

CONSORTIUM FOR ADVANCED STUDIES ABROAD*
B U E N O S A I R E S



A Brief Guide to Buenos Aires and Argentina For Study Abroad and Summer Internship

Welcome to Buenos Aires! We put this guide together in the hopes that it will get you started in your first couple of weeks here. Note that we didn't include much touristy information about the city – guidebooks and the official Buenos Aires tourism website (<http://www.bue.gov.ar/>) offer a lot of information, including downloadable guides. The important thing to remember is to talk to everyone and ask questions. People here will be more than willing to give you suggestions of places to go and help with problems that arise.

Enjoy!

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PLANNING

Budgeting

Over the last few years (i.e. ~2009-16), inflation in Argentina has skyrocketed and rather than the official 9%, the accurate number has been closer to 29%. Therefore, as you prepare to start your wonderful Argentinean adventure, be aware that because of inflation Argentina is still affordable, but no longer as cheap as some of the study abroad veterans may have told you. Some estimates even say that the inflation makes living in pesos just as expensive as living in New York City. Don't fret so fast, my young

Harvardian! The good news is that you will be coming with your trusty dollars, and so the exchange rate (*that now hovers around 14.29+ pesos and 14.64+ pesos*) <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/dolar-hoy-t1369> will work in your favor. With the new government that began in 2016, the exchange rate is now national and *casas de cambio* still operate but banks now offer currency exchange although you might have to be an affiliate of said bank. It is still much cheaper to go to Argentina than to Europe!

While being outside a lot and getting to know the city is obviously fun, it also means that you'll end up eating out a lot (or buying sandwich materials); pretty much every meal other than breakfast and dinner (usually around 9pm) with your Argentine host family. If you're living on your own, you will obviously also end up spending plenty of money on food. Despite the low price of food in Argentina when compared to the United States, everything adds up, especially when there is no dining hall or brain break, and you spend a lot of time in the city.

IMPORTANT! Look into your bank account and credit / debit card fees; you may want to seriously consider opening a new one to save on ATM fees (which can be as high as 5 USD + 1% of the withdrawal amount in some cases); more tips about this in the Money section below.

There is definitely no need to panic and you will find Argentina affordable, when compared to the United States or Western European countries you may have traveled to. Nevertheless, it is good to realize that prices have been rising. It is advisable to keep these things in mind so that you can enjoy Argentina and all it has to offer without unpleasant financial surprises.

What to bring

- Having a laptop here is a huge help. It can be a useful resource for discovering places to visit and things to do in Buenos Aires, as well as keeping in touch with friends and family at home (email, skype, etc.). You'll be able to use wireless, where it's available (generally in the private universities, some cafes, and with some host families). A wireless adapter costs about 300 pesos.
- Medications. If you take specific prescriptions or over-the-counter medications, it's generally a good idea to bring them. Same goes for contact lenses. If you do run out of something specific, pharmacies vary widely in the drugs they carry (though they all should be able to treat basic complaints—fever, allergies, pain, etc.), so you may have to

shop around. Otherwise, you can buy most things you need here, and it will probably be cheaper than in the US (electronics are the only exception...those are much more expensive here). Some cosmetics are also considerably more expensive here while others, like Neutrogena products, are cheaper. For the cool folks, sunglasses are expensive here so bring yours should you want it.

- American peanut butter! It's hard to find in Buenos Aires – maybe impossible – and if you're as addicted as some of us were, it might be nice to bring a jar or two. You can find peanut butter (sometimes) in Jumbo or Disco, the two major American-style supermarkets here, but it appears infrequently and without any rhyme or reason. It's also, available in markets in the barrio chino, though it doesn't taste quite the same. You can also buy natural peanut butter in many dietéticas, but it isn't Skippy or Smuckers, that's for sure. Basically, if you can't go without a good ol' PB&J or PB&Banana for 2 months, bring your own PB.
- Girls: Bring hair elastics from the States. They sell some here, but they're not of great quality and are harder to find than you might think. It's probably best to bring a big pack from the pharmacy or a supermarket.

THE BASICS

Money

If you can, change some dollars into pesos before you leave the US. Most banks (especially in big cities) do foreign currency transactions, but you might want to call your bank several days before your departure; some require 2-3 business days to process a request for foreign currency. You should seriously consider bringing some American money to exchange here in Buenos Aires or in other countries where you intend to travel. Buy a money belt and carry it on your person to ensure its safety.

IMPORTANT

- Know what credit card and ATM fees you'll pay on transactions abroad.
- Make sure you tell your bank that you'll be in Argentina (and anywhere else you're planning on traveling)
- If you run out of cash to exchange, you can use xoom.com to send yourself money from your bank account but the rates are now less favorable (13.87) than the official rate

- **Wire Transfers**—they are actually one of the most profitable options, in addition to the fact that they are more secure than unofficial currency transactions in Buenos Aires. You can use xoom.com or riamoneytransfer.com or moneygram.com, which are the two best options for wire transfer by certified agencies. If you have a US debit or credit card, it is even better because you can send yourself money, to pick up at one of their locations in the city nearest to you (there are many and are bank-type places). It is secure and just like any secured and certified online financial transaction—yes, like using Amazon.com. It's a much safer option to send yourself money from now and then, than carry all that USD cash with you—quite risky! Do NOT use Western Union, it is just like using an ATM card i.e. wasting money. You will NEED your passport, in addition to the transaction code and a passport photocopy that they will keep.
- **ATMs – (changes are happening quickly with this new government so double check)** As of now, most US banks do not have any sort of arrangement with any banks down here to give you free ATM usage. That means you'll pay your own bank's foreign ATM fee (e.g. 5 USD in case of Bank of America) plus 1% of whatever you take it. However, an HSBC or Citi account (just visit your local branch to open one) can be a solution, because both have many ATMS and charge no fees for use in Argentina. If you're from the East Coast, you can also look into checking accounts with Commerce Bank (www.commerceonline.com), which does not charge any fees for using their debit cards abroad. Also, be sure to communicate with your bank before you leave for Buenos Aires. Tell them that you will be withdrawing money in Argentina and any other foreign countries you intend to visit. Having a canceled bank card is no fun, and neither is trying to communicate with fraud services from abroad. Make sure that your bank card doesn't expire in the time you're here; if it will, order a new one before you leave so that your parents don't have to send you the new one. Be mindful of withdrawal limits for your bank before arriving in Buenos Aires. Generally, one is allowed to withdraw up to 1,000 pesos at a time, although some US banks impose limits on withdrawals abroad (up to 300 pesos in some cases), so if you need a larger amount of money, you may have to plan a bit in advance. Most banks will also allow you to increase the withdrawal limit if you call them and explain your needs by phone. Importantly, try to withdraw amounts that will give you smaller bills (280, 290, etc.). 100 peso notes are a pain to change, but you can generally do it at larger *farmacias*, supermarkets, clothing stores, and restaurants. Another option is to buy something cheap (~5 pesos), and they will break the bill for you.
- **Credit Cards** – Most credit card companies charge a percentage (usually 1-4%) of whatever you buy in foreign currencies. Check with your company. If your credit card allows you to, you can withdraw money from ATMs using your credit card as a debit card. If you do this, you will likely not have the same 350 peso limit that exists for foreign debit

cards. Note, however, that ATM transactions with credit cards tend to have very high interest rates. Pay off the transaction as soon as possible!

- Currency exchange – With the new government has made the decision to unify the many exchange rates. The current rate when I got here in February 2016 was of 15.9 Argentine pesos to the dollar but now in mid-2016, it's at 14.20 per dollar. I'd advise to go to *casas de cambio* that your host family or María José knows since they're safer and secure. Be wary of going to *casas de cambio* recommended by strangers on the street, they may offer you counterfeit currency and/or mug you. If you are changing large sums the spread might be worth it, but you do the math.

Note that banks in Argentina are only open from 10am-3pm, which, conveniently, happen to be the five hours of the day when you are likely to be busy. Plan ahead. There are a lot of *casas de cambio* in Buenos Aires. To exchange money in Buenos Aires you always need your passport.

- DOLAR BLUE/Dolar Paralelo, <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1686625-el-dolar-blue-bajo-a-105>
- Traveler's Checks: American Express has a branch in General San Martin square, which is not far from the Harvard offices in Buenos Aires. It might be a good idea to buy Traveler's Checks in the U.S. and cash them, free of commission, in the American Express.

Cell Phones:

If you have a tri-band phone (many T-Mobile cells are tri-band, for example; look yours up on the internet) you will be able to use it in Argentina. You may have to "unlock" it (call your cell phone company directly). Then you'll just need to buy a sim card (*un chip*) for about 30 pesos. Also, most blackberries can be used abroad. Just be sure to call your service provider ahead of time and check rates so that there are no unpleasant surprises. Since Verizon and Sprint phones have built-in sim cards, this method is not an option for their customers.

- One security issue – iPhones as well as other fancy phones can be targets for thievery in public. It may be good to have an Argentine phone for texts/calls and your iPhone just for WiFi usage in more secure locations, but not 100% necessary.
- You can definitely get by only using WiFi to communicate (WiFi is available in

every café/restaurant and a lot of public places, too), but it's really nice to have a local cell phone/line.

- Ask your host family if have an old cell phone lying around! My family had one that a previous study abroad student had bought and left here, and I ended up only needing to buy a SIM card (50 pesos/ roughly \$5).
- You won't be able to get a contract phone for less than a year, so you want a prepago (prepaid) phone. Your options are Personal, Movistar, and Claro. In my travels, I found that the cheapest phones were around 600 pesos (\$50). It depends on the company and the individual store you happen to be at. Really insist that you want the cheapest phone they have- they often start by showing you more expensive options.
- You can recharge (recargar) your phone at a kiosco by buying a phone card or telling your number to the person working there.
- Plans - Plans generally are expensive, charge termination fees for less than a year, and require Argentine DNI (identification). Therefore, the pre-paid phones (called "prepago") are usually the best option. Price information is included below. Generally, you purchase a cell phone and continually add minutes to your plan by purchasing phone cards from any of the local kiosks/stands.
- Companies - The best providers of phone cards (tarjetas de cargo) are Movistar, Personal, and Claro. A slight advantage for Personal users: on the Personal website, you are able to send text messages online to Personal phones free of charge. This way, your parents or friends from the US, as well as your friends in Argentina, can send you text messages free of charge and you can reply. Your reply will go straight to their computer; it's a nice, easy way to stay in contact with people in the US and to get instantaneous messages from far away.
- Prices -You should be able to get a basic phone for around 400-600 pesos. Texts cost about 2 pesos per text, while phone calls run about 90 centavos per minute depending on the company, how much you buy, etc. Generally there is no charge for incoming calls. If you're using a pre-paid plan and travel outside of the Provincia de Buenos Aires, you will often be charged for incoming calls (think of it as national roaming). Text message and call prices may also depend on the amount you recharge to your pre-paid account. Make sure to ask about all kinds of charges when buying your phone, or else you may quickly be surprised by how fast your cell phone credit melts

away.

- Where - You can buy phones at stands in pretty much any mall or in the stores themselves, which are scattered throughout the city. However, if you're planning on getting a prepaid phone (a better option than a plan), you might need to look around a bit more. Be wary of purchasing a phone from an isolated electronics store that is not part of a large department store (i.e. Fravega) or located within a shopping mall – some independent owners have been known to trick tourists into buying already used phones. Don't be surprised if you go to 5 stands for the same company, and each stand tells you a different thing. They're not trying to rip you off, they just don't know. (In other words, ask around at a couple places if you don't like what you hear at the first, and don't be frustrated if it takes a little while. It will work out). Make sure you have a copy of your passport with you when buying a phone. (Some places may ask for the original).
- Recharging - You'll probably run through about 100 pesos of credit in 1-2 weeks. When you're low, go to pretty much any *locutorio* or kiosco and ask for a *tarjeta de recargo* for your specific phone company. You will then be able to follow the instructions on the card to add minutes to your phone. If, initially, your Spanish is not strong enough to understand voice instructions on your own, feel free to nicely ask the locutorio operator to charge the phone for you. They are accustomed to doing this favor for tourists. You can also choose to do a *carga virtual*, which means that instead of using the pesky scratch card, you can charge your credit just by giving the kiosco worker your cell phone company, and your telephone number.

Internet

- Locutorios charge about 5 pesos or less an hour and are everywhere. Your host family will most likely have WiFi. Otherwise, there are options to install wireless; discuss with your family. A high-speed broadband connection runs about 100 pesos (approximately 10 dollars) per month plus the installation fee. This is a very good deal; talk to your host family about installing it if they do not have Internet. Wireless can be installed for approximately 150 pesos.
- You may also take advantage of Wi-Fi at the Subte stations, as long as you feel safe flashing your laptop in public, which will probably depend on the time of day. The connection can be faster than in locutorios. Many malls (such as the one in Las Canitas, at the corner of M.L. Campos y Maure) and cafes (such as the chains Havana, Persicco,

Placere and Volta) also make Wi-Fi available for their customers. McDonald's restaurants also offer free wireless.

Adaptors

You can buy adaptors in pretty much any *ferretería* (hardware store) for about 25 pesos. If you already have a European adaptor (with the round plug), most Argentine plugs are adaptable to the circular plug.

Warning! Argentine plugs have a voltage of 220 volts, which is much higher than American plugs. Be careful when charging any appliances; check the information on the plug itself before using it. Hair dryers, hair straighteners and electric shavers can be particularly sensitive. You can buy a transformer in a *ferretería* if you want to avoid the risk of shorting out your more appliances.

If you plan to travel to neighboring Chile or Brazil, please keep in mind you need an adaptor for their power as well; you would hate not being able to charge your camera on your trip...

Calling the United States and Other Foreign Countries

- If you have good Internet access, you may want to try Skype, which will let you call anywhere for free, as long as the person you're calling also uses the program. You can also make calls to land phones using Skype, but you will be charged for it. You can purchase Skype credit online at www.skype.com; it comes in denominations of 10 or 25 dollars per purchase, and calls from your Skype account to cell phones or land lines in the US cost just 2.1 cents per minute. Skype also gives detailed information on prices to cell phones and landlines around the world (be careful – all places are not 2.1 cents per minute and calls to international cell phones are generally much more expensive than calls to land lines). Verify that your computer has a microphone and you can use Skype from it; if you don't have Internet in your house, you can use Skype from Wi-Fi cafés, which are located throughout the city. You just need to enter a café, order a coffee, tea, or something to eat, and you can bring your laptop and use it for as long as you like. Also, Gmail will let you make free calls from your computer to any phone in the US. After you put in the number it will let you know if your call is free or not.

- The phone card *Llamada Directa*, which you can buy at pretty much any kiosk or

locutorio, is a great deal. For 10 pesos you get 1hr15mins to call USA. There are good deals to the rest of the world too. The Llamada Directa rate is a little over 4 cents per minute, but if you don't have Internet access in your house, it is a very good price compared to other international calling rates. Another good phone card is *Linea*.

- Another option is InternetCalls.com. Your calls are free for the first week and afterwards you can buy credit for 10 Euros to call as much as you want anywhere in the world (generally land phones, also cells in the US and Canada) for at least 12 weeks.
- Similarly, consider using jajah.com

Sending/Receiving Mail

- Letters - You can send letters and small envelopes from many locutorios or any Correo Argentino center you see. Lighter letters and cards cost 4 pesos, and heavier ones, 9. Make sure you send them with Correo Argentino – There are a couple other mail services offered by locutorios (including Correo Andreni) which will try charging you more.
- Sending Packages – The Argentine customs rules are strict. No food of any sort (including gum and chocolate) can go through the country. You have to declare what you're sending on customs forms. While it's illegal to lie, we've known people to declare "books" or "toys" when sending cookies. (We're not suggesting you do this, obviously...)
- Receiving Packages – Same deal goes for receiving packages – no food. If a package declaring that it contains food is sent to you, it will be retained in customs. If that happens, here's the procedure:
 - a. You'll receive a letter telling you the package is retained (they'll charge you for the letter)
 - b. The letter will probably have some numbers to call. Explain the situation. You'll need a "despechante" to get the package released. This costs money too.
 - c. Chances are you'll have to go pick the package up yourself. Normal mail is in Retiro, and UPS is in Ezeiza.
 - d. Import taxes supposedly follow the package pick-up.

Additionally, mail carriers are known to leave packages (anything that can't be slipped under the door) on the street outside of apartments, where they can easily be stolen;

other times, packages just disappear without a trace. The moral of the story: It's a total coin flip if the care package your dear mother has mailed you will actually arrive! Therefore...

If you are receiving sensitive documents – bank information, credit cards, bank cards, etc. – we strongly suggest having your parents, family, friends, etc., send it through FedEx. It is very expensive (about 75-80 dollars for an 8.5X11 letter containing paper documents), but it is guaranteed to get to you in a few days and it comes with a tracking number, so you know exactly where it is at all times.

A piece of advice on the Argentine mail system/international mail in general: estimates for arrival from the US can range from 5-7 days to 20-30 days using regular mail, depending on the type of USPS service someone uses to send a package to you. Note that the estimate only considers how long it takes for the package to get from the US Postal System to the Argentine one; it does *not* include the time it takes for Correo Argentino to deliver it to you. Moreover, once it lands in Argentina, the USPS is no longer responsible for it. Thus, if somebody is sending you something time-sensitive or important, it is best to go through FedEx or UPS.

ARRIVAL - Getting To/From the International Airport (Ezeiza) And the Domestic Airport (Aeroparque Jorge Newberry)

Cabs from Ezeiza: when you arrive at Ezeiza, use an official taxi stand like Taxi Ezeiza, which is inside the building before you go outside. You tell the stand where you're going and pay there (should be 500 pesos). You should exit the airport and go to one of the official taxi stands – Taxi Ezeiza, with a big blue and white sign, is located just outside of customs on your walk out of the airport. You don't need to pay the driver. If someone helps you carry your bags to the taxi, he will expect a tip. A few pesos are sufficient. Thus, if you only have big bills from having changed money, try to buy something small in the airport (gum, a Coke, etc.) so you have some change to give. Do not take a spoken offer from a random cab driver standing in the airport or on the sidewalk. While these rides are usually safe, they are also likely to be an extreme ripoff (3500 pesos).

Cabs to Ezeiza: Ezeiza is about 50 minutes from the more residential parts of Buenos Aires (Belgrano, Palermo, etc.), so give yourself ample time. When taking a cab to the airport, it is best to call a Remis or a cab the night before and arrange a time and a price. Reserving a taxi in advance is probably cheaper (400 pesos). Remis, when arranged ahead of time, may cost as little as 280 pesos, depending upon where you're being picked up and it is definitely best to avoid a meter-based cab ride to the airport. More recently, the official cab companies are charging an additional five peso fee per bag that you bring into the taxi. Telephone numbers for Remis are: 4903-3202/ 0032/ 0400/3183

Bus to / from Ezeiza: While taking a colectivo (regular bus in Buenos Aires) is an option that will get you to the airport for 10 pesos (must have SUBE), it takes a long time. However, there are also direct, private buses to Ezeiza from Retiro (and from Retiro to Ezeiza). On your first arrival it may be the best idea to take a cab, but once you're familiar with the city, you may well take the bus from / to Retiro, which is a reasonably priced and safe option. One recommendable option is a company called **Manuel Tienda Leon** (<http://www.tiendaleon.com.ar/home/home.asp>) which will charge you 200 pesos for a 40 minute bus ride between the airport and Terminal Madero (a less than 5 minute walk from the Retiro subway station and colectivos) and, sometimes, even directly to your address via a special shuttle service (those are hit or miss, they're mostly part of the price you pay, but there are times in the day at which the bus leaves you at Terminal Madero, and you have to shlep to Retiro from there.) It's generally not necessary to buy the bus tickets in advance; when arriving at Ezeiza, you'll see the company's office right after going through customs and into the main airport lobby, where you can purchase a ticket. To get to the bus, you walk some 400 ft straight ahead after leaving the terminal, along a large parking lot to your right. When sidewalk ends, just turn left and within 150ft or so you'll see the bus and the company's little booth. When departing from Retiro (i.e. Terminal Madero at Av. Madero, corner of San Martín), you can buy a ticket right in the main office. The buses leave every half hour. While I've never seen crowds there and bought tickets right before departure, buying them online seems to be another option (which I never tried though).

- **Bus to Aeroparque:** Manuel Tienda Leon also has shuttle buses to Aeroparque, a mostly domestic airport in Buenos Aires, for 50 pesos (5 USD). Nevertheless, the airport is better reached by cab (the airport is close to the city center, so a cab shouldn't cost a lot) or a colectivo, which may take a bit longer, but will cost less. Take a colectivo from / to Retiro / Microcentro (33, 45) or Plaza Italia (37, 160). The Aeroparque stop is at Av. Costanera R. Obligado, in front of the sectors A and B of the airport. However, when taking a 37 or 160 from Plaza Italia, make sure to ask the driver whether the bus is going to the airport, because these two lines have multiple routes and not all of them go down Av. Obligado. However, any 37 or 160 from Aeroparque will go to Plaza Italia.

TRANSPORTATION

Apps

BA Cómo Llego is a fantastic app if you have a Smartphone. It's like Google maps but just for Buenos Aires

Tarjeta SUBE

One of the first things that you will want to do when arriving in Buenos Aires is get your hands on a SUBE card. These magnetic swipe cards will allow you to navigate through the subways and the buses. You can buy a *tarjeta SUBE* (works just like the T-card) at many kioscos, or best at a *Correo Argentino*, or at the SUBE office near the corner of Corrientes and Callao. You will have to pay an initial fee of 30 pesos and (maybe) fill out a form detailing much of your personal information but it is undoubtedly worth the effort. If you don't have a SUBE card, you will not be able to travel in any form of public transport.

Subte

Works well, pretty safe, though most people say *colectivos* are more secure at night. Be aware that the Subte closes at 10:30pm. It is a good system to use if you are going to a very specific place (i.e. Plaza de Mayo, the 9 de Julio area in the center, etc.), but stops can be very far away from where you live or where you are going. Thus, subway travel can be very tedious if you need to transfer.

The subway is 6 pesos. You can buy a paper ticket at each subway station, or you can pass directly through the barriers by swiping your SUBE card.

WARNING: DO NOT carry your wallet in your back pocket or leave your purse unzipped. Argentines can distinguish the unwary traveler, and they will mug you if you give them a chance.

Colectivos (buses)

- General procedure:
 - 1) Make sure you're standing at the right stop (different lines stop at different parts of the block; stops are generally marked with the number of the line)
 - 2) Wave to get the drivers attention (he may ignore you; don't worry, that means another bus is generally following closely)
 - 3) When you get on the bus, tell the driver either where you're going (the intersecting avenue) or, just say 6 – 6.25 – 6.50 pesos, depending on how far you go. Inflation is a real thing, so expect bus fares to increase out of nowhere, the price doubled during my stay here in Buenos Aires.
 - 4) USE YOUR TARJETA SUBE! Make sure when you travel that you have charged it in a kiosco, or in the subway. Indicate to the driver where you will be getting off of the bus and he will indicate the rate to you.
 - 5) When you see you're close to your stop, press the red button, and get off through the door in the back of the bus.

- Be aware that some bus lines (for example, the 60) have multiple routes. Make sure you get on the bus going on the route you want. Don't be shy in asking the bus driver when getting on.
- Be sure to pick up a Guia T (María José will give you one in orientation). It is a book of all the major bus routes in the city and provides maps of bus routes as well as a list of streets each bus travels. If you lose your Guia T, you can buy another (about 5-6 pesos) in most kioscos.
- Routes can be determined ahead of time at <http://mapa.buenosaires.gob.ar/>.

Taxis

- *Radiotaxis* work well – ask your host family which company they use – you call the company and a taxi arrives at your door within 10-20 minutes. They're a good option late at night after going to a club or elsewhere. Otherwise just take a taxi on the street. *Radiotaxis* are more secure than general private taxis.
- Note that in case of rain, all cabs are taken out of the blue, and it's very, very difficult to get one. If you know you'll need a cab, e.g. to go to the airport, call ahead and reserve one for a particular hour, because if it starts to rain, you really don't want to be stuck making other plans. (Or walking to the airport, and I'm speaking from experience here...)
- Word of advice – know generally how to get where you want to go so the taxi-driver doesn't take the long way. Drivers may know a location based upon the intersection; as in, "the corner of Gurruchaga and Paraguay" is generally more known than is "2502 Paraguay."
- PAY IN SMALL BILLS and, please, check the bills you receive as change to verify they don't look fake. Tips are not necessary when taking cabs. When paying for a taxi ride in the city, it is generally advisable to round up to the next peso (for a 28.50 ride, you would give the driver 29 pesos), but you will usually receive change.
- Also, don't be afraid to make conversation with the drivers. They have a wealth of information about the city and plenty of opinions about the politics and economics. Plus, you're slightly less likely to get cheated if you've made friends with them.
- UBER – Uber started operating in mid-2016 but many regulations are in place and taxi drivers are not very keen to Uber drivers. I'd recommend taking *Radiotaxis* just because they're safer, even if they can be more expensive. You could be fined along with the Uber driver – so be careful.

APARTMENT SEARCHING / LIVING ALONE

While the Harvard Study Abroad Program strongly encourages a host family, there are some people who will opt to live in an apartment. Moving to a new city and looking for

an apartment, all the while speaking a foreign language, can be daunting. First and foremost, we recommend that you come to Buenos Aires and stay in a hostel for a few days so that you can do an on-site apartment search. A good hostel is Hostel Obelisco on Corrientes; you can reserve a room online (www.hostelinternational.com). It would be even better to rent an apartment for a week before you find a place, as hostel life is transitory and uncomfortable, but weekly apartment rentals tend to be expensive.

Here are a few tips to finding a place in Buenos Aires:

1. Begin an introductory apartment search on Craigslist well before you leave. Check out typical rates and locations. Most really nice shared apartments in Buenos Aires run for less than 6-700USD per month, and you can get some in San Telmo or other less “chique” areas for under 4,300 pesos if you’re sharing a place. Rooms within apartments usually run from 450-600, depending on location, but you should rarely, if ever, pay more than 800USD/month for a room in a shared apartment. Note that many prices on Craigslist are weekly prices – don’t be fooled. It is generally more expensive to live in a single apartment, and it might be a little lonely, too!

Some good sites for apartment finding:

- www.bahomerental.com This is a very luxurious offering – lots of beautiful apartments, mostly multi-room, mostly very expensive. A good starting point to look at price ranges, location, and what is offered in terms of furniture, etc.
- www.yesba.org This is actually an ex-pats site for Buenos Aires, but if you register, you can look up housing ads as well as receive emails about Ex-Pat gatherings in the city.
- www.craigslist.com Tried and true – craigslist is often the best option.
- www.lanacion.com Look up classified ads in *La Nación*...it’s the most obvious way to find an Argentine roommate.
- Compartodepto.com An awesome place to find a room or a roommate.

2. Figure out what is most important to you before you look for the place. Location? Whether or not you can have people over (this is a really important part – sometimes, potential roommates are averse to big social gatherings, and you’re likely to want to bring your friends over if you’re living in an apartment and they’re in host families). Talk to any potential roommate about that in advance – preferably face-to-face, but email or phone conversations work well, too.

As for location:

- Palermo, Las Cañitas and parts of Belgrano are great areas to live if you’re looking for access to good restaurants and nightlife as well as easily accessible public

transportation.

- San Telmo is cheaper and smaller, hence more accessible via subte. Keep in mind, though, that you may take many a late-night cab home from Palermo clubs and bars if you live in San Telmo, where very few (if any) Harvard students are housed. However, San Telmo bars are no less chic, and considerably cheaper than Palermo bars.
- Try to find a place close to major bus lines (almost every major street in the city has lots of bus stops) and a Subte stop. Talk to María Jose and other Harvard affiliates who have spent time in Buenos Aires about what areas are safest.
- Recoleta, while pricier, is a walking distance from the microcenter and always has lots of street activity.
- Almagro, Villa Crespo, and Caballito are great places to live if you want a more “neighborhood” feel

3. Do not agree to anything over Craigslist or some other internet rental agency. People tend to exaggerate over Craigslist, and you should see a place and meet people before you agree to pay any money. Sometimes, a place that is “one block from the subway” is actually eight blocks; sometimes, a “sunny, bright kitchen” means a grungy stove with a small window with near-blinding sunlight. Make sure to see everything for yourself.

4. Grocery shopping/cooking for yourself in an apartment: Ah, this is the most interesting part. There are good supermarkets in Buenos Aires, but you’ll not find anything like a Costco or a Whole Foods in the city. Disco and Jumbo are the ones with most variety, and you can indulge particularly patriotic cravings in the imported food section (read: refried beans; tortillas; imported teas and coffees; peanut butter, if you’re lucky; nuts, etc. – such imported goods are very expensive). The best (and cheapest) produce, however, can be found at local *fruterías* and *verdulerías*, located every few blocks in most residential neighborhoods. You can only pay with cash at *fruterías*, but you can use major credit cards at all supermarkets. On Fridays, Coto (another supermarket) gives you a 10 percent discount if you use a credit card. If you’re looking for specialty products – specific types of beans or seeds (flax seed), nuts, or other things – you can usually find them at *dietéticas*, which sell great “health food” and supplements. Hausbrot is a great bakery (and a chain) that sells delicious wheat breads and all-wheat empanadas and pastries; there are several sprinkled all over Buenos Aires, with one located in the Jumbo supermarket/shopping complex between Dorrego and Avenida Bullrich near the Palermo/Belgrano border, and another located in front of Alto Palermo mall.

5. Live with Spanish speakers! Be they Argentine or other international exchange students, Spanish speakers offer you the added benefit of giving you practice at home. Many international students from Spanish-speaking countries study in Buenos Aires, and

many of them elect to live in apartments. Look for ads on Craigslist, but a lot of Mexican exchange students opt to study at the UCA (Universidad Católica Argentina), and many of them live in apartments. Getting in touch with the UCA exchange program office may give you some tips to finding other young foreign students looking for roommates of similar age and interests. Moreover, it is nice to live with other students, because you'll have similar schedules and can end up traveling together on mutual vacations.

SAFETY

As anyone will tell you, just like in any other big city, in Buenos Aires you'll need to take some basic precautions. One of the places where you should be particularly careful is the area around Retiro's bus terminal. Even though Retiro boasts some of the most luxurious hotels in the city, it's also very close to "Villa 31," a poor neighborhood whose youngsters often prey on tourists.

Other basic security precautions:

- **The area around ATMs/banks:** Be careful when you're taking out money, because some people will work either solo or in pairs/groups in the areas outside ATMs to rob people leaving from the ATM. You needn't be paranoid at all (most likely nothing will happen), but be on the lookout for people loitering outside ATMs or people near the bank who might be communicating with somebody else on a cell phone. Sometimes, one person will communicate with another to tell them which direction a person is heading after leaving the bank. Just be careful!
- **Ipods:** You will likely be safe listening to your Ipod on runs, while walking around the city, etc. Note, however, that it is an obvious item of worth; nobody is going to come up to you in a bus and rip it from you, but like in any big city, it might be best to purchase some neutral-colored headphones (black or grey rather than the really white ones that scream "I'm listening to an Ipod"). As with almost all things, it is much safer to use it and listen to it on the street during the day than it is late at night if you are walking alone.
- **Bank Cards, Passports, and Credit Cards:** We recommend that you *always* leave your passport in a safe spot at home and carry it with you only when absolutely necessary (when buying bus tickets, booking travel, etc.). Always carry a photocopy of your passport with you; when you purchase something with a credit card at grocery stores and many other places, they require that you show a form of photo identification. Carry a copy of your passport and a photo ID (a student ID, a drivers' license, etc) when you're going grocery shopping. Most places will also ask you to provide your passport

number when signing a credit card receipt; be prepared to provide the number. As for bank cards and credit cards, we also recommend that you leave your bank card in your house unless you are withdrawing cash that day. If you have more than one credit card, it is best to carry just one at a time; if, unfortunately, you are robbed, you will still have access to your bank account (and thus cash) and other credit cards. It is best also to carry as much cash as you need – carrying excess cash, as in the United States and almost anywhere else, is a little more dangerous.

- **If something happens:** In the event that you have something valuable robbed (laptop, primarily), you need to file a police report. Talk to people in the place it was stolen (home, school, hostel, etc) to ask how to do this. Typically they'll direct you to the nearest headquarters. There, you tell the police officer what happened. He'll type up a report that you sign, he signs, it gets an official stamp or something similar, and you're good to go. You need this form if you're going to file an insurance claim, so hang onto it. Either contact the insurance company when you get back to the States, or fax your parents the form and have them do it. If you're not planning on filing an insurance claim, it's your call whether or not to go through the trouble of filing a police report.

HAVING FUN

BA is loaded with good places to eat, dance, drink... We've outlined a few below, but definitely talk to your host families, other students, coworkers, shop owners....everyone will give you tons of advice, and that's often the best.

Nightlife

Good fall-backs (and just to get you started): Plaza Serrano, in Palermo, has a lot of bars, which are usually full of young people and have decent prices. As far as clubs (**boliches**) are concerned, there are tons, but it all depends on whom you're with and what you want. Some of recent recommendations:

1. Crobar (Av. Libertador 3886) diverse music selection.
2. Niceto Club (5510 Niceto Vega, Palermo). A cool Palermo joint. You haven't seen how crazy Buenos Aires can get until you have gone to their Thursday night parties.
3. Club Araoz (LOST) (Araoz 2424, Palermo): If you are jonsing for some good old hip-hop and US club mixes, this is the place to be on Thursday nights. If you get to the club before 2:30 (which living in Buenos Aires, is sometimes difficult) you can see the break-dancers do their thing.

4. Clubs in San Telmo, such as Museo (but there are so many more), are less fancy but are equally amazing.
5. Azucar (Av. Cabildo 2040, Belgrano): (Sometimes free until 3AM) great salsa club where you can easily find a really great partner who will spin you around all night long. This might be a little more complicated for the men... as many of the people here are fantastic salsa dancers. However, they also provide classes with the price of entrance if you go early in the night.
6. MINT (Costanera Norte y Sarmiento): great music, large
7. JetLounge (close to the Aeroparque, in Costanera Norte): Very "in" these days, with very fashionable and attractive people. Women sometimes go in for free; men for 100 pesos. Mix of music, amazing venue, and great partying environment.
8. Asia de Cuba (Olga Cossentini 751, Puerto Madero); smaller, more upscale (to the extent you may wanna wait till you're 40 years old to go there), great DJs

Note that the cover at boliches is usually pretty steep, between 100 pesos for women and 200 for men. This price usually includes a drink or two; and drinks at the biggest, most popular boliches run about 60 for cocktails and 50 for a beer. If you come before a certain time, you might be able to get in for free; try to find out what the time limit is before you go.

The only thing you might have trouble with is finding something open on Wednesday nights, aside from "after-office" (everyone goes straight from work to drink, still in business clothes). Rumi (Figuerola Alcorta 6442 y La Pampa, Belgrano) and La Diosa (Costanera Rafael Obligado 3731) are good bets for this tricky night. Thurs-Sat pretty much all clubs are hopping (but don't start to fill up til 2 or 3am and stay full til dawn). Sunday tends to be gay night (Amerika's popular and jam-packed; Gascon 1040).

Check out www.buenosaliens.com (clubbing and electronic music), www.bainsomnia.com (nighttime happenings), or <http://infoboliches.com.ar/capital.htm> (info and photos of many local boliches, some users comments).

Non-night club outings:

Milongas! Are so much fun, you don't have to dance, just go and have a drink while watching everyone between 15-90 dancing tango. Each milonga has its night of the week, so while there is an infinite number of great milongas, try to find out which night is the night to go to which.

Peñas are great! You can sit there and listen to amazing Latin music live. Highly recommended the Peña del Colorado, which has great music, food and wine. At midnight on Thursdays, when the main show is over, people pull out their guitars and start playing. Check their details at: <http://www.delcolorado.com.ar/>

If you like jazz, definitely check out Jazz y Pop (Paraná 340), a really famous jazz club in the 70s, recently reopened. In the past greats like Lionel Hampton have graced the stage. If you can, try to find the owner who they call El Negro... and he may tell you stories all night long.

Live music in Buenos Aires is as easy to find as empanadas. The city has an amazingly efficient website at <http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar/>

If you are looking for something a bit more active and different on a Tuesday, yes, Tuesday night check out the ping pong and pool bar at CAFÉ SAN BERNARDO, Av. *Corrientes* 5436 (Villa Crespo)

Food/Restaurants

See below in “Apartment Searching/Living Alone” for tips regarding food shopping. Although you can’t cook in a host family’s kitchen, you should be able to use a small part of their fridge, their microwave, their hot-water boiler/tea pot, and their plates/utensils—which means that sandwiches, salads, and other non-cooking lunch items are all options. But if going out to eat is more your thing...

There’s no shortage of good places to eat in BA – check out www.guiaoleo.com.ar Pizza here is fantastic, empanadas are everywhere and generally good, and the meat is out of this world (and even better when accompanied by a good wine from Mendoza).

Typical Argentine food tends to get a bit tiresome after a while. Argentine restaurants to a fault sell almost any cut of meat you can imagine, some chicken, milanesa de carne/pollo (meat rolled in bread crumbs and fried – is the size and shape of a hamburger), lots of ham and cheese sandwiches/empanadas/croissants (called *medialunas*), salads (usually a simple combination of lettuce and tomato, although they sell good, extensive salads with fresh beets, carrots, hardboiled egg, and asparagus – depends on the place). Puré de papa – mashed potatoes – as well as French fries or a side salad often accompany most steaks and meat dishes.

There is a wonderful array of ethnic restaurants in Buenos Aires, many of which offer a pleasant respite from the endless milanesas and steaks you’ll encounter during your stay in Buenos Aires. Here are a few great restaurants, but remember that if you are eating out on a weekend night, it is necessary to make a reservation either the day before or on the afternoon before you go.

1. Juana M – Carlos Pellegrini 1535: A nice restaurant in Buenos Aires. The venue is fantastic (with paintings decorating the walls) and the staff is incredibly friendly. The menu borders on the classic Argentine – steaks, pastas, chicken... – but the quality and taste are astonishing. Prices are very reasonable, with a salad bar included with several dishes. (Very few restaurants offer such service and quality for that price range, and we ended up going at least once a week.)
2. Green Bamboo – corner of Costa Rica and Carranza in Palermo: A fabulous Vietnamese/Asian fusion restaurant that serves delicious entrees and whose food is topped only by the endless and delicious list of cocktails. The drinks are wonderful and the food is spicy – something Argentines haven't quite gotten used to.
3. Al Andaluz – 1823 Godoy Cruz in Palermo: Really good fusion of Spanish food and the Argentine love of good meat. It's pretty pricy as far as Buenos Aires restaurants go – 45 pesos or so for an entrée, but the food is delicious and the restaurant is beautiful.
4. Don Julio – Gurruchaga and Guatemala in Palermo: A typical Argentina *parrilla*, Don Julio is known for its good steaks and wine, and the prices are very reasonable (20-30). We've also found that the *volcán de chocolate* is incredible.
5. Novecento – 199 Baez in Las Cañitas: A pseudo-Italian restaurant that borders on the romantic (dim lighting, candles, etc.), Novecento has delicious food and even better desserts. Also kind of pricey, but the pastas are delicious, and the restaurant serves a good grilled salmon (something any and all seafood aficionados will appreciate after a few months in Buenos Aires. Fish is scarce!).
6. Los Inmortales – various sites in Buenos Aires: The best pizza in the city.
7. Bar Uriarte – Uriarte and Honduras in Palermo: A delicious modern Argentine restaurant with a fabulous wine list, amazing appetizers and salads, and delicious meat and pasta entrees. Also, make sure to get dessert here – every single dessert on the list is delicious.
8. Natural Deli – Gorostiaga and Arce in Las Cañitas/La Imprenta: Owned by a British ex-pat, this new restaurant is a lot like a Whole Foods-style café or deli in the United States. They sell delicious and fresh chicken sandwiches, great salads, and their innovative twists on wraps (like a Mexican chicken wrap or a vegetarian Thai wrap) are a great lunch. Best of all, you can order fresh food to go and it's ready in 10 minutes. It's a perfect place for a great lunch. You could legitimately eat lunch here 2-4 times a week

and be happy; there's a section of already prepared lunch food for purchase as well. The brownies are probably the best made-to-go in the city, and the muffins and pastries are great as well. The place also doubles as a natural food store; you can buy peanut butter, natural cookies, homemade pastas, and vitamins here. Don't miss out – this place has one of the best (and refreshingly different) lunches in Buenos Aires.

9. Sudestada – Guatemala 5602 in Palermo: Incredible Vietnamese food, definitely the best in the city. Average: 150 Pesos.

10. Melo – Pacheco de Melo 1833 in Recoleta: Specializes in pastas, beef, fish. A well-kept Argentine secret; wonderful food, great atmosphere; few foreigners.

11. T-Bone – Armenia 2471 in Palermo: Amazing fresh out-the-oven bread and cocktails. The food is pretty good, but atmosphere, snacks, and drinks stand out in particular. Ever-changing art on the walls and sometimes live music.

12. Garbis – Scalabrini Ortiz 3190 in Palermo; Monroe 1799 in Belgrano: Middle Eastern, Armenian, with the option of Menu Libre. The most beautiful buffet that I have ever seen. For 50 pesos you can have access to a spectacular vegetable salad bar with greek salads, garbanzo beans and amazing hummus... and also repeatedly order ANYTHING off the menu. Afterwards enjoy the beautiful table full of baklava, fresh fruit and order any dessert off the menu (as many times as you want!)

13. Los Amigos – corner of Arenales and Bulnes in Palermo; great empanadas; try ananas, jamon y queso.

14. Bar Federal – a San Telmo establishment. Big portions of food and strong cocktails.

15. Fabrica del Taco – good Mexican fare in Palermo.

16. La Aguada--Bilinghurst 1862 The best empanadas Tucumanas and humita that you can find in Buenos Aires without taking the trip up north!

Shopping

BA has a lot to offer in terms of shopping, but prices tend to be mid-high range. The main malls in Buenos Aires are “Alto Palermo” (subte stop Bulnes), “Galerias Pacifico” (in the microcentro – a beautiful building to visit even if you don't want to shop), “Abasto,” (which has an amazing food court) and “Paseo Alcorta.” Most of the stores in the malls

tend to be rather high-end. Avenida Santa Fe is lined with stores as well, and there you'll find more of a variety in prices and quality. For boutiques, visit the area surrounding Plaza Serrano in Palermo Soho (on weekends, the plaza fills with designers selling clothes, jewelry, bags, and other fashion items). Leather goods offer the best deals in Buenos Aires in terms of international prices. Quality clothing, even if it belongs to an Argentine brand, is around the same price as in the US.

By all means, visit "Patio Bullrich," Buenos Aires's fanciest mall. Contrary to popular belief, prices are not very different from other malls (aka, "Alto Palermo" or "Abasto") and they do have some amazing clothes, jewelry, and accessories.

Tourist-packed Avenida Florida (near Plaza de Mayo) also has a wide array of clothes stores and other merchandise, and its wide open street is perhaps the most Latin American element of Buenos Aires. The wide pedestrian-only avenue can be found in the heart of many Latin American cities, and despite Buenos Aires' European exterior, Avenida Florida is reminiscent of other downtown areas across Latin America. Be careful on Avenida Florida, though – as it is a major tourist attraction, petty theft is much more common. Do not carry much cash and be a little more vigilant than you would otherwise.

Check out the neighborhood called Once, where one can find everything cheaper than one would find it anywhere else. Be careful there and don't forget to bargain! Among the many original stores in the city, one recommendation is Dimension at Av. Santa Fe near Plaza Italia: a super original hippie store with lots of beautiful scarves, wraps, and printed dresses.

Movies and theater

You won't have trouble finding a movie theater that shows Hollywood movies. Cartelera del cine de La Nacion is a good resource, as it lets you search by movie title, schedule, or look for theaters by neighborhood (<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/espectaculos/cartelera-cine/>). Similarly, La Nacion's Cartelera de Teatro is a fairly comprehensive reference: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/espectaculos/cartelera-teatro/>. Movie prices are usually about 105 pesos, though matinee and weekday screenings tend to be cheaper (and theaters sponsored by INCAA, the government film agency, show Argentine films and only charge 8 pesos! One is Cine Gaumont at Rivadavia 1635). Don't forget to ask for a student discount! (though they may not always have it) If you're interested in *cine alternativo* – independent cinema, local movies, documentaries – check out <http://www.elreverso.com.ar/>; on any given day there are a variety of movies shown across the city and many of them are free or cost no more than

Gym

The famous Argentinean beef and other treats you'll discover may make you look for a gym. You'll see a lot of small gyms scattered throughout the city, so you'll be able to find one that meets your expectations and doesn't ruin your budget. If you prefer chain gyms, two of the options are Megatlon (all across the city; expensive though: 900 pesos / month) and WellClub (gyms in Palermo and Barrio Norte; much cheaper than Megatlon).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

Volunteer work, social service, student activities...

Get involved – there's no shortage of things to do in Buenos Aires, so it really depends on what you're interested in. Take classes in dance, martial arts, theatre. Join a soccer team (or organize games with friends – you can rent out fields...just ask). Find a community service organization...

Social service opportunities outside:

- Every Thursday night parishioners from la **Iglesia San Tarcisio** (Demaria 4422) get together on the first floor of the church to make sandwiches and prepare hot chocolate or juice. They then haul this food over to the largest public children's hospital in Buenos Aires to give to families and the kids that can eat. There are usually a lot of Pepperdine students involved when their university abroad program is in session. When there are no Pepperdine kids in town, the church ladies often find it difficult to track down kids to get involved. Kids are amazed to see students from North America and it is amazing to some of the children improve from week to week. This opportunity also provides an inside view of hospitals in a hospital system very different from our own.
- **Bachilleratos** are community-based secondary schools that offer degrees to students that could not graduate from the state-run public high schools. At Maderera

Córdoba you can teach English language classes for second and third-year students with another professor, Antonella Romiti. If you would be interested in teaching at one of the dozen or so bachilleratos in town, you can probably get in touch with the director of Maderera Córdoba. Email Ezequiel Alfieri at ezealfieri@hotmail.com.

VISAS

In order to strengthen the relationship between Argentina and the United States of America, the Argentine Government has resolved to suspend the collection of the reciprocity fee from US passport holders who visit our country for less than 90 days, for tourist or business purposes.

If you're here on a tourist visa and need to renew it, a daytrip to Colonia, Uruguay is a good option. Even if you don't need to renew your visa it's a fun trip. Check out www.buquebus.com for one-day packages. (Be aware that traveling to Brazil or Chile on a US passport involves a visa or a one-time reciprocity entrance fee)

As for Brazil, if you intend to travel even for a day trip, you need to get a Brazilian tourist visa; you'll have to work with the Brazilian Consulate (1533 Carlos Pellegrini, 5th floor). The visa costs ca. 170 USD for a US citizen and you'll need to provide bank and credit card information as well as a passport photo (with official Kodak label on the back; there are tons of places to get them taken in the city) to get one. The Brazilian Consulate in Buenos Aires has a useful website for US citizens seeking a visa: http://www.conbrasil.org.ar/CONSBRASIL/visas_otros01engl.asp . Plus, the Consulate is just across Av. 9 de Julio from María José's office!

Be prepared to leave your passport at the consulate for three days or more before you can pick up your visa. Chile does not require a visa.

TRAVEL

They have a saying here in Argentina: "God is everywhere but his office is in Buenos Aires." Two months is a short time to get to know all of Buenos Aires but should you want to travel, Argentina is a vast country with an incredible variety of landscapes! Waterfalls, mountains, sierras, canyons, lakes – you name it, Argentina has it. It's a good idea to get a guidebook before you get here (books in English tend to be more expensive abroad.)

Important: Carry a **student ID** with you EVERYWHERE when you travel. It's best to bring your Harvard ID and also get an ID from either San Andres or Di Tella if you're studying there. Places in Argentina only give you student discount prices if you have an Argentine ID. To remedy this, we suggest you purchase an **ISIC card** (International Student Identification Card). It costs 12USD and it will get you great discounts in national parks and can get you further discounts on airfare, lodging, tours, excursions, etc. It is well worth the 25 dollars.

As you plan your travels, you will see that it's best to either **fly or take a bus**, depending on your destination, time, budget, and kind of trip you wish to make (e.g. BsAs-Iguazu-BsAs or a trip involving some exploration in between).

As for **flying**, check out these websites:

1. LAN: www.lan.com – A great airline, a lot of flights to Santiago, Chile, but also many destinations in Argentina, Brazil, Peru.
2. Aerolineas Argentinas : <http://www.aerolineas.com.ar/> - This airline, which serves many national and international destinations, but plagued by problems with unions which have repeatedly led to flight cancellations and delays. They also charge foreigners more than Argentinean citizens.
3. LADE: <http://www.lade.com.ar/home.htm> - LADE, a company operated by the Argentine Armed Forces, is generally much more affordable than Aerolineas Argentinas. Serves a number of destinations in central and southern Argentina.
4. GOL: <http://www.voegol.com.br/> - For flights to Brazil, generally considered the cheapest Brazilian airline.
5. TAM: <http://www.tam.com.br/> - Another Brazilian airline, tends to be more pricey than GOL.
6. ITA Software: a free matrix that shows basically all available flights and prices to/from given destinations within or on given dates. <http://matrix.itasoftware.com/>

Bus travel is a surprisingly comfortable and relatively cheap way to get to most tourist destinations. The seats (called *butacas*) are quite wide and recline between 150-180 degrees (depending on the type of bus: cama, semi-cama, etc.) You will often be served *alfajores* or even champagne on the bus, and with good attitude (and maybe earplugs) you will make it even to Salta or Iguazu Falls quite comfortably.

A good way to start planning is the website of the large bus terminal in Buenos Aires, called Retiro: <http://www.tebasa.com.ar/paginas/buscador.html>. Here you'll be able to search for companies that go to your desired destinations, check out their schedules and website addresses. You may go directly to the websites of the companies and purchase

tickets online (although often you may have to use Internet Explorer to do so). You may prefer to go to the Terminal in Retiro to compare the offer of various companies (and you'll see dozens of them!) and ask any questions you may have in person. Among the many, many bus companies, some of the recommended ones are:

- Nueva Chevallier: <http://www.nuevachevallier.com/>
- Flechabus: <http://www.flechabus.com.ar/>
- Rapido Argentino: <http://www.rapido-argentino.com/>
- General Urquiza, Sierras de Cordoba: <http://www.generalurquiza.com.ar/>
- Andesmar: <http://www.andesmar.com/shop/default.asp>
- Via Bariloche: <http://www.viabariloche.com.ar/home/index.html>
- More links here: <http://www.busstation.net/main/busarg.htm>

If you like to plan ahead, take advantage of the resources at Casas de Provincias which will provide you with maps and touristy leaflets. You'll find the addresses of the Casas in the appendix at the end of your Guia T. **Some** ideas for trips in Argentina:

Patagonia (preferably a month; I had to pack as much as possible into 11 days).

- An idea for a short, but unforgettable itinerary: **El Calafate –El Chalten – Torres Del Paine (Chile)**. El Calafate boasts proximity to a famous glacier – Perito Moreno. However, the town itself is terribly boring, so if you like active tourism you absolutely have to head to El Chalten – 4 hrs north from El Calafate – this little town is called Argentina's capital of trekking. You can easily spend 4-5 days here taking advantage of the many trails that will offer you to stunning views (Mount Fitz Roy range). You can also join an organized group for a spectacular trek on the Glaciar Torre (it's cheaper here than on Perito Moreno and just as exciting). Both towns are in the region of Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. Back to Calafate and now consider the Chilean town of Puerto Natales (5.5 hrs away from Calafate), the gate to the world famous Parque Nacional Torres Del Paine. A 4-day trek (so-called "W") is a must here, but the park is quite expensive (30 USD for entrance, ca. 10 USD a night to camp, ca. 30 USD a night for a bed at *a refugio*). Unless you somehow arrive by air, you won't be required to pay the 140 USD fee on entrance to Chile.

- If you can make it all the way south, **Ushuaia** is also incredible; going from November to late March is best, even if it is high season for tourists. There are penguin and sea lion tours, and you can spend time doing very low-intensity treks in Parque Nacional de Tierra del Fuego. Another fun fact about Ushuaia: if you go there, they'll stamp your passport with a "Fin del Mundo" stamp; it's a tourist gimmick, but it's cute. If you go, make sure to go on a boat tour of the Beagle Channel – it has beautiful views of

the Andes, local wildlife, great views back to the city of Ushuaia, and it is breathtaking at sunset. Ushuaia is also much more of a town/city than is Calafate, so there is more to do and more to see. Visiting the Museo de Presidio is a must, as it is the historical museum of the huge prison that existed in the city from the turn of the century until 1947. This is a shameless food plug, but there is a great vegetarian restaurant (not really a restaurant – it's take out only) on Piedrabuena Street -- two blocks up from Avenida San Martin -- called "El Bambu." It's owned by a phenomenally nice Tiawanese immigrant family that serves great food for cheap (it's priced by weight – you can stuff yourself for 17 pesos). It's a great fusion of Asian and Argentine food and provides a welcome respite from typical Argentine fare.

○ **Puerto Madryn and Peninsula Valdes** are known for penguin and whale sightings. Go during high season (November-March) if you want to see them!

Important! Go to Patagonia no later than in early April – afterwards the temperatures go down, traveling is much more difficult, and many places close down (forget about trekking).

Cordoba and the sierras – (preferably at least a week, 4-5 days will do). Explore the city that gave the world Maria Jose! Relax strolling down the streets of Cordoba's historical center, where you'll find the Manzana Jesuitica, Unesco World Heritage site, side by side with the Facultad de Derecho and Ciencias Sociales de Universidad Nacional of Cordoba. I call this school the Harvard of Argentina for one simple reason, which you will understand when you see the students trying to make their way to class through the crowds of tourists. After a day in Cordoba, you have many options! I first went to the town of Carlos Paz (dead in the winter), and then chose to explore the Valle de Punilla, heading north to La Cumbre (some hiking trails, a yummy fabrica de dulce de leche, good paragliding offer) and Capilla del Monte (go trekking and listen to the locals brag about Capilla's very own "primera calle techada en Argentina!").

El Noroeste – (two weeks would be great; this is a one-week option). Provinces of **Salta, Jujuy, and Tucuman**. Up north in Jujuy La Quebrada de Huamahuaca boasts dazzling combinations of colors on its hills (visit Purmamarca, Tilcara, Iruya). Some of the highlights of Salta are Salinas Grandes – vast salt fields, as well as the diverse Valles Calchaquies. The region's many charming towns (notably Cachi) will also give you an opportunity to take a picture of a cactus with snow capped Andes in the background. South of Salta the road to Cafayate will expose you to a range of strange reddish rock formations (Quebrada de las Conchas). When in Cafayate, tour the town's many *bodegas* and taste their fine wines. Finally in Tucuman, consider hiking in the region of Tafi del Valle and don't forget to visit Tucuman's historical Casa de la Independencia, where

Argentina's independence was proclaimed (1816).

Iguazu Falls (You think Niagara Falls were impressive? Think again.) You can either fly or take a bus to Iguazu. The bus takes 15-20 hours, while the flight is 2 hours. If you plan well in advance, the flights are not prohibitively expensive, and we, those who bussed to Iguazu, highly recommend the flight. You really only need 2 days in Iguazu, and there's a great hostel called Hostel Iguazu that comes equipped with a pool and an included buffet dinner (warning to any vegetarians: be prepared to eat lots of white carbohydrates!). Try to do an excursion in the rainforest (zipgliding, trekking, etc.), and definitely go see the "Tres Fronteras" where Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil all meet. It is known as the most "dangerous part of Latin America" due to lax border patrol in Paraguay, and that part of Paraguay is actually on the US Department of State's watch list for Al Qaeda activity. Still, however, you can see the fronteras by boat, and it is a really cool experience.

One more thing about Iguazu: While you will be told that you must get a Brazilian visa to see the Brazilian side of the Falls, many an American traveler have illegally crossed the Brazilian border in taxis to see the falls. This is common and very frequently done; we probably can't advise you to do it (what with the risk of being detained or deported or both), but rumor has it that said taxis are about 150 each, as opposed to the visa charge. Do so at your own risk, and if worse comes to worst, it's still unbelievable if you only see the Argentine side.

Also consider! :

- Mendoza (The wine capital of Argentina, great hiking options in the region.)
- Bariloche (Spectacular Lake District; Argentina's most famous skiing resort, but there are cheaper and equally good alternatives.)
- Gualeguaychu (The biggest carnival in Argentina (January-February))
- Mar Del Plata (Famous beach resort, full of porteños in the summer.)

Possible day trips from Buenos Aires:

- Tigre (Discover the diversity of Puerto de Frutas, Tigre's colorful Sunday market, and take a boat trip to visit the communities in the Delta del Parana.)
- Colonia (Travel back in time walking the streets of Colonia after sunset – it's one of the best preserved colonial towns in South America. Add an extra day and visit Montevideo: sip maté with the locals at the beach in the center of the city.)
- San Antonio de Areco

Longer Trips for those Wishing to See More of South America

- **Machu Picchu - Peru:** You can take a Buenos Aires-Lima-Cusco flight for about 600USD if you get good rates; book far in advance. This is an unbelievable trip, and the airfare from Buenos Aires to Cusco is far cheaper than it would be from the US. Most flights have an overnight stay in Lima and a 6:00-9:00am departure from Lima to Cusco. Try to spend at least 5-6 days in Peru – you can spend a day or two in Lima (not a nice/pretty/clean city – be warned!), but it is really nice to spend time in Cusco. The trip to Machu Picchu is a two day, one night trip that gives you one night in Aguas Calientes, the town about 30 minutes south of Machu Picchu. If you book more than 3-4 months in advance, you can take the 4-day Inca Trail or 5-day Salkantay trail that starts near Cusco and ends at Machu Picchu. To do so, you should be in really good physical condition and have a lot of hiking and camping equipment (you should be able to rent it in Cusco). The altitude will affect you, but Machu Picchu and the surrounding Inca ruins are unbelievable. Make sure to bring your student ID with you for great discounts on park entrance to Machu Picchu and other transportation délas.
- **Rio de Janeiro/Buzios/Florianópolis – Brazil:** The Rio/Buzios package is available at most travel agencies in Buenos Aires, and it is a very typical Spring Break-style beach and party vacation. You'll have to pay for a Brazilian visa. If you plan on going to Brazil more than once, be careful with your visa, because you'll have to buy more than one if you say you're only going for a 10-day trip and then decide three months later that you want to go to Iguazu. Flights to Rio depend on the season; Carnival season is obviously the most expensive both for flights and for lodging, and if you intend to go, book *well in advance*. Buzios is a snorkelling, scuba diving, beach-y place near Rio; it is very popular during Semana Santa. As for Florianópolis, it is a beautiful island in Southern Brazil that is home to some of the most beautiful beaches in South America. It's a 20-hour bus ride from Rio, or you can take a quick flight.
- **Chilean Patagonia -- Chile:** Argentina gets most of the hype with its spectacular glaciers and the whole Tierra del Fuego thing, but Chilean Patagonia is supposed to be just as breathtaking, if different. You can cross the border on a bus (and not have to pay the 140 dollar fee!), or you can fly into Santiago and work your way south by plane or bus. From what we've heard, the most beautiful parts of Chile are those well outside Santiago. You can also visit Valparaíso (more beachy and on the west coast) and Antofagosta.