Tour Code
AR10

ADVENTURESABROAD

ESSENTIAL ARGENTINA

Featuring Patagonia, Iguazu Falls & the Northwest

19 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Buenos Aires

Arrival in Buenos Aires.*

Nearly 40% of the country's 33 million citizens live in Gran Buenos Aires (Greater Buenos Aires), which at first makes the city almost as imposing as New York or London. However, after a brief orientation, you will find that the compact city centre is accessible and easily explored on foot, by bus, taxi and underground.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Buenos Aires: City Tour

Today we see the sights of this cosmopolitan city. In the early part of the 20th century, Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world. The grand public buildings of Buenos Aires reflect this opulent era. The city is known as the "Paris of South America" because of its wide boulevards and European-style architecture. Buenos Aires was founded for the second time in 1580 by Juan de Garay, just north of Mendoza's encampment. In accordance with Spanish law, he laid out the large Plaza del Fuerte (Fortress Plaza). It acquired its present name of Plaza de Mayo after the month of revolution in 1810. Our tour focuses on the major public buildings.

Catedral Metropolitana, built on the sight of the original colonial church was not completed until 1827. Not only is it considered a major religious landmark, but also a historic site of great importance. Here lies the tomb of Jose de San Martin, the man who (along with Simon Bolivar) liberated South America from Spanish rule in the early 1800's. The Plaza de Mayo is also home to Museo del Cabildo, the Presidential Palace (Casa Rosada), and the National Congress (Palacio del Congreso).

We also visit the Recoleta Cemetery where Buenos Aires' richest citizens are buried in magnificent marble tombs elaborately decorated with statues. The most internationally-famous person buried here is "Evita" Peron. While in BA, we will also visit La Boca neighbourhood, so named for its position at "the mouth" of the Riachuelo, and its role as the port of call for thousands of immigrants from Italy, Spain, and other European countries. Those settlers struggled, starved, hoped, and celebrated in this rough-and-tumble barrio. Today, one of the most photogenic and colourful parts of Buenos Aires, La Boca is the domain of the working class, bohemian artists, rabid soccer fans, and tango artists.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Buenos Aires: Tigre Tour

Meet your guide in central Buenos Aires, and start your Delta adventure by listening to a little history about the development and expansion of Buenos Aires through the years. With your guide, board the boat at Puerto Madero and head to Tigre.

Cruise along the Costanera Navigation Canal, parallel to the Buenos Aires shoreline, passing the River Plate Stadium and the University of Buenos Aires.

Then, cruise through the canals of the delta, one of the largest in the world. Discover how the inhabitants of the delta turned it from a swampy area into a developed region with grass paths and canals of fresh water. Pass yacht clubs, waterfront houses on stilts, a market, and the house and museum of former Argentina president Sarmiento, who encouraged people to make their homes here.

In Tigre, hop an a bus, where you'll head to Puerto de Frutos. Here, follow your guide to the port that connects life on the islands with the mainland. It’s a lively and popular spot where you’ll have some time to take photos and walk around. You can also grab a bite to eat (own expense).

Next, visit Paseo Victoria where you'll have a chance to visit various museums including Museo del Mate, Naval Museum or Tigre and Art Museum (tickets not included).

Finally, head to the Tigre train station, where you will take a train back to the city of Buenos Aires. After approximately one hour, you will arrive to the Retiro train station, where your tour ends.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Buenos Aires - Trelew - Punta Tombo - Puerto Madryn

This morning we fly to the Welsh town of Trelew in the Chubut Province of Patagonia.

Upon arrival we'll head immediately to the coast and Punta Tombo, a peninsula into the Atlantic Ocean 110 km (68 mi) south of Trelew, where there is an important colony of Magellanic penguins. Between September and April, a large number of Magellanic penguins come to this site to incubate their eggs, and prepare their offspring for migration -- the largest such colony in South America. Couples stand in front of their nests, protecting the eggs from birds and other predators, and occasionally one adult goes to the sea for food. Other wildlife encountered in the area including sea birds (mainly seagulls, chimangos and cormorants), rheas and guanacos.

We then return to Trelew and have a tour of the town and excellent natural history museum. Founded in 1886 as a railway junction, Trelew takes its name from Lewis Jones who promoted expansion of the railway system -- tre means "town" in Welsh, and Lew is short for Lewis. Immigrant workers flooded in from Europe as the railway network expanded. Both Welsh and Italian language and traditions are still very strong here.

We continue north to the small, laid-back city of Puerto Madryn. Puerto Madryn is protected by the Golfo Nuevo, which is formed by the Península Valdes and the Punta Ninfas. The town was founded on 28 July 1865, when 150 Welsh immigrants arriving aboard the clipper Mimosa named the natural port Porth Madryn in honour of Sir Love Jones-Parry, whose estate in Wales was named "Madryn".

For visitors, the main attraction here is the Peninsula Valdes and the thousands of whales that come to the protected waters of the gulf every summer.

Overnight in Puerto Madryn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Peninsula Valdes

Today we have a full-day excursion to the Peninsula Valdes.

The coastline is inhabited by marine mammals, like sea lions, elephant seals and fur seals. Southern right whales can be found in Golfo Nuevo and Golfo San Jose, protected bodies of water located between the peninsula and the mainland. These baleen whales come here between May and December, for mating and giving birth, because the water in the gulf is quieter and warmer than in the open sea. Orcas can be found off the coast, in the open sea off the peninsula. In this area, they are known to beach themselves on shore to capture sea lions and elephant seals.

The inner part of the peninsula is inhabited by rheas, guanacos and maras. A high diversity and range of birds live in the peninsula as well; at least 181 bird species, 66 of which migratory, live in the area, including the Antarctic pigeon.

The first part of our day will feature a whale-watching excursion by boat. Our launching point will likely be the only town on the peninsula, the small settlement of Puerto Piramides. On the land portion of our tour, we will see a number of estancias where sheep are raised. We will also visit the park's visitor centre.

Return to Puerto Madryn (dinner on your own this evening).

Overnight in Puerto Madryn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 6 Puerto Madryn - El Calafate

Today we fly to El Calafate on the southern shore of Lago Argentino, 80 km away from the entrance to Los Glaciares National Park. Located on a steppe landscape, visitors are awed by its views, the turquoise colour of Lago Argentino, and its vegetation, typical of a desert region.

The village takes its name from a bush, which can still be found in the region, though not in the same quantity as in old times. It is a typical steppe plant, covered by yellow flowers in the spring. Its fruit is a very small and dark violet berry; visitors can get to know it through marmalade, ice cream, and liquors made by the people in the village.

Overnight in Calafate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Calafate: Lago Argentina Glacier Cruise

Today we explore the glaciers, mountains, forests and lakes of Los Glaciares National Park on board a luxury cruise boat. We spend a full day relaxing on a stylish watercraft, taking in views of the Patagonian ice field. This morning we transfer the pier to join our cruise, which offers the best opportunity to visit the Spegazzini, Upsala, and the Perito Moreno glaciers in an intimate way.

We cruise out of the Upsala Channel toward the iceberg barrier, then to the largest glacier in the park; the Spegazzini Glacier. Continue to Puesto de las Vacas, where we will disembark and take a short guided walk through the icefields. During our journey, admire dramatic views and enjoy spectacular photo ops of the natural surroundings, including forests, glaciers, icefields, bays, and steppes.

We will then navigate toward Punta Avellaneda and Boca del Diablo to reach the Canal Spegazzini to see the glacier that bears the same name. The cruise will arrive at Puesto de Las Vacas (an extremely quiet bay in the Canal Spegazzini), where we can enjoy a guided walk with stunning panoramic views of the Spegazzini Glacier.

We continue toward Herminita Peninsula; the series of ice floes of the most varied colours and shapes, anticipates the proximity of Upsala Glacier. We will stop in front of the barrier of ice floes which at present is blocking the entrance to Canal Upsala. If the weather conditions are good we will observe the glaciers at a distance.

We continue to Canal de los Tempano to finally reach Perito Moreno Glacier. Huge icebergs on the glacier's 60 m (180 foot) high face calve and collapse into the Canal de los Tempanos as it advances about 100 m (300 feet) a year. The roar of the gigantic ice wall as it crashes into the surrounding channel is an unforgettable experience.

NOTE: Though weather may seem fine in Calafate, the weather on the water and near the glaciers can be completely different. You should be prepared with layered clothing and a warm hat.

Late afternoon we return to Calafate.

Overnight in Calafate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Calafate - Fly to Ushuaia

Today we fly to Ushuaia on the island of Tierra del Fuego.

Ushuaia is considered the world's southernmost city. In 1520, Magellan passed through the strait that now bears his name, in search of a sea route to the spice islands of Asia. The Yahgan Indians built the fires that inspired Europeans to give this region its name -- "The Land of Fire". At first, very little attention was paid to this rocky and glacial shoreline, and its indigenous Indian population. It was not until the demise of

Spain's colonial domination of the region in the late 1800's, that other Europeans began settling here. Since 1950, the town has played host to an important naval base, supporting Argentine claims in Antarctica. In 1870, the South American Missionary Society, a British-based organisation, made Ushuaia its first permanent outpost in the Fuego region.

You will have time to discover this interesting town. We suggest a visit to the old prison of Ushuaia located within the confines of the naval base. The penitentiary was constructed by the prisoners themselves between 1902 and 1920. Now this impressive complex houses the Antarctic Museum, the maritime museum, a modern art gallery as well as a restored wing of the prison, complete with cells inhabited by some of the infamous prisoners.

Overnight in Ushuaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Tierra del Fuego National Park

If you are looking to connect with nature and the history of the southernmost city in the world, Tierra del Fuego National Park is the ideal place to do it.

The park protects 68,909 hectares and is the only one in Argentina that combines marine, forest and mountain environments giving shape to the sea coast, lakes, valleys, extensive peat bogs and magnificent forests dominated by trees such as lengas, guindos and ñires. All these environments form a unique scenery with the purest air you can breathe. Here you will find exuberant and diverse landscapes, inhabited by birds such as the picturesque cauquén marino, the steamer duck or the black-browed albatross. As you walk along the trails it is normal to come across grey and red foxes, and to hear the "tac, tac, tac" of a Magellanic woodpecker.

This place also features the history of the Yámanas, the first inhabitants of these lands. Paying attention, you can find mounds of mussel shells, known as "concheros" or shell middens that remind us that these lands have been inhabited for more than 10,000 years.

Our drive to the national park is short and scenic. We'll pass the world's southernmost golf course and make a stop at Escondido beach and its famous post office, where you can purchase postcards/stamps and send them on their long way homeward. At Lapatoia Bay we reach the southern end of the Pan-American Highway, which starts in Alaska and runs all the way down through Canada, the USA, Central and South America.

We'll also stop at Lago Roca (Lake Acigami), the main freshwater body of Tierra del Fuego National Park, which extends through Argentine and Chilean territory. We'll enjoy a nice easy walk along the shore, ending up at the Alakush Visitor Center, which features a restaurant, gift shop, and an interpretive room with information about the park and the first inhabitants who resided on the island.

Return to Ushuaia for dinner and overnight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Ushuaia: Beagle Channel

Today (weather permitting),* we include a cruise on the Beagle Channel, named after the ship on which Darwin sailed through here in 1832. The island of Tierra del Fuego is divided between Argentina and Chile and the Beagle Channel forms part of the border between the two countries. In addition to spectacular scenery, we should see many species of marine mammals and birds, including a penguin colony.

* Please note: As Tierra del Fuego is so close to the Antarctic Circle and surrounded by water, the weather here is extremely changeable hour by hour. In order to maximise our sightseeing, we may have to alter the sequence of our activities. Your Tour Leader will do his/her best to ensure that you see all the items listed on these days but, in the event of extreme weather, other activities may have to be substituted.

Depending on the timing of today's activity, your Tour Leader may decide to include lunch instead of dinner today.

Overnight in Ushuaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 11 Ushuaia - Buenos Aires: Tango Show

Today we fly back to Buenos Aires. This evening we include a Tango dinner show.

Tango is a partner dance that originated in the 1890s along the Río de la Plata, the natural border between Argentina and Uruguay, and soon spread to the rest of the world. Early tango was known as tango criollo (Creole tango). Today, there are many forms of tango extant. Popularly and among tango dancing circles, the authentic tango is considered to be the one closest to the form originally danced in Argentina and Uruguay.

Tango is a dance that has influences from European and African culture. Dances from the candombe ceremonies of former slave peoples helped shape the modern day Tango. The dance originated in lower-class districts of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The music derived from the fusion of various forms of music from Europe. The word "tango" seems to have first been used in connection with the dance in the 1890s, possibly related to the latin word "tangere" but more likely related to the African slave word "tango" (drum or dance place).

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Buenos Aires - Iguazu Falls

This morning we transfer to the airport for our two hour flight to Iguazu Falls. After transferring to our hotel we have time to relax and have lunch. This afternoon we have a guided tour of the falls on the Argentine side (upper balconies).

Here we are at the confluence of the River Iguazu and the deep flowing Parana. This place is known as the "Hito de las Tres Fronteras" because at this point Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay converge. The national park here is home to more than 21,000 plant species and 400 bird species. The waterfalls disgorge 1700 cubic m (1,853 cubic yards) of water per second from a height of 70 m (230 feet) in 275 different falls, most of which are in Argentina. On the frontier with Brazil there is a gully -- La Garganta del Diablo (The Devil's Throat)* which is 150 m (490 feet) wide and 700 m (2,290 feet) long.

Overnight at Iguazu Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Iguazu - Salta: City Tour

Today we fly to Salta (1100 m/3,300 feet) in the northwest corner of the country.

The city of Salta, capital of Salta Province, was founded on April 16th, 1582 by Hernando de Lerma, governor of Tucuman. Known as "Salta la linda" (Salta the Beautiful), it is one of the Argentine cities that has valued and preserved its colonial architectural heritage. In its building aspect you can appreciate a mixture of colonial buildings with white walls, red tiled roofs, also with modern constructions within an urban scheme that includes several green spaces. The variety and beauty of its landscapes is spectacular: the magnificence of its mountains, its valleys, its gorges, and the subtropical flora and fauna preserved in the national parks, are just some of its immediate attractions.

Upon arrival we will have a guided walking tour of the highlights of Salta, most of which are grouped around the central square: the Cathedral, the Cabildo or Town Council, which houses the Museo Historico del Norte; the Museo Colonial, and the Museo de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts). The church of San Francisco has one of the tallest church towers in the Americas (53 m/175 feet), and the Convento de San Bernardo now belongs to the Carmelite Order.

Overnight in Salta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Salta - Cuesta Obispo - Cachi - Molinos

The road between Salta and Cachi is one of the most spectacular paths of the Argentinean Northwest. We will pass through four different ecosystems, from the green jungle of the Yungas to the semi deserted Calchaqui Valley. 33km of mountain road will bring us closer to Paso Piedra del Molino at 3400 meters (11,155 ft): condors flying in the blue sky, Guanacos, and wild burros among thousands of Cardones, the local species of giant cactus. There will be time for a walk in a small red desert rarely visited and a moment of relax under a cozy Molle in the white colonial village of Cachi, where the sun shines almost all year round. We will spend the night in the small Village of Molinos in a secluded valley with a rich history.

Overnight in Molinos (2000m / 6,560 ft).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Molinos - Angastaco - Quebrada de las Flechas - Cafayate

Route 40 is one of the most famous and longest in the world. The road between Molinos and Cafayate passes through desert scenery, small ranches of local farmers, vineyards and giant colourful mountains, while we appreciate the Flechas Gorge, a desert of ash and quartz rocks covered with clay, product of an ancient lake. On full moon nights, the place offers a natural light show performed by the reflection of the light in quartz offering the visitor the impression of being in an illuminated desert.

On arrival in Cafayate (1683 m / 5,522 ft), we'll have a look at the charming town centre and visit one of the local wineries for lunch and a tour.

Overnight in Cafayate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 16 Cafayate - Quebrada de las Conchas - Salta

On the way back to Salta, we will explore the Conchas Gorge: 70 km of a deep ravine built in the last 50 million years with huge deposits of minerals (clay and sandstone in particular), moulded by water and wind that comes from an age when the region was dominated by a humid and warm climate, inhabited by a completely different wildlife, including crocodiles and turtles. This is truly spectacular drive, and the morning light often provides dramatic shadowing and enhancement of the myriad colours of the stone soaring above us.

Our accommodation choice near Salta is a small "finca," or tradtional-style farmhouse converted to a comfortable small inn in a peaceful rural setting. This is a great relaxing way to wind down at this stage of our journey. This afternoon we will enjoy a traditional cooking class on site; our dinner will feature the culmination of our efforts and, perhaps some of the excellent local wines with which we have become familiar.

Overnight near Salta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Salta - Quebrada del Toro - San Antonio de los Cobres - Salinas Grandes - Purmamarca

The Toro's Gorge is a natural lift that connects the green valley of Salta (Lerma Valley), rich in tobacco and horses with an arid plateau at more than 3500 meters, called Puna. In less than 100 km, along the old railroad known as the Train to the Clouds, we will cross the eastern chain of the Andes to enter in the Puna. El Mojon, a small settlement lost in this high desert is an extraordinary example of the strength of the people inhabiting the Puna and how they can live in the XXI century without forgetting their ancestral traditions. Salinas Grandes, an open white space of more than 100km surrounded by volcanoes, where the horizon seems endless. Finally, crossing the highest point of the itinerary, we will enjoy the best view of the Eastern Andean Range going down via Cuesta de Lipan. With the sunset, we will arrive to the Andean village of Purmamarca, built in the surroundings of the Cerro de los 7 Colores.

155 km paved road, 170 km gravel road.
Maximum altitude 4170m / 13,680 ft; altitude at arrival 2300m / 7,545 ft.

Overnight in Purmamarca.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Purmamarca - Humahuaca - Tilcara - Salta

The Humahuaca Gorge is a large valley that ends at the border with Bolivia and it is located in the province of Jujuy in the far north of Argentina. It is a quite young Valley, given that its formation dates a million years old. The Gorge is famous for its colourful mountains, its geological formations and its historic villages. During our visit we will have the best place to feel the real atmosphere of this part of Argentina: the Humahuaca Market, a walk in the Colorado Gorge, a sacred garden of Cardones at 3200m / 10,500 ft, the Pucara of Tilcara -- a pre-Inca fortress and the villages of Tilcara, Humahuaca and Purmamarca that also offer the opportunity to visit craft markets. In the afternoon return to Salta.

Overnight in Salta (city).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Salta - Buenos Aires - Departure

Today we transfer the short distance to Salta Airport for our flight to Buenos Aires' domestic airport (AEP). We then transfer to the international airport (EZE) for our flight homeward (most northward flights depart in the evening - please bear this connection in mind if your are making your own air arrangements).

BUEN VIAJE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast