

Santiago Unplugged: A Tour Like No Other

13 FEB 2025

A Whimsical Tour of Santiago, Chile: Adventures with a Walrus, Penguin, Moai, and Friends

By JENNIFER POLACK

When you think of embarking on a tour of Santiago, Chile, the standard expectations might include stunning street art, lush vineyards, and the breathtaking Andes mountains. But what if your adventure featured a charming walrus, a curious penguin, a stoic Moai, and a lively group of eleven college students? This quirky combination turned an ordinary exploration into an unforgettable journey filled with laughter, learning, and the occasional quirkiness of life!

A Unique Beginning Our adventure kicked off at the bustling Plaza de Armas, where the historical heart of Santiago beats vibrantly. Sheltered under the iconic palm trees, we were introduced to our unexpected co-pilots: Waldo the Walrus, Penelope the Penguin, and Mo the Moai. While moai statues are typically seen on Easter Island, we decided to give 'Mo' a little vacation from his enormous stone brethren to partake in our exploration.

At first glance, the locals and tourists alike were perplexed by our eclectic ensemble. However, the sight of Waldo's blubbery face and Penelope's bright feathers quickly melted hearts and turned heads. With our whimsical team assembled, we set off to uncover the wonders of Santiago.

Exploring the City Our first stop was the incredible Barrio Bellavista,

known for its vibrant street art and eclectic atmosphere. Waldo, Penelope, and Moai seemed to thrive in this colorful environment. Wandering through the streets adorned with murals, the college students took turns snapping pictures with our charming companions, creating memories that would last a lifetime. Penelope even struck a pose in front of a mural featuring other exotic birds something we could only assume was her interpretation of avian camaraderie!

Next, we strolled up to Cerro San Cristóbal. As we hiked the scenic trails, Waldo showed off his balancing skills, managing to wobble on a nearby rock while trying to catch the attention of passing hikers. Meanwhile, Penelope waddled ahead, undoubtedly pretending to lead the expedition. Mo, with his unmoving yet dignified presence, offered a serene backdrop for countless candid photos, much to the delight of our group.

The Culinary Adventure No trip to Santiago would be complete without indulging in the local cuisine. We found ourselves at a quaint market, where we dived into a culinary adventure. Our walrus had a penchant for seafood, of course, while Penelope enjoyed sambaing around the stalls filled with fresh fruits. We took the opportunity to feast on empanadas and a variety of traditional dishes, all while sharing laughter and stories that would echo long after the trip ended.

Cultural Insights The college students, keen on cultural insights, took turns listening to our local guide, who shared fascinating stories about Santiago's history, culture, and the significance of the Valparaíso-Santiago connection. Waldo looked especially intrigued by the tales of the ocean, likely reminiscing about his walrus friends back home, while Penelope publicly declared her interest in

coastal lifestyles. Mo, the stoic observer, remained an impressive figure, silently endorsing every piece of knowledge shared with an air of authority.

Bonding Moments As the sun began to set, our group gathered for a spontaneous chat by the Mapocho River. With the shimmering city lights reflecting off the water, we shared our thoughts on the day, with laughter and joy echoing through the air. It was in these moments that the bond between the students, and our animal companions, truly blossomed. Waldo's silly antics and Penelope's cheerful chirps brought smiles to every face, while Mo served as the gentle reminder of how traditions and history could shape our adventures.

A Memorable Farewell As our day in Santiago drew to a close, we gathered for one final photo, with Waldo draped in a colorful scarf, Penelope perched on a nearby rock, and Moai standing tall, almost like a pillar of memory. The camaraderie fostered between the college students and our whimsical companions transformed the tour into a lively tapestry of experiences that would stay with us long after we left Chile.

In reflecting on our journey, it became clear that the true essence of travel lies not only in the sights we see but in the bonds we forge and the laughter we share. Touring Santiago alongside a walrus, a penguin, a Moai, and passionate college students infused our adventure with a sense of wonder, reminding us that travel is meant to be as much about joy and connection as it is about exploration.

So, if you ever find yourself in Santiago, keep an eye out for whimsical companions who might just join you on the adventure of a lifetime! Who knows what treasures await when you open your heart to the unexpected?



Reuters

International Moose Count Underway

By BOB O'BOBSTON

The UN-sponsored International Moose Census got off to a flying start today with hopes for an increase in the worldwide moose population compared to last year's disappointing figures. Among the traditional early reporters were Egypt, returning figures of six moose, a twenty percent increase on 2011's figures of five, and Uruguay whose moose population remains stable at eleven.

According to Robbie McRobson, head of the UN Moose Preservation Council, worldwide moose numbers are expected to grow markedly on last year due to the traditional moose strongholds of Canada and the United States, with the larger developing moose ecologies also poised to make gains. The largest percentage increase in moose will likely come from China", says McRobson, The Chinese government has invested heavily in moose infrastructure over the past decade, and their commitment to macrofauna is beginning to pay dividends". Since 2004 China has expanded moose pasture from 1.5% of arable land to nearly 3.648% and moose numbers are expected to rise to 60,000 making China a net moose exporter for the first time. This is good news for neighbouring Mongolia, a barren moose-wasteland whose inhabitants nonetheless have an insatiable desire for the creatures. The increase in Beijing-Ulanbataar trade is anticipated to relieve pressure on the

relatively strained Russian suppliers, but increase Mongolia's imbalance of trade with its larger neighbour.

Historically the only competitor to China in the far eastern moose markets has been Singapore but the tiny island nation is set to report a net loss, expecting a decrease of more than five percent on last year's 50,000 moose counted. The head of Singapore's Agency for Agriculture, Jing-Feng Lau, explained to an incredulous Singaporean parliament yesterday that bad weather had contributed to this season's poor showing, most notably when a cargo of 150 moose were swept out into the Indian ocean in a monsoon.

Yet again the global demand for moose will be met largely by the US and Canada. The recession-hit States is taking comfort in its moose growth figures with gross production expected to break 700,000 and net exports to grow by 2%. The worldwide dominance of Canada shows no signs of abating though with this year's moose population expected to match last year's record figures of one hundred million billion.

Europe's rise as an international moose power will slow slightly this year as a response to the European Union's move towards standardising the European moose. Stringent quality controls are holding back the development of the eastern european populations compared to last year when they contributed significantly to europe's strong growth figures. Norway, which is not an EU member but has observer status, strengthened in numbers relative to the Euro area with numbers of Norwegian moose, known locally as elk" expected to rise for the tenth consecutive year, particularly thanks to a strong showing in the last quarter.

As moose season reaches its close, researchers world wide are turning to science in an attempt to boost next year's figures. NASA stunned the scientific community today with the announcement of their discovery that the moon is significantly smaller than previously believed. This conclusion, which is the conclusion of a ten-year collaborative project, will have profound implications for the moose community as the gravitational field

is now known to be of the right strength to support moose in orbit.

According to John Johnson, head of the NASA Moon Sizing Experiment the first delivery of moose into low moon orbit could be achieved as early as the third quarter of next year. The technology to nurture moose in space is available now", he said, "all that is needed is political will".

Granny wins World Wrestling Championship

By ROY MCROYSTON

Records were smashed in Nicaragua's World Wrestling Championship last night as 78-year-old Maud Johnson, grandmother of five, became the first woman for fifty-six years, and the oldest competitor ever, to claim the gold medal. She walked away with her million dollar share of the prize money, runner up Tommy Thompson from Nigeria taking half a million, and third place New Zealander John Smith receiving a warm handshake from the umpire.

Having started the tournament a rank outsider she began to impress in her second match when she took US number three Ron Ronson by surprise and subdued him in twenty seconds with her unique move that has been dubbed "Maud's Death Grip". The injection of a new wrestling style into the tournament was welcomed by spectators and Johnson's pre- and post-match breakdances have proved entertaining to fans. However, she was still not expected to win in round three last Wednesday, facing off against title-holder Paulo "Spine-Snapper" Lutti, of Vatican City. Underdog Johnson was soon showing her worth with stamina and agility easily matching last year's winner. Lutti's experience paid off initially as he took the first two rounds, but as Johnson became more confident her superior strength came to the fore and she clawed back two rounds to take the contest into a decider. By this time Lutti's body language indicated that he already felt overawed by the

pretender to his crown, and the newcomer took advantage of this to engage a mutual headlock which she held for three hours until the Vatican man retired from exhaustion. The next seven matches were barely a contest as the news of Johnson's supremacy overawed all her opponents who became too intimidated to fight properly.

Nigerian Tommy Thompson is also a relative newcomer to the wrestling scene, but with his 210lb frame he was expected to fare well against Johnson who weighs in at only 90lb. However Johnson's lithe and slender, some would say scrawny, figure belies her agility and strength which she demonstrated by holding

Thompson above her head several times during the bout and throwing him into the crowd once. With the scores tied at 2-2 time ran out and the contest went to a panel of judges to be assessed. They awarded Thompson a C grade whilst Johnson received an A, becoming the first grandmother to ever win the title.

The new champion explained her success as the result of a strict training regimen instituted by her coach and grandson five-year-old Sammy Johnson. "I've been drinking ten raw eggs for breakfast every morning, sprinting fifty miles a day and carrying my daughter's car to the end of the road and back whenever I felt my arthritis was OK" she said. Sammy

added "I always knew she could do it. She's my grandma.". The youngster is also her manager and has reportedly arranged sponsorship deals which will dwarf her one million dollar prize fund. Her new contract with headband designer Nike alone is set to earn her fourteen billion dollars over the next year. She will also be promoting Tupperware, Halliburton, the Republic of Macedonia, and Gala Bingo. Her continued participation in the sport is not assured as she wants to spend more time on her bungee-jumping business, and knitting. Everyone here at the World Championships, however, hopes for her return.