



Iguazú Falls & the Northeast

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Why Go?

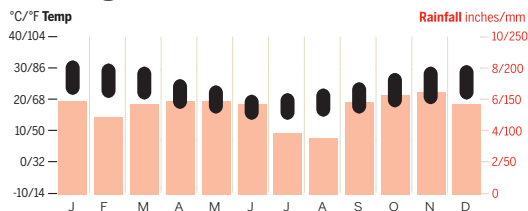
Northeast Argentina is defined by water. Muscular rivers roll through flat pastureland that they flood at will, while fragile wetlands support myriad birdlife, snapping caimans and cuddly capybaras. The peaceful Río Iguazú, meandering through the tropical forest between Brazil and Argentina, dissolves in fury and power in the planet's most awe-inspiring waterfalls.

The river then flows into the Paraná, one of the world's mightiest watercourses, which surges southward, eventually forming the Río de la Plata near Buenos Aires. Along it are some of the country's most interesting cities: elegant Corrientes, colonial Santa Fe and booming Rosario, as well as Posadas, gateway to the ruined splendor of the Jesuit missions.

Dotted throughout the region are excellent reserves and national parks, representative of the biological diversity of this region. The shallow freshwater lakes of the Esteros del Iberá harbor an astonishing richness of wildlife that's easily seen among the aquatic plants.

When to Go

Puerto Iguazú



Feb Hot weather and flashy Carnival celebrations in Gualeguaychú, Corrientes and Posadas.

Aug Cool and dry; spot animals in the Esteros del Iberá gathered around scarce water sources.

Sep–Oct Not too cold, hot or crowded. Iguazú flowing well but flooding and rain less likely.

National Parks & Reserves

There are some excellent national parks within the region, varying from the dry savannas of the Chaco to the rainforests of Misiones.

In the far northeast, Parque Nacional do Iguacu (p188) and Parque Nacional Iguazú (p186) are the access points for viewing the incredible Iguazú Falls, and also provide a habitat for orchids, big cats, birdlife and other flora and fauna.

Nowhere will you see quite as much wildlife as in the wetlands of Reserva Provincial Esteros del Iberá (p163), while it's the haunting elegance of yatay palm trees that makes Parque Nacional El Palmar (p171) so very special.

Deforestation has denuded much of the Chaco area, so the scrub forests and marshes of Parque Nacional Chaco (p201) and Parque Nacional Río Pilcomayo (p202) are especially valuable, as are the natural reserves that are located further west in the region (see the boxed text, p203).

ALONG THE RÍO PARANÁ

The mighty Río Paraná, the continent's second-longest river at 4000km (after the Amazon at 6405km), dominates the geography of Northeast Argentina. Several of the nation's more interesting cities lie along it; all have their town centers a sensible distance above the shorelines of this flood-prone monster, but have a *costanera* (riverbank) that's the focus of much social life. The river is still important for trade, and large oceangoing vessels ply it to and beyond Rosario, a city whose friendly inhabitants and optimistic outlook make it a great destination.

Santa Fe and Paraná have a relaxing sleepy feel – who can blame them, with the humidity the Paraná generates? – and attractive traditional architecture, while beautiful Corrientes is the home of *chamamé* music (a local musical style derived from polka) and launch pad for the wonderful Esteros del Iberá wetlands.

The Paraná is the demesne of enormous river fish – surubí, dorado and pacú among others – that attract sports fishers from around the world. Their distinctive flavors enliven the menus of the region's restaurants; make sure you try them.

Rosario

0341 / POP 1.19 MILLION

The boom times are back for Rosario, birthplace of both the Argentine flag and 'Che' Guevara, and an important river port. The derelict buildings of the long *costanera* have been converted into galleries, restaurants and skate parks, and the river beaches and islands buzz with life in summer. The center – a curious mishmash of stunning early-20th-century buildings overshadowed by ugly apartments – has a comfortable, lived-in feel, and the down-to-earth *rosarinos* (people from Rosario) are a delight. All are very proud of the city's current claim to fame: Lionel Messi, a golden boy of world soccer (football), is Rosario born and bred.

Though it's a private home and you can't enter, you may want to check out the apartment building at Entre Ríos 480, where the newborn Ernesto 'Che' Guevara had his first home.

History

Rosario's first European inhabitants settled here informally around 1720 without sanction from the Spanish crown. After independence Rosario quickly superseded Santa Fe as the province's economic powerhouse, though, to the irritation of *rosarinos*, the provincial capital retained political primacy.

The Central Argentine Land Company, an adjunct of the railroad, was responsible for bringing in agricultural colonists from Europe, for whom Rosario was a port of entry. From 1869 to 1914 Rosario's population grew nearly tenfold.

Though the decline of economic and shipping activity during the 1960s led to a drop in Rosario's population and power, its importance as a port was rivaled only by Buenos Aires. Its title as Argentina's second city, however, was later usurped by Córdoba – a status still hotly contested by *rosarinos*.

Nationalistic Argentines cherish Rosario, which is home to a monument to the nation's flag, as Cuna de la Bandera (Cradle of the Flag).

Sights & Activities

La Costanera

NEIGHBORHOOD, BEACH

Rosario's most attractive feature is its waterfront, where what was once home to derelict warehouses and train tracks has largely been reclaimed for the fun of the people. It stretches some 15km from its southern end at Parque Urquiza to the city's northern