

# Buenos días, BUENOS AIRES!

Elegant, sophisticated and a foodie's dream destination, Buenos Aires has it all. There's little wonder it's known as the Paris of the southern hemisphere

BY NICK DALL

## H

ome to about 14 million *porteños*, Buenos Aires warrants weeks of exploration. From the city's splendid signature neoclassical architecture and most magnificent boulevards, to its infectious cafe culture and thriving colourful tango scene, there's a little something for everyone. And that's before we've even mentioned the hub's throbbing nightlife, world-class steaks, legendary football pedigree and pristine river delta. The best part? Your rands will actually go somewhere here...

### CHARM YOUR SOCKS OFF

For sheer chocolate-box charm it's difficult to beat San Telmo.

Shabby chic and reminiscent of the Mediterranean, it's a favourite among Bohemians and yuppies. 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 bits of cow) in town, look no further than La Brigada: they're not lying when they say you can cut the meat with your spoon. San Telmo is also home to some of the best *milongas* or tango houses in town (make sure to catch a show), while visiting fashionistas will be taken by the funky design co-ops and vintage shops.

## INSIDER'S Know this GUIDE

### GETTING THERE

SAA flies daily from Joburg to São Paulo, which is a three-hour flight from Buenos Aires.

### MOVING AROUND

The historic Subte (underground) is quite an experience. Uber is also very affordable here.

### SAFETY

Beware of pickpockets, especially in La Boca.

### LANGUAGE

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

### WEATHER

Buenos Aires's weather is much like Durban's.

### TIME ZONE

It is five hours behind South Africa.





**DOWN AND DIRTY**

The port-side hood of La Boca is the beating heart of the Argentine working class. La Boca is home to world-famous football team Boca Juniors – go on one of the great guided tours of their La Bombonera stadium, and visit the fascinating museum. Step your experience up a notch by watching a live game, especially a treat if Boca are playing El Clásico – against arch rivals River Plate.

La Boca isn't only about football though: El Caminito del Rey is a colourfully painted street with a carnival atmosphere, which makes it one of the most touristy places in the city. Instead of wasting your cash on overpriced curios, we'd advise taking the time to snap some selfies: the garish backdrop will look decidedly exotic in a frame on your mantel.



**CULTURE CULTURES**

Most of the biggest sights are found in the Microcentro, otherwise known as Downtown. You can't miss the obelisk that towers high above the Plaza de la República, and it's only a stone's throw from the Teatro Colón, one of the best opera houses in the world. Guided tours are fascinating (the labyrinth of change rooms and costume stores has to be seen to be believed) and it's often possible to get tickets for a performance.

If the roughly R240 price tag for the Teatro Colón tour is too steep, why not head on over to the Casa Rosada, the president's official residence and the setting for *that* scene in the film *Evita*. Tours are 100% gratis, but they are only offered on Saturdays and Sundays.

Afterwards, we'd recommend popping into Cafe Tortoni for coffee and a *medialuna* (croissant). Established in 1858, it's a real

**BEER AND BURGER INDEX**

<b>1 RAND = 1.05 PESO</b>	
PINT OF BEER IN A PUB	R60
BIG MAC MEAL	R100



**ABOVE:** Tuck into a medialuna and coffee at the long-standing Cafe Tortoni; splurge a little and stay at Alvear Palace Hotel

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** The iconic obelisk on the Plaza de la República; kids playing football in La Boca; the colourful lanes of El Caminito del Rey

Buenos Aires institution, having been frequented by famous writers, politicians and musicians for more than a century. The waiters still wear bow ties and the decor is original. If shopping is more your thing, head over to Florida Street for everything leather – just be prepared to hold your ground with the sometimes pushy shop assistants.

**GLAM IT UP**

Palermo and Recoleta are Buenos Aires' equivalent of the leafy suburbs. Stately buildings and wide streets make for a decidedly Parisian feel, which is topped off by Bosques de Palermo (Palermo Park): a delightful green lung, where you can rent a pedalo for next to nothing. Meanwhile, the astounding La Recoleta Cemetery is so enormous it even has a map with street names and numbers! Most people are only interested in one address though, which is why

there's always a crowd of people in front of Evita Péron's mausoleum.

While you're in the area, don't miss the trendy enclaves of Palermo Soho (a chic Bohemian hood great for cafes and shopping), Palermo Hollywood (a de rigueur pocket packed with trendy bars and restaurants) and Palermo Viejo (the heart of BA's flourishing fashion scene and home to the stylish flagship boutiques of local designers).

On the other side of the coin, ultra-modern 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 the city's flashiest bars and restaurants. Eating and drinking in Puerto Madero may set you back a pretty penny, but a relaxing walk on the promenade is absolutely *mahala*.

**NATURAL HIGH**

The port town of Tigre and the surrounding Paraná Delta are a train

ride from the Microcentro. The hop-on hop-off Tren de la Costa is geared towards tourists: not only are the carriages quaint and atmospheric, but the stations themselves house shops, restaurants and museums. Two of my favourite stops on the route are Anchorena (great for a walk on the banks of the Río de la Plata) and San Isidro, one of the city's wealthiest suburbs and home to an impressive cathedral, stately stone houses, manicured gardens and a fascinating rugby museum.

If Buenos Aires is South America's answer to Paris, then Tigre is its Venice. Here, the Paraná River forms a tangled web of streams, inlets and forested islands before emptying itself into the ocean. Kids get to school on ferries, post is transported by boat, and a floating greengrocer moves from door to door. A day spent exploring this paradise will teleport you from the urban maelstrom in a heartbeat. ✨

WHERE  
**to stay**

➤ **Budget**

**GARDEN HOUSE HOSTEL**

Well-located, vibey, clean and has dorm rooms, doubles and triples. Basic breakfast included. [gardenhouseba.com.ar](http://gardenhouseba.com.ar)

➤ **Moderate**

**LEMON APARTMENTS**

Stylish self-catering apartments in the heart of San Telmo. [lemonapartments.com.ar/en](http://lemonapartments.com.ar/en)

➤ **Luxury**

**ALVEAR PALACE HOTEL**

An undisputed symbol of the Belle Époque, and has been at the forefront of Buenos Aires' cultural scene since 1932. [alvearpalace.com](http://alvearpalace.com)