

# Dear Everyone

Greetings from nearly Spring in San Francisco. The 21st of September marks the first day of spring here, co-inciding with “students’ day” which primary schools celebrate with picnics and outdoor activities, and older students celebrate with festivals in the parks, sadly sometimes marred by all-day drinking and the consequences of same.

Good news this month is that schools are finally back in every day, in something like the fifth change of schedule this year. We are not yet quite on full timetables because apparently Covid can only be kept at bay for five hours at a time (who knew?). All three of our school age children now have different start and finish times which makes for some juggling, and moments when the house turns into Watford junction with everyone coming and going but we are grateful for this turn of events, and Hazel has been celebrating not having to homeschool any more by going out cycling around the countryside a couple of times a week.



Other good news this month is that Hazel has finally managed to revalidate her teaching qualification for use in Argentina! Those who have been following the saga may remember me embarking on this process back when we were expecting Danny, who had his tenth birthday in May this year. It has taken nearly three times the number of years to recognise a Cambridge University BEd than if I had just started studying again from zero like any Argentinean 18 year old. The experience has been rather like taking a connoisseur’s route up a mountain; finding ways around all the unexpected ravines and crevasses means that finally arriving at the summit feels like so much more of an achievement than if I had merely jogged along a marked trail and snapped a selfie at the top.



Hazel’s experience in the education system is but one illustration of the bureaucratic minefield that characterises Latin America, including Argentina. When people think about Latino cultures, we might imagine businesses and organisations operating in an easy relaxed way; after all, these are lands of siestas, leisurely meals lasting late into the evening, and where “mañana” almost denotes a state of emergency. However, this is only part of the story, and in practise, red tape pervades every area of daily life. Recently the TMF group, a global provider of business services, published their annual “Global Business Complexity Index” which ranks 77 countries, representing 92% of global GDP, according to their obstacles to operating a business. From this, the top (worst) ten countries are, in order; Brazil, France, Mexico, Colombia, Turkey, Indonesia, Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Poland. Note that six out of these ten are from Latin America, and most of the rest of the region follows shortly after. The accompanying report attributes Argentina’s position to its complex legislation and the multiple levels of government agencies, and TMF’s regional Latin America director recommends that anyone embarking on a business venture should “enlist the help of a partner who knows the region and can monitor the rapid pace of change in legislation”. Don’t say we didn’t warn you! Thank you for reading, and for your ongoing prayers and support. Have a good month.

*Hazel X Martin*



**Joni & Daniel**

