



ARGENTINA



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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Southeastern South America.

Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación (National Tourist Board)
Calle Suipacha 1111, 20º, 1368 Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (11) 43 12 56 21. Fax: (11) 43 13 68 34.
Web site: <http://www.sectur.gov.ar/homepage.htm>

Embassy of the Argentine Republic
65 Brooke Street, London W1Y 4AH
Tel: (020) 7318 1300. Fax: (020) 7318 1301.
E-mail: seruni@mrecic.gov.ar
Web site: <http://www.argentine-embassy-uk.org>
Opening hours: 0900-1700 Monday to Friday.

Argentine Consulate
27 Three Kings Yard, London W1Y 1FL
Tel: (020) 7318 1340. Fax: (020) 7318 1349.
Opening hours: Monday to Friday 0930-1600 (general enquiries); 0930-1300 (visa applications).
The Consulate also provides tourist information.

British Embassy
Dr Luis Agote 2412/52, 1425 Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (11) 45 76 22 22 or 48 03 77 99. Fax: (11) 48 03 17 31. E-mail:
mailmaster@baire.mail.fco.gov.uk

Embassy of the Argentine Republic
1600 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009
Tel: (202) 238 6400. Fax: (202) 332 3171. E-mail: seconswash@sysnet.net
Web site: <http://www.embajadaargentina-usa.org>
Consulate General in: New York (tel: (212) 603 0401).

Argentina Government Tourist Office
12 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019
Tel: (212) 603 0443. Fax: (212) 315 5545.
Web site: <http://www.wam.com.ar/tourism>

Embassy of the United States of America
Avenida Colombia 4300, 1425 Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (11) 47 77 45 33/4. Fax: (11) 45 11 49 97 or 45 14 18 10 (consular section).
Web site: <http://www.usembassy.state.gov/posts/ar1/www0100.html>

Embassy of the Argentine Republic
Suite 910, Royal Bank Center, 90 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B4
Tel: (613) 236 2351/4. Fax: (613) 235 2659.
Consulates in: Montréal and Toronto.

Canadian Embassy

Street address: Tagle 2828, 1425 Buenos Aires, Argentina
Postal address: Casilla de Correo 1598, 1000 Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: (11) 48 05 30 32. Fax: (11) 48 06 12 09.

Country dialling code: 54.

2 GENERAL

Area: 2,780,400 sq km (1,076,311 sq miles).

Population: 35,672,000 (1997).

Population Density: 12.7 per sq km.

Capital: Buenos Aires. Population: 2,960,976 (1991).

Geography: Argentina is situated in South America, east of the Andes, and is bordered by Chile to the west, the Atlantic Ocean to the east and Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil to the north and northeast. There are four main geographical areas: the Andes, the North and Mesopotamia, the Pampas and Patagonia. The climate and geography of Argentina vary considerably, ranging from the great heat of the Chaco (El Chaco), through the pleasant climate of the central Pampas to the sub-Antarctic cold of the Patagonian Sea. Mount Aconcagua soars almost 7000m (23,000ft) and waterfalls at Iguazú stretch around a massive semi-circle, thundering 70m (230ft) to the bed of the Paraná River. In the southwest is a small 'Switzerland' with a string of beautiful icy lakes framed by mountains.

Government: Federal and Democratic Republic. Gained independence from Spain in 1816. Head of State and Government: President Fernando de la Ruá since 1999.

Language: Spanish is the official language. English is widely spoken with some French and German.

Religion: 80% Roman Catholic, 7% Protestant with small Muslim and Jewish communities.

Time: GMT - 3.

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Lamp fittings are of the screw-type. Plug fittings in older buildings are of the 2-pin round type, but some new buildings use the 3-pin flat type.

Telephone: IDD is available (but not generally in use). Country code: 54. Outgoing international code: 00. The system is often overburdened and international calls are expensive. Local calls can be made from public call-boxes, which are located in shops and restaurants and are identifiable by a blue sign outside. Public phones take one peso or 50 and 25 centavos coins or cards. Reduced tariffs apply from 2200-0800.

Mobile telephone: CDMA/TDMA networks in operation. Not compatible with GSM handsets. Network operators include Telecom Personal (web site: <http://www.telecompersonal.com.ar>). Roaming can be arranged.

Fax: Most large hotels have facilities.

Internet/E-mail: ISPs include Via Net.Works (web site: <http://www.smitter.com.ar>). Public access is available in cybercafes in main towns.

Telegram: A cable service to other Latin American countries exists, run by All America Cables Limited.

Post: The main post office in Buenos Aires is located in Sarmiento 189 and is open 0900-1930 Monday to Friday. Airmail to Europe takes between five to ten days. Surface mail to Europe takes on average 20-25 days but can take as long as 50 days, so it is advisable to send everything airmail. Internal postal services are subject to delay. Post office hours: 0800-2000 Monday to Friday, 0800-1400 Saturday.

Press: The Buenos Aires Herald is the leading English-language newspaper in Latin America. Argentina's principal dailies include Clarín, Crónica, El Cronista Comercial, La Nación, Página 12, La Razón and Ambito Financiero.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:
MHz17.8415.1912.096.195

Voice of America:
MHz13.749.7757.4055.995

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	No	Yes
Australian	Yes	No	Yes
Canadian	Yes	No	Yes
USA	Yes	No	Yes
OtherEU	Yes	No	Yes
Japanese	Yes	No	Yes

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for 6 months required by all except nationals of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay who, for journeys that do not go beyond Argentina and these five countries, may use their national ID cards.

VISAS: Required by all except the following:

- (a) nationals of the countries shown in the chart above for stays of up to 90 days;
- (b) nationals of Andorra, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey, Uruguay, Vatican City, Venezuela and Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for stays of up to 90 days;
- (c) nationals of Hong Kong (British Nationals Overseas), Jamaica and Malaysia for stays of up to 30 days;

(d) transit passengers holding confirmed onward or return tickets for travel provided continuing their journey within 6 hours and not leaving the airport.

Note: Visa exemptions mentioned above are for tourist and business purposes only. Business travellers are advised to contact the Argentinian Consulate before departure.

Types of visa and cost: Tourist, Business, 15-day visa (issued to artists, musicians, etc.) and Transit. The cost is £18.33.

Validity: Visas are generally valid for stays of up to 90 days. Extensions for a further 90 days are possible for some nationals; contact the Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy) for details.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular Section at Embassy); see address section.

Application requirements: Tourist visa: (a) Passport. (b) Application form. (c) 1 passport photo. (d) Fee; payable by cheque or postal order. (e) Return ticket. (f) Letter from employer.

15-Day visa: (a)-(e) and: (f) Letter or agreement from the company or organisation requiring the applicant's services.

Business visa: (a)-(e) and: (f) Letter of introduction from employer. (h) Bank reference and proof of sufficient funds.

Note: Nationals of Australia, Hong Kong (British Nationals Overseas), Malaysia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, UK and USA should travel with a UK company letter.

Working days required: 2.

Note: Minors travelling to or from Argentina, if unaccompanied by their parents, must carry their parents' or other legal guardian's authorisation to travel, which must be certified by an Argentine Consul if issued abroad. Fines will be levied if passengers do not comply with immigration requirements and passengers will be deported.

4 MONEY

Currency: Peso (P) = 100 centavos. Peso notes are in denominations of P100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 2. Coins are in denominations of P1, and 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 centavos.

Currency exchange: While the US Dollar is generally accepted as legal tender, foreign currencies can be exchanged in banks and authorised cambios (bureaux de change), which are available in all the major cities.

Credit cards: Diners Club, American Express, Visa and MasterCard are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services that may be available.

Travellers cheques: It is often difficult to exchange these in the smaller towns. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Peso against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date March '99 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00=1.581.501.451.46 \$1.00=0.990.991.001.00

Currency restrictions: The import and export of both local and foreign currency is unlimited. Gold must be declared.

Banking hours: 1000-1500 Monday to Friday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Argentina without incurring customs duty by:

(a) Travellers over 18 years of age coming from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay or Uruguay, or by residents returning to Argentina after less than one year's stay in these countries:

200 cigarettes and 25 cigars; 1 litre of alcohol; 2kg of foodstuffs; goods to the value of US\$150 (if arriving by land) and US\$200 (if arriving by air or sea).

(b) Travellers over 18 years of age coming from countries other than those listed above, or by residents returning to Argentina after less than one year's stay:

400 cigarettes and 50 cigars; 2 litres of alcohol; 5kg of foodstuffs; goods to the value of US\$300.

Prohibited Items: Animals and birds from Africa or Asia (except Japan) without prior authorisation, parrots and fresh foodstuffs, particularly meat, dairy products and fruit. Explosives, inflammable items, narcotics and pornographic material are also forbidden. Note: All gold must be declared. It is wise to arrange Customs clearance for expensive consumer items (cameras, typewriters, etc) to forestall any problems.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Apr 12 Maundy Thursday. Apr 13 Good Friday. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 1 Labour Day. May 25 National Day (Anniversary of the 1810 Revolution). Jun 10 Malvinas Day. Jun 18 National Flag Day. Jul 9 Independence Day. Aug 16 Death of General José de San Martín. Oct 15 Day of the Americas (Columbus Day). Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Mar 28 Maundy Thursday. Mar 29 Good Friday. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May 1 Labour Day. May 25 National Day (Anniversary of the 1810 Revolution). Jun 10 Malvinas Day. Jun 19 National Flag Day. Jul 9 Independence Day. Aug 21 Death of General José de San Martín. Oct 16 Day of the Americas (Columbus Day). Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	Yes	No
Cholera	Yes	1
Typhoid and Polio	Yes	-
Malaria	2	-
Food and Drink	3	-

1: Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is not a condition of entry to Argentina. However, precautions are advised. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness. See the Health appendix for more information.

2: Malaria risk, exclusively in the benign vivax form is low and exists in pockets in the provinces of Salta, Jujuy, Misiones and Corrientes. Protection in the form of 300mg of chloroquine prophylaxis administered weekly is advised.

3: Tap water is considered safe to drink. Drinking water outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and sterilisation is advisable. Pasteurised milk and dairy products are safe for consumption. Avoid unpasteurised milk as brucellosis occurs. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information consult the Health appendix. Hepatitis A and intestinal parasitosis are widespread. There is some risk of viral hepatitis and anthrax.

Health care: Medical insurance is recommended as there are no reciprocal health agreements. Medical facilities are generally of a high standard.

Travel - International

AIR: Argentina's national airline is Aerolíneas Argentinas (AR). Other airlines serving Argentina include Aeroflot, Air France, Alitalia, American Airlines, British Airways, Canadian Airlines, KLM, Lufthansa, South African Airlines and United Airlines.

Approximate flight times: From Buenos Aires to London is 18 hours (depending on connection), to Los Angeles is 16 hours, to New York is 14 hours 15 minutes, to Singapore is 29 hours 30 minutes and to Sydney is 16 hours.

International airport: Ezeiza Ministro Pistarini (EZE) International Airport (tel: (11) 44 80 95 38), 42km (26 miles) from the city. There is a bus service to the city operating every 30 minutes between 0400-2100 (travel time - 40 minutes). Taxis are also available. Airport facilities include a bank, restaurants, tourist information kiosk, bureau de change, duty-free shops and car hire (Avis, Dollar and Localiza). There is also a coach connection to Jorge Newbery airport (locally called Aeroparque) for domestic flight connections.

Departure tax: Approximately US\$23.50. For flights to Montevideo (Uruguay), the departure tax is US\$5. Passengers in transit and children under two years of age are exempt. Visitors are advised to check with their airline or travel agent as the departure tax is subject to frequent changes.

SEA/RIVER: The main ports are Buenos Aires, Quequén and Bahía Blanca. Ferries and hydrofoils link Buenos Aires with Montevideo in Uruguay, and there are ferry connections down the Paraná River from Paraguay.

RAIL: The major direct international route is from Buenos Aires to Asunción in Paraguay. There are also direct rail links with Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay. Services are often disrupted and delays can be expected.

ROAD: Argentina has a network of approximately 217,762km (136,101 miles) of roads, of which around 156,789km (97,993 miles) are paved. There are well-maintained road routes from

Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia and Chile. Coach: Direct daily services between Buenos Aires, Puerto Alegre, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Domestic flights from Jorge Newbery (Aeroparque) and Córdoba (COR) (Pajas Blancas) to destinations throughout Argentina are run by Aerolíneas Argentinas (AR), Austral (AU) and LAPA (MJ). Air travel is the most efficient way to get around, but the services are very busy and can be subject to delay. You are advised to book in advance for all flights. Aerolíneas sells a 30-day 'Visit Argentina Pass', with 4-8 coupons for flights within the country.

Domestic airport: Buenos Aires Aeroparque Jorge Newbery (AEP) is located on the bank of the Rio de la Plata, a few minutes away from the main financial and commercial district. There are frequent bus and taxi services to all areas of the city as well as a coach connection to Ezeiza Ministro Pistarini international airport. Airport facilities include a bank/bureau de change, left luggage, car rental and a tourist information kiosk.

Departure tax: Approximately US\$4 - \$12, but subject to frequent changes.

Rail: Owing to severe underfunding of State railways and recent privatisation, all longhaul services have been disrupted, although some suburban lines have been greatly improved. The domestic rail network extends over 43,000km (27,000 miles), which makes it one of the largest in the world. Children under three travel free and children aged 3-11 pay half fare. There are three classes: air-conditioned, first class and second class. There are restaurant and sleeping facilities for first-class passengers. Second-class rail travel is good value. There are six main rail routes from Buenos Aires: Buenos Aires-Rosario (where one branch goes to Tucumán and Jujuy via Córdoba and the second branch goes to Tucumán and Jujuy via La Banda), Buenos Aires-Rojas, Buenos Aires-Santa Rosa, Buenos Aires-Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires-Las Flores-Quequén Necochea and Buenos Aires-Bahía Blanca (where a branch goes to San Carlos de Bariloche). Rail travellers are warned that once out of Buenos Aires information is very hard to come by.

Special fares: The Argempass entitles visitors to unlimited first-class train travel, but is only sold in Argentina at railway booking offices. 30-day, 60-day and 90-day passes are available. A supplement is charged for sleeping car accommodation. The passes must be used within 30 days of purchase and are valid from the first day of use to the last day at 2400. Other discount tickets include: Group Pass - 10-25% discount for a group of 10-25 people; Family Pass - 25% discount for a parent and up to 2 children; Youth Pass - 25% discount for people under 30 years of age; Senior Pass - 25% discount for women aged 55 and over and men aged 60 and over; and Student Pass - 25% discount for students.

ROAD: Major privatisation programmes have resulted in many trunk roads being upgraded. Expect tolls on motorways. Rural roads, composed of packed dirt, become impassable after rain. Nonetheless, buses are considered to be a more reliable form of long-distance transport than trains. Traffic drives on the right. Car hire: There are a number of agencies in Buenos Aires. Documentation: International Driving Permit is required and this must be stamped at the offices of the Automóvil Club Argentino.

URBAN: Buenos Aires is generally well served by public transport. The city's underground, the subte, was the first to be constructed in Latin America. Recently privatised, its old glitzy stations (adorned with ceramic tiles portraying scenes of Argentine life) are now being renovated. There are five lines, labelled A to E; the fare of 50 centavos is valid for all lines. Services operate from early morning to late at night on a fixed-fare basis; tokens can be **purchased at booking offices.** **Bus:** Services are provided by colectivo minibuses operating 24

hours a day on an inexpensive flat fare; however, these are often crowded, particularly at rush hour, but are usually prompt. There are extensive bus services in other towns, including trolleybuses in Rosario. Taxi: Available in most cities and large towns and can either be hailed on the street or found at taxi ranks. They are usually recognisable by their yellow roofs.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Buenos Aires to other major cities/towns in Argentina.

	Air	Road	Rail
Córdoba	1.10	9.00	12.00
Bariloche	2.10	22.00	36.00
Cataratas	1.30	17.00	24.00
Iguazú	1.40	20.00	-
Mendoza	1.50	17.00	30.00
Mar del Plata	0.40	4.00	4.00
Rio Gallegos	4.15	36.00	-
Rosario	0.50	4.00	4.00
Salta	2.00	15.00	20.00
Ushuaia	3.00	30.00	-

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: Hotels range in standard from the most luxurious in Buenos Aires to the lowest class in the rural areas. In Buenos Aires, the cheaper hotels can mostly be found around Avenida de Mayo. Generally service is excellent. All hotels add approximately 3% tourism tax, 24% service charge for food and drink and 15% room tax. Check correct charges when booking. Most are air-conditioned, many have fine restaurants. For further information, contact the National Hotel Association, Tucuman 1610, Buenos Aires 1050 (tel: (11) 43 72 72 75; fax: (11) 43 71 51 08); or the Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación (see address section). Grading: Maximum and minimum rates are fixed for 1-, 2- and 3-star hotels, guest-houses and inns; 4- and 5-star hotels are free to charge any rate they choose. All hotels, guest-houses and inns, as well as campsites, are graded according to the number of beds available and the services supplied.

BED & BREAKFAST: Available in small family hotels in Buenos Aires and other cities. Maid service is usually included in the price, but laundry service usually requires a small extra charge. Bed & Breakfast hotels can also offer useful tourist advice.

SELF-CATERING: It is possible to rent cheap self-catering apartments and flats, with or without maid service, either by the day or week. Some can provide meals. Most apartments are in Buenos Aires.

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: Most resort cities welcome campers, and there are motels, campsites and caravan sites throughout Argentina. Campsites can be found in virtually every major region. Dormobiles are for hire.

9 RESORT & EXCURSIONS

For the purposes of this guide, the following section has been divided into eight geographical **areas**: Buenos Aires, The Atlantic Coast, The Pampas, Misiones, Mesopotamia & El Chaco; Córdoba, Mendoza & the Andes; The Andean Northwest, Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego.

Buenos Aires

Argentina's capital city is located within the Capital Federal District and forms one of the world's largest metropolitan areas. Buenos Aires is an elegant shoppers' paradise and cosmopolitan centre that takes pride in its cultural establishments. There are now few reminders of the city's glorious past, although the immense Catedral Metropolitana (Metropolitan Cathedral), which contains the remains of San Martín, Argentina's liberator, is a notable exception. So is the famous Teatro Colón, the world's largest opera house (with a capacity of 2500 seats), which occupies an entire block on the massive Avenida 9 de Julio, the city's major thoroughfare with its Obelisco (obelisk) at the intersection with Avenida Corrientes (the traditional theatre, cinema and nightlife district). Also worth a visit are the Isaac Fernández Blanco Museum of Spanish-American Art, which houses an important silverware collection and is located in a beautiful neo-colonial mansion; the Ambrosetti Museum; the Museum of Colonial History; and the Basilica of Luján, which attracts millions of pilgrims every year. The old artists' quarter of La Boca, home of the tango, is located along a narrow waterway lined by meat-packing plants and warehouses. Visitors can see a tango show at one of several tango bars for approximately US\$40-60. The San Telmo borough, one of the oldest parts of the city and particularly known for the Manzana de las Luces (Block of Enlightenment), has also preserved its artistic spirit. The city's oldest church, the Jesuit Iglesia San Ignacio, is located here. San Telmo has many cafés, antique shops, tango night spots and a Sunday flea market on Plaza Dorrego. Buenos Aires' open spaces are particularly notable in the northern part, where a succession of parks stretch for miles along the River Plate. The Palermo neighbourhood contains the Jardín Botánico Carlos Thays (Botanical Gardens), the Jardín Zoológico (zoo), the Campo de Polo (polo grounds), the Hipódromo (racetrack) and the Planetarium. The city's main shopping districts are located around the microcentro (north of Avenida de Mayo), which includes popular tourist areas like the Florida and Lavelle pedestrian malls, the Plaza San Martín, and the commercial and entertainment areas of Corrientes, Córdoba and the fashionable Santa Fe. North of the microcentro is the chic and upper-class Recoleta borough, famous for its Cementerio de la Recoleta (where many members of Argentina's élite are buried) and the renowned Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Museum of Fine Arts), which has works by Renoir, Rodin, Monet, Van Gogh and numerous Argentinian artists. Near the presidential palace, the neighbourhood known as Puerto Madero is now in serious competition with Recoleta to become the city's most chic quarter. Many of the port's 19th-century warehouses and docks have been transformed into Manhattan-style lofts, expensive restaurants, trendy nightclubs, new office blocks and a university campus. Further southeast is the Costanera Sur National Park, a nature reserve close to the banking district.

EXCURSIONS: Argentina's most important devotional site, the neo-gothic Basílica Nuestra Señora de Luján (whose day is May 8), is located 65km (41 miles) west of Buenos Aires. Around 113km (71 miles) west of the capital lies the village of San Antonio de Areco, the centre of Argentina's gaucho tradition and host to the Día de la Tradición, the country's biggest gaucho celebration held annually in November. The village is also known for its artisans, who specialise in mate paraphernalia, rastras (silver-studded belts) and facones (knives). The country town of Capilla del Señor can be visited on a day trip with an old historic steam train (tickets should be purchased a week in advance).

The Atlantic Coast

MAR DEL PLATA: Located approximately 400km (250 miles) from Buenos Aires, this is the main tourist resort on the Atlantic coast. Often referred to as 'Mardel', Mar del Plata's sandy beaches attract thousands of visitors during the December to March season. The many grandiose mansions testify to the city's upper-class origins. Interesting sites include the Villa Normandy (which has a distinctive French style), the Iglesia Stella Maris (a church with an impressive marble altar), the Torre Tanque (an 88-metre/289-ft tower offering good views) and the Villa Victoria (once a literary salon). The Banquina de Pescadores is a picturesque wharf near the port with many restaurants and cafeterias. Mar del Plata is also the site of the largest gambling casino in Argentina.

Other well-known resorts on the Atlantic coast include Villa Gezell, Pinamar, Miramar and Necochea, the latter being well-known for the Parque Miguel Lillo, a large green space beside the beach, whose pine woods are popular for cycling and riding. New resorts are constantly springing up along this stretch of coastline. Most can offer deep-sea fishing and watersports.

Further south, some 650km (407 miles) from Buenos Aires, lies Bahía Blanca, the largest southern city, whose massive port makes it one of the country's major commercial centres.

The Pampas

The area known as the Pampas consists mostly of flat agricultural land and contains the provinces of Buenos Aires, La Pampa as well as parts of Santa Fe and Córdoba. The area is well-known for its horse-breeding tradition and cattle ranches.

LA PLATA: LA PLATA: Located 56km (35 miles) southeast of Buenos Aires, La Plata is the capital of the Buenos Aires Province and an important administrative, commercial and cultural centre. It has one of the country's best universities. South of La Plata lies the Sierra de la Ventana, whose scenic peaks attract many hikers and climbers. One of the most popular peaks for climbing excursions is the Cerro de la Ventana (1136m/3408ft), which is located within the Ernesto Tornquist Provincial Park.

SANTA FE: SANTA FE: The capital of the Santa Fe Province is linked to Paraná, capital of the Entre Ríos Province, via a tunnel beneath the River Paraná (see below). Mainly important as an agricultural and industrial centre, Santa Fe's colonial past is still visible in its streets and squares, though there are also many modern buildings. The nearby city of Rosario, on the west bank of the River Paraná, was where the Argentinian flag was first raised and its biggest attraction is the impressive, boat-shaped Monumento Nacional a la Bandera (Monument to the Flag). La Semana de la Bandera (Flag Week) is celebrated annually in June. Nearby is the town of Rufino, an important centre for cattle raising. Walking and trekking are popular in the Lihue Calel National Park, an area consisting mostly of desert, located some 226km (142 miles) south-west of the city of Santa Rosa, and known for its pink granite rock formations (reaching up to 600m/1968ft).

Misiones, Mesopotamia & El Chaco

The Misiones Province has a subtropical climate and is nearly surrounded by Paraguay and Brazil. It is most famous for its Jesuit missions and the spectacular Iguazú Falls. Mesopotamia usually refers to the area between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers and comprises the provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes. El Chaco is a sparsely populated area of nature reserves and parks.

POSADAS: POSADAS: The capital of the Misiones Province is joined to Paraguay by a modern bridge. The province is well known for its old Jesuit missions, and the most impressive Jesuit ruins can be visited at San Ignacio Mini, some 50km (32 miles) east of Posada. Jesuit carvings and art are on display at Posada's Museo Regional. The gigantic Yacyreta Dam lies 200km (125 miles) upstream from Posada. Puerto Iguazú is the gateway to the majestic Iguazú Falls (parts of

which are located in neighbouring Brazil). The falls are located within the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Iguazú National Park, whose subtropical rainforest provides a habitat for over 2000 identified plant species and 400 bird species. (For details of hiking trails, see the Sport & Activities section.) The Iguazú Falls are formed by the River Paraná which, before reaching the edge, divides into many channels. The most impressive of these is the Garganta del Diabolo (Devil's Throat), which can be approached via a system of catwalks (some of which may occasionally be closed owing to flooding). At their highest point, the falls have a vertical drop more than one and a half times the full length of Niagara Falls. Visitors can catch a good view of the falls from a tower near the visitor centre, which also organises free trips to the Isla Grande San Martín, another good lookout point from which to catch an extensive and crowd-free view.

PARANÁ: PARANÁ: The capital of the Entre Ríos Province can be reached from Santa Fe via the Hernandarias Tunnel under the River Paraná. East of Paraná, near the border with Uruguay, Concepción del Uruguay has numerous spas and river beaches (on the River Uruguay), notably at Banco Pelay and Itapo. The nearby city of Gualeduatchu is famous for its carnival, which rivals those of Rio and Bahía in Brazil. Further north, some 360km (225 miles) from Buenos Aires, lies the El Palmar National Park, whose main attractions are the old yatay palms, some of which are nearly 800 years old.

CORRIENTES: CORRIENTES: Corrientes, the capital of its namesake province, is one of Argentina's oldest cities. The General Belgrano Bridge over the Paraná River joins the city to Resistencia, the capital of the Chaco Province (see below). Among Corrientes' oldest churches, the Santísima Cruz de los Milagros and the Convento de San Francisco are worth a visit. In the north of the province lies the Esteros del Iberá, an area of marshland, lagoons and lakes providing a refuge for hundreds of bird species, reptiles and mammals such as swamp deer and capibara (the world's largest rodent). There are numerous remains of Jesuit settlements in the vicinity, notably at Yapeyú, the birthplace of José de San Martín. Cattle ranches (estancia) can be visited at San Gará, Atalaya and San Juan Poriahú. Well-known for its fiestas and carnivals, the Corrientes is also the land of the chamamé, a characteristic type of rhythmic music derived from the polka, celebrated in the annual National Chamamé Festival.

EL CHACO: EL CHACO: The capital of the Chaco Province is Resistencia, which prides itself on being a 'city of sculptures' (there are over 200 of them), and is a major cross roads for Paraguay and excursions through the Chaco to the northwest. The Chaco National Park is a large expanse of swamps, grasslands, palm savannahs and forest, which is rarely visited as camping is the only available accommodation. Interesting nature reserves within the area include Estricta Colonia Benítez (in the eastern Chaco) and the Pampa del Indio Provincial Park. Campo del Cielo is an area famous for its meteorite fragments dating back some 6000 years. Formosa, the capital of Formosa Province, is a good starting point for excursions to the northern Chaco. Interesting buildings in the city include the Casa de Gobierno, which has been declared a national monument. Apart from Formosa's annual week-long Fiesta del Río (a nocturnal religious procession), one of the main regional attractions is the massive Río Pilcomayo National Park, an area of swamps, marshland and savannah on the Paraguayan border, whose Laguna Blanca is an ideal spot for birdwatching.

Córdoba, Mendoza & the Andes

CÓRDOBA: CÓRDOBA: Located on the bank of the River Primero, Córdoba has preserved much of its colonial past and character. Some of the most interesting colonial buildings include El Cabildo (the Town Hall) and the Casa del Obispo Mercadillo. One of the best streets in which to see colonial buildings is the Calle Obispo Trejos. Also worth seeing are the churches of the Compañía de Jesús, San Francisco and San Roque. Argentina's first university, the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba was founded here. The scenic mountain hinterland known as the Sierras de

Córdoba is dotted with colonial hermitages and tourist towns: Cosquín hosts an annual folklore festival and La Falda is a popular resort for excursions to the Sierra Chica. Around Córdoba, numerous Jesuit churches can be visited: Alta Gracia, 35km (22 miles) south-west of the city, is one of the best-known. Also of interest is the town of Jesús María, which hosts the Fiesta Nacional de Doma y Folklore, an annual celebration of gaucho horsemanship and customs.

MENDOZA: MENDOZA: The Mendoza Province is Argentina's main wine-producing region and the annual grape harvest festival, the Fiesta Nacional de la Vendimia, is held in the provincial capital, Mendoza, at the end of February and the beginning of March. Founded in 1521, Mendoza is characterised by tree-lined streets and a large network (some 500km/32 miles) of irrigation channels. The Andes mountain ranges can be seen in the distance from many parts of the city, whose universities, museums, theatres and art galleries testify to a lively cultural life. Interesting museums include the Museo Sanmartiniano (for history) and the Museo Popular Callejero (architecture). Most wineries near Mendoza offer tours and tasting. Some of the province's main wine cellars are located in San Rafael. Near the border with Chile lies the famous Mount Aconcagua (6995m/22,944ft), the highest mountain in the Western hemisphere, located within the Aconcagua National Park. A good starting point for exploring the area is Uspallata, located in a serene valley surrounded by mountains. Some of the best ski resorts can be found at Las Leñas (one of Argentina's most prestigious winter sports resorts, open from June to October), the Valles del Plata and Los Penitentes. Also worth visiting is the striking Puente del Inca, a natural stone bridge over the River Mendoza; and Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer), a famous monument in the high Andes, nearly 4000m (13,120ft) above sea level, offering magnificent views.

SAN JUAN: SAN JUAN: San Juan, capital of the San Juan Province was rebuilt after an earthquake in 1944. Today, the city is characterised by wide, tree-lined streets and fairly modern buildings. Around 60km (38 miles) southeast from here, the small town of Vallecita attracts large numbers of pilgrims who come to visit the famous Difunta Correa shrine (with the busiest times being around Easter and Christmas). The city of Agustín del Valle Fértil is a good base for excursions to the Ischigualasto National Park, a desert valley also referred to as 'the valley of the moon', owing to its distinctive rock formations and fossils dating back some 180 million years.

The Andean Northwest

JUJUY: JUJUY: The capital of Jujuy Province, San Salvador de Jujuy, was once a stopover for colonial mule traders. It has an interesting Indian market, the Mercado del Sur and, at Termas de Reyes, thermal baths overlooking the scenic canyon of the River Reyes. North of the city lie the colourful dry landscapes of the Quebrada de Humahuaca and its isolated peasant villages. The indigenous village of Purmamarca is surrounded by the Cerro de los Siete Colores (Hill of Seven Colours), whose layers show different geological periods. Further up stands the Pelata del Pinto (Painter's Pallet), named after its view of the multi-coloured surrounding mountains. The Calilegua National Park lies on the province's eastern border. It has abundant birdlife, some dense subtropical cloud forest and offers good views of the Gran Chaco from Mount Hermoso (3600m/11,808ft).

SALTA: SALTA: The city of Salta, capital of Salta Province, is reputed to have the best preserved colonial architecture in Argentina. The most significant buildings are grouped around the central square, including the Cathedral, the Cabildo (Town Hall) - which houses the Museo Histórico del Norte, the Museo Colonial and the Museo de Bellas Artes - and the Iglesia San Francisco. The province is well-known for its spectacular train journey, El Tren a las Nubes (Train to the Clouds), which ascends the Quebrada del Toro and climbs up to the puna. The climax of the trip is the crossing of the La Polvorilla viaduct (4182m/13,716ft above sea level). Around 100km (63 miles) south of Salta, the Quebrada de Cafayete is a landscape of barren sandstone known for its distinctive formations, such as the Garganta de Diabolo (Devil's Throat). Surrounding Cafayete

are many vineyards, which flourish in the warm, dry and sunny climate. The Los Cardones National Park is known for its large cacti (cardó), reaching heights of up to 6m (20ft).

LA RIOJA: LA RIOJA: This province has a large variety of mountains, canyons, gorges and red-earthed plains. The Talampaya Canyon is one of its most famous natural attractions, owing mostly to its peculiar rock formations. The town of Nonogasta has many vineyards and wine cellars open to visitors. La Puerta de Talampaya is well-known for its petroglyphs.

CATAMARCA: CATAMARCA: This province is flanked by the Sierra del Colorado in the west and the Sierra Graciana in the east, with San Fernando de Valle de Catamarca being the provincial capital. The region is popular for hiking, trekking and horseback riding tours to the surrounding mountains.

SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO: SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO: The provincial capital of Santiago del Estero Province, named after the province, is the country's oldest city, with numerous churches and old colonial buildings. The province is renowned for its spas and warm thermal pools, the most popular being at Río Hondo and Las Aguas del Sol.

TUCUMÁN: TUCUMÁN: Another Andean province offering green valleys with subtropical vegetation surrounded by snow-capped mountains. Within the Tafí Valley lies the Parque de los Menhires, named after its interesting collection of stones decorated by Tafí Indians. Also worth a visit are the ruins at Quilmes, an ancient fortified citadel built by Quilme Indians.

Patagonia

Comprising the provinces of Río Negro, Neuquén and Santa Cruz, Patagonia - the southernmost portion of South America (located in both Argentina and Chile) - is a vast region with numerous parks and nature reserves. The Patagonian coast is home to large herds of seals, sea lions, blue whales and thousands of penguins.

RÍO NEGRO: RÍO NEGRO: One of the best-known resorts in the southern Lake District is San Carlos de Bariloche, which is surrounded by lakes, glaciers and forested mountains and which has both modern tourist amenities such as shopping areas and casinos, as well as hiking, mountaineering and picnic sites. Skiing is possible in Gran Catedral, a well-known resort with modern facilities. The nearby Nahuel Huapi National Park contains the massive Nahuel Huapi Lake, stretching over 100km (63 miles) to the border with Chile. Within the lake area lies the Isla Victoria, a natural sanctuary, which can be reached by private or organised boat trips. Travelling south, a road through spectacular scenery, passing the shores of three lakes, leads to El Bolsón, 130km (82 miles) from Bariloche, known for its hops and fruit orchards. The Feria Artesanal, a market held in El Bolsón on Saturday (and on Thursday during summer), provides a good opportunity to sample local dishes. Possible excursions within the area include the trail to the Cabeza del Indio, a rock formation resembling the 'noble savage', with good views of the Río Azul and Lago Puelo en route.

NEQUÉN: NEQUÉN: The town of Junin de los Andes is well-known for trout fishing and offers good access to the Lanín National Park (see below). Nearby San Martín de los Andes, located on Lake Lácar, is close to one of Argentina's main winter sports destinations in Cerro Chapelco. San Martín is connected to Bariloche by a scenic road (also called 'the route of the seven lakes'), leading past seven lakes and through a landscape of snow-capped mountains, waterfalls and gigantic trees. The region's principal attraction is the Lanín National Park, a still fairly untouched area dominated by the extinct, snow-capped Volcán Lanín (3776m/12,386ft), and characterised by rare plant and animal species (including raulí, a type of beech, and pehuén, the monkey puzzle tree). On the northern shore of Nahuel Huapi National Park (see above) lies Villa la

Angostura, a resort whose main interest is the nearby Los Arrayanes National Park. Located on the Quetrihué peninsula (connected to Angostura by an isthmus), this park is best known for the El Bosque de Arrayanes, a forest of arrayán (cinnamon-barked) trees, many of which are over 100 years old. The Siete Lagos scenic road connects the park to San Martín de los Andes (see above). Puerto Madryn, founded by Welsh settlers, is a popular base for excursions to the nearby wildlife sanctuary at the Peninsula Valdes nature reserve, in Chubut Province, where large numbers of sea lions, elephant seals and penguins frequent the beaches. Further north, the Isla de los Pájaros bird sanctuary is home to cormorants, flamingos and egrets. A number of trails and spots in the area provide opportunities for observing colonies of sea lions and elephant seals, notably at Punta Delgada, in the sheltered bay of Caleta Valdés, below the cliffs of Punta Loma and the nature reserves of Punta Norte and Punta Pirámide - the latter also being the main base for whale-sighting trips to the Gulf of San José; the best time to see whales is from August to December. The Punta Tombo reserve is known for its vast colonies of Magellanic penguins (around half a million of which use the reserve as a breeding ground from September to April). Further south, near the sunny town of Esquel, is Los Alerces National Park, which protects vast stretches of the tall and long-lived (400 years) alerce conifer trees.

SANTA CRUZ: SANTA CRUZ: One of the province's main attractions is the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Los Glaciares National Park, an area of great natural beauty, with rugged mountains and numerous glacial lakes, including Lake Argentino. Accessible from the busy tourist town of El Calafate, the park's centrepiece is the Moreno Glacier, one of the earth's few advancing glaciers. Huge icebergs calve and topple into Lake Argentino at the so-called Canal de los Témpanos (Iceberg Channel), and there are nearby catwalks and platforms from which to observe this event. It is also possible to visit the Upsala Glacier via a boat trip from Puerto Bandera along Lake Onelli and past floating icebergs.

Tierra del Fuego

Over half of this remote southern province belongs to Chile. Tierra del Fuego is the gateway to the Antarctic.

USHUAIA: USHUAIA: The provincial capital is the world's most southernmost city, located in a dramatic setting, with jagged glacial peaks rising from sea level to nearly 1500m (4920ft). The Museo del Fin del Mundo (Museum of the End of the World) has exhibits dedicated to the Indians, nature, local history and the many shipwrecks that happened in the area. The nearby Martial is within walking distance and yields spectacular views of the city and the Beagle Channel. The city of Río Grande is mostly a petroleum service centre facing the South Atlantic and, though of no particular interest, the surrounding countryside offers good hiking opportunities (particularly around the Garibaldi Pass, where lenga tree forests show striking displays of red leaves during autumn). Some 18km (12 miles) west of Ushuaia, the Tierra del Fuego National Park, Argentina's only coastal national park, comprises rivers, lakes, forests and glaciers.

10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Trekking: Trekking: Argentina's vast landscapes, alpine parks, lakes and deserts offer spectacular opportunities for walking and trekking. The best trekking areas are the Andean Lake District, the Sierras de Córdoba, the Sierra de la Ventana (in Buenos Aires province) and Patagonia, a huge and sparsely populated region, dotted with glaciers and lakes, and home to several of Argentina's most popular national parks (for further information, see the Resorts & Excursions section). One of the most popular tourist towns for starting excursions to the area is Calafate.

Mountaineering: Mountaineering: The Wild West frontier town of El Chaltén is a popular starting point for mountaineering trips to the Fitzroy Range. Good climbing is also possible at Aconcagua (near Mendoza) and the Sierra de la Fentana (for experienced climbers only).

Skiing: Skiing: There is excellent skiing on the eastern slopes of the Andes, with an increasing number of ski resorts and runs. The season is generally from May to September. Bariloche is the oldest, most established and best-equipped ski resort. The runs at San Antonio, San Bernado, La Canaleta, Puente del Inca and Las Cuevas on the border of Argentina and Chile also offer exciting skiing. Other resorts include Caviahue, Cerro Bayo, Cerro Chapelco, Vallecitos, Las Leñas and Esquel. Visitors are advised to book accommodation in advance.

Watersports: Watersports: The rivers descending from the Andean ranges are attracting an increasing number of whitewater rafting enthusiasts. Some of the most popular include Río Mendoza and Río Diamante (Cuyo region); Río Limay and Río Manso (near Bariloche); and Río Hum and Río Meliquinza (near San Martín de los Andes). Swimming can be enjoyed in rivers, lakes and small resorts along the Atlantic coast; water-skiing along the San Antonio River in the Tigre Delta Region; scuba diving in Patagonia; yachting and boating along the River Plate; and fishing on the Atlantic coast off the piers. Freshwater fishing (for trout and salmon) is particularly good along the Paraná River and in Argentina's many artificial lakes. By far the most popular spectator sport is football, which is followed obsessively throughout the country. Palermo Park in Buenos Aires has a golf course as well as public and professional polo grounds. The polo season is from October to December.

11 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: North American, Continental and Middle Eastern cuisine is generally available, whilst local food is largely a mixture of Basque, Spanish and Italian. Beef is of a particularly high quality and meat-eaters should not miss out on the chance to dine at a parillada, or grill room, where a large variety of barbecue-style dishes can be sampled. Popular local dishes include empanadas (minced meat and other ingredients covered with puff pastry) and locro (pork and maize stew). In general, restaurants are good value. They are classified by a fork sign with three forks implying a good evening out. Hotel residents are usually asked to sign a charge slip. Drink: Argentinian wines are very good and inexpensive. Local distilleries produce name brands of most well-known spirits. Whiskies and gins are excellent, as are classic and local wines. Caribbean and South American rum add flavour to cocktails. There are no licensing laws.

Nightlife: Buenos Aires' nightlife is vibrant. There are many theatres and concert halls featuring foreign artists. Economic instability has meant a contraction of some of the more extravagant nightclubs for which Buenos Aires was famous, though there are still a large number of smaller

intimate boîtes (clubs) and many stage shows. There are casinos throughout Argentina. Shopping hours: 0900-1900 Monday to Friday and 0900-1300 Saturday.

Special Events: For a full list of special events, contact the National Tourist Board. The following is a selection of the special events occurring annually in Argentina: Jan Sea Festival, Mar del Plata; Jineteada (breaking in horses) and Folklore Festival, Diamante, Prov. Entre Ríos; Chaya (a musical instrument) Festival, La Rioja; Doma (breaking in horses) and Folklore Festival, Intendente Alvear, Prov. La Pampa; Folklore Festival, Cosquín, Prov. Córdoba. Feb Carnival, Esquina, Prov. Corrientes; Pachamama (Mother Earth) Festival, Amaicha del Valle, Prov. Tucumán; Trout Fishing Festival, Río Grande. Mar Grape Harvest Festival, Mendoza. Mar-Apr Holy Week, Salta; Festival of Our Lady Del Valle, Catamarca. Jul Poncho Week, Catamarca; Simoca Fair, Simoca, Prov. Tucumán; Santiago Week, Santiago del Estero; Dorado Fishing Competition, Formosa. Aug Snow Festival, Río Turbio, Prov. Santa Cruz; Jujuy Week, Jujuy; Dorado Festival, Posadas, Prov. Misiones; Snow Festival, Bariloche. Sep Chamamé Music Festival, Corrientes; Agriculture Festival, Esperanza, Prov. Santa Fé. Oct Fiesta de la Cerveza (beer festival), Villa General Belgrano. Nov Sea Salmon Fishing Contest, Comodoro Rivadavia; Tradition Week (gaucho shows), San Antonio de Areco. Dec Gaucho Festival, Gral. Madaria, Prov. Buenos Aires; Trout Festival, San Junín de los Andes, Prov. Neuquén.

Social Conventions: The most common form of greeting between friends is shaking hands. When invited to somebody's house it is quite common to take a homemade dish or dessert. Dinner is usually served between 2100-2200. Avoid casual discussion of the Falklands/Malvinas war. Dress is not usually formal, though clothes should be conservative away from the beach. Formal wear is worn for official functions and dinners, particularly in exclusive restaurants. Smoking is prohibited on public transport, in cinemas and theatres. Tipping: Tips are theoretically outlawed but some hotels or restaurants will add 25% service charge, plus a 21% tax charge. In these cases, a minimal tip is still expected. Otherwise, 10% on top of the bill will suffice. The same applies in bars. Taxi drivers tend to expect tips from visitors.

12 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Argentina is rich in natural resources and also has a large and profitable agricultural sector; the country is one of the world's major exporters of wheat and also produces maize, oilseeds, sorghum, soya beans and sugar. Beef is no longer the dominant trading commodity that it once was, but agriculture still accounts for a large proportion of export earnings. Agricultural goods aside, Argentina exports textiles and some metal and chemical products. These, along with oil refining and vehicle production, are also the main components of Argentina's manufacturing industry. Hydroelectricity and coal meet the bulk of the country's energy requirements. The structure of the economy was characterised by major state involvement until the Menem government started to dismantle the public sector, selling off some industries and opening others to competition. The other key components of economic policy were the fixing of the Peso's value to the Dollar and an overhaul of the country's financial system. While the majority of the population suffered some economic hardship from these policies, they proved to be effective in tackling the twin historical scourges of the Argentinean economy: high inflation and foreign debt. The present inflation rate, effectively zero, is a marked contrast to most of the 1990s during which inflation averaged around 30%. The present government has done little to vary the essentials of economic policy-making. However, after a decade of steady growth, the economy has been static during 2000. Brazil is the largest of Argentina's South American trading partners. There are also important trading relationships with the USA, which is the main source of manufactured products, and the countries of the former Soviet Union, which buy large quantities

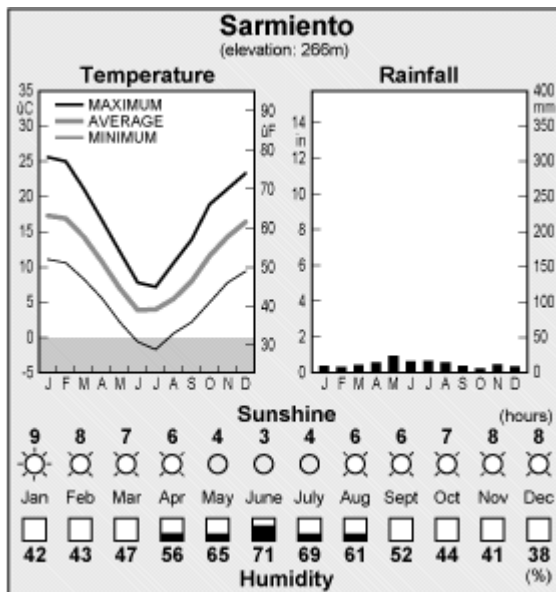
of grain. Elsewhere, trade with Japan and the EU - especially Germany and The Netherlands - has grown rapidly in recent years.

Business: Business cards are usually given and business people expect to deal with someone of equal status. Punctuality is expected by visitors. Literature is in Spanish although many Argentinian business people speak English as a second language. Office hours: 0900-1900 Monday to Friday.

Commercial Information: The following organisation can offer advice: Cámara Argentina de Comercio (Chamber of Commerce), Avenida Leandro N. Alem 36, 1003 Buenos Aires (tel: (11) 43 31 80 51; fax: (11) 43 31 80 55; e-mail: cac@cac.com.ar; web site: <http://www.cac.com.ar>).

Conferences/Conventions: For more information, contact the Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación (see address section).

13 CLIMATE



The north is subtropical with rain throughout the year, while the Tierra del Fuego in the south has a sub-arctic climate. The main central area is temperate, but can be hot and humid during summer (December to February) and cool in winter.

Required clothing: European clothes for the main central area. Lightweight cottons and linens in the north. Warm clothes are necessary in the south and during winter months in the central area. Waterproofing is advisable for all areas.

14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Europeans first arrived in the territory which became Argentina in the early 16th century. After becoming a vice-royalty of Spain in the 1770s, Argentina achieved independence in 1816. Between the mid-19th century and 1946 Argentina swung from civilian to military rule and

from radical to conservative policies. In 1943 a coup resulted in the rise of Lt General Peron Sosa as President. After winning the election of 1946, Peron instigated a policy of extreme nationalism and social improvement. He founded the Peronista movement and after his overthrow in 1955 continued to direct the movement from his Spanish exile. The ensuing administrations failed to secure the full allegiance of either the people or the trade unions and Peron was triumphantly re-elected as President in 1973. On his death a year later his wife, Isabelita Peron, took over but chaos ensued and she was deposed by a military coup in 1976. The legacy of Peron (and his wife) continues to inspire Argentinian politicians to this day. The end of the Peronist period heralded perhaps the darkest period in Argentinian history. Driven by an obsessive fear of 'communism' and 'subversion' - and supported by governments through the Americas (including Washington) - the military regime instituted a reign of terror in which disappearances, torture and extra-judicial murder were commonplace. The military's blatant inability to run the economy did much to undermine such credibility as they enjoyed. But the final straw was the invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas islands in 1982, which led to a humiliating defeat for the Argentinian military at the hands of a British task force and led swiftly to the collapse of the regime and the inauguration of a new era of civilian politics. The Partido Justicialista (PJ) carried the Peronist banner while its main opponent was the Union Civica Radical (UCR), a reform-minded centrist party with a history stretching back to the 1930s. The UCR won a majority of national assembly seats and its candidate, a provincial governor named Raul Alfonsin Foukes, assumed the presidency in 1983. The UCR was successful in negotiating the transition to civilian rule and restoring the credibility of the country's civilian polity: a considerable achievement given the continuous rumble of dissatisfaction from the military and discontent from a population seeking retribution for years of repression and improvement in their economic circumstances. However, it was economic failures that undid the UCR government: by the time of Alfonsin's departure from office in June 1989 Argentina was racked by 4-digit annual inflation and still financially crippled by massive foreign debts. The Peronist challenger, Carlos Menem, led his party to victory and promptly instituted a programme of financial austerity and economic liberalisation, including the complex and politically dangerous task of dismantling the country's vast public sector. The programme was sufficiently successful for Menem to secure a second term of office in 1995. However, a subsequent economic downturn and persistent attempts by President Menem to alter the constitution (to allow him to stand for a third term of office) undermined his party's position. A new centre-left party, Frepaso, which emerged in 1993, initially attracted much of the anti-Peronist vote away from the UCR. However, the two parties subsequently combined in a united outfit, known as Concertacion (Alliance), to present a concerted and ultimately successful challenge to the PJ at the presidential and legislative elections at the end of 1999. Ex-Buenos Aires mayor Fernando de la Rúa, standing for Concertacion, won a narrow victory over the Justicialista (Peronist) Eduardo Duhalde, although the alliance failed to secure an absolute majority in the simultaneous poll for the national assembly. A key domestic challenge for the new government is to restore confidence in the nation's public institutions much of which, during the years of private-sector growth under Menem, has become ossified and corrupt. Abroad, the Falklands/Malvinas dispute has been overshadowed by more important concerns over Argentina's relations with its neighbours - especially Brazil - and regional economic co-operation and convergence.

Government: Under the amended constitution which came into force in August 1994, legislative power is in the bicameral Congreso (Congress), comprising a 257-member lower house, the Camara de Diputados (Chamber of Deputies), and a 72-member Senado (Senate). Members of the lower house are elected every four years by proportional representation; the senate is indirectly elected by provincial legislatures and serves a six-year term. Executive power is held by the president, assisted by a cabinet of ministers, who is directly elected for a four-year term (renewable once only).

15 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Argentina's climate and geography vary considerably, ranging from the heat of the Chaco, through the pleasant climate of the central Pampas to the sub-Antarctic cold of the Patagonian Sea. In the southwest is a small 'Switzerland' with a string of beautiful icy lakes framed by mountains.

Hotels range in standard from the most luxurious in Buenos Aires to the more basic in the rural areas.

Buenos Aires, the capital city, is a shoppers' paradise and a cosmopolitan cultural centre. It takes pride in its National Art Museum, Folk Art Museum and Teatro. The immense cathedral contains the remains of San Martín, Argentina's liberator.

The national parks of the Andes region are abundant with wildlife and provide good opportunities for shooting, fishing and skiing. Popular local dishes include empanadas (minced meat and other ingredients covered with puff pastry) and locro (pork and maize stew).

Buenos Aires' nightlife is vibrant with many theatres and concert halls featuring international artists as well as local talent.

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