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BUENOS AIRES



WHAT AM I  
DOIN' HERE?

## BUENOS AIRES

Argentina, the second largest country in South America, is a land of spectacular natural beauty, astonishing contrasts, and myriad attractions as varied as its topography and climate.

Cradled between the broad Atlantic Ocean and the rugged Andes mountains, it is more than a million square miles in area - roughly about one third the size of continental United States - and stretches across the south-eastern corner of the continent from the densely forested swampy tropics of the Gran Chaco in the north to the frozen fiords of sub-Antarctic Tierra del Fuego in the extreme south.

Within this vast area are such a seemingly endless variety of scenic wonders and tourist attractions as the magnificent waterways along the Uruguay, Paraguay, and Parana rivers; lovely national parks and famed sea-side and mountain resorts; its towering snow covered Andean Cordillera; a coast line which extends for twenty-five hundred miles from Rio de la Plata to the Strait of Magellan; and the wide, desolate Pampa, which covers nearly a quarter of a million square miles in the heart of the country. Two thirds of the nation's twenty million population is concentrated in the big cities which rim this great expanse of flat, fertile farmland where most of the country's wealth in cattle and grain is found.

The social, political, cultural, and commercial centre of this young vigorous and dynamic nation is Buenos Aires, the eight largest city in the world. "B.A.", as most travellers refer to it, is the most cosmopolitan city in South America.

In the central part of Argentina the climate is generally mild and temperate, making it a most pleasant and attractive place to visit the year around. The seasons are just the opposite of those in Canada, with spring taking place from September through November, summer from December through February, autumn from March through May, and winter from June through August.

According to the most recent census, about 97 percent of the population of Argentina is of European origin and emigrated within the last century. Italians are the most numerous, with Spaniards a close second. Roughly 3 percent are of Indian or other non-caucasian strain.

The legendary Gaucho, the colourful, hard-riding tough, lawless and ruggedly independent nomad who roamed the Pampas - like the American cowboy - is almost a thing of the past. But the tradition lives on in some of the large "Estancias" (ranches) where modern Gauchos still dress in bombachas, ponchos, and black felt hats, round up the cattle and do other ranch chores as they did in days gone by. The Indians who once inhabited this part of South America too, are practically extinct today, with the exception of those still found in the Chaco region and a few others on the island of Tierra del Fuego.

Argentina today is a republic composed of twenty-two provinces, a federal district, and one territory which comprises Tierra del Fuego, the South Atlantic Islands and the Antarctic. Its liberal constitution provides for a federal union of the provinces, which retains all power except those reserved for the national government. The president and vice-president are elected for six years and may be re-elected. The legislative branch of the government is vested in a congress which consists of a chamber of deputies and a senate. The judicial branch consists of a supreme court and the national tribunals, on the federal capital and in the provinces. Judges are appointed by the president and confirmed by the senate. The country's legal system is based on the Roman Law and the Napoleonic code.

The language of Argentina is Spanish, with slight variations in pronunciation, but English is widely spoken and the traveller usually has no trouble getting around in the big cities and resort areas. Most of the fine hotels have bilingual telephone operators and English is understood and spoken in many of the better restaurants and stores.

Argentina is probably the best fed nation in Latin America, if not in the world. The average Argentine consumes two hundred pounds of beef a year. Meat in this carnivorous land is as plentiful as the great herds that graze on the pampas, and prices compared to Canadian standards are low. This is one reason why "bife" (steak) is a staple food on the Argentine diet, and all sorts of chops and choice cuts are featured in restaurants, dining rooms, "confiterias" and even sidewalk cafes throughout the country. Other typical Argentine specialties are: "Parrillada" - a mixed barbecue consisting of a cut of beef, port and blood sausages, kidneys, liver, and "chin chuluis" (intestines); "cabrito" (roast kid); "exabeche" (chicken fish or partridge marinated in vinegar); "puchero" (boiled dinner consisting of a brisket of beef, slice of salt pork, sausages, and several vegetables); "bife a caballo" (steak on horseback - a steak with two fried eggs on top); "empanadas" (fried or baked meat pies); and "mollejas" (sweetbreads). But for some truly authentic Argentine food, you have to journey out to an "estancia" (ranch) and enjoy an "asado" an Argentine barbecue, and drink the bitter tea that is known as "mate".

Nothing typifies the Argentines' love of fine food and just for good living more than the "confiterias" of Buenos Aires. The "confiteria", is a unique Argentine institution that can best be described as a combination English tearoom, cocktail lounge, French cafe, American bar, and ice-cream parlour, with a delicatessen thrown in for good measure. Some of these are rather modest little lunchrooms, where only the most essential viands are surveyed, but others are grandiose marble palaces.

Argentina is a shoppers paradise where you can buy practically anything and everything from silver antiques and hand-woven vicuña ponchos to alligator handbags and nutria coats. And Buenos Aires is the place to come to for those excellent buys in leather and woolen goods, fine luggage, handsome shoes, and a variety of items for both men and women made out of alligator, calf-skin, pigskin, snakeskin, and antelope. Its main shopping street, Calle Florida, is closed to vehicular traffic most of the day.

In general, the great majority of Argentines dress well, live well, and eat more than any other people in South America. The country has one of the most liberal and progressive educational systems in the world, a low rate of illiteracy and a relatively high standard of living.

Buenos Aires is modern, bustling, progressive, and prosperous metropolis that sprawls leisurely on the flat, fertile southern bank of the broad and muddy Rio de la Plata, about a hundred and twenty-five miles from the Atlantic Ocean.

Its cluttered skyline, busy modern harbours, and giant grain elevators offer unmistakable proof that this is the capital, chief sea port, and most important industrial and commercial city in Argentina. It is the biggest city south of the equator. A modern metropolis of more than three million persons, "B.A." has the tallest skyscrapers in South America, the widest avenues in the world, and the

biggest steaks anywhere. Its fine restaurants, excellent hotels, elegant shops, and a wide variety of amusements and entertainment have made it a favorite stopover for tourist circling the continent. Its citizens known as "porteños" (of the port) distinguish them from their rural kin, have the vibrant vitality and bold independent spirit so characteristic of this young nation, tempered with the self assurance and sophistication of the true cosmopolitan.

One of this city's outstanding tourist attractions is its colourful, predominantly Italian water-front district of La Boca. The city's bohemian section. But by far the most popular form of diversion for most tourists is found in the many restaurants, confiterias, cafes, cabarets, loites and theatres which have made this city a gourmets' paradise and the show place of the continent.