

Argentina not only offers the tango, fine wines, and world class football but she is also home to a rich cultural heritage. The capital, Buenos Aires has one of Latin America's most cosmopolitan populations with countless generations from Italy and Spain, to Scotland, Germany and Wales.

The country is also home to an incredible geographical diversity, with abundant wildlife and some stunning scenery.

With a good tourist infrastructure and modern facilities you may travel from the sub-tropical north all the way down to Tierra del Fuego, where Patagonia meets the icy waters of Antarctica. From elegant world class hotels in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires to the simple refuges in the towering mountains of the Fitzroy range, Argentina will delight all visitors with her fabulous charm and natural beauty.

Electricity: 220V, 50Hz

Time Zone: GMT/UTC -3

Dialling Code: 54

Festival Calendar

March/April - Easter

May 1st - Labour Day

May 25th - Revolucion de Mayo - Commemorating the revolution of 1810.

June 10th - Dia de las Malvinas

June 20th - Flag Day

July 9th - Independence Day

August 17th - Dia de San Martin - Commemorating the anniversary of San Martin's death

October 12th - Columbus Day

Climate

For residents of the northern hemisphere, Argentina offers the inviting possibility of enjoying two summers in the same year, but the country's great variety and elongated geography can make a visit in any season worthwhile. Buenos Aires' urban attractions, for example, transcend the seasons, but Patagonian destinations, such as the Moreno Glacier in Santa Cruz, are best to visit in the summer months (December to February). The Iguazú Falls in subtropical Misiones province are best in the southern hemisphere's winter or spring when heat and humidity are less oppressive. The winter months (mid-June to late September) also offer the opportunity to go skiing.

Currency

The Argentinian Nuevo Peso is the official currency and as Argentina is generally one of the most expensive countries to travel through in Latin America, recent currency devaluation has resulted in a sharp drop in prices.

The US dollar is the best foreign currency to take with you as it offers the best rate of exchange, but most foreign currencies can be exchanged with little difficulty. Both credit cards and travellers' cheques are widely accepted, but not without disadvantages. Commission rates as high as 10% will be levied on travellers' cheques and should you choose to pay by credit card, you can expect a service charge.

Our best advice is to accept that you are probably never going to get the best rate of exchange and travel with the form of currency you feel most comfortable with. All of this taken into consideration, we still feel that travel to Argentina is definitely worth the extra cost!

Banking hours are from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, closed on Saturdays and may vary depending on the season.

Visas

Most foreigners do not require a visa, only a tourist card, which is issued at no cost upon entering the country. You must reconfirm your country's current entry requirements prior to your departure.

Health

Dengue fever is a concern in the subtropical north. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits the dengue virus, is most active during the day, and is found mainly in urban areas, in and around human dwellings. Signs and symptoms of dengue fever include a sudden onset of high fever, headache, joint and muscle pains, nausea and vomiting. A rash of small red spots sometimes appears three to four days after the onset of fever. Severe complications do sometimes occur. You should seek medical attention as soon as possible if you think you may be infected. A blood test can indicate the possibility of dengue fever. There is no specific treatment. Aspirin should be avoided, as it increases the risk of haemorrhaging. There is no vaccine against dengue fever.

Altitude sickness (In the thinner atmosphere above 3000m (9842ft), or even at lower altitude, lack of oxygen causes many individuals to suffer headaches, nausea, shortness of breath, physical weakness and other symptoms that can lead to very serious consequences, especially if combined with heat exhaustion, sunburn or hypothermia.

Acute mountain sickness (AMS) can affect anyone and care should be taken to avoid ascending mountain peaks above 3000m (9842ft) too quickly. Sleep at a lower altitude than the greatest height reached during the day, if possible.

Hypothermia - At high altitudes in the mountains or high latitudes in Patagonia, cold and wet conditions can kill. Changeable weather at high altitudes can leave you vulnerable to exposure: after sunset, temperatures in the mountains or desert (even when simply taking a long bus trip) can drop from balmy to below freezing, while high winds and a sudden soaking can lower your body temperature too rapidly. If possible, avoid travelling alone; partners are more likely to avoid hypothermia successfully. If you must travel alone, especially when hiking, be sure someone knows your route and when you expect to return. In some areas, you should always be prepared for cold, wet or windy conditions even if you're just out walking or hitchhiking.

Best time to go

Argentina falls within the temperate climate zone and enjoys four seasons that run opposite to those of the Northern Hemisphere. It is never a bad time to visit Argentina, but because our adventures are centered round trekking in the Southern Patagonia region, our tours operate predominately throughout its summer season, from November to April.

Upon arrival

Once you've reclaimed your baggage and cleared customs, you will be warmly welcome to Argentina, assisted with your luggage and taken you to your hotel by private air-conditioned minivan/bus. Please do not leave the airport terminal building unless you have made contact with Amazing Peru staff. Also ignore the calls from taxi drivers as your private transport has been provided for you.

Food and drink

Drink only bottled water. Pasteurised milk is widely available. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Avoid street food vendors and the cheaper restaurants.

What to eat

To try some typical foods, here is a selection of what we recommend.

Parrillada - As Argentina is famous for its beef, this local dish of grilled meats is a must
Matambre relleno - A stuffed and rolled flank steak that makes for a good appetizer served cold or baked

Carbonada - A beef stew with rice, sweet potatoes, squash, maize and chopped apples and peaches

Locro - A thick stew made from white beans, maize, beef, sausages, pumpkin and herbs

Empanadas - Pastries stuffed with meat or cheese or even both

Queso y dulce - Cheese topped with preserved fruit

Flan - A caramel custard topped with dulce de leche, an Argentinean invention of caramelised milk

Argentina helado - The best places to try is where you see a sign that reads “Elaboracion propia or elaboracion artesanal” These places make the ice cream on premises and offer a variety of flavours

Almadrado - Ice cream rolled in crushed almonds

What to drink

Mate (pronounced mah-tay) - When in Argentina, you have to try this tea-like beverage. If nothing else, it will be a conversation piece. Yerba mate is made from dried chopped leaves of Ilex paraguayensis, a relative of common holly. Mate has become a way of life for Argentineans and should be considered their national drink. The consumption of mate is a social ritual, bringing family and friends closer together

Coffee - almost always in espresso form with lots of sugar

Wine – Again, some world class wines are being produced in Argentina.

Licuada - A blended milk and fruit drink

Submarine - A bar of semisweet chocolate which dissolves in a glass of steamed milk.

Highlights

Buenos Aires

Perhaps the most cosmopolitan metropolis in South America. Most of the population is of European descent and the city is reminiscent of Paris. It is situated on the Rio de la Plata, and as its name suggests, it is the city of good winds.

Plaza de Mayo - At the corner of 25 de Mayo and Rivadavia, this is the hub of the city centre and where many public buildings such as the Catedral Metropolitana can be found. At the east end, you will find the Casa Rosada presidential palace with the famous balcony from which Juan and Evita Peron greeted the masses. Open from Tuesday to Friday from 9am to 6pm and Sunday from 3 to 6pm

Teatro Colon - found at the intersection of Cirrito and Tucuman, this theatre is a world-class opera house that opened in 1908 with a presentation of Aida. It seats 2500 spectators and offers standing room for another 1000. There is also a museum featuring instruments, costumes and photographs of performers.

Open from Monday to Friday, noon to 6pm. Dress is formal

Museo de Arte Moderno - Open daily except Monday from noon to 8pm, the museum is found in the Centro Cultural San Martin at Avenida Corrientes 1530 on the 9th floor. With works by Picasso and Dali, among others.

Museo Historico Nacional - This museum offers a historical account of Argentina from the time of its independence until the present day. It's open on Wed, Thurs, Fri, and Sun from 2pm to 6pm.

La Boca - Buenos Aires' most colourful neighbourhood. It's a great place to go for excellent Italian cuisine and has become an artsy suburb.

San Telmo - Just a few blocks south of Plaza de Mayo lies the artist's quarter, what some believe to be

Buenos Aires' most interesting feature.

Avenida Sante Fe - The most fashionable shopping area in Buenos Aires.

Recoleta - Northwest of downtown, this is another very fashionable area. Visit the fine arts museum, called Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, and the city's gardens of Plaza Alvear and Plaza Francia. The latter hosts the largest crafts fair in the city every Sunday

Tango - Go to the neighbourhoods of either San Telmo or Boca to try your hand at this national dance.

Theatre - the Teatro General San Martin at Avenida Corrientes 1530 offers excellent, and often free, performances.

Córdoba

Argentina's second city, Córdoba long rivaled Buenos Aires for political, economic and cultural supremacy; indeed, while Buenos Aires languished through neglect in the 17th century, Córdoba was the country's architectural treasure house. Today, a fine collection of colonial buildings is concentrated in its compact centre. They include the old market, the Iglesia Catedral (featuring a Romanesque dome) and the Jesuit Iglesia de la Compañía. The Museo Histórico Provincial Marqués de Sobremonte is one of the most important historical museums in the country.

Iguazú Falls

Situated in the Parque Nacional Iguazú near Puerto Iguazú, these spectacular falls lie just east of the confluence of the Iguazú and Paraná rivers. At least 5000 cubic m (176,570 cubic ft) of water per second plunge the 70m (230ft) into the abyss below. If they look familiar, it's because they were the supporting actors in the film *The Mission*; appropriately, the area has historic ruins of Jesuit missions which also draw many visitors. San Ignacio Mini, built in a style of architecture known as 'Guaraní baroque', is especially popular. The surrounding park is home to 55,000ha (135,850ac) of pristine subtropical rainforest, with abundant wildlife and plant species.

Mar del Plata

Summer means the beach to the inhabitants of Greater Buenos Aires, and Mar del Plata is most often the beach they have in mind. Situated 400km (228mi) from the capital on the northern Atlantic coast, beaches in this area sprawl for 8km (5mi). Sophisticated mansions from the area's heyday as an upper-class resort mingle with the newer, more modest resorts catering to middle-class *porteños*. Sea lions keep an eye on the fishing activities around the wharves, and a replica of the grotto of Lourdes is a kitsch paradise.

Pampas

The unrelentingly flat Pampas is Argentina's agricultural heartland and home of that symbol of romantic nationalism, the *gaucho*. Comprising the provinces of Buenos Aires, La Pampa and major parts of Santa Fe and Córdoba, its varied environments include forested hills, extensive grasslands and flamingo-flecked salt lakes. The Parque Nacional Lihúé Calel is a popular detour, with wildlife including puma, guanaco, rhea, native hares and a variety of wild chinchilla called a vizcacha. The cities of La Plata, Luján (whose basilica to La Virgen de Luján receives 4 million pilgrims a year), Rosario and Santa Fe are worth seeing for their many museums, churches and faded colonial buildings.

Andean Northwest

Home to abundant natural attractions and atmospheric relics from the pre-Columbian and colonial past, this is the more 'traditional' part of Argentina. It includes the provinces of Jujuy (with numerous wildlife reserves), Salta (with the best preserved colonial city in the country,

hundreds of archaeological sites, subtropical forests and polychrome desert canyons), Tucumán, La Rioja, Catamarca and Santiago del Estero.

Cuyo

The Cuyo region consists of the Andean provinces of Mendoza and San Juan, and adjacent San Luis. The area retains a strong regional identity, with a unique *mestizo* population reflecting the influence of neighbouring Chile. An important agricultural region particularly famous for its grapes and wine, it lies in the shadow of the massive Andes and is visited for its many sporting and recreational activities, such as climbing and trekking. Wineries, hidden mountain villages and the centres of Mendoza and San Juan are other attractions.

Patagonia

This enormous region south of Buenos Aires province features a glacier-dotted mountainous interior, unique coastal wildlife and Andean national parks. Península Valdés is a special treat for lovers of wildlife, with large numbers of sea lions, elephant seals, guanacos, rheas, Magellanic penguins, sea birds, flamingos and right whales. The Perito Moreno Glacier of Santa Cruz is a 60m (197ft)- high river of rising, toppling and exploding ice, though it hasn't advanced for several years. Carmen de Patagones is a beautiful colonial city and there are unexpected vestiges of the area's previous Welsh inhabitants - in particular the town of Gaiman.

Tierra del Fuego

Argentina shares half of this island territory in the South Atlantic Ocean with Chile. It's a place of oil derricks, sheep, glaciers, wind and waterways. **Ushuaia** and **Río Grande** are the two main towns; awesome scenery, wild walks and fishing are the island's main attractions. Argentina's only coastal national park comprises rivers, lakes, forests and glaciers, with great trekking and wildlife-spotting opportunities.

Hotels

All the hotels we recommend are clean, well located and comfortable hotels varying in services as according to their category. We rarely use hostels as the price difference is negligible between a good hostel and a hotel. In places like Patagonia, we work with some superb pousadas and hosterías. We do endeavour to choose the best hotels in line with your budget. There are five star deluxe hotels we offer that are among the best hotels in the world. We will always quote you with good hotels on all our programmes but upgrades or downgrades will be available as per your request. However, as the price will decrease with downgrades, this will ultimately reflect in the services and standards of the hotel.

Flights

Unless otherwise stated, we provide all the internal flights in your programme. We can provide international flight quotes upon request. We work directly with the best airlines in South America but are not responsible for any changes in flight schedules or cancellations made by the airlines. This is the responsibility of the airline in question. We will always endeavour to minimise any delays or changes but cannot guarantee a successful outcome.

Insurance

It is a mandatory requirement that all our customers take out adequate travel insurance cover. Once you have obtained your insurance, it is company practice to check the validity and cover of your insurance policy and we hold the right to refuse travel to anyone whose insurance does not satisfy Amazing Peru's stringent criteria. These include cancellation and curtailment, death or injury, medical insurance, emergency repatriation, delayed baggage, loss and theft etc.