

## BUENOS AIRES

Buenos Aires is not a Spanish colonial city. About 100 years ago, there was a huge influx of migrants from Italy and most of the “old” dates from the early 1900s when it was rich. The city has a European feel. The Spanish is different from other countries – “ll” is pronounced “zh” so Calle (street) is like “cazhey”. Many people speak some English.

Our blog: <http://pamnieff.com/latinamerica/a-week-in-buenos-aires-2019> You can contact us via the blog.

### Money:

**With a high inflation rate and a depreciating currency, it's impossible to predict how much things will cost.**

Very few places take CCs so you need cash. **ATM withdrawals are a bad idea!** There is a limit on how much you can withdraw from an ATM at any one time (Feb 2019 ~ AUD 170) and there is always a fee of ~ AUD\$14 (Feb 2019) per withdrawal plus whatever charges your Aussie bank adds. Also there is a poor exchange rate for cash withdrawals. ATMs often run out of money on weekends and there was no money in any of the ATMs at the airport when we arrived.

AUD\$ are more or less useless. **US\$ cash preferred**, must be in perfect condition and preferably in 50s. Euros can be changed too, but the exchange rate is not as good as US\$. You cannot change cash at a bank but must use a “Cambio” which are generally open 9-3 Mon to Fri. You need your passport and patience; it takes a while. There is no black market (known as dollar blue) now so do not change money on the street. We used a Cambio on Calle St Martin in the Centro.

Inflation is high, 50% - in Jan 2019 – e.g. the Subte went from P6.70 to P16.50 in a year. So prices I show will not be correct when you go. On the other hand, the Peso halved in value in 2018 so some things are cheaper in AUD terms.

We found many things somewhat expensive, similar to Aussie prices. E.g. coffee, beer about AUD\$5 each. On the GDP adjusted Big Mac Index it's the 3<sup>rd</sup> most expensive country in the world.

The symbol for the Peso is \$ so be sure you are quoted and pay in Pesos, not US\$.

Tipping, 10-15% is appreciated in bars/restaurants: a few include 10% in the bill. Round up for taxis.

### Getting from the airport:

The airport is about 45 minutes from the town, depending on the traffic and where you are going.

After you come through customs there is a Taxi Ezeiza booth where you can organise an official taxi. Prices are fixed. We used a transfer service from our hotel which was cheaper.

There is also an airport bus, Manual Tienda Leon for about AUD\$20 pp, but it only goes to one place (Madero) then you need a taxi so for 2 people it's not significantly cheaper and not so convenient.

### Where to stay:

We like San Telmo, an older area with character, walking distance from the centre.

We stayed at [Lemon Apartments](#) 4 times. It's only 2 years old and each room has a cooktop, pots, pans and plates, microwave and fridge. Very friendly staff and inexpensive. Excellent location.

Bring ear plugs; Buenos Aires is NOISY.

### **Getting around:**

Buses are called colectivos. The metro is the Subte. The app **BA Cómo Llego** is good to find which bus/subte to take.

You need a card to travel, cannot use cash - a Sube (pronounced Sue bee) card. The card itself costs P82.50 (\$3) in Feb 2019. Each trip cost P16.50 (.60c) so charge the card with say P100. Get it at any Subte station. Can also buy it in kiosks but price varies. You only need one for two people as you can tap twice. You just tap on, no need to tap off as all Subte trips are the same price. On the bus (colectivo), just tell the driver your destination, tap the card and the machine will deduct the correct fare.

The Subte is the best, fastest way to get around but incredibly crowded at peak times (avoid). There are beautiful ceramic murals from the 1930s in some of the stations. We have never experienced any crime; in fact the opposite, people help each other, but take care on buses (colectivos) and especially on the Subte.

### **Safety:**

We have never had any issues at all. The streets Calle Florida and Calle Lavalle in the centro have a reputation for spivs and petty theft. Pick pocketing could happen on the Subte. There are many poor "immigrants" to blame.

You might like to go into a shop if you have to use your phone etc. as an added precaution.

La Boca is safe but stick to the main tourist street (Caminito); don't go wandering.

Don't mention the Falklands (Malvinas), the subject is very sensitive and emotional.

### **Barrios:**

**San Telmo** – An older area, cobbled streets, great graffiti, full of character. It's our favourite part of Buenos Aires.

**Recoleta** – Recoleta cemetery is worth a look. Eva Peron is buried there. Some fancy shops and restaurants.

**Palermo** – Leafy, trendy bars & restaurants, boutique shops esp. Palermo Hollywood & Palermo Soho. More for the night life. Some nice parks to walk around there.

**Centro** – Busy, not too exciting. Plaza de Mayo to see the mothers of the disappeared marching on Thursdays is a must.

### **What to do:**

**La Boca** – colourful buildings, history, a must. Home of the tango. You can walk there in about an hour from San Telmo or 53 bus.

**Mataderos** – Feria de Mataderos, Sunday afternoon only (closed Jan/Feb, maybe mid March). Gauchos dancing in the street, music, dances etc. Good parrilla (BBQ) food stands. Quality craft stalls. Festival atmosphere without tourists. Take a 126 bus from San Telmo, about an hour. Check for return bus stop as the street is closed for the Feria. We've been 3 times and loved it.

**Plaza Dorego** – San Telmo. Have a beer or wine in the plaza and watch free tango. The dancers are busking so give something.

**San Telmo Markets** – Sundays, mainly afternoons, full length of Defensa (Street). Antiques and crafts.

**Tigre** – Delta north of Buenos Aires. The train line from Retiro Station was closed in Feb 2019. So use Tren de la Costa about every 30 minutes from Retiro on Mitre line (change at Mitre/Maipu). You use the Sube card on both. At Tigre take a boat trip around the Delta from the main wharf (P200/\$8 cash only). It is very nice. Can be busy on weekends.

## **What to eat:**

Buenos Aires was populated by European migration, mainly from Italy and the food reflects that heritage. Many restaurants are closed on Mondays. Meals can be BIG; it is quite OK to order one and share (“para compartir”).

**Empanadas** – traditional snack, lots of different fillings, widely available, mostly at pizza joints.

**Gelato** – best gelato outside Italy.

**Steak** – lomo is the most tender (and most expensive), cut with a spoon. Bife de Chorizo is a flavoursome (but not so tender) cut favoured by Argentinos. “A punto” is medium but can be more medium rare. “Jugoso” is rare (J is pronounced as a h = Hugoso). “Bien hecho” is well-done (but well done steak is not the norm).

**Costillas** (ribs) - can be good.

**Parrillada** – a mixed grill. A HUGE amount of grilled (cheaper) meat including intestines. Usually shared by 2 or more people.

**Choripan** – sausage sandwich, some are good, some not so. Worth a try.

**Provoleta** – grilled cheese similar to Haloumi but stronger taste.

**Bread** – the bread is terrible! But there is a French bakery in San Telmo market that is very good.

**Wine** – Malbec is the red wine of Argentina. There is nothing quite like it. We would not drink anything else in Argentina. You can't go wrong with Luigi Bosca wines, but they are more expensive and there are many excellent cheaper brands. Torrontés is the white to try, smells sweet but tastes dry. Chandon is a good sparkling for about \$20.

**Beer** – a glass of draft beer is called a “chopp”. Quilmes is the local brand but there are many boutique bars/beers.

**Pasta** – if you can cook for yourselves. Fantastic, cheap, many varieties freshly made also many different sauces plus grated cheese. We liked La Leonesa on Carlos Calvo opposite San Telmo market. Otherwise there are plenty of restaurants. Buenos Aires is more Italian than Spanish.

## **Where to eat:**

**Pirilo** – Defensa 821, random opening hours after 2pm. Traditional cheap Argentina pizza, two types Muzza (mozzarella with tomato sauce) and Cebolla (onions and cheese). Just get whatever they have fresh at the time. No tables or chairs, grab a slice of pizza and glass of wine or beer. Go for the atmosphere, not the food. Average cost, about AUD\$2 per slice/glass. You pay after you've finished.

**La Covacha de Chicho** – Chacabuco 1054, cheap, friendly, family hole in the wall steak joint. The meat isn't the best in Buenos Aires but the vacio (flank) sandwich is very nice. Open 12 till about 3, then again in the evenings.

**La Brigada** – Estados Unidos 465, our favourite restaurant in San Temo. Very traditional, somewhat formal, fabulous steak (lomo) and a great experience, some English spoken. It is expensive though – AUD\$100-\$150 for two steaks and wine, but both outstanding. AUD\$40 for a provoleta and salad (we shared one of each).

**La Estancia** – Lavalle 941 in the Centro. The whole cow cooking in the traditional gaucho manner over a fire is on display in the window. Large restaurant, open all hours, a bit touristy, not cheap. The costillas (ribs) are really good. Definitely worth having a meal there, we've been a few times. (Remember ll is pronounced zh). Some English.

**Mataderos** – see “What to do” above. We like the vacio sandwich with a glass of patero (foot-pressed) wine from a stall at the back. But there are many stalls with lots of different traditional foods.

**Bars** – there are some beautiful old, historical bars in San Telmo (that also serve food). I'll let you discover them.