

# Argentina's Best

## Passion, culture and beauty

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## ARGENTINA'S BEST

The Republic of Argentina is a large country with a population of around 40 million people, mainly of Spanish and Italian decent. It occupies much of the southern part of South America, bordering Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia and Paraguay in the North.

The Spanish conquistadores arrived in the 16th century and virtually wiped out all of the indigenous people through violence, disease and disposition. Slaves from Africa were brought over in the 18th century mainly to work in the fields. The resulting culture is an eclectic mix of indigenous traditions, European influences and African rhythms including art, literature dance and song. The tango is a classic example of this mix. It was developed in the bars, cafes and brothels of Buenos Aires in the 1880's. It was deemed far too indecent to be mainstream at that time!

The country has had a fairly tumultuous history with Spain, England, France all fighting over territory at some stage. Its modern political history has seen a succession of military and democratic governments. The most tragic era was from the mid 1970's until the early 1980's when a military junta ruled the country. Almost 30,000 citizens "disappeared" during this time and it remains a painful issue to the country's people. The 1982 invasion of the Falkland Islands is well documented. Basically, the military government of the time declared the region part of Argentina. Thatcher's British Government responded by sending troops and just 6 weeks later, the Argentinian's surrendered. Civilian governments have since ruled. Physically, it is a diverse country with deserts and sub tropical forests in the North, and freezing conditions in the South. The South Atlantic Ocean runs down the East coast and the Andes Mountains borders Chile in the West. These two factors have a major influence on the climate. Its highest point is Aconcagua which rises to 6,960m (22,837 feet), the highest point on the American continent – both north and south!

The capital city Buenos Aires was first established around 500 years ago. Today it has a population of around 3 million and is the administrative and cultural centre of the country. It's renowned for its European architecture and rich cultural life. In fact, it has more theatres than any other city in the world. Argentina is famous for many things including Tango, Gauchos (cowboys), its beef industry and wonderful steak restaurants, Iguazu Falls and Ushuaia - the world's most southern populated township. Like many of the neighbouring countries, Argentinians love their sport. They are soccer "mad" and hold Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi as national sporting heroes. They also love rugby, basketball and polo.



**Day 1, Monday 13th February**  
**USHUAIA – EL CALAFATE**

At the end of the Antarctica cruise, disembark at the port of Ushuaia. Transfer to Ushuaia airport, for the flight to El Calafate on

Aerolinas Argentinas AR1869K departing at 13:35hrs. Transfer to our accommodation at the Calafate Parque (or similar) for a 4 night stay. Depending on the arrival time, we'll have some time to rest or explore before dinner at the hotel. *B/D*

**Day 2, Tuesday 14th February**  
**EL CALAFATE – PERITO MORENO GLACIER**

After breakfast, we'll depart for Perito Moreno, a spectacular glacier and UNESCO World heritage site. From the observation post, we will learn how it forms a natural dam of ice, stopping the flow of the water from Rico's arm to the Iceberg barrier. Lunch is at a local restaurant with a beautiful view of the glacier. Later in the afternoon, we'll return to El Calafate. *B/L/D*

**Option for those wanting to trek the Perito Moreno Glacier (Note. only available to travellers under 65 yrs).** From the port, Bajo de las Sombras embark to cross Lake Rico, approximately 20 minutes of navigation in front of the south face of

the Perito Moreno Glacier. Meet your mountain guides, who will lead the group to a shelter with facilities. From there, a short walk will begin along the coast of the lake, which includes a talk about glaciology. The guides will place crampons on each trekker. After a safety briefing, begin the walk. The hike is of medium-hard degree of difficulty, depending on your stability and fitness level. The route on the glacier lasts approximately 1.5 hours and you will see a variety of typical formations of a glacier such as cracks, sinks, seracs and lagoons. At the end of the hike on the ice, you will return to the shelter by a walkway that crosses the lush Patagonian Andean forest.

**Day 3, Wednesday 15th February**  
**EL CALAFATE – LAGO ARGENTINO**

Today, early departure to Punta Bandera, to explore Lago Argentino by catamaran. This is a wonderful navigation along the waters of the lake and a chance to view three incredible glaciers from the water: Upsala, Onelli and Spegazzini. After sightseeing we'll enjoy lunch on board, then return to Punta Bandera, then El Calafate. *B/L/D*

**Day 4, Thursday 16th February**  
**EL CALAFATE – EL CHALTEN**

Founded recently in 1985, El Chalten is the youngest town of Argentina. It attracts people from all over the world looking for adventure and unique experiences. First we'll visit the Cóncores and Águilas viewpoints, both short walks that lend themselves to spectacular views of the massifs of Torre, Fitz Roy and the Valley of the Vueltas River plus Lake Viedma. We'll depart the centre of El Chalten by

crossing over the bridge of the Fitz Roy River and walk up the path. This is a gentle climb of about forty minutes. Try and spot condors between the valleys of the Vueltas River and admire the impressive granite peaks and glaciers beyond the town of El Chaltén. We will have some spare time to stroll at leisure before heading back to Calafate for dinner. *B/D*



**Day 5, Friday 17th February**  
**EL CALAFATE – SALTA**

Today we'll transfer to the airport and fly north to Salta. Our first flight is to Buenos Aires on Aerolíneas Argentinas AR1869L departing El

Calafate at 15:55 hrs. Our connecting flight AR1460L Buenos Aires to Salta departs 20:10hrs (arriving Salta 22:25hrs). We'll transfer to the hotel where we will stay for three nights. *B/D*



**Day 6, Saturday 18th February**  
**SALTA – CAFAYATE**

Departure to Cafayate. Is an important wine centre in the region. It is a delightful Spanish colonial-style town nestled at the foot of the Andes at an altitude of 1,600 metres. The trip will take a little over three hours. Along the way, we'll discover landscapes of elusive beauty. La Quebrada de



Cafayate is one of the most spectacular natural sites in the northwest of Argentina. The elements of wind and water have sculpted fantastic shapes in the mountains with multicoloured strata, and the gigantic

backdrop of the Andes as a bonus. Discover several rock forms along the route, including the amphitheatre, Devil's Gorge and panoramic viewpoint "Tres Cruces". We'll enjoy a stop at a local winery for a mandatory tasting of regional wines and lunch. Return to Salta in the afternoon, on the way stop at Cerro San Bernardo which dominates the city of Salta and offers a panoramic view. Tonight, a regional dinner in a *pena saltena*, an establishment where locals come to share a typical meal accompanied by a show and folk music. *B/L/D*



**Day 7, Sunday 19th February**  
**SALTA – QUEBRADA DE HUMAHUACA**

Today starts with an early departure for Humahuaca, a traditional Andean village located at 3,000 metres. After three hours drive, we will arrive in Purmamarca which means "village on the virgin land" in Aymara, at the foot of the famous Mountain of Seven Colours. Stroll through the alleys of this village of 600 inhabitants, renowned for its local crafts, wooden sculptures, hand-woven rugs and textiles. Then the group will drive towards the "Quebrada de Humahuaca". The astonishing beauty of Quebrada de Humahuaca is not the only reason for its inclusion in 2003 on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. It is also for its cultural significance. The valley constituted a commercial way for more than 10,000 years, containing traces of that

today. We'll stop in Tilcara, a charming village which houses a fortress, the Pucará de Tilcara, a pre-Inca archaeological site established between 1000 and 1480. In addition to this important urban development unearthed by archaeologists, the position of the site allows a fabulous

panorama as far as the eye can see on Quebrada. Then we'll arrive in Humahuaca. Founded in 1591, it is inhabited by Coyas Indians who keep intact the beliefs and cults of the highlands. Discover



this village with its pepper trees and pretty little church. Lunch in a local restaurant before we return to Salta, stopping at Maimará to enjoy "The Painter's Palette". In Indian tongue Maimará means "falling star", and is a small town at the base of the Humahuaca Ravine. The Painter's Palette is the earthly name given to the magnificent geographical feature of the mountains which is located right opposite the small village, so colourful they appear as if they had been painted on by a divine hand. *B/L/D*

**Day 8, Monday 20th February**  
**SALTA – MENDOZA**

Today we will transfer to Salta airport for our flight to Mendoza on Aerolíneas Argentinas AR1453L at 11:00hrs. Mendoza was founded in 1561 and named by the governor of Chile. The provincial capital sits 761 metres above sea level in the Valley of Mendoza River, east of the Andes. Except during its long "siesta" hours, it is a lively city with a population of around 500,000 and it is the most important administrative and commercial centre in the province. Our accommodation here will be for three nights. *B/D*



**Day 9, Tuesday 21st February**  
**MENDOZA**

After breakfast, the group will depart for a city tour to get acquainted with the history and culture of this city. The tour begins in the historical part where in 1561 Don Pedro del Castillo founded the city. The space is now dedicated to the Foundation Museum and the Jesuit ruins, vestiges of the 1861 earthquake. We will continue, visiting the main sights of the city including Independence Square and the Spanish Steps as well as monuments such as the cathedral, San Francisco Basilica, the civic district and the Governor's house of the Province. Next we visit prestigious Emilio Civit Street, a residential area that leads to the lungs of Mendoza City, and the 370-hectare General San Martín Park, designed by French landscape architect Charles Thays. We will go through the famous porticoes of the park and continue through the Rosedal Garden and the lake before reaching the Cerro de la Gloria (Hill of Glory) where the famous Monument of the Homeland is held in honour of the Andean Army. We will visit a winery for lunch and an olive farm before returning to our hotel in the afternoon. *B/L*

**Day 10, Wednesday 22nd February**  
**MENDOZA – ALTA MONTANA**

This morning we depart on an all-day excursion in the high mountain area. This circuit is an incursion into the imposing world of the Andean Cordillera. It offers a varied range of colours and reliefs and will take us to the border with Chile. Along the Mendoza River, we will enjoy a magnificent view

of the Cordón del Plata mountain range and the colossal Potrerillos hydraulic dyke that produces energy and distributes water for irrigation. We'll arrive at the Uspallata Valley, the southernmost point of the Inca Empire and visit the villages of Picheuta, Polvaredas and Punta de Vacas from where we can see the famous Tupungato volcano, whose snowy summit permanently rises to 6,800 metres. Continue onwards to the magnificent Puente del Inca natural architectural work and source of thermal water. Legend has it that well before the arrival of Cristobal Colon, the successor to the Incas throne was suffering from paralysis and had to go to the baths at the southern end of his Empire. Further along the route, at 2,750 metres, is the viewpoint for Cerro Aconcagua, the colossus of America standing 6,959 metres above sea level, where you access the Laguna Horcones and the Aconcagua Provincial Park. After that we will arrive at Las Cuevas, located at 3,200 metres. Between Las Cuevas and the international tunnel, the path leads to Christ the Redeemer, a monument located at 4,200 metres above sea level, symbolising the union between Argentina and Chile. Return to Mendoza late in the afternoon. *B/L/D*

**Day 11, Thursday 23rd February**  
**MENDOZA – BUENOS AIRES**

After breakfast the group will transfer to Mendoza Airport for the flight to Buenos Aires on Aerolinas Argentinas AR1401L at 09:40hrs. Transfer to our hotel where we will spend 4 nights. Dinner is at the hotel. *B/D*



**Day 12, Friday 24th**  
**Tuesday**  
**BUENOS AIRES**

Today comprises mainly of a Buenos Aires city tour with our private guide and a transfer. We'll drive through the main avenues including 9 de

Julio and obelisk, Corrientes Avenue with many theatres, cinemas, bookstores and restaurants and Avenue de Mayo, home to magnificent historic buildings. At Place de Mayo, every Thursday brings together mothers who have lost their children under the last dictatorship. Next we'll discover La Boca. It was the historic port of Buenos Aires and a refuge for immigrants, especially the many Italians who arrived between 1880 and 1930. The popularity of the district is due to the street "Caminito," where there are rows of small humble houses, of coloured sheet metal. Then the group will cross San Telmo, a historic district that was originally an alley uniting Plaza Mayor to the port. Over time, artisans or workers in connection with the port activities settled there and the district was enlarged. A bit like Montmartre in Paris, the district is known for being home to artists, writers and intellectuals and has turned into a gentrified area of antique shops and tango bars. Lunch is at a local restaurant before we continue to the district of Puerto Madero. One of the youngest neighbourhoods in the capital owes its name to architect Eduardo Madero, whose project was retained in 1882. The red brick buildings so characteristic of the neighbourhood date from the beginning of the 20th century. It is today one of the most important gastronomic and residential centres of the city. The tour will finally take us to La Recoleta, a residential area of excellence: restaurants, bars, discotheques and other places of entertainment are

numerous. The walks are pleasant thanks to its many parks and squares. We will also visit the La Recoleta cemetery, opened in 1822, the most remarkable of the country. More than 70 monumental and luxurious vaults having been declared National Historical Monuments. Tonight we'll enjoy a traditional dinner and tango show at a famous cabaret in town. *B/L/D*



**Day 13, Saturday 25th February**  
**ESTANCIA – BUENOS AIRES**

We will depart early today to visit a typical Argentinian Estancia (cattle farm) and discover the life of the "gauchos" (cowboys). The Pampa region (or lowlands) are fields of green grass that occupy a quarter of the country. Home of the legendary gaucho, all the romantic fantasies about Argentina are concentrated here. Enjoy a local lunch of "asado" and then a folk show with dances and songs of the country. Return to Buenos Aires in the afternoon. Dinner is at the hotel. *B/L/D*



**Day 14, Sunday 26th February**  
**BUENOS AIRES - TIGRE**

Depart for a day-trip that will take us to the northern part of the city. We'll enjoy sensational panoramic view of the Rio de la Plata, the widest river in the world, Jorge Newbery Airport, River Plate World Stadium and Buenos Aires University. We will go by Panamericana Freeway to make a route of 30 km until arriving at Tigre City, the cradle of rowing. We will take a cruise and enjoy the Paraná Delta. In a quiet, stable and safe route we will go into the islands and islets labyrinth full of rivers and streams, to learn about life on the island, recreation and aquatic sports. Return to BA later in the afternoon for some free time. A special farewell finale dinner is planned tonight. *B/D*



**Day 15, Monday 27th February**  
**HOMEWARD BOUND**

After breakfast, you'll depart the hotel for Ezeiza Airport for your flight home. (All flight schedules to be advised) *B/ Meals in flight*



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required; eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.