



With its Welsh tea houses (above) and Welsh-style homes (right), Argentina's Chubut region is home to the largest population of Welsh speakers outside of Wales.

# Revealing

**When visiting ports in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, cruisers won't be surprised by those nations' Spanish roots. But the conquistadores aren't the only ones who brought their customs and language to South America. On a recent South American itinerary aboard Celebrity Cruises' *Millennium*, three port excursions reveal some surprising heritage in the southern hemisphere.**

## Welsh Heritage in Argentina

The largest population of Welsh speakers outside of Wales lives in the Chubut region of Argentina. In fact, the blending of Spanish and Welsh cultures in this region is so perfect that no one even bats an eye over incongruous place names like Puerto Madryn – *puerto* is Spanish for “harbor” and Madryn is a place in Caernarvonshire, North Wales. Here, they belong together.

Puerto Madryn, a small, friendly city, is the starting point for Celebrity's 6-hour “Punta Loma & Welsh Tea in Gaiman” shore excursion. The Welsh towns of Gaiman and Trelew are just over an hour's drive from the port, but the excursion takes you to the sea lion colony in Punta Loma before venturing out for tea in Gaiman. If you prefer to skip the sea lions, you can hire a taxi in Puerto Madryn to take you directly to the Welsh towns.

The Welsh-Argentinean connection was initiated in 1865, when a ship of 150 Welsh nationals left home to escape oppression by their English neighbors. They arrived in Argentina on June 28, hoping to set up an independent Welsh state



Don Klein

# Roots

By Leslie Gilbert Elman

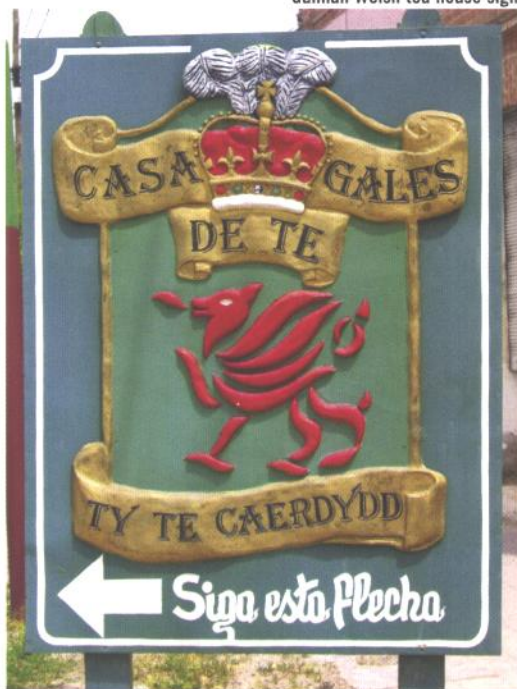
On a South America cruise, heritage tours uncover surprising cultural influences.

within Argentina. (That's why you'll find streets called "Avenida 28 de Julio" all over this part of Argentina.)

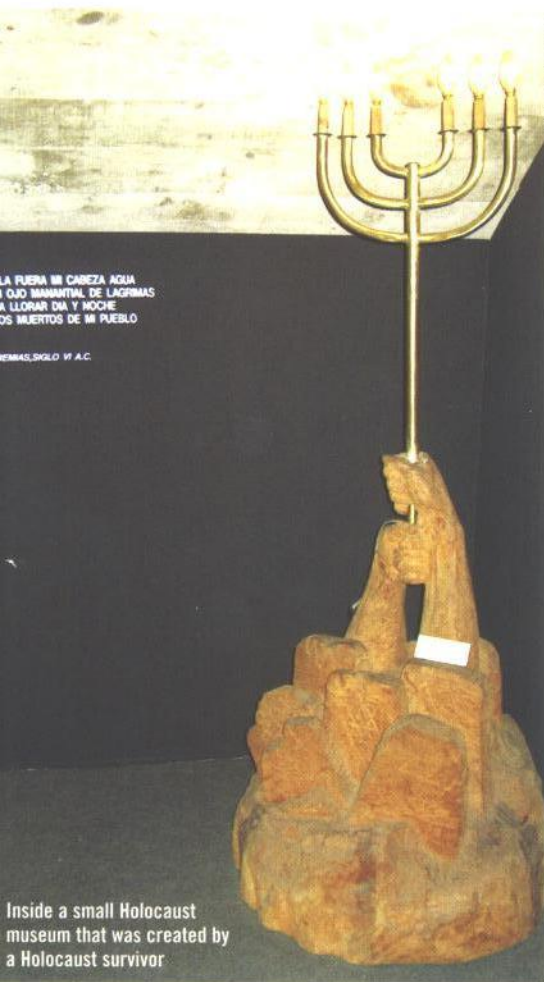
Argentineans weren't keen on the idea of a new country within their country, but they welcomed the Welsh as settlers and left them to go about their business in the desolate, untamed Patagonia region. Pretty soon the Welsh moved from dry Puerto Madryn to more fertile areas near the Chubut River. They settled mainly in Gaiman and Trelew, made friends with the local Tehuelche Indians, started farming wheat, and founded the first newspaper in Patagonia – a Welsh-language paper called *Y Drafod* – which was still being published until a few years ago.

If you're here in the South American spring (September and October), you might be lucky enough to catch an *eisteddfod* – a traditional Welsh music, dance, and poetry festival – in one of the villages. At any time of year, you'll have to try Welsh Black Cake – a fruitcake heavy with whiskey and spices such as cinnamon and cloves. Sample a slice with a "cuppa" at one of Gaiman's teashops and then bring some home. You'll find it packaged for sale at shops in Gaiman, Trelew, and Puerto Madryn.

Gaiman Welsh tea house sign



Don Klein



Leslie Gilbert Eiman

## Jewish Heritage in Uruguay

“I figured that if the cruise line offered this tour, it had to be worthwhile,” said a woman on the bus as we prepared to embark on a Jewish heritage tour of Montevideo, Uruguay. New for Celebrity in 2006, judging by its popularity (four busloads of passengers from our ship), this tour is likely to join the permanent excursion roster.

Everyone on the bus agreed that Uruguay was not the first place we’d think of when hunting for Jewish roots. But by the end of the 3-hour shore excursion we realized that we’d underestimated Uruguay’s connection to the Jewish community.

The first Jews to migrate to South America were Sephardim from Spain, Portugal, and North Africa – the Jewish heritage most visitors expected to find in Montevideo. Yet, as the tour progressed, we learned that most of Uruguay’s Jewish population was Ashkenazim. Immigrants came from Germany and Eastern Europe before and during World War II because this small nation was notably generous with visas for those fleeing persecution in Europe. Uruguay was also the first country in Latin America to recognize the state of Israel and, even though she never visited the city, the late Israeli prime minister Golda Meir has a square dedicated to her in Montevideo.

Taking the shore excursion is the best way to trace Jewish heritage in Montevideo for two reasons. First, the guides are members of the Jewish community in Montevideo and their personal reflections and experience add dimension to the tour. Second, they will lead you to synagogues in various neighborhoods that you’d be unlikely to find or gain access to without their help. For example, one houses a poignant Holocaust museum created by a Holocaust survivor.

One site you can visit without a tour is the Holocaust Memorial. Built in 1995 and overlooking the Rio de la Plata, this beautiful monument represents the World War II experience as a wall ripped apart in the middle by conflict. It’s a must-see and easily accessible by taxi if you choose to explore Montevideo on your own.

Montevideo, Uruguay



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The German Colonial Museum's four buildings reproduce the lifestyle of German colonists.

## German Heritage in Chile

What's surprising about German heritage in Chile is not that it's there, but that it stretches as far back as 1842, when German naturalist Bernardo Eumon Philippi first laid eyes on Lake Llanquihue in southern Chile. He wrote that it reminded him of Lake Geneva in Switzerland. It was the kind of place, he figured, where people from alpine regions could settle in and feel comfortable. Ten years later they did just that; leaving economic hardship in Germany for a new life in the New World.

The first ship of German immigrants arrived in Puerto Montt, Chile, in 1852 and the passengers quickly made their way toward Lake Llanquihue. That's pretty much what you'll do on Celebrity's 4½-hour excursion to Puerto Varas and Frutillar. It takes you out of the pleasant, but unremarkable port of Puerto Montt and into the lake district that those 19th-century German settlers found so appealing.

The architecture here is distinctly Tyrolean – wooden houses with steeply sloped roofs, colorful shutters, and flower-filled window boxes. You'll find German names on the mailboxes and locally brewed German-style Kunstmann and Austral beer on tap in the bars and restaurants. The annual Musical Week concerts in Frutillar – January 27 to February 5 – usually feature the music of Bach and Beethoven. And many people, particularly the older generation, speak German as their primary language.

Although the real point here is to soak up the scenery – and it *is* beautiful – the German Colonial Museum in Frutillar, which is part of the tour, provides a good background on the German *colonos* (colonists) who settled here more than 150 years ago. The main street in Frutillar is Avenida Philippi, named for the man who first turned Germans' attention to this part of Chile. Stop in at one of the cafés along the street and enjoy authentic German *kaffee und kuchen* (coffee and cake) before you head back to the ship. ■

Don Klein



A hotel in Frutillar shows the distinct Tyrolean architecture.