

# Welcome to Argentina

*It's apparent why Argentina has long held travelers in awe: tango, beef, gauchos, fútbol, Patagonia, the Andes. The classics alone make a formidable wanderlust cocktail.*

## City Life

Arriving in Buenos Aires is like jumping aboard a moving train. Outside the taxi window, a blurred mosaic of a modern metropolis whizzes by, and then the street life appears – the cafes, the purple jacaranda flowers draped over the sidewalks (in spring!) and *porteños* (residents of Buenos Aires) in stylish clothing purposefully walking past handsome early-20th-century stone facades. And it's not just Buenos Aires that's a stunner – Córdoba, Salta, Mendoza and Bariloche each have their unique personalities and unforgettable attractions, so don't miss them.

## Natural Wonders

From mighty Iguazú Falls in the subtropical north to the thunderous, crackling advance of the Glaciar Perito Moreno in the south, Argentina is a vast natural wonderland. The country boasts some of the Andes' highest peaks. It's home to rich wetlands that rival Brazil's famous Pantanal, mountains painted in rustic colors, deserts dotted with cacti, massive ice fields and arid steppes in Patagonia, cool lichen-clad Valdivian forests, Andean salt flats, a spectacular Lake District, penguins, flamingos, capybaras and more. All are stunning sights and adventures just waiting to be experienced.

## The Cuisine

Satisfying that carnal craving for juicy steak isn't hard to do in the land that has perfected grilling wonderfully flavorful sides of beef. *Parrillas* (steak restaurants) are everywhere and will offer up any cut you can imagine. And if you're a fan of pizza and pasta, these Italian staples are ubiquitous as well. But there's more – in Buenos Aires you can experience a huge variety of ethnic cuisine, from Southeast Asian to Middle Eastern to Scandinavian. Down it all with that famous Argentine wine, and you'll be struggling to maintain your waistline.

## Argentine Culture

Tango is possibly Argentina's greatest contribution to the outside world, a steamy dance that's been described as 'making love in the vertical position.' And what about *fútbol* (soccer)? Argentines are passionately devoted to this sport and, if you're a fan, experiencing a live match should definitely be on your itinerary. Add a distinctive Argentine take on literature, cinema, music and arts, and you have a rich edgy culture – part Latin American and part European – that you can't help but fall in love with.



## Why I Love Argentina

By Sandra Bao, Author

Argentina is my country – this is where I was born and raised, where I lived until my family emigrated to the USA. It's changed drastically since I was a little girl, but what I love most about Argentina is its people. They've nurtured their creativity, adaptability and perseverance, through good and very bad times, all while maintaining their traditions, humor and pride. I'm always happy to go back to this amazing place and its inhabitants – it's been a real privilege.

**For more about our authors, see p640**