



Chapter 2 - Arrival at Purmamarca

2013

This latest trip to Argentina had been planned for six months, and still I wasn't ready to leave my adopted home of Stockholm. It didn't matter that I had spent days carefully gathering up my travel clothes and all the electronic gadgets I would need: my PowerBook, iPad, audio recorders, cables, etc. My suitcase was fully packed, and in all practical ways I was ready to leave. But I really hadn't prepared myself for what the separation from Stockholm would feel like. Anyone who has visited Stockholm knows the feeling of wellbeing and contentment there. You can see in the eyes of the people on the street, and you can feel it like a vibration just rising up out of the city.

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Don't you think that different cities each have a characteristic vibration? And then when you visit some new place in the world, you become keenly aware of just how different that kind of feeling can be? I don't think that any single word can sum up that particular feeling. On the conscious level there is the blend of sights and sounds, and on the subconscious level there is this sixth sense of the multiple layers of energy—the slow cycle of the day, the fast rhythm of speech, and the nuance of gesture with its ebbs and flows of emotion. It forms a montage that intertwines the familiar with the unfamiliar. Or, you might say that the blending of all these layers of feeling is like the layers of a song. Stockholm has a song. It is a song that I have become very much in tune with.

But now I had chosen to leave Stockholm to spend a month in a place with a very different energy, a very different song. I was returning again to northwestern Argentina, to the region of Salta, for another encounter with this land of complex spiritual energies.

It is a two-hour flight from Stockholm's Arlanda airport to FRA, the massive Frankfurt airport. It is a thirteen-hour flight to EZE, the international airport for Buenos Aires, followed by an hour's cab ride across town to the domestic airport, AEP, where Ulla and I finally climb aboard a two-hour flight to Salta. Thirty hours of traveling when you include all of the layovers.

These long international flights just seem to scramble up the body's energy field. I think that this happens because our bodies are so quickly changing their location within the earth's energy field. Maybe there are a few people who are unaffected by such things, but I end up doing meditative exercises during these long flights to harmonize my energy field (instructions included in chapter 5!). As long as I keep it up, I

continue to feel present, focused, and in harmony with myself. But I always fall asleep and thus I never seem to do it enough. So, after I arrive I sit down and do these exercises again to help overcome the jet lag.

Ulla and I gave ourselves one day in the city of Salta without any agenda just to recover from the flights—yes, to get over our jetlag, but also to begin that more subtle process of adjusting to the energy of our new location. When we left, you could say that we were in tune with the song of Stockholm. Arriving in Salta, we are out of tune and in the wrong key. I had hoped that being in Salta would immediately bring back that special feeling that I remembered from our last trip, but that wasn't the case. I began to wonder if it were me, and my heart sank a little. But Salta is not our ultimate goal, and the time spent there is simply a period of adjustment.

The next day, we headed off to the small town of Purmamarca, a four-hour drive to the north leaving the province of Salta behind and entering the province of Jujuy. As our car slowly gained altitude, climbing up and out of the green valleys, that familiar feeling came back. I am in love with this energy and my sadness fell off of me.

Wikipedia says that the name 'Purmamarca' derives from the Aymara words that mean 'desert city' or maybe better 'town of the virgin land.' It sits in the lap of the most exquisite landscape, the *Cerro de los Siete Colores* (Hills of the Seven Colors). Whatever had existed here in pre-Columbian times, the village is now a hub for tourists who are hiking along the scenic trail that starts on one side of town and then winds around back through the hills before emerging on the other side of town. The cheap local buses bring in youth carrying their backpacks, while most of the larger

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tourist busses bring in groups of people their parents' age struggling with their suitcases. The hotels and the restaurants vary from very local to very touristic.

This is the Andean corner of Argentina. Bolivia is a short ride to the north and Chile lies close to the west. In Purmamarca's open market that encircles the edges of the main square, you find essentially the same goods that you find in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. It is arid and dusty here as it is in all of these high-altitude towns, and the many local entrepreneurs are in a constant battle against the wind and the dust.

I am so happy to be back in Purmamarca. And it is strange how quickly that being here again is just a continuation of being here the two previous years. A different hotel, the same energy. It all blends into one.

Ulla and I waste no time gathering up our backpacks and our folding chairs to head out on the trail beyond the town. I should describe a bit of what the land itself is like when you are walking across the open ground like we do, not just following the tourist's paths. The entire ground is covered with stones. Most of the stones are slate, sometimes scattered about and sometimes piled thick. When you are walking, you pretty much have to keep your eyes on the ground in front of you all the time to watch and place every step you take. In amongst the stones there are small plants, especially small, unhealthy looking cactuses that grow along the ground. Those are dwarfed by the green sticker-bushes that you must absolutely avoid. Then scattered about are a few other plants clinging to the niches they have found to survive in. Looking up, out, and across at the distant hills, you can see the isolated silhouettes of the tall cactuses that stand proud in the sunlight. And there are expansive hills and huge cliffs all around you that appear devoid of visible plant life. The complex patterns

of erosion in the hillsides are filled with immense detail, like the faces of the ancient people who once lived here. And the colors vary across from one hill to the next—red, purple, green, white. The intricate patterns of the cliffs and the smooth contours of mountains behind them all contribute to a uniquely colorful tableau.

Ulla chooses to sit in a spot behind a small hill that shields her from the view of the hikers passing by. For myself I find a beneficial spot to sit out in an open area well off from the main path. I unfold my portable camping chair and adjust it until it sits squarely on the ground. I sit and tune in. I reach out with my feelings.

My awareness latches onto a broad cliff face looking down at where I sit. I send out my love, and love begins to resonate back to me. My feelings intensify as I make deeper and deeper connections—giving and receiving. It is like singing to the land and the land sings back to me. The dirt, the rocks, the hills, the plants, they are all singing their songs to me. I send out my love and love is returned back with a song. And I close my eyes to take in the subtle qualities of the soil and the minerals of this place, focusing first on one thing then another. I tune into each thing to find its signature vibration, and these build one upon the other, one note upon the next, to create a shimmering chord. This is the inner fabric of this space, the song of this land. I send out my love, and love is returned to me. Now the rough sandy gravel, now a spread of purple stones. Each layer of rock sings the song of its existence. They are all blended in a distinct and yet enigmatic harmony.

A spirit walks up to my right, a curious one observing me. He watches and then leaves.

The strange geometries of the landscape here speak with individuality and give form to the great earth

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energies rising up and out. These are earth geometries, not the abstract kind of geometry thought up by humans. And there are other layers here. The majestic cliffs in the distance are singing their slow song of huge expanses of time. And there is the vibration that comes from deep in the layers of the earth below here that is like notes of a string bass.

I am quickly harmonized with this place. In the sending and receiving of love, my own frequencies begin to match the land around me. My notes begin to harmonize with the notes around me. I have totally arrived. The heaviness of Salta is far behind.

There are three spirits who step forward as guardians of this land. I greet them and I ask their permission to do sacred work here. They greet me and offer their assistance. Yes, there is a heart connection, and we will work together. They want to lead me through the underground passages into the earth, to places where great spirits dwell. I understand; I had visited there once before two years ago. We enter the energetic passages that run deep beneath the hills and lead down into the inner folds of the earth.

Pachamama, the Andean mother earth herself, greets me. She sings a loving song, love of the earth, love of the sky, love of living. I am harmonized and mesmerized by Pachamama's song. She connects me into the earth. I am suspended between the core of the earth below and the cosmos above. I hold the pillar of light; I am in love's point of balance for all-that-is. This is my personal mission, the role I need to fulfill. It is a mission to bring forth this kind of love of the earth in others.

I look out again across this land and it sings back to me the love that I feel. The sun is setting and the wind is racing across the landscape. The air takes on a chill, and

as I stand up, I realize that my limbs are stiff. But I am also prepared now for the work in the days ahead.