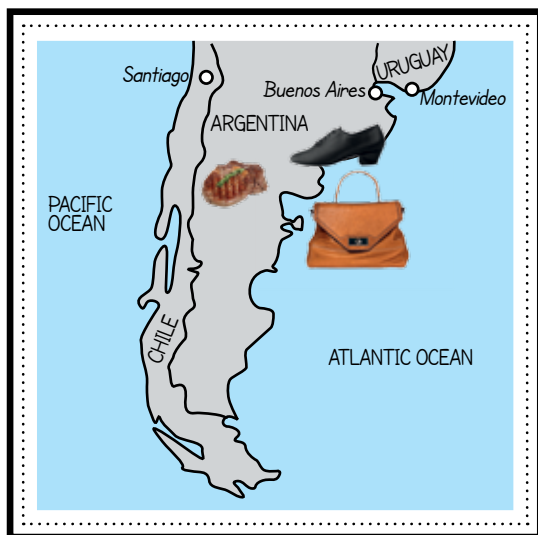


Buenos días, Buenos Aires



EXPLORE A CITY THAT EXPRESSES ITSELF THROUGH LIVELY MUSIC, PASSIONATE DANCING AND DEEPLY INGRAINED CULTURE
By Nick Dall



Buenos Aires is an enormous city with around 2.8 million inhabitants. You could spend a month here and feel like you hardly know the place. But divide your time well, visiting different neighbourhoods, exploring the city's sights, and you can experience the lively spirit this city has to offer.

San Telmo is probably the most charming of these neighbourhoods. Shabby-chic and redolent of the Mediterranean, it's a favourite among both hipsters and Bohemians. It's a great place to watch tango in the streets, browse for antiques and eat traditional Argentine *parrillada*, or mixed grill. For the best steak (and other cuts of beef) in town, look no further than **La Brigada** (Estados Unidos 465) – you can cut the meat with a spoon. And after dinner, head over to **El Viejo Almacén** (Balcarce 799) for their spectacular tango show – booking is essential.



The story of Evita

Evita Perón is a global icon, due in part to the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Evita*, and the Hollywood musical of the same name starring Madonna as Evita.

Evita grew up in the poorest part of a village in rural Argentina, the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy landowner and a local peasant woman.

At the age of 15, she moved to Buenos Aires to pursue a career in acting. What she lacked in talent, she made up for with her good looks and determination. She achieved great success as a radio actress, and had a string of increasingly important lovers.

In 1944, she met Juan Perón, an army colonel and government minister. A year later, they married, and Perón was elected president of Argentina in 1946.

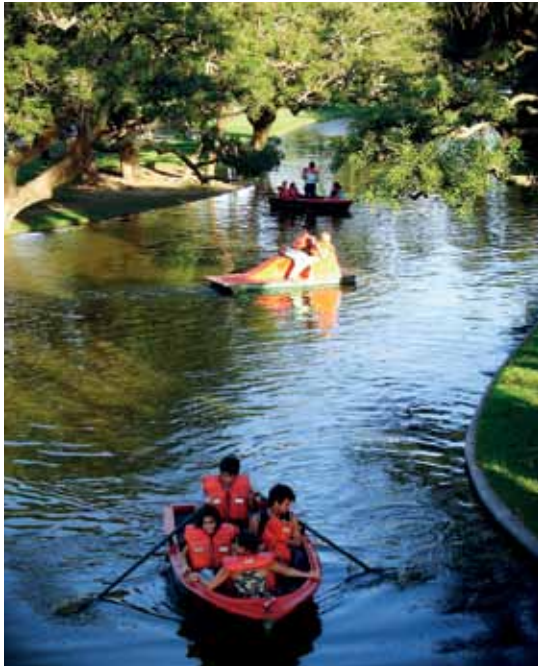
Evita was an elegant, stylish and well-dressed champion of the poor. At the age of 33, she died of uterine cancer. Her career may have been brief, but there's no doubt her memory still captivates a nation.

Her remains rest in a mausoleum in the breathtaking La Recoleta Cemetery – a place of pilgrimage for devout Evita fans.

Another definite must-see is the Evita Museum (Lafinur 2988), which is housed in a glamorous colonial building and features fresh, modern displays.

▶ SEE IMPROMPTU TANGO PERFORMANCES IN THE SAN TELMO DISTRICT

LEFT THE HISTORICAL CASA ROSADA



Most of the biggest sights are downtown. You can't miss the obelisk that towers above the **Plaza de la República**, and it's only a stone's throw away from the **Teatro Colón** (www.teatrocolon.org.ar), one of the greatest opera houses in the world. Guided tours are fascinating – the labyrinth of changing rooms and costume stores has to be seen to be believed – and it's often possible to get tickets for a performance. Consult their website for schedules.

Another downtown must-see is the **Casa Rosada**, the president's official residence and the setting for the famous balcony scene in the film *Evita*. Afterwards, pop into **Café Tortoni** (Avenida de Mayo 825) for coffee and a *medialuna* (a croissant). Established



in 1858, the cafe retains much of its old-fashioned charm; the waiters still wear bow ties and the decor is almost entirely original.

Palermo and **Recoleta** are the leafy suburbs of Buenos Aires. Stately buildings and wide streets make for a decidedly Parisian feel, which is topped off by Palermo's Parque Tres de Febrero, a delightful green lung, where you can rent a pedalo. Meanwhile, the astounding **La Recoleta Cemetery**, where you can see the tombs of presidents, artists, poets, and Eva Perón, was voted one of the world's most beautiful.

All glass and stainless steel, **Puerto Madero** is Buenos Aires' answer to Sandton. It's located on the banks of the Río de la Plata and is home to some of



Need to know

WEATHER Summers are hot and humid with rain. Winters are mild.

SAFETY Pickpockets and bag-snatchers abound, especially in La Boca.

GETTING THERE SAA flies daily to Buenos Aires from Joburg.

GETTING AROUND The *subte* (underground) has recently had its classic wooden trains replaced with new trains. Taxis are also a popular way of getting around.

MONEY R1.67 will get you one Argentine Peso.

LANGUAGE Spanish is Argentina's official language, but (broken) English is widely spoken.

ACCOMMODATION Good budget options are **Luba Tango Guest House** (www.lubatangohouse.com.ar, rates from \$55 pps per night) and **Livian Guest House** (www.livianguesthouse.com, rates from \$90 per room per night).



▶ CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE

TANGO LOUNGE AT THE FAENA HOTEL

COLOURFUL LA BOCA NEIGHBOURHOOD

PEDALOS AT A PARK IN PALERMO

OUTDOOR ASADO (BARBECUE) SELLER

DOWNTOWN'S OBELISK ON THE PLAZA DE LA REPÚBLICA

the city's flashiest bars, cafes and restaurants. But perhaps the most ostentatious location of all is **Faena Hotel** (www.faena.com), which has several restaurants and bars, and the city's most exclusive tango show.

Nowhere is more representative of the working classes than **La Boca**.

This neighbourhood is home to the world-famous football team Boca Juniors. Guided tours of La Bombonera stadium (their home turf) are great. Even better is attending a live game, especially when Boca are playing their rivals River Plate.

La Boca isn't only about soccer though: **El Caminito** is a colourful street with a fun carnival atmosphere, and one of the most touristy places in the city.

Whether you shop till you drop, learn to tango or watch a game, you'll definitely fall in love with the Paris of the South. ♦

Shop till you drop

Buenos Aires is simply a shopper's paradise, if you know what to look for.

Leather is big business, and whether you're after a jacket, a pair of boots, a purse, or a wallet, you are bound to find it.

For quality items at affordable prices, head for **Prüne** (www.prune.com.ar), which has a couple of outlets

throughout the city. You will also find many leather merchants where you can have your jacket specially tailored.

Argentina produces some amazing wines, and is particularly famous for its Malbec, a rich, robust red and the most perfect partner to *parrillada*.

There are plenty of wine shops in the capital. The

local Malbec from **Winery** (www.winery.com.ar) and **Lo de Joaquin Alberdi** (www.lodejoaquinberdi.com) are worth trying.

The neighbourhood of San Telmo is home to countless antique shops,

selling anything from art and books to cameras and chandeliers.

There's a popular antiques market at **Plaza Dorrego** (also

in San Telmo) on Sundays, with loads of street tango performances – and a lively atmosphere.



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