



Argentina



ARGENTINA

Argentina is a country of immense beauty and proportions. Its geographic diversity spans the most breathtaking terrain from Antarctica, through the wild, glacier-filled mountains of Patagonia and massive open plains of La Pampas to the deserts and tropical jungles in the north.

The country can be enjoyed for its natural wonders alone, but no visit here could be called complete without stepping into its soul, its capital city. The elegant Buenos Aires is home to 40 percent of the population, and is a buzzing metropolis with a rich, passionate and tortured history that is integral to its character. It is Europe and South America contained in one geographical location, with elements of the unknown around each corner. It is familiar and strange at the same time, but at its very core, wonderfully welcoming.



A pony's reflection in the water in Argentina © fainmen

Along the elegant avenues of the fashionable districts, sophisticated diners observe passers-by while they sip strong coffee or enjoy smooth cervezas. There is a constant smell of meat grilling from every corner and sidewalk that reveals the Argentine passion for 'asado'. Neither glamour nor passion is in short supply in this cosmopolitan hub where Porteños are equally versed in football, politics and fashion.

There are disparities between the rich and poor, with many people living in near slum conditions in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Since 1992 the economy has teetered near collapse due to corruption and government mismanagement, prompting regular and sometimes violent demonstrations. However it is business-as-usual as far as tourism is concerned; in fact, the resultant devaluation of the peso has made the country much more affordable for travellers.

Basics

Time: Local time is GMT -3.

Electricity: Electrical current is 220 volts, 50Hz. Most hotels and offices use the three-pin flat type plug, however most older buildings use the two-pin round type plug.

Money: The Argentinean Peso (ARS) is divided into 100 centavos. The recent devaluation of the Peso has made Argentina more affordable for travellers but there is still much economic uncertainty and travellers are advised to keep an eye on the exchange rate. Currency can be exchanged at banks and *cambios* (bureaux de change) but it is easier to use ATMs, available in most urban towns, which reflect the current exchange rate. Credit and debit cards are generally accepted, and US Dollars and Euros are normally taken everywhere, but some international cards place limits on transactions. Cirrus cards sometimes aren't accepted. There can be problems using travellers cheques in rural areas, although most banks in major cities should accept them. It's best to take travellers cheques in US Dollars to avoid additional exchange rate charges.

Currency Exchange Rates				
ARS1.00	ARS5.00	ARS10.00	ARS100.00	ARS1,000.00
A\$ 0.35	A\$ 1.74	A\$ 3.49	A\$ 34.85	A\$ 348.52
C\$ 0.30	C\$ 1.49	C\$ 2.98	C\$ 29.80	C\$ 298.01
€ 0.19	€ 0.96	€ 1.91	€ 19.11	€ 191.15
NZ\$ 0.43	NZ\$ 2.14	NZ\$ 4.28	NZ\$ 42.76	NZ\$ 427.56
R 2.17	R 10.85	R 21.69	R 216.90	R 2,169.05
£ 0.17	£ 0.83	£ 1.67	£ 16.68	£ 166.81
US\$ 0.27	US\$ 1.33	US\$ 2.66	US\$ 26.60	US\$ 265.96

Note: These rates are not updated daily and should be used as a guideline only.

Language: Spanish is the official language, but English is understood in the tourist areas.

Entry requirements for Americans: US nationals require a passport for travel to Argentina, but no tourist or business visa is required for unlimited entries of up to three months each.

Entry requirements for UK nationals: UK nationals require a passport, but no tourist or business visa is required for a stay of up to three months for British Citizens. British Overseas Territories Citizens or British

Overseas Citizens coming for tourism do not require a visa for stays of up to three months, while British Nationals (Overseas) do not require a tourist visa for a stay of up to one month.

Entry requirements for Canadians: Canadians require a passport, but no tourist visa is required for a stay of up to three months.

Entry requirements for Australians: Australians require a passport, but no tourist or business visa is required for unlimited entries of up to three months each.

Entry requirements for South Africans: South African nationals must hold a passport, but no tourist or business visa is required for unlimited entries of up to three months each.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders: New Zealand nationals require a passport, but no tourist or business visa is required for unlimited entries of up to three months each.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals: Irish nationals require a passport, but no tourist visa is required for a stay of up to three months.

Passport/Visa Note: Visas are valid for several entries within the period of validity stated in the visa. It is recommended that all visitors have sufficient funds (at least US\$50 per day), as well as onward or return tickets and documents required for next destination. Extensions on visas are possible.

Health: There is a low risk of yellow fever, cholera and malaria in some northern provinces, so it is wise to seek your doctor's advice when travelling to these areas. However since the outbreak of yellow fever in neighbouring Brazil and Paraguay in January/February 2008, it is recommended that all visitors to regions bordering these countries, including Iguazu Falls, be inoculated against yellow fever. Outbreaks of dengue fever are on the increase, and visitors are advised to avoid getting mosquito bites as there is no effective treatment for it. A hepatitis A vaccination is recommended before travel to Argentina as well as a typhoid vaccination for those who might eat or drink outside major restaurants and hotels. Water is safe to drink in major towns and cities. Medical facilities are good in the major cities. Treatment is expensive, however, and medical insurance is advised. Asthma, sinus and bronchial ailments can be aggravated by pollution in Buenos Aires. Those with specific conditions should bring a sufficient quantity of medical supplies and medicines for the trip.

Tippling: A 10% tip is expected at restaurants. Porters expect some small change per bag.

Climate: Argentina's elongated geography ensures that the country has a diverse climate. The north is subtropical with rain throughout the year and is best visited between May and September when the heat and humidity is less oppressive. The south has a sub-arctic climate and is best visited in the summer (December to February). The central area is temperate, but can be hot and humid during summer and cool in winter.

Safety: Although the political and economic crisis is over, there are still periodic outbreaks of social unrest and demonstrations. Visitors are advised to avoid such public gatherings and keep abreast with news to know whether any political disturbances are expected. However, there is no specific threat to foreigners and travellers should not be discouraged from travelling throughout the country. Be alert for bag-snatchers, pickpockets and con-men, particularly in crowded areas in Buenos Aires, on public transport and in popular tourist haunts, such as San Telmo.

Customs: Argentineans are warm and unreserved people.

Business: Business people dress well in Argentina and visitors are expected to wear a smart suit. Handshaking is normal. Argentineans are great conversationalists and are interested and knowledgeable about world events, politics and sporting. Meetings usually begin with small talk. Use titles when addressing people: Señor (Mr), Señora (Mrs) and Señorita (Miss) followed by their surname. Business culture in Argentina can be bureaucratic and as with most South American countries negotiation and decision making can take a long time and is best done face to face. Make sure you see the right people, as only those in high positions are likely to be able to make a final decision. Business hours are 9am to 5pm in Buenos Aires, with an hour for lunch. Outside the capital it is normal to take a siesta between 1pm and 4pm. Many business people are away on holiday during January and February.

Communications: The international access code for Argentina is +54. The outgoing code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0044 for the United Kingdom). The area code for Buenos Aires is (0)11. Calls are usually made from public call centres, but there are also public telephones that take coins or phone cards, although one usually pays more than the unit value of the card. Mobile phones are increasingly popular; the area code must always be used when phoning a mobile in Argentina. Internet cafes are widely available in Buenos Aires and other popular tourist destinations. Many hotels also offer Internet access.

Duty Free: Travellers to Argentina over the age of 18 years can bring in the following items to the value of US\$300 without incurring customs duty: 2 litres of alcohol, 400 cigarettes or 50 cigars, and 5kg of food items. Restrictions apply to fresh foodstuffs such as meat and dairy products. Prohibited items include explosives, inflammable items, narcotics and pornographic material. Firearms and ammunition for sporting purposes are allowed if accompanied by a license/certificate.

BUENOS AIRES

Downtown Buenos Aires is as sophisticated as any European city, with its wide avenues, fine colonial architecture and rows of pavement cafes. The city was built by French, Italian and Spanish immigrants and the Porteños (locals) still regard themselves as more European than South American. Travellers walking through the leafy parks and boulevards could be forgiven for thinking they were in Madrid,



Paris or Milan.

Buenos Aires was founded on the shores of the Rio de la Plata in 1570 and was named after the patron saint of sailors for the good wind or *buen aire*. The city remained a colonial backwater for 200 years while the Spanish concentrated their attentions on wealthier Peru. During this time Buenos Aires became a thriving centre for smuggling between South America and Europe. Dissatisfaction with Spanish economic and political dominance escalated to boiling point and culminated in the revolution of May 1810 and finally to independence in 1816. Its history since then has been dogged by military coups and political mismanagement; the consequences of which are growing disaffection with the government and widespread poverty, as is evident in the sprawling shantytowns on the city's outskirts.



Argentina Puerto Madero at night © Tiago Luiz

This turbulent history has not managed to stifle the indomitable spirit of the Porteños whose passion, charm and vibrancy have forged this great city, a place in which the fire of Evita's soul and the allure of the tango endure.

Attractions

Cabildo

Opposite the Casa Rosada on the Plaza de Mayo is the resplendent former Spanish town hall, the Cabildo, a fascinating old colonial building fronted by arches that once encircled the plaza, back during the May Revolution in 1810. The guards outside the building are members of the revered Regimiento de Patricios, which was formed in 1806, and the changing of the guard every hour is a popular attraction. They still wear their traditional uniforms, designed nearly 200 years ago. The interior houses a small museum, which displays some interesting architectural relics, religious icons as well as watercolour paintings by Enrique Pellegrini.

Address: Calle Bolívar 65; **Telephone:** (011) 4334 1782; **Transport:** Metro to Plaza de Mayo, Cathedral or Bolívar; **Opening time:** Tuesday to Friday 12.30am to 7pm, Sunday 2pm to 6pm; **Admission:** \$1

Casa Rosada

One of the world's most famous balconies juts out of Argentina's Presidential Palace, known as the Casa Rosada. The pink building has been the scene of many a political rally, particularly during the regime of the notorious and tragic Juan and Eva Peron. The Italian style building, fronted with palm trees and fountains, was painted pink when it was converted from a Customs and Post Office building into the presidential palace. President Sarmiento decided to appease opposing political parties by merging red and white into a pink colour scheme for the palace. Today the building houses a small basement museum displaying some presidential artefacts. Each evening a small platoon of mounted grenadiers emerge from the guardhouse to lower the flag on the Plaza, adding a touch of pomp and ceremony to the pretty building.

Address: Hipólito Yrigoyen 219, Plaza de Mayo; **Telephone:** (0)11 4344 3802; **Transport:** Metro to Plaza de Mayo; **Opening time:** Museum: Monday to Friday 10am to 6pm, Sundays 2pm to 6pm. Guided tours are available; **Admission:** Free

Cathedral Metropolitana

Other important buildings around the Plaza de Mayo include the Neoclassical Cathedral Metropolitana, which houses the tomb of General José de San Martín, the revered hero who liberated Argentina from the Spanish. The cathedral was periodically rebuilt and renovated since the foundation stone was laid in the 16th century. The current structure was finally completed in the mid-19th century. The interior has recently been renovated and the gilded columns, Venetian mosaic floors, and silver-plated altar are in pristine condition.

Address: San Martín and Rivadavia streets, Plaza de Mayo; **Telephone:** (0)11 4331 2845; **Transport:** Metro to Bolívar, Cathedral, or Plaza de Mayo; **Admission:** Free

La Recoleta Cemetery

An unlikely tourist attraction, La Recoleta Cemetery is well worth visiting to see its magnificent display of monuments and the ostentatious tombs of Argentina's rich and famous. One of the more modest, but by far the most celebrated, is the grave of Eva Peron. Every day thousands of visitors come to leave flowers at the door of the Duarte family mausoleum, where she is buried. Forty years on, Evita remains both the most revered and reviled figure in Argentina. Love her or loathe her, her spirit lives on in La Recoleta.

Address: Calle Junín, Plaza Francesa; **Website:** www.info-recoleta.com; **Opening time:** Open daily. Guided tours are available; **Admission:** Free

Plaza Dorrego

Plaza Dorrego lies in San Telmo, the bohemian artists' quarter and the birthplace of *tango*. The tiny square is surrounded by elegant houses, now mostly converted into antique shops and bars whose tables overflow onto the

street. On Sundays the plaza is the setting for the ancient antique market, the Feria de San Pedro Telmo. Though you are unlikely to discover any bargains you may find an interesting souvenir or two. The stallholders pack up their wares at 5pm and the square becomes the setting for informal tango dances. This is as popular with the locals as it is with tourists and even the inexperienced may be tempted to try it out. There are numerous museums nearby the plaza worth visiting, including the Museo Histórico Nacional and the Museo de Arte Moderno.

Teatro Colón

The Teatro Colón opened in 1908 is the second largest performing arts theatre in the southern hemisphere, second only to the Sydney Opera House in Australia. It was designed by Italian architect Francisco Tamburri and is an Italian Renaissance-style building with a seating capacity of 2,500 (although more people have been squeezed in at a time). It has hosted many international performers including Nijinsky, Pavlov, Pavarotti and Domingo. Guided tours take visitors to the theatre's workshops, rehearsal rooms, auditorium and stage.

Address: Cerrito 618; **Telephone:** Guided tours: (0)11 4378 7132/33, ticket office: (0)11 4378 7344; **Website:** www.teatrocolon.org.ar; **Transport:** Metro to Carlos Pellegrini station; **Opening time:** The theatre is currently closed for renovations until May 2010

La Boca

La Boca ('the mouth') is the most colourful neighbourhood or *barrio* in Buenos Aires, original home of football legend Diego Maradona and the tango. An assortment of brightly painted low houses made of wood and metal line the streets, including the famed main street Caminito, in this poor but happy area full of artisans, painters, street performers, cantinas and open-air tango shows. The neighbourhood was originally settled by Italian immigrants, most of whom came to work in the docks. Today it is frequented by crowds of tourists who come to soak up the atmosphere.

Mar del Plata

Two hundred and thirty miles (400km) south of Buenos Aires, Mar del Plata is by far Argentina's most popular beach resort. Around three million local tourists holiday here every summer, drawn to its busy beaches and lively entertainment. Visitors can alternate between spending idle days people-watching on the beach or enjoying a spot of culture at one of the city's small galleries. There is also the bustling port to visit with its numerous and colourful traditional fishing boats and noisy colony of sea lions. For a taste of the good life, the Mar del Plata has some excellent bars and restaurants and, at the height of summer, a non-stop nightlife. Some visitors prefer to travel outside the peak Christmas season when there are shorter queues for restaurants and the like. Even in winter the city doesn't close down, as there are half a million permanent residents.

Floralis Genérica

Floralis Genérica is a working metal sculpture located on the United Nations square in Recoleta. It was offered to the city by Argentine architect Eduardo Fernando Catalano, who described it as an environmental structure. Its metallic petals open and close based on the incidence of solar rays and visitors to the site will find the giant metal sculpture 'in full bloom' in the heat of the day and closed at night. The sheer genius of the giant flower makes it a sight worth seeing.

Address: United Nations Park, Recoleta

Nueve de Julio Avenue

At 127 metres wide, Avenida 9 de Julio is claimed to be the widest avenue in the world, honouring Argentina's Independence Day which falls on 9th July. The avenue runs from the Retiro district in the north to Constitucion station in the south, roughly one kilometre to the west of the Rio de la Plata waterfront and consists of 18 lanes of traffic, nine on each side. In the middle of the street stands a 67-metre-tall obelisk marking the heart of Buenos Aires. Visitors can climb to the top where they can look out over the Avenida 9 de Julio through its four observation windows.

Address: Avenida 9 de Julio, Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires Zoo

Home to over 350 animal species and known for some of its exotic breeding, the Buenos Aires zoo is the perfect place for families, a romantic date or tourists. With nine species of mammals, 49 species of reptiles and 175 species of birds, the zoo's goals are to conserve species, produce research and educate the public. Disposable cameras are on sale and professional photographers are on standby to capture all the memories. Animal food can be bought at the entrance and other stations located around the zoo to encourage visitors' interaction with the animals. The best time to visit the zoo is on a sunny weekday afternoon, when time can be spent lounging in front of the white tiger enclosure, for which the zoo is well-known, or elephant house with only a few other people to contend with for the best view.

Address: Ave Sarmiento and Ave Las Heras; **Telephone:** (0)11 4011 9900; **Website:** www.zoobuenosaires.com.ar; **Opening time:** Tuesday to Sunday and holidays from 10am. Open daily during school holidays; **Admission:** General admission (Entrada general) is \$8 or the more advanced pass (pasaporte) is \$14.90

Airports

Ministro Pistarini International Airport (EZE)

Location: The airport is situated 22 miles (35km) to the southwest of Buenos Aires.

Time: GMT -3.

Contacts: Tel: +54 (0)11 5480 6111.

Transfer between terminals: The two terminals are linked by a covered walkway.

Getting to the city: Manuel Tienda Leon run a shuttle-bus every 30 minutes to Madero Terminal in the city centre, where smaller shuttle buses connect passengers to final destinations. Rides to the city centre are about 40 minutes and cost approximately US\$11 (Tel: (+54 11) 0810-888-5366). Public buses are cheaper but can take up to two hours to the city centre. Without reservations metered taxis are available outside the terminal building. Reservations can be made from official booths just outside the customs area and cost between US\$9 and US\$13; unofficial taxis should be avoided. Private cars, also called remis, are a cheap and reliable option with fixed pre-set prices. They available for hire on the lower level of both terminals or by phone (Tel: (54 11) 5480-0196) and cost up from US\$7.

Car rental: Car rental companies have desks in Terminal A.

Airport Taxis: Metered taxis are available outside the terminal buildings of Buenos Aires Ezeiza International Airport and cost between ARS35 and ARS50. Taxis have reservation booths inside the airport and visitors should confirm the price before making the reservation. Avoid touts and unlicensed taxis.

Facilities: There are several shops, pharmacies, restaurants, cafes and bars, as well as duty-free shopping. Bureaux de change and ATMs are available as well as a 24-hour bank. There is a left-luggage facility and a tourist information desk in Terminal A. Other facilities include mobile phone hire, medical service, a VIP lounge and Internet access. Facilities for the disabled are good.

Parking: Long and short-term parking is available in both a multi-level covered parking garage (adjacent to Terminal A) and an open-air lot.

Departure Tax: Airport tax: US\$18 (international flights), US\$8 (regional and Uruguay), \$6.05 (domestic).

Security tax: US\$2.50 (international), \$1 (domestic). Immigration tax (international flights): US\$10.

Website: www.aa2000.com.ar

Argentina Climate and Weather

Argentina's elongated geography ensures that the country has a diverse climate. The north is subtropical with rain throughout the year and is best visited between May and September when the heat and humidity is less oppressive. The south has a sub-arctic climate and is best visited in the summer (December to February). The central area is temperate, but can be hot and humid during summer and cool in winter.

Buenos Aires has a temperate climate with average temperatures ranging from 94°F (35°C) in January to 50°F (10°C) in July. The heaviest rain falls during autumn and spring, though rain can be expected at any time of the year. Many locals leave Buenos Aires during the hot summer months (December, January and February) and head for the coastal resorts.

Tourism

National Secretariat of Tourism, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 4312 2232 or www.turismo.gov.ar

Argentina Embassies

Embassy of Argentina, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 238 6401

Embassy of Argentina, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7318 1300.

Embassy of Argentina, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 236 2351.

Embassy of Argentina, Canberra, Australia: (02) 6273 9111.

Embassy of Argentina, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 430 3524/7.

Embassy of Argentina, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 269 1546.

Embassy of Argentina, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 472 8330.

Foreign Embassies in Argentina

United States Embassy, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 5777 4533.

British Embassy, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 4808 2200.

Canadian Embassy, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 4808 1000.

Australian Embassy, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 4779 3500.

Embassy of South Africa, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 4317 2900.

Embassy of Ireland, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 5787 0801.

New Zealand Embassy, Buenos Aires: +54 (0)11 4328 0747.

Argentina Emergency Numbers

Emergencies: 101.

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