

PATAGONIA PAPERS

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Synopsis

12,000 words

Enter the far reaches of the South American continent, a desolate place full of wonder and stunning natural beauty. It was the world of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, an escape, a far-away place, full of glaciers, mountain peaks and penguins.

This collection of travel stories, with a title Dickensian in nature, was not about a jovial British gentleman searching variety to his life throughout England, but a Canadian Engineer who paid for his wanderings by sitting at a desk in Montreal. It took an hour and a quarter by bus, subway then bus to get to this job, but living location, just as travel location, was extremely important.

Travel by bus became exotic as this engineer would ride the bus and chuckle aloud as he read *Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. He would be transported to the country side of England as in the back pages of his mind, he planned travels of his own.

One can get similar spectacular scenery by travelling to Western Canada. Antoine de Saint-Exupery could have flown across the Rockies, but the Andes had their own nature and appeal that beckoned to engineer and novelist alike.

The challenge and mystique of travelling in a Spanish-speaking land had its appeal. In addition, there were other reasons. Butch was running from the law, while the engineer was running from a large number of English-speaking tourists that flock to destinations for the less hardy. In Banff or Jasper, one will probably not meet a German tourist who sailed around Cape Horn or a Dutch climber who reached the peak of Aconcagua or an elderly American explorer about to sail to his last continent, Antarctica.

Spanish audio tapes, the movie "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," and carrying groceries up the hill of Avenue du Parc were part of the preparations. However, "Donde esta el autobus para Barcelona" and "Los Manos Arribas" were not particularly useful phrases. The engineer decided to learn Spanish in another way. Everything he owned and ate was labelled in Spanish.

Through reading the stories of the Patagonia Papers, one can escape through an engineer's eyes and start the planning of one's own pilgrimage.