

Chile temblor adds to Tahoe couple's vacation memories



By Kathryn Reed

One month ago today, Marty and Leslie DeTarr's vacation plans got shaken up a bit in a way that could never have been predicted.

The South Lake Tahoe couple was in Chile when the deadly and devastating 8.8 earthquake struck the South American country.

They were supposed to fly back to the States on March 1. That didn't happen.

"We were emailing American Airlines and the travel agent. There was no response," Marty DeTarr said. "(March 2) we got a response from the travel agent who said it might be 10 days."

The airlines said things would be back to normal at the Santiago airport in three days. That didn't happen.

"We heard later the ceiling at the airport terminal had caved in and wiped out all the computers," DeTarr said.

They didn't feel the earth move because they were about 1,000 miles from epicenter down in Patagonia near Torres del Paine.

But many of the people working at the resort they were staying at were from that country's capital and knew of family and friends who had died. One worker relayed stories about the tsunami on the small coastal town of Constitución.

"He said cars were in the street at night and the next morning they were gone. They had rolled out into the ocean," DeTarr said.

With no one coming and going, the Explora Lodge had no problem putting the DeTarrs up for a couple nights – for free.

“We weren’t in fear or concerned about our lives,” DeTarr said of the experience.

By March 3 their 3.5-week vacation was just about over. It meant riding a bus for more than four hours to Calafate, Argentina; finding their luggage at a different location across the border than where the bus parked; and then paying \$250 for a taxi ride to Buenos Aires. From there, it was a plane ride into Reno.