

## THE MADEINEARNEST ESSENTIALS

Population **13,000,000**

Country **Argentina**

Currency **Peso**

Official Languages **Spanish**

Time Zone **GMT-5**

Country Dialling Code **+54**

## HOTEL

### The Cocker

Only five suites, a modern design, set in a newly restored art-nouveau town house.

## AREA

### San Telmo

Atmospheric area of beautiful colonial mansions and shady squares, a fascinating history, captivating performers and excellent restaurant and bars.

## RESTAURANT

### La Cabrera

The best parrilla. Unspeakably good steaks.

## BAR/CAFE

### Bar Seis

An urban semi-industrial design done with Argentine flair - a great buzzy place to grab a drink and some food.

## ART

### MALBA

The best modern art museum in South America.

## TRIP

### Ferry to Uruguay

Get the ferry to the stunning old colonial settlement of Colonia Del Sacramento in Uruguay - it's only an hour away!

## THE MADEINEARNEST INSIDER

### Dan Begbie-Clench

## RESTAURANT

**Olsen** A Scandinavian restaurant (including the wood-heavy interior and exterior design) with a twist on Argentine food - popular and very busy.

## ICE CREAM

**Scannapieco** You simply cannot do a Buenos Aires guide without recommending many ice cream stops. This is as good as it gets but you should stop and sample often.

## HOTEL

### Home

Independent and design conscious.

## PLACE TO VISIT

**Planetarium** Located near the Jardín Japonés, built in the 60s and simply a stunning piece of stand-alone architecture.

## EXPERIENCE

**Thames Street** Take a walk down Thames (a street in Palermo) and the surrounding streets - Gurruchaga, Uriarte, Honduras, El Salvador, JL Borges - for some great examples of slightly run-down classic Buenos Aires architecture from the turn of the century, like Haussmann's Paris with a South American twist.

## THE HIDDEN GEM

### Ocho7Ocho

No sign on the door, but fabulous drinks.

## WEBSITE

<http://www.bue.gov.ar>

Invaluable tourist information.

**Initial impressions of Buenos Aires can be underwhelming. It's flat, lacking in memorable landmarks and not particularly attractive at first sight. The Rio Plata is a gaping grey mass of water and the actual name of the city (literally translated as 'good air') is surely a misnomer judging by the pungent odours. But, the city has an intriguing history and was UNESCO's first City of Design...**

A genuine outpost of the new world, Buenos Aires is primarily inhabited by immigrants of European extraction. They've experienced a tumultuous few centuries, enduring horrific recessions, staggering wealth, appalling governments, 'dirty' civil wars, female icons, and footballing megastars. But what's it like for the average visitor?

Well, Sunday is as good a day as any to start. The day is dominated in the south of the city by **La Feria de San Telmo**, the celebrated weekly antique and flea market. All the streets in this area of charming, crumbling, colonial style buildings are taken over by a variety of vendors and performers. Inevitably, the market is increasingly orientated towards tourists but it still hosts some seriously classy entertainment. Full on ten piece bands languidly churning out mournful, lilting tango laments. Tango dancers mysteriously and dramatically trying their steps on the pavement whilst weathered vendors sell an array of intriguing products. The indoor section of the market is where the best products and prices are to be had and the area is well served by a fantastic selection of parrilla (Argentinean grill houses) and bars. **Desnivel** (so cheap), **Don Ernesto** (fantastic variety of dishes) and **El Brigada** (unbelievable meat, in a good way) are of particular renown and high standards. The main square of San Telmo, surrounded by streets of posadas (old colonial mansions), is **Plaza Dorrego**. Once the market ends early on Sunday evening, this turns into a outdoor tango dance (milonga) where locals congregate to practice their steps. Touristy? Perhaps, but still a must do.

Still in the south of the city lies that infamous quarter, otherwise known as the 'republic of **Boca**'. This is reached by passing the charismatic **Lezama Park** replete with its mighty trees and huge sculptures. An eye catching mural welcomes the gringo to the mean streets of Boca. Caution is advised in this area (although cloaking paranoia in a tourist is not a strong look!) and the 29 bus is perfect for getting from Boca right to the other end of the city if so required. Boca's alleged centrepiece is **Caminito**, an old fishermans alley with garishly painted houses, now rebranded as an artists enclave. Yes, it's touristy but it is the only place where you can see the real old style immigrant/dockworkers' houses and how they used to live. An interesting five minutes walk north is **La Bombonera**, the stadium of Boca Juniors. You can have a guided tour of the ground and attached museum at any time apart from match days... a memorable experience and a truly inimitable ground; both intimate yet intimidating. Make time to pop in to **El Obrero**, a football-mad restaurant in the shadows of La Bombonera for a very cheap meal surrounded by photos of the great and the good (Bono, Tim Robbins, Susan Sarandon, Maradona) and football scarves and pennants from around the world.

Other parts of Boca, perhaps best viewed out of a vehicle window, look intriguing. This is the real Buenos Aires, right on the river and genuinely local with a fascinating history too. Numerous patches of this area have a shabby appearance but with beautiful, classily constructed old buildings... you can almost smell the inevitable gentrification potential. Other parts are unquestionably raw with sprawling riverside shanty towns illustrating more serious social problems.

The main administrative, political and commercial heart of the city separates North from South. Dominating the centre is the **Plaza De Mayo**, which contains the famously pink Presidential Palace, **Casa Rosada**, where **Eva Peron** called out to her adoring public. Whilst the actual centres of many cities prove quite anodyne, there are some treats tucked away here, notably the **Confiteria Ideal**, around a ten minute walk north west. This is an old school café and tango venue, dripping in character. Even at four in the afternoon, an ancient suited man is in the corner bobbling away on the bontemi organ, whilst tango is practised upstairs... a very special place. Nightly milongas take place, thus making it a viable night time alternative. Between here and the centre is the world renowned **Café Tortoni**, steeped in literary tradition and endowed with an endearingly grandiose interior. The problem is the clientele is no longer composed of elegantly arty portenos (BA locals) but crass Americans with bum bags, yapping away and taking multiple pointless photographs. The magic has left the building!

The two main areas of interest in the north of the city are **Palermo** and **Recoleta**. Palermo is further separated into different sections. **Palermo Viejo** is absolutely packed with boutiques, bars and restaurant, and yes that dreadful adjective 'trendy' is often used to describe it; but don't let this put you off. It's a calm and very green area of low level, elegant buildings with genuine character and multiple independent enterprises offering excellent design, clothes, cuisine, drinks or music. The nightlife here is fantastic and the range of restaurants is truly stunning, covering all cuisines from teriyaki to tamales. **La Cabrera** serves monumental steaks which are always accompanied by TWELVE bowls of tapas-like accompaniments... incredible, sumptuous creations. Suffice to say, the portions are enormous. The bars of Palermo really get going to around 1am (everything in BA starts late!) and there's plenty of choice, some of the best around **Plaza Serrano**, so bide your time as there are many later options.

Buenos Aires is famous for its clubs and most are located on the coastal road, **Costera Norte** about ten minutes from Palermo in a cab. However, the tip from us would be **Niceto**, actually within Palermo, which hosts a great array of sessions and tends to attract preferable crowd, rather than the annoying teenagers found at some of the bigger clubs. Avoid **Pacha** and its expensive glitz and keep it underground. Go to the all night milonga at the **Armenian Social Centre** (or Centro Cultural Torcuato Tasso in San Telmo), where graceful 70 year olds dance with stunning 20 year old girls, and drink litres of excellent beer or caipirinhas for less than a pound. This area is bursting with exciting action and an early night would be an unwise option!

Palermo also has numerous famous parks and museums, so once the excesses of the night before have abated, it's time to get out there. **Malba** is Argentina's premier modern art museum and is very impressive, as is the actual building (to see the classics of Degas, Manet, Renoir et al in Buenos Aires head to **Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes**). The **botanical gardens** at Plaza Italia (known as Parque Gato, the Cat Park) nearby Malba are a great place to seek shade during the stifling heat. You won't be alone; the park is absolutely full of stray cats which makes for entertaining viewing. The **Jardín Japonés de Buenos Aires** is also close by and extremely surreal. They're a pretty good approximation of a traditional Japanese water garden but what sets them apart is the incessant flood of Argentinean teenagers dressed up (quite convincingly) as Japanese people and characters (from Harajuku girls to Samurai). Bizarre, but there is a nice sushi restaurant there too. Another interesting visit in this vicinity is the **Evita Museum**: self explanatory really but a worthwhile exhibition of a fascinating character. The lady in question is buried in **Recoleta Cemetery** which is a smart district nearby and well worth a visit.

More than anything, Buenos Aires a city for exploring and walking around. There are so many interesting areas and fantastic places that are only to be uncovered through random exploration. The city has really established its own character. The European influences are obviously there but there are also more distinctive traits particular to the porteno: immaculate fashion, the sizzle of a tenderloin on the grill, the seductive mysteries of the tango, the unbelievable ferocity of football supporters - this really is a city that needs to be experienced.