

On the Road



SANDRA BAO Coordinating Author

Researching is hard work, stomping from one hotel to another. This time I took a break – tossed aside my notes, got on a horse and looked at the Argentine countryside from a gaucho's perspective. It wasn't easy imagining a romantic, isolated pampas with 10 other tourists riding alongside, but the ride was great nonetheless.

BRIDGET GLESON

The snow started falling harder as we boarded a boat in Parque Nacional Los Glaciares, South (p487). We couldn't see anything – it was white all around, and tourists were slipping on the deck and bumping each other with umbrellas. Then the clouds parted. We fell silent as the massive crystal-blue Glaciar Perito Moreno suddenly loomed before us.



GREGOR CLARK

OK, I admit it: I love baby farm animals. And Uruguay in springtime is kind of a rural paradise. If you want to feed a baby cow or sheep, just ask at one of the country's *estancias turísticas*, and they'll likely turn you loose with your very own bottle.

LUCAS VIDGEN

One of the only true bonuses about researching in Argentina during winter was that the ski resorts were still open. Here I am, hard at work in Los Penitentes (p355), outside of Mendoza at the end of the season. Snow conditions? Sheet ice. Views? Absolutely unbelievable.

ANDY SYMINGTON

From the northwestern town of Chilecito (p305) you can explore the region's industrial heritage with a steep, bumpy 4WD ascent to the abandoned mine at La Mejicana, high up in the mountains at nearly 5km of altitude. The landscape is rugged, bleak and utterly spectacular.



Destination Argentina

Get a few people free associating on the word ‘Argentina,’ and it’s quickly apparent why the country has long held travelers in awe: tango, Patagonia, beef, football, Tierra del Fuego, passion, the Andes. The classics alone make a formidable wanderlust cocktail.

Just wait till you get here. Arriving in Buenos Aires is like jumping aboard a moving train. Outside the taxi window, a blurred mosaic of drab apartment blocks and haphazard architecture whizzes by as you shoot along the freeway toward the center of the city. The driver – probably driving *way* too fast while chain-smoking and talking incessantly about government corruption – finally merges off the freeway. Then the people appear, the cafes, the purple jacaranda flowers draped over the sidewalks, *porteños* (residents of Buenos Aires) in stylish clothing walking purposefully past the newspaper stands and candy kiosks and handsome early-20th-century stone facades.

Despite the enormity of the capital city – which is home to a whopping 30% of the country’s population – visitors seem to find its groove with surprising ease. The real shocker, after experiencing the art, music, cafes, shopping and all-night revelry of Buenos Aires, comes when you leave it. Aside from a handful of cities such as Rosario, Córdoba, Mendoza and La Plata, Argentina is pretty darn empty. Population centers are small, and even provincial capitals can have the feel of a friendly town. While these places can be worthy destinations in themselves, their real purpose is usually to springboard people into Argentina’s greatest attraction: the natural world.

From the mighty Iguazú Falls in the subtropical north, to the thunderous, crackling advance of the Perito Moreno Glacier in the south, Argentina is a vast natural wonderland. The country beholds some of the Andes’ highest peaks, several of which top 6000m near Mendoza and San Juan. It’s home to wetlands that rival Brazil’s famous Pantanal, massive ice fields in Patagonia, mountains painted in rustic colors, deserts dotted with cacti, cool lichen-clad Valdivian forests, glacial lakes, Andean salt flats, a spectacular Lake District, penguins, flamingos, caimans, capybaras and more.

But Argentina’s cosmopolitan and natural marvels are only part of a very complex equation. Visitors will also experience a country at odds with itself – a potential economic powerhouse not fully in control of its destiny. Argentina dips into an economic crisis every dozen years, frustrating its citizens to no end. This has manifested in the recent low approval ratings of Cristina Kirchner, the country’s first elected female president, who took office in 2007 (following in the footsteps of her husband, Nestor Kirchner). This country, like most of the rest of the world, is currently down – but not out. Argentines do have an overly healthy dose of skepticism, but it’s tempered by a hope their country will one day pick itself up and leave its erratic reputation behind.

Travelers who dig beneath the tourist-office version of Argentina will find a country full of passion and beauty. They’ll find amicable, seductive and engaging people fascinated with strangers who visit their land, many from countries they want Argentina to aspire to emulate. You can be one of those lucky enough to know the Argentine people, their land and their culture. This is a place people dream about visiting, and many fall in love with it once they arrive.

FAST FACTS

Area: 2.8 million sq km

Population: 40,150,000

Capital: Buenos Aires

Primary language:
Spanish

Secondary languages:
Quechua, Aymara, Toba
(Qom) & others

Time: GMT minus 3hr
(depending on daylight
savings time)

GDP per capita: US\$8235

Inflation: 15%, highly
variable

Unemployment rate:
9-10%

Beef consumption per
capita: 70kg per year

Getting Started

Forget everything you've heard about the challenges of travel in South America. Argentina is different. It's easy. Comfortable buses run on set schedules, petty theft is relatively rare (except perhaps in Buenos Aires), overnight buses are luxurious and the streets are safe. But the country does have its quirks, and knowing a few particulars before you go will make your journey all the more enjoyable.

This section will help you know when to visit (wait, August is ski season?), how much you might spend (prices have skyrocketed) and where to go for more information. Argentina is still a remarkable deal, and you can do it on a budget or live it luxuriously. It all depends on what you want out of your trip.

WHEN TO GO

Argentina's seasons are the reverse of those of the northern hemisphere. The best time to visit Buenos Aires is in spring (September through November), when the jacarandas are in bloom and temperatures are blissfully cool, and in fall (March through May). Summer (December through February) in the capital is hot and humid. Mendoza, Córdoba and the Lakes District are all spectacular during fall: the leaves put on an epic display, temperatures are comfortable and the crowds are thin.

Summer is the best time to hit Patagonia, when the weather's milder and more services are available. In other seasons, public transportation becomes trickier as services thin out. Northern Argentina can be brutally hot in summer and is best visited in spring. Winter (June through August) and fall in this region are also pleasant.

Ski season runs mid-June through mid-October, and the resorts are most expensive and most crowded in July and August when every *porteño* (person from Buenos Aires) seems to be on the slopes.

The most expensive times to travel are the Argentine vacation months of January, February and July.

COSTS & MONEY

After the economic collapse of 2001/02 Argentina devalued the peso and the country became instantly affordable. Travel was cheap. In the following years the economy stabilized, inflation reared its head and the world became hip to the Argentine bargain. Prices rose. Although Argentina has become pricier, it's still good value, especially if you're traveling on the euro or the UK pound.

See Climate Charts (p600) for more information.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Checking the visa situation (see p611)
- Tampons – tough to find in smaller towns
- Ziplock bags – to waterproof your gizmos
- Duct tape – make a mini-roll around a pencil stub or lighter
- Handy wipes – great for overnight bus rides
- Swiss Army knife – must contain a corkscrew!
- Ear plugs
- Universal sink plug – a must for hand-washing clothes

RATES ON THE RISE

Lonely Planet aims to give its readers as precise an idea as possible of what things cost. Rather than slapping hotels or restaurants into vague budget categories (which can still leave you guessing), we publish the actual rates and prices that businesses quote to us during research. The problem is that prices change, especially somewhere such as Argentina, where inflation runs rampant. But we've found that readers prefer to have real numbers in their hands so they can make the calculations once they're on the road and then apply them across the board. This is still more precise than price ranges.

Argentina is no longer the rock-bottom bargain it was before 2005, but it remains good value. Where else can you enjoy a steak dinner with a good bottle of wine for under US\$20? Or an amazing scoop of ice cream for under US\$3? Certainly not in Europe or the USA. Although we anticipate prices will continue to rise, we've still opted to provide the prices given to us at the time of research. Our advice: call or check a few hotel or tour-operator websites before budgeting your trip, just to make sure you're savvy about going rates.

If you're on a budget, you can get by on AR\$80 to AR\$100 per day (outside Patagonia) by sleeping in hostel dorm beds or cheap hotels and eating at the cheapest nontouristy restaurants. Things get pricier when you add tours, entertainment and travel. Outside the capital and Patagonia, midrange travelers can get by comfortably on AR\$180 to AR\$200 per person per day if traveling with a companion, staying in a comfy hotel and eating at decent restaurants.

Buenos Aires and especially Patagonia are more expensive than the rest of Argentina. In the capital, good hotel rooms start at around AR\$200 per double. In the provinces you can land a good hotel for AR\$160 per double, while an extra AR\$50 will get you something very comfortable.

Except in Patagonia, a pasta dinner can be as cheap as AR\$15 per person at a no-frills family joint, while a full gourmet meal at a top-end restaurant can cost around AR\$100 per person. In Patagonia a cheap restaurant meal starts at around AR\$25.

TRAVELING RESPONSIBLY

Since our inception in 1973, Lonely Planet has encouraged our readers to tread lightly, travel responsibly and enjoy the magic that independent travel affords. International travel is growing at a massive rate, and we still firmly believe in the benefits it can bring – but, as always, we encourage you to consider the impact your visit will have on both the global environment and the local economies, cultures and ecosystems.

Whenever you can, patronize the businesses listed in the Lonely Planet GreenDex (p666), which have proven that they're dedicated to sustainable travel. In all situations, try to support local businesses rather than large and international chains – it keeps profits and employment local. Whenever hiking, climbing, flying or otherwise enjoying the great outdoors, do your best to adhere as strictly as possible to the ethics of **Leave No Trace** (www.lnt.org), principles created by outdoor enthusiasts to minimize impact on the environment.

Although Argentina lacks a large indigenous population (unlike the Andean nations to the north), it does have its share of indigenous communities, primarily in the Chaco (p241) and in the Lakes District (p374). Whenever visiting or traveling through these communities, be sensitive to local beliefs and customs and avoid playing the gawker.

And don't forget the obvious: learn the language! Even if you blow it, you're attempt will be appreciated.

For more on sustainable travel, see p72.

HOW MUCH?

Midrange hotel AR\$180-250

Five-hour bus ride AR\$75

Slice of pizza AR\$4

Sirloin steak AR\$30

Average in-city cab ride AR\$20

TOP PICKS



NATIONAL PARKS

Argentina is a nature-lover's dream, and its parks are truly one of the best reasons to be here. For a complete list, see p76, but don't miss the following:

- Parque Nacional Los Glaciares (p478)
- Reserva Faunística Península Valdés (p430)
- Parque Nacional Iguazú (p221)
- Parque Provincial Ischigualasto (p373)
- Reserva Provincial Esteros del Iberá (p200)

WEIRD & WACKY PLACES

After all, everywhere has its oddities. The following offbeat places will get you thinking just how interesting Argentina can be. ¡Que raro!

- Museo Rocsen (p330) Possibly the most eclectic museum you'll ever visit
- Gaucho Antonio Gil shrines (p200) Nods to Argentina's Robin Hood – with a gaucho twist
- Difunta Correa Shrine (p367) Honoring the mother of all mothers
- Parque El Desafío, Gaiman (p440) Recycling for art – or just a bunch of junk
- Tierra Santa (p102) Religious theme park without holy roller coasters

MOVIES

Argentina has both inspired and produced countless outstanding movies. Here are our noninclusive, totally biased choices.

- *El bonaerense* (2002), directed by Pablo Trapero (see p47)
- *Nueve reinas* (2000), directed by Fabián Bielinsky
- *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004), directed by Walter Salles
- *El secreto de sus ojos* (2009), directed by Juan José Campanella
- *Histórias mínimas* (2002), directed by Carlos Sorin
- *Pizza, birra, faso* (1998), directed by Adrián Caetano and Bruno Stagnaro
- *La ciénaga* (2001), directed by Lucrecia Martel (see p47)

CLASSIC LITERATURE

Be they works by Argentine authors or by foreigners writing about Argentina, the following are perfect for those long bus rides across the Argentine pampas.

- *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1976), by Manuel Puig
- *The Tunnel* (1948), by Ernesto Sábato
- *Hopscotch* (1963), by Julio Cortázar
- *In Patagonia* (1977), by Bruce Chatwin
- *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings* (1962), by Jorge Luis Borges
- *The Honorary Consul* (1973), by Graham Greene

TRAVEL LITERATURE

After years out of print, Lucas Bridges' classic, *Uttermost Part of the Earth* (1947), was republished in 2008. Bridges brilliantly describes his life among the indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego – a must-read for anyone heading south.

Another newly released account of an old journey is Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's offbeat *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2003), in which the young medical student recounts his eye-opening journey by motorcycle in 1951 and 1952 through Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru and Colombia.

In *Bad Times in Buenos Aires* (1999), Miranda France covers everything from Argentine condoms to psychoanalysis in a wry (and sometimes overbearingly negative) account of her stay in the capital in the 1990s.

If you're going to be wandering down to Patagonia (and even if you're not), pick up Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977), one of the most informed syntheses of life and landscape for any part of South America. For a glimpse into some gripping Patagonian mountaineering, read Gregory Crouch's *Enduring Patagonia* (2001), in which the author details his ascents of Cerro Torre's brutal west face and several other wild climbs.

Nick Reding's *The Last Cowboys at the End of the World: The Story of the Gauchos of Patagonia* (2001) takes place mostly in Chile, but is equally pertinent to the conditions and changes in neighboring Argentine Patagonia.

Frequently reprinted, William Henry Hudson's *Idle Days in Patagonia* (1893) is a romantic account of the 19th-century naturalist's adventures in search of migratory birds. Also check out his *The Purple Land* (1885) and *Far Away and Long Ago* (1918).

INTERNET RESOURCES

For websites about specific topics (such as hostels, relocating to Argentina, or gay and lesbian resources), see the appropriate section in the Directory (p596). For websites about Buenos Aires, see p93.

The following should get you started (all are in English or have an English link):

Argentines (www.theargentines.com) Expat-run newspaper out of Buenos Aires, with wide-ranging, at times in-depth, articles on Argentina.

Argentine Post (www.argentinepost.com) Good interesting articles on Buenos Aires and Argentina.

Argentina's Travel Guide (www.argentinastravel.com) Lots of information and fun articles on the country.

Argentina Turística (www.argentinaturistica.com) Packed with information on Argentina and its cities, and much more.

Bloggers in Argentina (www.bloggersinargentina.blogspot.com) A collection of Argentine bloggers; a good personal way to get a taste of the country.

Buenos Aires Herald (www.buenosairesherald.com) An international view of the country and world from the website of Buenos Aires' excellent, main English-language newspaper.

Latin American Network Information Center (www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/argentina/) Has a long list of Argentine websites. It's hardly complete, but you're bound to find something useful.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Succinct summaries on traveling to most places on earth; postcards from other travelers; and the Thorn Tree bulletin board, where you can ask questions before you go or dispense advice when you get back.

Events Calendar

Although Argentina is less prone to wild festivals than other South American countries, there are several fiestas that might be worth planning your trip around. Aside from the ones listed here, nearly every town in Argentina has its own fiesta, many of which are covered in the destination chapters. For a list of national public holidays, see p603.

JANUARY

FESTIVAL NACIONAL DEL FOLKLORE

late Jan

Near the city of Córdoba, the town of Cosquín hosts the National Festival of Folk Music (p320; www.aquicosquin.org, in Spanish) during the last week of January. It's the country's largest and best known *folklórico* (folk music) festival.

FEBRUARY–MARCH

CARNAVAL

late Feb–early Mar

Though not as rockin' in Argentina as it is in Brazil, this celebration is rowdy in the northeast, especially in Galeguaychú (p204) and Corrientes (p196). In the northwest (particularly Quebrada de Humahuaca) there's more emphasis on traditional music and dancing. Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, also has a good Carnaval (see p547).

FIESTA NACIONAL DE LA VENDIMIA

late Feb–early Mar

Mendoza city's National Wine Harvest Festival (p345) kicks off with parades, folkloric events and a royal coronation – all in honor of Mendoza's intoxicating beverage. For more information, see www.vendimia.mendoza.gov.ar, in Spanish.

MAY

DÍA DE VIRGEN DE LUJÁN

May 8

Thousands of devout believers make a 65km pilgrimage to the pampas town of Luján (p144) in honor of the Virgin Mary; other large pilgrimages to Luján take place in early October, early August, late September and on December 8.

JULY–AUGUST

EXPOSICIÓN RURAL

late Jul–early Aug

Get a glimpse of Argentina's obsession with its cattle and other livestock – horses, sheep, chickens etc. Gauchos do their thing, farm machinery is on display and there are plenty of meaty things to eat.

FESTIVAL Y MUNDIAL DE TANGO

mid–late Aug

Buenos Aires' best tango dancers perform at venues throughout the city during the two-week Tango Festival (p108). There's also a world-class competition and plenty of classes and workshops.

SEPTEMBER

SOUTH AMERICAN MUSIC CONFERENCE

exact date varies

This is Buenos Aires' biggest electronic music party (p108). It features the who's who of the electronic world, with networking conferences held during the day and 50,000 party-goers at night.

OCTOBER

FIESTA NACIONAL DE LA CERVEZA/OKTOBERFEST

early Oct

Join the swillers and oompah bands at Argentina's National Beer Festival, Villa General Belgrano's Oktoberfest (p326) in the Central Sierras. For more details, check out <http://elsitiodelavilla.com/oktoberfest>.

EISTEDDFOD

late Oct

This lively Welsh festival, featuring plentiful grub and choral singing, takes place in the Patagonian towns of Trelew (p437) and Trevelin (p465). It's a great one for inducing those 'wait-am-I-really-in-South-America?' moments.

NOVEMBER

DÍA DE LA TRADICIÓN

early–mid-Nov

The Day of Traditional Culture festival kicks off with a salute to the gaucho and is especially significant in San Antonio de Areco (p147), the most classically gaucho of towns. However, it is also important – and decidedly less touristy – in the mountain town of San José de Jáchal (p371), in San Juan.

MARCHA DEL ORGULLO GAY

mid-Nov

Buenos Aires' Gay Pride Parade (p108) draws thousands of gay, lesbian and transgendered citizens, as well as their supporters, who march (with the music up loud!) from Plaza de Mayo to the Congreso.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

NORTHERN LOOP

Two to Four Weeks / Buenos Aires to
Parque Nacional Iguazú

From lively **Buenos Aires** (p80), head to **Mendoza** (p339), smack in the heart of wine country. Take a day trip to **Puente del Inca** (p355) and the **Cristo Redentor** (p357) monument. Then, take an overnight bus to **Córdoba** (p309) to explore Argentina's finest colonial center.

Journey to **Tucumán** (p280) for some eclectic architecture and one of Argentina's liveliest street scenes. Head northwest to mellow lakeside **Tafi del Valle** (p286) for a day, then on to beautiful **Cafayate** (p276) to knock back some local torrontés wine. Sober up and journey through the epic **Quebrada de Cafayate** (p279) to **Salta** (p260), whose central plaza is one of Argentina's finest. From there, journey into the otherworldly **Valles Calchaquíes** (p272) to the adobe villages of **Cachi** (p272) and **Molinos** (p274). Next up, take in the beauty of the magnificently eroded Andean valley, **Quebrada de Humahuaca** (p252), where you can bed down overnight in lively little **Tilcara** (p254).

Return to Salta. From there, bus across the Chaco or fly via Buenos Aires for the grand finale: two days at **Parque Nacional Iguazú** (p223).

Covering more than 4000km, the Northern Loop takes you to four of Argentina's finest cities, through the forgotten Valles Calchaquíes to villages plucked from centuries past, and to one of South America's greatest natural spectacles, Iguazú Falls.



GRAND LOOP**Six to 12 Weeks / Buenos Aires to Buenos Aires**

From **Buenos Aires** (p80), head south for whale watching at **Reserva Faunística Peninsula Valdés** (p430). Take the long bus ride south to **Ushuaia** (p518) in Tierra del Fuego and on the way, stop for penguin watching at **Reserva Provincial Punta Tombo** (p441), dolphin spotting at **Reserva Natural Ría Deseado** (p450) and coastal bird-watching at **Parque Nacional Monte León** (p453).

After reaching Ushuaia allow for several days of exploration. Then, follow the two-week Patagonian Passage itinerary (p27) before winding your way up to the **Lake District** (p374), with a chocolate stop in **Bariloche** (p401). Bump down the lake-studded **Ruta de los Siete Lagos** (Seven Lakes Route; p392) to the leafy resort of **San Martín de los Andes** (p391) before exploring the Valdivian forests of **Parque Nacional Lanín** (p389).

From San Martín, head to **Aluminé** (p385) for rafting or fly-fishing and then on to gorgeous little **Villa Pehuenia** (p386) for a day or two of hiking and relaxation. Next, explore the breathtaking volcanic landscapes around **Malargüe** (p360) and continue north to **Mendoza** (p339) for wine tasting and more mind-blowing Andean scenery. From Mendoza, journey via **San Juan** (p364) to **Parque Provincial Ischigualasto** (p373), and then head east to explore the colonial center of **Córdoba** (p309).

From Córdoba, cut north to **Tucumán** (p280), then through the wildly eroded canyon of **Quebrada de Cafayate** (p279) to **Salta** (p260). From there head in to **Quebrada de Humahuaca** (p252) for a few days. Travel across the rugged Chaco, to visit **Reserva Provincial Esteros del Iberá** (p200). Continue northeast to the **Jesuit missions** (p217) near Posadas and finish beneath the massive falls of **Parque Nacional Iguazú** (p223). Fly back to Buenos Aires and party till your plane leaves.

The Grand Loop traverses more than 8800km, from Tierra del Fuego and Los Glaciares in the south, through the beautiful Lake District, to the traditional villages and Andean scenery of north-west Argentina. Throwing a couple of flights into this itinerary makes it manageable in less time.



ROADS LESS TRAVELED

RUTA NACIONAL 40 Four to Eight Weeks / Abra Pampa to Torres del Paine

Argentina's quintessential road trip, RN 40 travels the length of the Argentine Andes through some of the country's remotest regions. Much of it remains unpaved, and requires perseverance, time and self reliance. As you travel, you'll see an Argentina that most people – even most Argentines – never do. Much of the route is doable by bus, but some stretches require your own vehicle.

RN 40 starts south of **Abra Pampa** (p259) in the northwest, but the steep stretches before **Cachi** (p272), in the wildly scenic **Valles Calchaquies** (p272), are impossible without a 4WD. Alternatively, start at Cachi. Further south, you'll hit lovely **Cafayate** (p276) before passing tiny **Huaco** (p372) and traditional **San José de Jáchal** (p371). Take a breather in **Mendoza** (p339) – you've been going *at least* a week now – and then explore the volcanic landscapes around **Malargüe** (p360). To avoid road closures, travel south of Malargüe in summer.

Continue south via tranquil **Buta Ranquil** and explore the lagoons and hot springs around **Chos Malal** (p382). Detour to the national parks of **Lanín** (p389) and **Nahuel Huapi** (p410) for epic hiking before hitting **Bariloche** (p401). Drive **El Calafate** (p482), where you can see the mind-altering Perito Moreno Glacier. Take a side trip to **El Chaltén** (p474) for superb hiking in the Fitz Roy Range before continuing back down along RN 40 to **Puerto Natales** (p500), Chile. From there, explore **Parque Nacional Torres del Paine** (p505) before doglegging west to **Río Gallegos** (p453) to fly back to Buenos Aires (unless you continue south a bit to Ushuaia, on RN3; it's as far south as any highway in the world goes).



RN 40 travels nearly the entire length of Argentina, more than 5000km, from just south of the Bolivian border in the north, nearly to Tierra del Fuego in the south. Some stretches require a private vehicle, others a 4WD (or, sans the 4WD, good walking shoes, plenty of food and water, and a need for adventure).

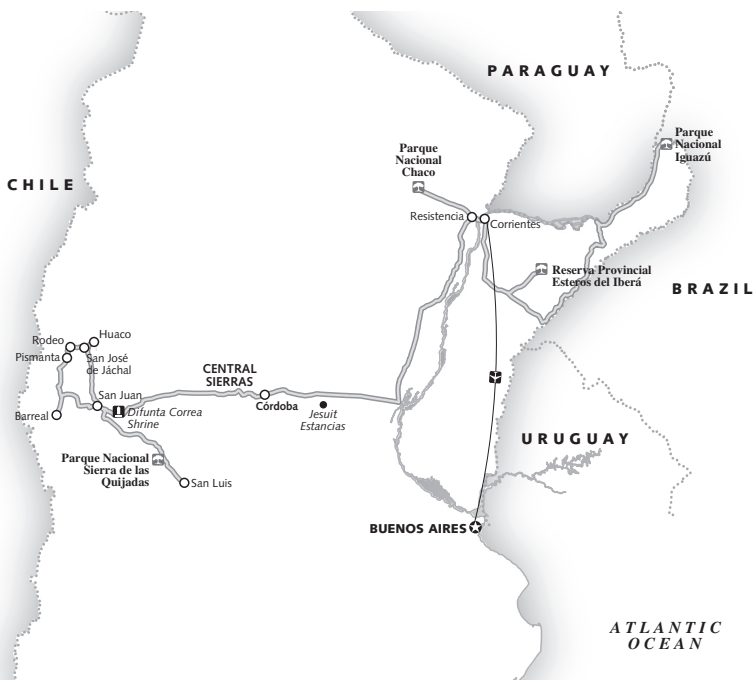
FORGOTTEN ANDES & NATIONAL PARKS Two to Three Weeks / San Luis to Corrientes

Just because the crowds head elsewhere doesn't mean this 2850km trip lacks sights. In fact, the forgotten back roads and little-visited villages and parks make this a very special trip through an Argentina that most foreigners never see.

This journey off the beaten track will turn up tiny villages, empty roads and rarely visited provincial parks. Begin in the small provincial capital of **San Luis** (p331), from where you can visit **Parque Nacional Sierra de las Quijadas** (p334), whose wildly eroded lunar landscape is similar to San Juan's Parque Provincial Ischigualasto – sans the people. Bus over to **San Juan** (p364), rent a car and head for the hills: drive up to **Barreal** (p368) in the breathtaking Valle de Calingasta for hiking, rafting, climbing and land sailing beneath the country's highest peaks. Head up RP 412 to the traditional towns of **Rodeo** (p371), **San José de Jáchal** (p371) and **Huaco** (p372), but stop en route for a dip in the thermal baths of **Pismanta** (p372). Take RN 40 back to San Juan and bus out to the fascinating **Difunta Correa Shrine** (p367) – and don't forget to leave a bottle of water as an offering to this patron saint of truck drivers (especially if you hitchhike!).

From San Juan, take an overnight bus to **Córdoba** (p309), a colonial city that foreigners often skip. After a day or two exploring the city and the Jesuit *estancias* (ranches) of the **Central Sierras** (p318), grab an overnigher to **Resistencia** (p233), an odd city of sculptures and the nearest hub to diverse **Parque Nacional Chaco** (p237). From **Corrientes** (p194), catch some live *chamamé* (folk music of northeast Argentina) and head to **Reserva Provincial Esteros del Iberá** (p200), a wetlands preserve and wildlife sanctuary comparable to Brazil's Pantanal.

By now you'll be aching for human contact: either join the crowds at **Iguazú Falls** (p223), a full day's travel away, or head back to Buenos Aires, flying from Corrientes or journeying overland.



TAILORED TRIPS

PATAGONIAN PASSAGE Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego & the Lake District

Though the sadistic manage this national-parks circuit in 10 days, two weeks is really the minimum. It's the end of the world, after all, so don't sell yourself short. Begin in **Ushuaia** (p518), in Tierra del Fuego, and visit nearby **Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego** (p528). Take a hopper flight to **El Calafate** (p482) and visit spectacular Perito Moreno Glacier in **Parque Nacional Los Glaciares** (p487). Bus down to **Puerto Natales** (p500) and hike the famous **Parque Nacional Torres del Paine** (p505). Head north again to **El Chaltén** (p474) for mind-altering hikes in the **Fitz Roy area** (p478). Then back to El Calafate for your return flight to Buenos Aires. *Chau!*

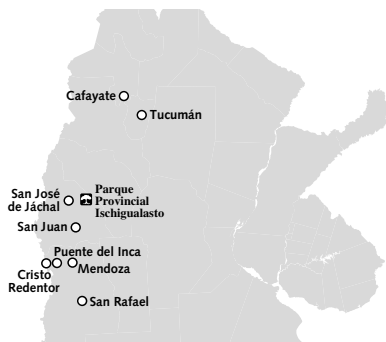
With an extra two weeks, begin the trip by heading south (by bus or plane) from Buenos Aires and stop in **Puerto Madryn** (p424) on your way down for whale watching at **Reserva Faunística Península Valdés** (p430). After exploring the national parks mentioned above, fly from El Calafate up to **Bariloche** (p401). From here, hike yourself silly in the Lake District national parks of **Nahuel Huapi** (p410) and **Lanín** (p389). Before your flight back to Buenos Aires, you may even be able to squeeze in trips to nearby **Parque Nacional Lago Puelo** (p417) and **Parque Nacional Los Alerces** (p465).



ADVENTURES IN WINE Mendoza, San Juan & the Andean Northwest

Prime your palate for this trip through Argentina's world-class wine countries. Following the oenologist's trail will not only give you a serious sampling of the country's finest libation, you'll be introduced to many of its most interesting regions. Uncork your trip in beautiful **Mendoza** (p339), Argentina's Andes-flanked wine capital. Be certain to stop at **Bodega La Rural** (p352), home of South America's largest (and best) wine museum. Squeeze in a day trip up RN 7 to **Puente del Inca** (p355) thermal baths and the lung-busting heights of the **Cristo Redentor** (p357), on the Chilean border.

Take a crack-of-dawn bus to **San Rafael** (p358), rent a bike and ride out to the city's wineries, making **Bianchi Champañera** (p358) your last stop for a bit of bubbly. The next day, head to **San Juan** (p364) to try the excellent syrah and regional whites produced near this leafy provincial capital. Pause between sips and squeeze in a day trip to **Parque Provincial Ischigualasto** (p373) or up RN 40 to **San José de Jáchal** (p371) if you have the time. From San Juan take an overnight bus to **Tucumán** (p280), and head the next day to lovely little **Cafayate** (p276) to hit a few wineries and dazzle your taste buds with the regional torrentés white wine. Return to Tucumán for your flight to Buenos Aires.



The Authors



SANDRA BAO

**Coordinating Author,
Buenos Aires, The Pampas & the Atlantic Coast**

Born to Chinese parents and raised in Buenos Aires, Sandra reluctantly came to the US when she was nine. She arrived in Toledo, Ohio during winter (it had been summer in BA) – but the novelty of snow was fun. The travel bug bit her after college and she visited more than 50 countries – so getting a job with Lonely Planet was only natural. Sandra has returned to Argentina a dozen times since her childhood, seeing the country change a little or a lot each time, always learning something and always meeting great new people. She's the author of about 25 Lonely Planet guidebooks, including *Buenos Aires*.



GREGOR CLARK

Uruguay

Gregor's fascination with South America dates back to high school, when his Spanish teacher filled him with starry-eyed notions of hiking the Inca Trail. Since then he's traveled the continent from tip to tail, developing a special fondness for Uruguay while researching the past two editions of this book. Favorite memories this time around include riding the range near Tacuarembó, watching the full moon rise over San Nicanor hot springs and rediscovering Montevideo's vibrant urban culture. He has contributed to Lonely Planet's *Brazil* and *South America on a Shoestring* and written about Machu Picchu and Easter Island in *Middle of Nowhere*.



BRIDGET GLEESON

Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego

As a child, Bridget listened to her mother talk about hitchhiking across Bolivia and sailing to Colombia. But her own South American experience, as a Buenos Aires–based writer covering food, wine and luxury travel, has been somewhat more sedate: the last time she was in Patagonia writing a story, Bridget had a personal fly-fishing instructor and four-course meals prepared by a French chef. Needless to say, she jumped at the chance to seek adventure on this pilgrimage to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Bridget is the author of Lonely Planet's *Buenos Aires Encounter*; she's also written for *Delta Sky*, *Continental* and AOL Travel.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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**ANDY SYMINGTON** Northeast Argentina, The Andean Northwest

Andy's relationship with Argentina is a story of four generations: his grandmother lived here in the 1920s, and her father had a *mate* plantation in Misiones. Andy first visited the country with his own father, the start of a long love affair with South America that has involved many trips all around the continent, a spell living and working in Buenos Aires, a deep-rooted respect for provincial Argentina that he renewed on this research trip, and a debatable addiction to barbecued intestines. Andy hails from Australia, lives in northern Spain, and has contributed to many Lonely Planet guidebooks.

**LUCAS VIDGEN** Córdoba & the Central Sierras,
Mendoza & the Central Andes, The Lake District

Lucas started wandering away from his mother in shopping malls when he was five and has never really stopped. Since then he's lived, worked and traveled in more than 20 countries, many of which don't supply milk and crayons when you get lost. First captivated by Argentina's wide open spaces and cosmopolitan cities in 2001, he now jumps at any excuse to go back. Among other Lonely Planet titles, Lucas has contributed to *South America*, *Guatemala*, *Nicaragua* and *Central America*. He currently lives in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala where he publishes – and occasionally works on – the city's leading nightlife and culture magazine, *XelaWho*.

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