



The Making of Argentina

A creative history from the Atlantic to the Andes

8–19 November 2024 (MK 560)

12 days • £7,410

Lecturer: Chris Moss

A comprehensive overview of history, politics, art, architecture, gastronomy and music.

Private tango show in Buenos Aires.

Spectacular scenery and geology in the Calchaquí Valleys.

Delicious high-altitude wines of Bodega Colomé and Cafayate.

Led by Chris Moss, journalist, author and former resident of Buenos Aires.

Tango, Evita, *Las Malvinas*, Maradona, meat and Malbec... much about Argentina is familiar to many of us, and yet it remains something of an enigma. It's about as far from Europe as a South American country can be, and yet is famously – or perhaps infamously – European in so many regards.

Argentina is South America's second-biggest country and the eighth-largest in the world, ranking between India and Kazakhstan. Yet it has a population smaller than that of Spain and its economic power has more often than not brought it woe instead of wealth. After giving the continent one of its great liberators, José de San Martín, the country was plunged into decades of civil war. For much of the twentieth century, military dictators and populists squandered the nation's huge potential and repressed its citizens.

How has this decline been managed, and how did Argentines manage to retain their creative vigour and distinctive glamour? What about Argentina's relationship with the UK, an important trading partner, builder of South America's most ambitious railway network and colonialist villain in the Falkland Islands? When and how did the remote backwater of Buenos Aires emerge to become a world-class city? Is 'Paris of South America' anything other than a nostalgia-laden nickname?

This tour aims to forge an understanding of Argentina through its multi-layered history and multi-faceted culture. Starting in Buenos Aires, we visit aspiring cities and civic palaces, museums and art galleries, cafés and steakhouses, and the necropolis where Evita is entombed alongside the society figures she spurned. It's a short hop from the capital to the pampas, one of the world's great breadbaskets and stockyards, and the backdrop against



Argentina, cowboys on the Pampas, copper engraving c. 1840 by P. Wurster.

which the figure of the *gaucho* emerged.

Follow the old Camino Real or Royal Highway, that once connected Buenos Aires with the silver mines of Alto Peru and the seats of Spanish power. In the northwest visit the Jesuit ranches and religious sites of Córdoba, Argentina's second city. From here, continue towards the Andes to survey a pre-Columbian site at Quilmes, see the cactus-strewn landscapes of the Calchaquí Valleys and visit the colonial treasures of Salta.

Along the way, we taste the *criollo* cuisines of the pampas as well as the foods of the Andean Valleys, many of which have their origins in pre-Hispanic societies. As with so many aspects of Argentine reality, from music to literature to religion, there has been a complex interplay between native identity and nationhood, indigenous traditions and imported values.

We also sample the country's famous wines in Cafayate, south of Salta, where vines grow at altitude. Huge alternations in temperature favour small-grained grapes with a high concentration of aromas and flavours.

Itinerary

Flights to Buenos Aires are not included. We recommend the Iberia flight from London Heathrow (via Madrid) on 7th November at c. 7.05pm, which arrives at c. 8.40am on 8th November.

Rooms are ready for occupation from 3.00pm on 7th November, allowing those arriving from London early on the 8th to check in immediately, and those arriving from elsewhere the opportunity to settle in the night before.

Day 1: Buenos Aires. The tour begins at 12.15pm with lunch and a talk at the hotel. Walk to the nearby Recoleta cemetery, with its architecturally diverse and ornate tombs, burial place of many of the country's leaders and cultural figures, including Eva Perón.

Day 2: Buenos Aires. Walk down the grand Avenida de Mayo, with fine belle-époque architecture, to the Casa Rosada, seat of the government of Argentina. Tour its beautiful interiors and gain further insight into the country's history and politics. See also the neoclassical cathedral. Afternoon tour of the Teatro Colón, a stunning theatre with one of the world's best acoustics.

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continued

Day 3: Buenos Aires. Explore Latin American art at the Museo de Bellas Artes and modern art gallery, MALBA. Trace the life and work of Eva Perón at the Museo Evita, housed in a 1923 mansion that belonged to her social foundation. Private tango show in the early evening at Café Tortoni, dating to 1858, frequented by Carlos Gardel as well as other painters, writers, artists and musicians (*venue to be confirmed*).

Day 4: San Antonio de Areco, Pampas. Journey outside the city to the Pampas grasslands to discover gaucho history and culture in the delightful town of San Antonio de Areco, home to renowned silversmiths. Enjoy an Argentine beef lunch, grilled in front of you at a majestic *estancia* in the countryside, surrounded by horses and cattle.

Day 5: Córdoba. Fly in the morning from Buenos Aires to Córdoba (1 hour 30 minutes, Aérolíneas Argentinas). Visit on arrival the country's first university, founded by the Jesuits in 1610, and their most historic church, Templo de la Compañía de Jesús, dating to 1675. Overnight in Córdoba.

Day 6: Córdoba. Drive into the countryside to see the Jesuit *estancia* of Jesús María, famous for its wine production, and Santa Catalina with its splendid church. Fly in the evening to Salta (1 hour 30 minutes). First of two nights in Salta.

Day 7: Salta. A day to explore the charming town of Salta with its fine colonial and neoclassical architecture. The rose-coloured cathedral houses the tomb of another Argentine liberator, General Güemes, while the Italianate church of San Francisco was designed by Luigi Giorgi. Salta's excellent archaeological museum presents the incredible Inca ritual of child sacrifice. Free afternoon.

Day 8: Calchaquí Valleys, Cachi, Molinos. In two minibuses drive through the dramatic and constantly changing scenery of the Calchaquí Valleys (c. 4 hours 30 minutes). From lush green countryside and deep red mountains, through fields covered in thousands of giant cacti we reach the tiny and pretty town of Cachi with a small archaeological museum. Continue to our hotel in Molinos, opposite the 18th-century church. Overnight in Molinos.

Day 9: Bodega Colomé, Cafayate. Nestled deep in vine-clad hills, drive to Bodega Colomé for a tasting and lunch with their aromatic and flavourful wines. Owner Donald Hess has combined his love of wine and art by

building a James Turrell museum on-site, a fascinating playground of light and space. The drive to Cafayate (c. 3 hours) reveals yet more astonishing geological features. First of two nights in Cafayate.

Day 10: Quilmes, Cafayate. Morning excursion to the pre-Inca remains at Quilmes. Inhabited from the 9th century AD, its 3000 inhabitants resisted evangelisation and enslavement resulting in bitter punishment. Taste some of Cafayate's best wines, including lunch in the vineyards of El Porvenir and dinner at José Louis Mounier's Finca las Nubes.

Day 11: Cafayate to Buenos Aires. Another breathtaking drive through the reds, ochres and pinks of the Cafayate gorge (c. 4 hours 30 minutes). Return to Salta for a flight to Buenos Aires (2 hours) and a final dinner in the capital.

Day 12: Buenos Aires. The tour finishes after breakfast. *We recommend the 2.20pm Iberia flight to Heathrow (via Madrid), which arrives tomorrow (20th November) at c. 9.15am.*

Lecturer

Chris Moss. Journalist and writer with a focus on Spain and the cultural history of Argentina. He studied theology, English literature and education, before moving to Argentina in 1991. After returning to the UK he wrote for *BBC History*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Time Out* and others. He has written and edited several guidebooks, including *Eyewitness Travel: Back Roads Spain*, a cultural history of Patagonia and a literary compendium for London commuters. He writes on South American music for *Songlines* and compiles tango albums.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £7,410. **Single occupancy:** £8,770.

Included: domestic flights with Aérolíneas Argentinas (aircraft: Boeing 737); travel by private coach or minibus; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 8 lunches and 8 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guides.

Flights: international flights between London and Buenos Aires are not included in the price of the tour. We send recommended flight options from London with your booking confirmation, which are available to book in

November 2023. The cost of a economy seat with Iberia at the time of going to press is c. £1,100.

Music: we hope to be able to offer tickets to a performance at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Programme details and tickets are released in February 2024.

Accommodation. Sofitel Recoleta, Buenos Aires (accorhotels.com): a modern 5-star hotel in the elegant La Recoleta district. **Hotel Windsor, Córdoba** (windsortower.com): a functional 4-star with a good restaurant, centrally located. **Solar de la Plaza, Salta** (solardelaplaza.com.ar): a 4-star hotel in a converted neoclassical mansion with spacious rooms. **Hacienda de Molinos** (haciendademolinos.com.ar): a simple 3-star hotel with rooms around pretty, shaded courtyards. **Patios de Cafayate** (patiosdecayate.com): a 4-star hotel with the feel of a colonial estate. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? This is a long tour that involves a lot of walking and standing. A good level of fitness is necessary and it should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Drives in the north-west are long, roads are not paved and the terrain dictates travel by minibus. Cachi sits at an altitude of 2,531 metres above sea level. Average distance by coach per day: 63 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.