
Argentina / Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires is the capital and largest city in Argentina. It is located on the southern shore of the Río de la Plata on the southeastern coast of the South American continent. Built by Europeans, this vibrant city overflows with energy and brims with attractive residents called porteños (people of the port). The food is fresh and innovative, the shopping ranges from designer labels to street hawkers, and nightlife will keep you swinging all night long. Don't miss attending a superpassionate fútbol or rugby game, snatching a quick tango lesson or downing a juicy steak, it is all top notch. Scratch beneath the surface and you'll find a wealth of old-world cafés, colonial architecture, outdoor markets and diverse communities, plus loads to intrigue and entertain. Rub shoulders with Recoleta's rich and famous while you visit its fascinating necropolis. Hunt for that antique gem in a dusty San Telmo shop or rollerblade around Palermo's green parks with the Sunday crowd.

Telephone and time difference

Dialing to Argentina 011 + 54 + 1 + phone number. Dialing from Argentina to the United States dial 001 + area code + phone number. The time difference (Eastern Daylight) is one hour. Example: it is 05:00am in NYC then it is 06:00am in Buenos Aires.

Climate

The city of Buenos Aires has a humid subtropical climate. The average year temperature is 63.7 °F and the average high temperatures ranges from 86.7 °F in January to 58.8 °F in July. The city gets approximately 45 in of rainfall per year.

Sights and museums

The 18th-century Basílica de Santo Domingo prominently marks the approach into San Telmo. This Dominican church has a long and colorful history. On its left tower, you'll see the replicated scars of shrapnel launched against British troops who holed up here during the invasion of 1806.

A massive mushroom of a building, the national library looks like it could launch into space if not for the weight of five million books and documents inside. Built on the site where Eva and Juan Perón lived, the national library is a sight to behold.

Cabildo de Buenos Aires was built in 1725 and was the original seat of government, the birthplace of the struggle towards independence from Spain. Its current arcade, built in 1940, is a restoration of the original 11 arches that stretched across the width of Plaza de Mayo until they were demolished to make room for Av de Mayo and Av Julio Roca. Inside, a small museum offers a fine view over Plaza de Mayo.

The Recoleta Neighborhood is a necropolis that offers name brand shopping; including Lacoste, Nike, Puma, etc. You may also visit the astonishing Recoleta cemetery where the Famous Eva Duarte de Peron, most known as "Evita" is buried. Eva was deemed "Spiritual Leader of the Nation" and was a major contributor to women's and low income rights in Argentina. She was a former actress and married Juan Peron who became president and where much of her influence began.

Taking up the whole east side of the Plaza de Mayo is the pink facade of Casa Rosada (Pink House), the presidential palace where Evita famously energized adoring crowds from the balcony during the 1940s.

Catedral Metropolitana was completed in the 1820s, the austere neoclassical facade of Buenos Aires' most important cathedral makes for an odd entrance into the splendid Baroque interior. The church has a beautiful rococo main altar and contains the mausoleum of General San Martín, Argentina's greatest independence hero. Outside, an eternal flame burns in his honor.

La Boca's is the popular pedestrian street lined with brightly painted houses and local artists selling their work. In the surrounding streets are crafts stalls and tango dancers, and everywhere there are groups of tourists taking photos.

Floralis Genérica was designed and funded by architect Eduardo Catalano in 2002, its six enormous metallic petals open every morning and close again at dusk.

The Obelisco towers 223ft above the oval Plaza de la República; it was inaugurated in 1936, on the 400th anniversary of the first Spanish settlement on the Río de la Plata. After major soccer victories, fans transform the intersection into a celebration ground.

An Italian cotton tycoon Luis Barolo commissioned architect Mario Palanti to build an architectural tribute to Dante's Divine Comedy. At 100m (328 ft) beautiful Palacio Barolo was then Latin America's highest building. Its height referenced the Divine Comedy's 100 songs, its 22 floors represented the number of verses per song, while its structure was divided into Hell, Purgatory and Heaven.

There are four main plazas (squares) in Buenos Aires, all worth a visit:

Plaza de Mayo was founded in 1580 as the city's first central plaza - its name commemorates the May Revolution (1810) that began the process of independence from Spain. It's the most symbolically important spot in the city, flanked by the Casa Rosada, the Catedral Metropolitana and several other important buildings. In the center stands the Pirámide de Mayo, a small obelisk commemorating the first anniversary of Buenos Aires' independence from Spain.

Plaza del Congreso Lively Plaza del Congreso is home to a miniscule amusement park, kid's playground, dog walkers, Rodin's statue The Thinker, and the splendid Monumento a los Dos Congresos. Honoring the congresses of 1810 in Buenos Aires and 1816 in Tucumán, which led to Argentine independence, its enormous steps symbolize the high Andes, while the fountain represents the Atlantic Ocean.

Plaza Dorrego is a colonial square and is the city's second oldest, after Plaza de Mayo. From Monday to Saturday you can pull up a plastic chair and watch some tango with a glass of something or browse the daily hippy craft market that skirts the square. On Sundays the antique stallholders take over for the Feria de Pedro San Telmo.

Plaza San Martín is the center's loveliest green space. Previously home to a slave market, military fort and bullring, its benches now host homeless people and kissing couples. Below the park's bluff is the Monumento a los Caídos de Malvinas, a memorial to those who died in the Falklands. Across the road is the art-nouveau Palacio San Martín.

Museums:

If there's one art museum you don't want to miss, MALBA is it. Opened in 2001 and housing the private collection of Argentine multimillionaire Eduardo Costantini, MALBA is home to exceptional works by Latin American greats.

Museo de Arte Moderno is set in a former tobacco factory, this stunning and highly underrated modern and contemporary art museum has a quality collection of Argentine and Latin American art, some work by big international names such as Picasso, Matisse, Dali, Kandinsky, Delaunay and Mondrian, as well as rotating exhibitions of art, photography, and experimental film and video.

Museo de la Ciudad is an intriguing museum that explores the relationships between the built environment and social life of the city through stunning old photographs, architectural plans, drawings and details, antique furniture and other fascinating artifacts.

Museo Fragata Sarmiento This elegant former naval ship sailed around the world 40 times between 1899 and 1938 before serving as a training school for Argentina's navy. While there's some interesting nautical paraphernalia on board, porteños prefer to laze about on the deck in the sunshine.

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes is Argentina's most important fine-arts museum and home to an outstanding and enormous collection of 19th- and 20th-century Argentine art, as well as works by European masters such as Renoir, Rodin, Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, Rembrandt and Van Gogh. Art-lovers could easily allow a day here.

Theatre and Nightlife

Buenos Aires is the site of the Teatro Colón, one of the world's greatest opera houses.

Bar Sur is excellent for a very intimate tango show. There are only a dozen tables in the dimly lit room and the dancers do a good job of not knocking over your drink with their high leg kicks - the appreciative crowd comes here to see dancing free of the usual 'tourist show' feel.

El Federal has been operating since 1864 and is a favorite San Telmo bar. It's partly to do to the atmospheric old wooden interior, with its long wooden bar, lowered floor, decorative arch and antique cash register; but mostly it's the buzzy vibe when its cozy rooms fill with locals. Order a bottle of red and a big wooden breadboard of picadas (the Argentine version of antipasto) and settle in for the night.

There are hundreds of other discos, bars and night clubs in the area.

Shopping

Shopping areas are always great for people watching in Buenos Aires. Calle Florida is an outdoor mall with live street performances daily. Another great place to visit is Galerías Pacifico Mall. Both are just walking distance from the accommodations in the city center of Buenos Aires. Palermo Viejo has been likened to New York's Soho and is crammed with boutiques selling trendy fashion.

Shopping hours are Monday-Friday 9:00am-8:00pm and Saturday 9:00am-1:00pm, although malls are generally open daily 10:00am-10:00pm.

Purchase tax or VAT, known as IVA (Impuesto de Valor Agregado), stands at 21% and is placed on everything with the exception of medicines and food. Tax-free shopping is available at many outlets in the city – visitors should look for the 'Tax Free Shopping' logo. On purchasing goods costing \$70 or more, visitors can receive a Global Refund Check along with the invoice for the VAT refund. Before leaving Argentina, the checks and the invoices should be presented at customs to get them validated by a customs stamp.

Also, Argentina is world renowned for its leather products. Some stores offering these exquisite products are Welcome, Dalla Fontana,

Excursions

If Argentina brings to mind thoughts of the beach then keep them at bay as it is quite the drive (~3-4 hours) to reach a nice sandy one to enjoy. A nice substitute though is a day at the Tigre River Delta.

Travel outside of the city and into the interior of the country to experience a traditional and romantic part of Argentine culture – the life of a "Gaucha". Gauchos are South American cattlemen, much like the cowboys of North America. Historically living on the horseback, modernization has forced most onto fenced in ranches. Though they can no longer ride as freely as before, they still work hard

mending fences, branding cattle, rounding up the herds and tending the sheep – all of which makes for a fascinating day out.

Colonia del Sacramento, or Colonia for short, is a lively colonial town with narrow cobblestoned streets flanked by whitewashed buildings just an hour's ferry boat ride from Buenos Aires, Argentina to Uruguay. Little plazas and gardens are all a part of the uniqueness of this old Portuguese colony. Even classic cars add to Colonia's feel of a town suspended in time. Being only a small body of water away from Buenos Aires, Colonia is a great side-trip that can further complete your vacation. Colonia also features the closest beach to Buenos Aires.