

A Fulbrighter's Guide to Caleta Olivia

By Ashley Kerr

Overview

Former ETA Fulbrighters:

2006	James ?	???
2007	Ashley Kerr	ashley.elizabeth.kerr@gmail.com

The Institute

The Instituto Provincial de Educación Superior is located close to the center of the town in the Escuela 36. It offers several profesorados, including de inglés, de educación especial, de música, de literature and de arte. Although there is also a Branco of the Universidad Nacional de la Patagonia Austral (UNPA), the IPES actually has more students.

Classes are at night, starting at 6:30 and usually finishing around 11 at night. The Profesorado de inglés has 4 years, offering classes in grammar, phonetics, language, literature and culture, although the emphasis is definitely on grammar and vocabulary, with little emphasis of literature or culture. The professors have varying degrees of fluency, some make fairly frequent errors while others speak rather well. Student level also varies greatly, some first years speak much better than fourth years. Students and teachers often work all day then come to class at night, therefore very little homework is asked for and teachers often are VERY slow in getting graded papers back (if they do at all).

There are many internal problems at the institute between students and faculty, students and the directors, faculty and directors. We lost many classes to fights or discussions.

Housing

Caleta Olivia has very few housing options and they are generally expensive. I was offered only one option, renting a room from the Cárdenas family for about US \$200 a month. It worked out very well for me, but if you want to live on your own you will find that options are very scarce. Because of oil production in town, prices are generally much higher than in the rest of Argentina.

Helpful vocabulary

alquiler – rent

ambiente – room (any; not just bedroom)

contrafrente – with windows to the back of the building vs. the street; these kinds of apartments are considered not as desirable, thus cheaper, but can be more quiet (there is *a lot* of street noise)

departamento – apartment

encargado – building manager, who lives on the ground floor of the apartment building and is in charge of cleaning and general maintenance

expensas – monthly maintenance fee, usually included in the rent; could also refer to all utilities costs

garantía – a type of guarantee that is usually provided by a renter's home-owning, local relative; this is a huge obstacle for foreigners renting an apartment, but some agencies are willing to overlook it if you pay the entire 8-month's rent in advance (yes, this is considered normal); ask about this up front

inmobiliaria – rental agency

reciclado - renovated

Transportation

Most of Caleta can be reached on foot. At night, taxis are the safest option.

Taxis are a relatively inexpensive mode of travel and are safer when traveling alone or at night. You can call one ahead of time or just flag one down on the street by waving your arm.

Long distance travel is best by bus, as airlines are frequently on strike. Also, you must fly from Comodoro Rivadavia, about 1.5 hours north of Caleta, and flights are few and expensive. In Caleta you are very far from everything. Luckily the buses are nice, although the distances are VERY long. Tickets are purchased mainly at the terminal. It can be quite confusing because there is not central directory of departures and arrivals; you have to go from one ticket window to the next to find out departure times and prices. Most companies accept credit cards. When purchasing a ticket, you will be asked for your passport number. On many routes, you can also choose the type of seats: semi cama (4 seats across per row; recline to 120°); coche cama / cama ejecutivo (3 seats across; recline to 160°); suite (3 seats across; recline to 180°). Bus seats are called *butacas*. Andesmar is one of the bus companies and has many departures from Caleta Olivia. Some trip times are: Ushuaia – 24 hrs, Glaciar Perito Moreno – 16 hrs, Buenos Aires – 28 hrs, Bariloche – 16 hrs, Mendoza – 30 hrs.

Shopping

There is not much shopping in Caleta. If you need anything out of the ordinary, you are better off traveling to Comodoro. Also, the only real bookstore is in Comodoro.

- Chain grocery stores – La Anónima. Has pretty much every basic.
- You can find better quality (and lower priced) meat, cheese, bread and produce at the small *carnicerías*, *fiambrerías*, *panaderías* and *verdulerías*, respectively.
- There are several small shops in town.
- Saturno has electrics and home goods.

Miscellaneous

Caleta is a small town. There isn't too much there. What there is:

- ✓ Eating out: There are not many restaurants and people don't really eat out (except for ordering takeout on weekends). But try: Buona Pizza on Calle Independencia or Nativos on Eva Peron. The café Otra Historia sometimes has cultural events and is a nice place to sit and read.
- ✓ Boliches (clubs): Latino is the biggest. There are two others on Monseñor Fagnano. Tronkos is a decent bar. Nightlife starts very late!
- ✓ Gyms: There are several gyms that offer monthly memberships and usually only group aerobic classes in town. They are constantly changing, so ask around.
- ✓ Other things to do: walk the costanera, sometimes there are whales or sea lions off the coast. The only movie theater in town is in the cultural center attached to the large church at the entrance to town. They show two movies a week.