

Ignacio Idalsoaga

BuinZoo



“ I saw an opportunity to encourage urban children and families to appreciate and conserve the natural world. ”

COUNTRY	Chile
INDUSTRY	Consumer
EMPLOYEES	119
YEAR SELECTED	2009
WEBSITE	www.buinzoo.cl

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

From humble origins as a makeshift animal shelter, Buin Zoo has grown into what is now considered Chile's leading zoo for animal care, education, and conservation. The park houses more than 2,000 animals of 250 different species in various attractions, organized by geographic region of the animals' origin. The zoo complex also houses a kennel, pet cemetery, and veterinary hospital and clinic. Buin Zoo has pioneered the concept of "Edutainment" — or education through entertainment — in Chile, encouraging a largely urban population to interact with and help conserve the natural world.

The entrepreneur behind Buin Zoo is Dr. Ignacio Idalsoaga, whose desire to educate the public about animals spurred him to launch this unique business venture in 1998. An animal lover with a veterinary background, Ignacio did not initially intend to start a business; but luckily, he knew how to spot an entrepreneurial opportunity when it was presented. Ignacio graduated with a degree in veterinary medicine from the University of Chile and worked for five years as a veterinarian while raising pigs on his family's land in Buin. When neighboring farmers began bringing him stray and injured animals, Ignacio honored his commitment as a veterinarian to treat them, supported by donations from visitors. The de facto animal shelter was known as Parque de Asis. Over time, Ignacio and his wife also developed an on-site pet cemetery and dog breeding kennel. The shelter grew to include more exotic animals (such as mistreated circus animals) and attracted an increasing number of visitors. Ignacio knew he had something big on his hands when in 1994, the Chilean government named Parque de Asis the most important private zoo in Chile, and in 1998, the Latin American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (ALPZA) named it the most promising zoo in Latin America.

Bolstered by these accolades, Ignacio began attending meetings on zoology, including ALPZA's training seminar in Mexico on caring for animals in captivity. The seminar completely changed the way he viewed the zoo – helping Ignacio make the leap from veterinarian to entrepreneur. In 1998, Ignacio renamed Parque de Asis as Buin Zoo in order to recast the business as a legitimate zoo. More importantly, Buin Zoo encourages its largely urban visitors to interact with and learn about the natural world, fostering an ethos of conservation in each visitor. Unlike other Chilean zoos, Buin Zoo continuously reinvents its attractions, integrating education and entertainment while improving the quality of life for its animals. Ignacio has also expanded his services to include a veterinary hospital, a pet cemetery, and a dog kennel, which are all incorporated into the 27-acre Buin Zoo complex.

For a population that is 88% urban, a trip to the zoo in Chile is a rare opportunity to engage with the natural world. The quality of this interaction can impact how people treat animals and the environment. Already a prominent Chilean zoo, Buin Zoo has the opportunity to influence zoos across Latin America by spreading the concept of Edutainment and setting a high standard for animal treatment.

ENDEAVOR AND BUINZOO

Ignacio is working with Endeavor Chile to create a board and a cabinet, and develop a second business plan. In addition to the global eMBA program and Ernst & Young Fellows program, he has participated in a local Endeavor Forum.

Ignacio has spoken on behalf of Endeavor Chile at various conferences.