

Welcome

Iguazú

Waterfalls,

a story of production, tourism
and conservation

Introduction

In the memory of those who visited the Iguazú National Park more than 25 years ago, there are several rooms of the Old Hotel Cataratas containing a small Museum in which a series of historical and natural objects were exhibited, such as embalmed animals and insects' collections.

Part of those natural materials were redestined to national collections that could give them due preventive conservation care. Along with them, part of the zoological collection from the nearby CIES, Subtropical Ecological Research Center, was relocated.

The historical pieces from that time, along with others donated by residents of Puerto Iguazú, were exhibited again after reopening in 2014, although they still did not contain a common story line that linked the main milestones in the recent history of the falls.

With the aim of offering this line and at the same time presenting new contributions about some of its protagonists, we propose this new historical exhibition.

Based in part on the historical framework offered by the APN records (synthesized on its website <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/parquesnacionales/institucional/historia>), we added information about this park. To prepare the script we have the collaboration of Mrs. María Novas and also the contribution of neighbors, such as the map of the neighborhood that existed in this place, prepared by the Cechuy family. In addition, we received Dr. Paula Bruno Garcén's valuable contribution, who brought us closer to the little-known history of a figure of great importance in the beginnings of this area as a relevant tourist site: Mrs. Victoria Aguirre.

This exhibition begins with the development of Misiones as a national territory, outside the province of Corrientes' jurisdiction. Much of the previous history and the 20th century, in relation to natural and environmental use issues, is already extensively covered in the permanent exhibition of the Ivirá Retá Visitor Center. Therefore, we cover the period that begins in 1880 and reaches the present day under a historical approach focused on the Falls Area and some key external points to understand it.

We invite you, then, to tour the exhibition "Iguazú Falls, a history of production, tourism and conservation". Welcome!

Environmental Education Team – Iguazú National Park

Early production and exploration times



Logging area near the Iguazú River's coast. On a ground stripped of trees, carts ("alzaprimas") that transported logs can be seen (end of S. XIX).

The lands of the current Iguazú National Park were, two centuries ago, an important source of

timber resources. In 1881, a few months before the National Territory of Misiones was created, the government of Corrientes (to which Misiones had been part of before) sold this land to private owners for logging. In particular, specimens of Peroba Rosa (*Aspidosperma polineuron*), Louro pardo (*Cordia trichotoma*), Guatambú or Marfim (*Balfourodendron riedelianum*), Argentine Cedar (*Cedrela fissilis*), Ipes (*Hadroanthus* genus) and Incense (*Myrocarpus frondosus*) were cut, which were transported downriver in rafts. The largest extraction of logs of wood was carried out between 1907 (when the Reserve Law was sanctioned, which "reserved" the right of possession of the lands to the National State), and 1928, when the National State bought the lands to create the National Park



Utensils used in working areas were of very simple manufacture. Pots were generally made of iron. There were sharpeners for "facas", knives, axes, and machetes.

Pan on trivet, wooden spoon and "reviro" inside the pan.

These kind of pans were used to cook "reviro", which is the main workers' food in those logging areas. "Reviro" is made mixing wheat flour, water and fat, an easy to manufacture meal, with accessible and forceful ingredients to endure the day's work. The word "reviro" comes from the Portuguese "revirar" which means "rotation".



Through these slides, wooden rolls were thrown towards the Iguazú and Paraná Rivers. On the river you can see the “jangadas” (rafts) that were assembled rolls of wood to be transported down the river. On the rafts are observed the people in charge of ensuring a successful transport: the “jangadero”.

Beginning in 1882, the government of the national territory, sent expeditions that reached the falls, seeking land in Alto Paraná for the installation of settlers. Naturalists were arriving, who left the first records of the environment.



During the Bosetti Expedition of 1883, they placed an Argentine flag made of sheet metal, on an island, probably San Martín Island.



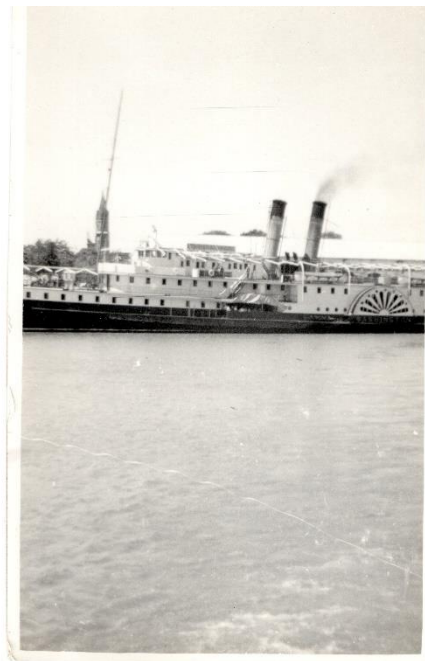
At the end of the 19th century, there was no infrastructure in this region. Kerosene-based lighting fixtures were used.

First tourist trips to the Falls Victoria Aguirre's contribution

In 1890 tourist trips to the waterfalls began. In 1900 the Nicolas Mihanovich Steam Navigation Society organized the first tourist excursion from Buenos Aires with a group of amateurs who traveled along the Paraná River during twenty days. Upon arriving in Corrientes, the crew boarded the Alto Paraná vessel, which brought them closer to the falls, on the Brazilian coast of Foz do Iguazú, from where access was completed with mules provided by a local worker.

In the first excursion from Buenos Aires participated Victoria Aguirre (1860-1927), who photographed her visit and donated three thousand pesos for the layout of the two-kilometer road to access the Falls from the Argentine coast. This contribution is part of a great task of collecting and patronage of the national heritage that she carried out throughout her life: she donated works from her art collection and historical pieces to national museums, financed scientific expeditions coordinated by the Museum of La Plata, participated in the Benevolent Society of Buenos Aires, made individual donations for the construction of schools and financed vacations for working women. She donated the land of the current CASI, Club Atlético San Isidro, nearby Buenos Aires City.

She also developed a great friendship with Perito Francisco Moreno, a key figure in the beginning of the national parks system of our country, and was an active member of the Argentine Photographic Society of Amateurs. Thus, Victoria Aguirre was established as a promoter of the development of Argentine tourism in the Iguazu Falls as part of a series of initiatives to sponsor national heritage.



The Argentine Navigation Fleet made trips from Buenos Aires to Iguazú through the Paraná River. The trip lasted seven days. This is the original menu from one of the trips.



The passenger steamer "Washington" was a luxury river passenger ship belonging to the "Nicolas Mihanovich Steam Navigation Society".

Tourists were transported by mules from Puerto Aguirre to Cataratas by the Picada Aguirre. At the beginning of S. XX there were no walkways and tourists approached the jumps from the rocks. Year 1902. Source: National General Archive.



Origins of the National Park and federal presence on the border.

Carlos Thays at the Iguazú Falls



In 1902, landscaper Carlos Thays, commissioned by the national government, carried out a study of the Iguazú Falls and designed a project for a National Park whose establishment took several years. This included projecting the infrastructure that facilitate access to the falls and ensure the comfort of tourists who remain in those beautiful places. In 1912, Thays presented a new development project. Neither of those projects were finally applied. In the image we see Carlos Thays on the Lanusse bridge, year 1912.

First institutional steps

During Figueroa Alcorta's presidency, some laws were regulated, such as those that promoted the development of railways and national territories. In 1909, following the advice of Thays, a law was passed that authorized the National State to reserve the right to expropriate or buy the land surrounding the falls to create a National Park. It also authorized access and beautification works, the foundation of a Military Colony and the construction of electricity generating plants. In 1913, it was authorized to establish a Police Station in Cataratas.

Cataratas Hotel



In 1920, Olaf Hansen, partner and administrator of the lands to which the Park belonged, initiated a plan for improvements and amenities in the Cataratas Area. This is how the Hotel Cataratas was built, which was inaugurated in 1922, although its construction continued until 1924. It is an English-style building on one floor, which originally had 24 rooms, a dining room, a games room, a bar and long galleries with railings like terraces towards the rainforest.

Burton Holmes was one of the first travel documentarians. He wrote and published travel logs from North and South America, Africa, Asia and Europe. This genre responds to the interest of the western public in discovering exotic and distant forms of life through images.



The Hotel was located in an area where large specimens of native wood had been extracted. Before National Parks arrived, the territory had been cleared. Fountain. AGN file.

The Hotel dining room was located in this room. Year 1929. Source: Iguazú National Park archive.

Establishment of the National Park

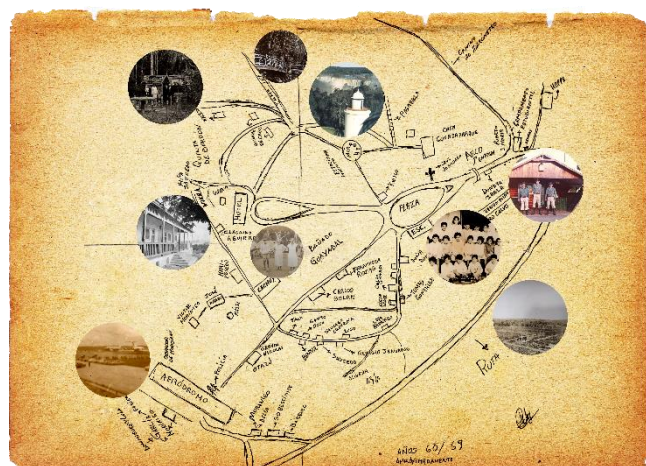
This region had been an area of border conflicts that had been settled in the late 19th century. Once the new National Territory of Misiones was created, the national state became present with the objective of exercising its sovereignty on the ground and preserving the Misiones Rainforest and the falls.

In 1928, the Government bought lands from the Ayarragaray Estate to create a National Park and gave the concession for the hotel, which was already providing services, to the Nicolás Mihanovich Steam Navigation Society.

The Iguazú National Park as a natural and cultural reserve was defined prior to its creation, but formally acquired a centralized management from 1934.

The "Nicolas Mihanovich Steam Navigation Society", for its part, had been created in Argentina in 1898, and by 1903 it already dominated navigation in the La Plata Basin. In the year 1930 it had a fleet of 320 ships of all kinds.

A neighborhood was formed around the Hotel, which functioned until the 1970s. There were houses, farms with animals, a school and an airfield.



Barrio Cataratas en el año 1969, dibujado por Lidia Angélica Cechuy

Creation of the Iguazú National Park

On September 30, 1934, Law No. 12,103 created the General Administration of National Parks and Tourism and the Iguazú and Nahuel Huapi National Parks. The first objectives were to protect "pristine" nature, defend borders and promote high-level tourism, and for this reason the development of localities linked to protected areas was promoted.

In Puerto Iguazú, the architect Alejandro Bustillo designed public buildings that are now in the historic center of the city, with a style inspired by the colonial era, as a symbol of the presence of the National State. The Engineer Iván Romaro, meanwhile, designed the footbridges in the falls, road works and the aerodrome. In this image, the Municipality and the seven docks: one of the first urbanization works that were in charge of the National Parks Administration.



Tourism Policies and Scientific Research in Park Management

In 1940, the National Parks Administration remodeled and expanded the hotel facilities, when new tourism policies were developed.

Since 1930s and 1940s, different groups of researchers carried out botanical and zoological surveys in the Iguazú National Park as part of campaigns by institutions from Buenos Aires, Tucumán, Córdoba and La Plata. At National level, in the 1950s, scientific research was promoted as a central axis in the protected areas' management, and then specialists in different subjects were hired.

National Ranger Corps

In its beginnings, the Park Ranger Corps was formed mainly by Patagonian pioneers, gauchos from Salta and “mensús” (workers) from Alto Paraná. They knew the terrain better than anyone and were used to living in isolated conditions and dealing with inclement weather. After some training attempts, the first Park Ranger School in South America was created in 1967. After being in various locations in the country, it settled in Embalse, Córdoba, as the Center for Training and Training in Protected Areas (CFyCAP).

Nowadays, park rangers are conservation agents who fulfill a wide variety of functions, from protected areas control and surveillance to visitor care, working with local residents and communities, making environmental education activities, supporting scientific research, and preventing and fighting fire.



Iguazú Park: UNESCO World Heritage Site

In 1972 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) approved the World Heritage Convention to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations what they called "World Heritage": Invaluable and irreplaceable assets not only for each nation but for all humanity. If they are lost, Humanity loses them.

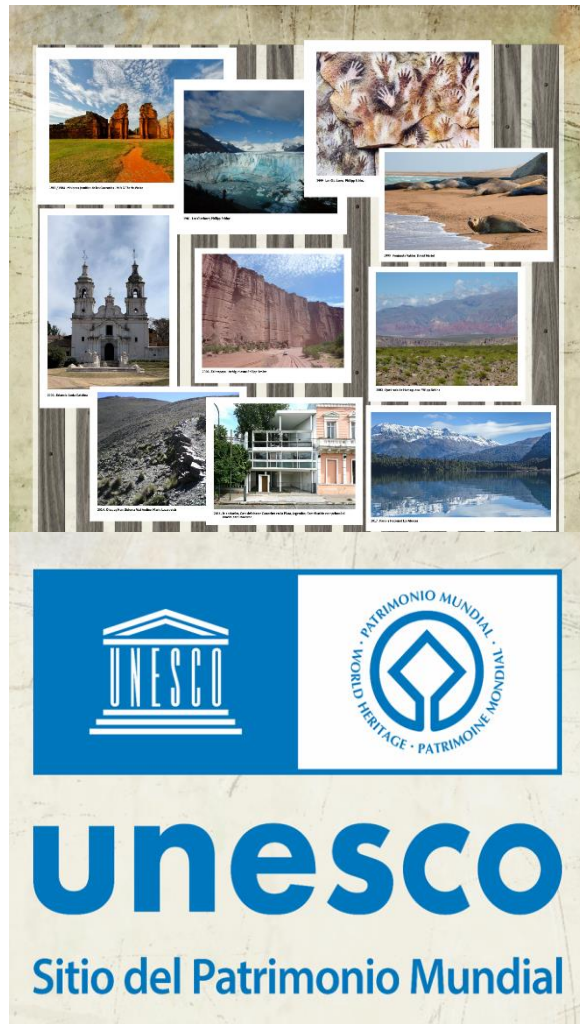
They are chosen for having an OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE (OUV) that is determined based on 10 criteria. The Iguazú National Park was elected a Heritage Site in 1984, complying with two of those criteria: Criterion (vii) represent natural phenomena or areas of outstanding natural beauty and aesthetic importance; Criterion (x) contain the most representative and most important natural habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity, including those in which threatened species survive that have Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Being chosen as a Heritage Site, is an international recognition of value and implies:

- Qualified recognition of the Assets Value, as a world-class cultural or natural value, and therefore of world tourist value.
- Access to international management and preservation funds
- Technical, economic and political support in the activities of management and preservation of assets.
- Creation of commitments at national and regional levels that strengthen long-term policies.
- Exchange of experiences in the management of assets: management of common problems, application of recent techniques, etc.
- Allows to coordinate and improve the management of common goods between different countries.
- Develop global protection strategies (i.e. tsunami warning, management of basins common to several countries.)

Strengthening and continuity of research for conservation

At the beginning of the 80s, the idea of promoting scientific research in this park was consolidated to include in the management the understanding of the rainforest ecosystems' dynamics and their real state of conservation. At the end of that decade, the Subtropical Ecological Research Center (CIES) was developed, which since then offers scientific-technical and logistical support to numerous



external research groups and which, together with its professionals and those of the PNI, contribute with research and management.

At the PNI, many of the researchers groups and professionals began their studies that would later form the National Research institutions that were established in Puerto Iguazú and continue to contribute to the management of the protected area: the IBS (Institute of Subtropical Biology – CONICET/FACFOR- Misiones National University) and the INMeT (National Institute of Tropical Medicine).

Iguazú Park today, strengthening the preservation of the Misiones Forest

Today, the Iguazú National Park protects a strategic portion of the Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest (or Misiones Forest), improving year after year population numbers of key species that had suffered serious losses.

This Park ecosystems and species' management is based on plans developed on agreed methodologies and is prepared by the technical and professional teams of the APN. In turn, the plans are based on top-level scientific and technical information, whose research and follow-up continue to be carried out by our own professionals and by the ones from national institutions that have established themselves in this region, from other parts of Argentina and also from abroad.

In addition to conservation, the public enjoyment of the Park is one of our creation objectives. In all national protected areas, their sustainable public use is encouraged so that you can make your visit in a conscious and respectful manner with other people and with the natural and cultural environment, uniting the defense of consumer rights and their safety with commercial loyalty, eliminating discrimination, and ensuring that the benefits derived also return to local communities.



References

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Pictures

Emilio White; PNI files; UNESCO files; National General Archive.



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