

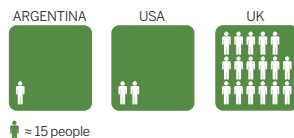


Understand Argentina

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population per sq km



Argentina Today

Cristina's Reign

Cristina Kirchner was re-elected Argentina's president by a landslide majority of 54%. She ran on a platform that appealed to the populist vote, promising to raise incomes, restore industry and maintain Argentina's economic boom. Her approach worked like a charm.

Kirchner has often been compared to Evita for her fight against poverty and her administration of generous social programs – but both have also shown authoritarian tendencies, such as trying to censor the media and rule by decree.

Kirchner dismissed the Central Bank president for not allowing her to use currency reserves to pay off future debts, and strong-armed business into price-control agreements. Her government has also been accused of manipulating economic numbers; in March 2011, the *Economist* magazine stated that it no longer trusted inflation figures coming out of Argentina and would cease to publish them in favor of figures from a US-based analyst. The Falkland Islands are another hot topic, with Kirchner once again seriously challenging the island's sovereignty – just in time for the 30th anniversary of the Falklands War.

Despite her many detractors, this *presidenta* has made admirable strides – she's addressed the abuses of the military dictatorship, championed same-sex marriage laws and, over all, supported the blue-collar classes. And her people love her for it, just like they did Evita.

Economic Woes

Argentina's currency devaluation in 2002 caused a demand for its suddenly cheap agricultural products. Helped along by skyrocketing government spending and growth in Brazil and China, this economic boom lasted through 2007 and revved up again in 2010. But now high inflation, a

- » Area: 2.8 million sq km
- » Population: 40,120,000
- » Capital: Buenos Aires
- » Primary language: Spanish
- » Time: GMT minus three hours (depending on daylight savings time)
- » GDP per capita (PPP): US\$16,000
- » Unemployment rate: 7.3%

Top Books

- » **Uttermost Part of the Earth** (E. Lucas Bridges, 1947) Classic book about Tierra del Fuego's now-extinct *indígenas*.
- » **In Patagonia** (Bruce Chatwin, 1977) Evocative writing on Patagonia's history and mystique.

- » **The Motorcycle Diaries** (1993, Ernesto Che Guevara et al) Based on the travel diary of the Argentine-born revolutionist.
- » **And the Money Kept Rolling In (and Out)** (Paul Blustein, 2005) How the IMF helped bankrupt Argentina.

Top Films

- » **La historia oficial** (The Official Story, 1985) Oscar-winning film on the Dirty War.
- » **Historias mínimas** (Intimate Stories, 2002) Three separate people traveling in Patagonia.