

Argentina Highlights: Patagonia, Salta, Mendoza & Buenos Aires

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Blue Dot Travel





14-DAY BEST OF ARGENTINA

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, Thursday 21st October BUENOS AIRES

Arrive in Buenos Aires and transfer to the hotel where we will spend three nights. There may be plans to see local sights today, depending on the flight schedule. Dinner at a local restaurant, which is a walk from the hotel. **D**

Day 2, Friday 22nd October BUENOS AIRES

Today comprises mainly a Buenos Aires city tour with our private guide. We'll drive through the main avenues, including 9 de Julio and the 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. 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. Like Montmartre in Paris, the district is known for housing artists, writers, and intellectuals and has become a gentrified area of antique shops and tango bars. Continue to the district of Puerto Madero (where we'll take a quick lunch stop at your own cost). One of the capital's youngest neighbourhoods is named after the architect Eduardo Madero, whose project was approved in 1882. The tour will finally take us to La Recoleta, a residential area of excellence: restaurants, bars, discotheques and other places of entertainment are numerous. We will also visit the La Recoleta cemetery, home to more than 70 monumental and luxurious vaults, all declared National Historical Monuments. Tonight, we'll enjoy a traditional dinner and a tango show at a famous downtown cabaret. **B/D**

Day 3, Saturday 23rd October 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, known as the lowlands, is a vast green grassland that occupies 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," then a folk show featuring country dances and songs. Return to Buenos Aires in the afternoon, with dinner at your leisure. **B/L**

Day 4, Sunday 24th October BUENOS AIRES – EL CALAFETE

Today is mainly a day of transfers, as we'll fly to El Calafate in Patagonia before checking into our accommodation for a 4-night stay. Dinner at the hotel. **B/D**

Day 5, Monday 25th October EL CALAFETE – PORETO MORENO GLACIER

Perito Moreno is a spectacular glacier and a UNESCO World Heritage site. From the observation post, we will see how it forms a natural ice dam, blocking the flow of 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**

Day 6, Tuesday 26th October EL CHALTEN

Founded in 1985, El Chalten is the youngest town in Argentina. It draws people from around the world seeking adventure and unique experiences. First, we'll visit the Cóndores and Águilas viewpoints, both short walks that offer spectacular views of the massifs of Torre and Fitz Roy,

the Valley of the Vueltas River, and Lake Viedma. We'll depart the centre of El Chaltén by crossing over the bridge of the Fitz Roy River and walking 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 7, Wednesday 27th October **EL CALAFATE – MENDOZA**

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Mendoza, a stunning region in the west of the country and famous for its wine. and check into your hotel, where we will stay for 3 nights. Dinner is at a local restaurant. **B/D**



Day 8, Thursday 28th October **MENDOZA CITY AND – LUJAN DE CUYO**

After breakfast, the group will set out on a city tour to explore the city's history and culture. The tour begins in the historical part, where Don Pedro del Castillo founded the city in 1561. The space is now dedicated to the Foundation Museum and the Jesuit ruins, vestiges of the 1861 earthquake. We will visit the city's main sights, including Independence Square and the Spanish Steps, as well as San Francisco Basilica, the civic district, and the Governor's House of the Province. Next, we visit the 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 visit a winery for lunch before returning to our hotel in the afternoon. **B/L**



Day 9, Friday 29th October **MENDOZA – ALTA MONTANA**

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 various 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, which generates electricity 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 onward to the magnificent Puente del Inca, a natural architectural work and a source of thermal water. Legend has it that, well before the arrival of Cristobal Colon, the successor to the Inca throne, he suffered 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 at 4,200 metres above sea level that symbolises the union between Argentina and Chile. Return to Mendoza late in the afternoon. **B/L/D**

Day 10, Saturday 30th October **MENDOZA – SALTA**

Fly to Salta today to experience a totally different region of this vast country. On arrival, we'll take a tour of the city and visit its core sites. Dinner at a local restaurant. **B/D**

Day 11, Sunday 31st October **SALTA – CAFAYATE**

Departure to Cafayate, a delightful Spanish-colonial-style town nestled at the foot of the Andes, at an altitude of 1,600 metres. The trip will take about 3.5 hours. La Quebrada de Cafayate is one of the most spectacular natural wonders in northern Argentina. Elements of wind and water have sculpted fantastic shapes in the mountains with multicoloured strata against the gigantic backdrop of the Andes. 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. On the return trip, we'll stop at Cerro San Bernardo, which towers over Salta and offers panoramic views. Tonight, a regional dinner in a *peña salteña*, an establishment where locals come to share a typical meal accompanied by a show and folk music. **B/L**



Day 12, Monday 1st November **SALTA – QUEBRADA DE HUMAHUACA**

Today starts with an early departure for Humahuaca, a traditional Andean village at 3,000 metres. After a three-hour 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 it was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2003. It is also for its cultural significance. The valley served as a commercial route for over 10,000 years, leaving traces of that era to this day. We'll stop in Tilcara, a charming village that houses the Pucará de Tilcara, a pre-Inca archaeological site built between 1000 and 1480. In addition to this important urban development unearthed by archaeologists, the site's position offers a fabulous panorama of the Quebrada as far as the eye can see. Then we'll arrive in Humahuaca. Founded in 1591, it is inhabited by the Coyas Indians, who preserve 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 the 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 mountain range, located directly opposite the small village, so colourful that it appears painted by a divine hand. **B/L**

Day 13, Tuesday 2nd November **SALTA - BUENOS AIRES**

After breakfast, we'll fly back to B.A. for one final night and a farewell dinner. **B/D**

Day 14, Wednesday 3rd November **HOMEWARD BOUND**

Depart for home or your next destination. **B**



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.