



# Buenos Aires

011 / POP 3 MILLION / AREA 203 SQ KM

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ i Latina (p92)
- ➔ Casa Saltshaker (p91)
- ➔ Chan Chan (p88)
- ➔ Sarkis (p91)
- ➔ Don Julio (p92)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Poetry Building (p82)
- ➔ Miravida Soho (p83)
- ➔ The 5th Floor (p83)
- ➔ Casa Calma (p79)
- ➔ Cabrera Garden (p83)

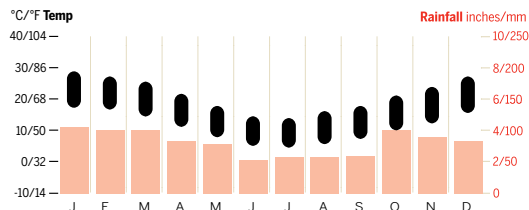
## Why Go?

Whip together a beautiful metropolis with gourmet cuisine, awesome shopping and frenzied nightlife – and you get Buenos Aires. It's a rough-hewn mix of Paris' architecture, Rome's traffic and Madrid's late-night hours, all spiked with Latin American flavor. BA is cosmopolitan, seductive, emotional, frustrating and chock-full of attitude, and there's no other place like it in the world. Seek out classic BA: the old-world cafes, colonial architecture, curious markets and diverse communities. Visit with *Evita* at Recoleta's famous cemetery, fill your belly with luscious steaks, dance the sultry tango and take in a crazy *fútbol* (soccer) match. Unforgettable adventures? You'd better believe it.

Everyone knows someone who has been here and raved about it. You've put it off long enough. Come to BA and you'll understand why so many people have fallen in love with this amazing city. There's a good chance you'll be one of them.

## When to Go

### Buenos Aires



**Oct–Dec** Spring and early summer mean warm days to enjoy outdoor restaurant patios and bars.

**Aug** Winter's peak brings BA's tango festival; or visit museums, art galleries and cultural centers.

**Mar–May** Explore BA during fall's pleasant days, and catch the city's Independent Film Festival in April.

## History

Buenos Aires was first settled in 1536 by Spaniard Pedro de Mendoza, but food shortages and attacks by indigenous groups prompted his hasty departure in 1537. Meanwhile, other expedition members left the settlement, sailed 1600km upriver and founded Asunción (now capital of Paraguay). Then in 1580 a new group of settlers moved back south and repopulated Mendoza's abandoned outpost.

For the next 196 years BA was a backwater and smuggler's paradise due to trade restrictions imposed by mother Spain. All the same, its population had grown to around 20,000 by 1776, the year Spain decreed the city as capital of the new viceroyalty of Río de la Plata.

BA's *cabildo* (town council) cut ties with its mother country on May 1810, but decades of power struggles between BA and the other former viceregal provinces ensued, escalating into civil war. Finally, in 1880 the city was declared the federal territory of Buenos Aires and the nation's capital forevermore.

Agricultural exports soared for the next few decades, which resulted in great wealth accumulating in the city. Well-heeled *porteños* (BA citizens) built opulent French-style mansions and the government spent lavishly on public works. But the boom times didn't last forever. The 1929 Wall Street crash dealt a big blow to the country's markets, and soon the first of many military coups took over. It was the end of Argentina's Golden Age.

Poverty, unemployment and decaying infrastructure became constant problems in the following decades. Extreme governments and a roller-coaster economy have also been recurring plagues, but despite this Argentina continues to bounce back every few years. Today BA remains a vibrant city with resilient and adaptable citizens – just like their ancestral settlers.

## Sights

### Microcentro

BA's Microcentro is where the big city hustles: here you'll see endless crowds of business suits and power skirts hastening about the narrow streets in the shadows of skyscrapers and old European buildings.

Florida, a long pedestrian street, is the main artery of this neighborhood. It's always

## TOP FIVE SPLURGES

- Book a room at the classic, sumptuous Alvear Palace Hotel (p82)
- Reserve a table at the closed-door restaurant i Latina (p92)
- Drink, eat and learn about Argentine customs at the Argentine Experience (p91)
- Head to the countryside and go horseback riding with Caballos a la Par (p74)
- Snag two tickets to the Faena Hotel's sexy Rojo Tango (p99) show

jammed during the day with businesspeople, shoppers and tourists seeking vehicle-free access from north to south. Buskers, beggars and street vendors thrive here as well, adding color and noise. Renovated old buildings, such as beautiful Galerías Pacífico, add elegance to the area.

Further south is BA's busy financial district, where there are several museums to investigate. After that comes Plaza de Mayo, often filled with people resting on benches or taking photos of the surrounding historic sites.

### ★ Plaza de Mayo

PLAZA

(Map p58; cnr Av de Mayo & San Martín) Plant-ed between the Casa Rosada, the Cabildo and the city's main cathedral, grassy Plaza de Mayo is BA's ground zero for the city's most vehement protests. In the plaza's center is the **Pirámide de Mayo**, a white obelisk built to mark the first anniversary of BA's independence from Spain. If you happen to be here on Thursday at 3:30pm, you'll see the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo gather; these 'mothers of the disappeared' continue to march for social justice causes.

### Casa Rosada

BUILDING

(Pink House; Map p58; ☎ 011-4344-3600; ☺ Free half-hour tours 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) On the eastern side of Plaza de Mayo stands the stately Casa Rosada. It's from the balconies here that Eva Perón famously preached to throngs of impassioned Argentines.

The building's color could have come from President Sarmiento's attempt at making peace during his 1868-74 term (by blending the red of the Federalists with the white of the Unitarists). Another theory, however, is that the color comes from painting the