massive construction project of beautiful churches and residences.

During our three-night stay in Córdoba, we delve deeper into this remarkable chapter of Jesuit history.

Monday, February 17
Depart from our respective home cities in anticipation of the overnight flight to Córdoba, Argentina.

Tuesday, February 18
Arrive Córdoba around midday.
Afternoon/Evening walking tour of Córdoba, to include the Manzana Jesuítica de Córdoba, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This is the city block whose main buildings include the Iglesia de La Campaña, the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, the Colegio Monserrat, and the Templo de la Compañía de Jesús. In addition we visit the Cripta Jesuítica del Noviciado Viejo.

Wednesday, February 19
Visit Estancia Alta Gracia, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, in the morning. Alta Gracia was first a major Jesuit estancia that eventually became a town. Today, several Jesuit monuments in excellent repair grace the main plaza.

The afternoon is free time to further explore Córdoba.
Dinner this evening is an adventure to discover on your own in Córdoba.

Thursday, February 20th
Visit Estancia Jesús María. This is one of the best-preserved and most visited estancias.

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February 21 – 23

The city of Posadas is the capital of the Misiones province. Mate, or “Jesuit tea” is a big industry here. Missionaries grew mate and encouraged the natives to drink this, instead of coca, and it has become the symbolic beverage of northern Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and southern Brazil. However the main reason to stay in Posadas is that it serves as the jumping-off point for visiting the nearby Reductions. Averaging 500 meters (1,650 feet) above sea level and once covered with subtropical forests, Misiones has a rich history thanks to its dense Guaraní population and the Jesuits who proselytized among them. In the early 17th century, the Jesuits founded 30 reducciones, populated with perhaps 100,000 Guaraní, bringing education and Christianity to these natives. Eventually, in 1767 Spanish king Carlos III expelled the Jesuits, and many indigenes fled to the forests and the missions fell into ruins. Walls were pried apart by invasive plants, and the Guaraní-carved sandstone statuary toppled. During our stay here, we are privileged to visit five of these fascinating Reductions in this most interesting area of Argentina and Paraguay.

Friday, February 21
Morning flight from Córdoba to Posadas, connecting in Buenos Aires.

This afternoon we cross the border into Paraguay, visiting Misiones de Jesús de Tavarangué. This “newest” of the missions was never actually completed when Carlos III expelled the Jesuits in 1767, but is the only one of the 30 missions with a surviving bell tower. Also in Paraguay is Santísima Trinidad del Paraná, the largest Jesuit mission in the area, and today the best preserved. Most of Trinidad’s original walls are still standing, and some statuary has been restored. See the main church, small church, college and cloister, cemeteries, kitchen gardens, native houses and workshops.

Saturday, February 22
Morning visits to La Mision de Loreto and La Mision de Santa Ana. These are among the oldest and less well-preserved of the missions, but significant in their own right.

The entire afternoon is devoted to San Ignacio Miní, the best-kept of all the Jesuit mission ruins. Here, we find fine architectural and sculptural details that typify “Guaraní Baroque”. San Ignacio’s centerpiece was its monumental church, 74 meters long and 24 meters wide, with red sandstone walls two meters thick. Overlooking the central plaza and decorated by Guarani artisans, this is arguably the finest remaining structure of its kind.
February 23 – 25

In the Guaraní language, Iguazú means “big waters”, and here is a dazzling panorama of cascades whose power overwhelms the sounds of the surrounding jungle. Las Cataratas del Iguazú (Iguazú Falls) refers to the spectacular canyon of waterfalls fed by the Río Iguazú. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Area in 1984, these 275 waterfalls form one of Earth’s most unforgettable sights. The falls pour over precipices 200 feet deep, spanning well over a mile; it’s like Arizona’s Grand Canyon with water pouring over all sides. Iguazú’s water volume is nine times that of Niagara Falls. Located at the confluence of the Iguazú and Paraná Rivers, this spectacle is considered one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

Sunday, February 23
Over the road transfer from Posadas to Iguazú, approximately 4 hours, to arrive early afternoon.
Afternoon free in Iguazú. B, L, D

Monday, February 24
Today is a full day exploring to the majesty of Iguazú Falls. Our guide leads us on the footbridges and trails of the Iguazú National Park, making our way into the jungle and across streams until the first waterfall appears. As we keep moving, see colorful toucans and charming coatis, before arriving at the most spectacular fall: La Garganta del Diablo (The Devil’s Throat).

This afternoon we make an unforgettable excursion called La Gran Aventura (The Great Adventure), an off-road tour around Iguazú National Park going through the jungle, rapids and cascades. Ride 5 miles (8 kms) in an off-road vehicle along Yacaratiá Path to Pueró Macuco. Soon after, we embark by boat sailing 3 ¾ miles (6 kms) down the Inferior Iguazú River, where the boat hits a few small river rapids in the final part. To finish, we approach the Garganta del Diablo Canyon, an amazing spot of this magnificent waterfall, disembarking on Isla San Martín to experience this incredible panorama. B, L, D
February 25 – March 1

Buenos Aires, a rich combination of South American energy and European sophistication, requires at least several days to explore. No length of time ever seems like enough in a city this wonderful! Fortunately for us, we have 5 nights here. Buenos Aires is South America’s highest-profile capital, and has changed remarkably since its start as a Spanish imperial backwater. Massive post-independence immigration turned a once cozy “Great Village” into the first Latin American city with a million inhabitants; prosperity made it a “Paris of the South” with broad avenues, colossal monuments, and mansard-capped mansions.

The old cemetery La Recoleta, a city of the dead, is fascinating if anyone knows a smidgen of local history. The long shopping street, Calle Florida, usually has street singers and actors with regional music or dance. The elegant Avenida Santa Fe appeals to anyone wanting luxury goods at a bargain.

Most of all, Buenos Aires is a city for “being” more than “seeing,” and so the cafés and restaurants are what many visitors enjoy most. People from the city are called “porteños,” and those folks are famous for “lookin’ good.” That’s what you do: You are.

Our time here is varied between the city itself, and two exceptional excursions outside Buenos Aires.

Tuesday, February 25
Morning non-stop flight from Iguazú to Buenos Aires.
This afternoon we enjoy a personalized guided tour including the Plaza de Mayo, the pulsating heart of Argentina, with the Teatro Colón and Obelisco; and the Casa Rosada, home to historic moments in Argentina’s history and the site of Eva Perón’s rousing speeches. We visit other quarters of the city including the exclusive Retiro and Recoleta, the Bohemian San Telmo, the stylish port area of Puerto Madero, La Boca, and Argentina’s most famous cemetery, the Cementerio de la Recoleta. B, L, D

Wednesday, February 26
This morning is a continuation of our guided Buenos Aires walking tour, including some Jesuit sites. Afternoon and evening are free in Buenos Aires, to explore as you wish. Dinner is an adventure to discover on your own in Buenos Aires. B, L

Thursday, February 27
Today brings a wonderful adventure into Uruguay. The tiny gem of Colonia del Sacramento is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and appears untouched by time. Just a short ferry trip from Buenos Aires and across the border, Colonia boasts beautifully preserved colonial artistry down its dusty streets, and is Uruguay’s best example of colonial life. Dating from the 17th century, the Historic Neighborhood contains many of Uruguay’s oldest structures, reminding us of Colonia’s time as a Portuguese settlement.

Dinner this evening is yours to discover on your own in Buenos Aires. B, L

Friday, February 28
Tigre and San Isidro are two wild natural suburbs of Buenos Aires that seem worlds apart from the city – and this morning we are fortunate to explore each. The Tigre River Delta is formed by the confluence of five rivers, where they flow from the Pampas into the Río de la Plata, and eventually the Atlantic Ocean. From the 1870’s – 1920’s, the region developed into an extensive summer resort, and today this area remains among the most distinguished suburbs of Buenos Aires.

The afternoon is free back in Buenos Aires, to continue your explorations of the city.

Our final evening brings a special treat as we experience a real Tango Show and dinner. The show brings enjoyment to the five senses. It is a lavish display of light, color, and sound, with state-of-the-art technology to enhance the most dazzling show in the history of tango. Meanwhile, enjoy local and international cuisine. B, L, D

Saturday, March 1
Depart for home from the Buenos Aires International Airport, arriving at our home cities on Sunday, March 2nd. B
Fr. John P. Mossi, S.J.

Fr. John P. Mossi, S.J., ordained in 1973 at St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco, is a Jesuit priest of the California Province of the Society of Jesus. He initially served at Our Lady of Sorrows parish in Santa Barbara, then facilitated retreats and assisted as a spiritual director for over seven years at El Retiro, the Jesuit Retreat Center of Los Altos. He received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Catholic University of America in D.C. and then taught classes in Pastoral Counseling, Catholicism and Christian Spirituality at Gonzaga University in Spokane from 1991 to 2008. Currently, Fr. Mossi is Director of Benefactor Relations for the California Province Advancement Office, Los Gatos. Fr. Mossi has led a pilgrimage to Jesuit heritage sites in Spain and also was chaplain on an Ignatian Spirituality tour on the MS Oosterdam to the Mexican Rivera.
I left Stonyhurst in the summer 1950, after a challenging CCF camp near Chester. On arriving in London my mother told me we had to go back to Argentina, as my father feared War III was about to break out. That meant the end of Stonyhurst for me.

Fortunately I had finished my School Certificate, and that was enough to get me into the Jesuit Novitiate in March 1951 as a member of the Argentine Province. Leaving England then was a painful and providential decision, as it set the course for the rest of my life in Argentina. After ordination in 1964 I requested permission to study education in the USA, and was accepted at Boston College and then carried on for a Ph.D. in Sociology of Education at the University of Chicago.

By then it was time to get back to Argentina, and I was able to set up an educational research center in Buenos Aires, with support from the Ford Foundation. This later grew into a Latin American Educational Research endeavor that was only beaten by internet.

Much to my dislike my superiors then posted me to the Catholic University of Córdoba. But it was to make for the best of my life. After teaching for over 20 years I was named Rector, (in American terms: President) of the University. I was fortunate enough to be able to work on many fronts, new buildings, promote research, and my swan song was the construction of a huge new library with the support of German bishops as well as many others.

At that time I was invited to join the Georgetown University Board of Directors, which, to say the least, was a fascinating experience.

For many years now I have been a member of the National Academy of Education, produced lectures at Educational Conferences, and even scribbled a few articles.

Having completed my terms in Córdoba, after a brief sabbatical in USA, I was asked to join the Latin American Jesuits Conference in Rio de Janeiro where I lived for two years, and now I’m back to school, at the oldest Jesuit School in the country (started in 1610), in Santa Fe (Argentina) and as well as helping out with confessions at our sanctuary of Our Lady “Nuestra Señora de los Milagros”.

Still excited to be an octogenarian Jesuit, my main job covers the school library, spiritual direction, camping, giving retreats, and carrying on with the mission work started in Patagonia many years ago.

Recently the local paper produced an article on me titled: “The Intellectual Missionary”. I think that title pretty well sums me up as I love intellectual activities as well as missionary work. There are many links between them, still to be explored.
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This tour includes all taxes, hotels, ground transportation, bi-lingual tour guide, activities, meals, and Air travel within Argentina as outlined in the program. We reserve the right to make any unplanned changes in the itinerary due to weather or any other unforeseen circumstances.

Not included on the tour is air to Córdoba and from Buenos Aires; the “Reciprocity Fee” of $160 due to the Argentine government (instated January 2013); alcoholic beverages with meals; guide gratuities. Air is NOT included to Córdoba and from Buenos Aires.

CANCELLATION: If cancelled up to 90 days prior, there is a $1,000 per person cancellation fee. If cancelled between 90 – 30 days prior, the penalty is 50% of the total cost of the trip. The trip is non-refundable if cancelled within 30 days of departure. Trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended.

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(269) 857-1700
david@villasandvines.com