



Argentina travel hints & tips

Laws in Argentina

Argentina takes its drug laws seriously, even possessing a small amount of drugs can lead to a lengthy jail sentence. (Coca leaves in their natural state, for chewing or in tea, are permitted).

The maximum blood alcohol level for driving in Argentina is 0.02% for motorcycles and scooters, and 0.05% for other private vehicles.

Driving

Vehicles drive on the right side of the road and overtake on the left.

You will need an international driving permit in order to drive in Argentina. You can get one in person at your local motoring organization.

Driving in Argentina can be hazardous, especially in Buenos Aires, with many cars ignoring traffic rules. Stay vigilant and don't expect cars to stop at a stop sign or to obey traffic lights. Respect for speed limits and traffic signals is patchy, and other road users can make unexpected manoeuvres.

Seat belts are compulsory for all passengers in a vehicle. Children under 10 must sit in the rear seats.

Driving while wearing headphones is illegal. Mobile phones can only be used hands-free.

Vehicles already on a roundabout have right of way.

On main roads, low-beam headlights must remain on during the day, regardless of the conditions. High beams should be used in rural areas and highways in low light or low visibility conditions.

Keep your windows rolled up and your doors locked as there's a risk of carjackings at traffic lights and stop signs.

Petrol stations can be far apart and not obvious from the highway, so take precautions to ensure you don't run dry.

Bike riders must wear helmets at all times.

When crossing a street, pay close attention. Many drivers do not respect the priority of the pedestrian.

What to bring

There's a wealth of things to do in Argentina so what you bring largely depends on what you have planned. In terms of clothes to bring, if you're visiting Argentina during the winter you will need warm jumpers and jackets, particularly in the south of the country where the cold is extreme. Many people think Buenos Aires and the north of the country are warm all year round but this is a myth so make sure you



pack for all eventualities, especially if you're visiting in the spring/autumn when the weather can be changeable.

If you plan to go hiking or do other activities in the interior of Argentina you should bring appropriate outdoor clothing and equipment - suggestions include warm layers (sweaters and socks), waterproofs, a large backpack and sturdy walking/hiking boots.

Average Weather in August in Salta

The geographical coordinates of Salta are -24.786 deg latitude, -65.412 deg longitude, and 3,960 ft elevation.

Daily high temperatures increase by 5°F, from 69°F to 74°F, rarely falling below 55°F or exceeding 88°F. Daily low temperatures increase by 5°F, from 41°F to 46°F, rarely falling below 31°F or exceeding 55°F.

For reference, on December 25, the hottest day of the year, temperatures in Salta typically range from 63°F to 82°F, while on July 13, the coldest day of the year, they range from 39°F to 67°F.

The month of August in Salta experiences gradually decreasing cloud cover, with the percentage of time that the sky is overcast or mostly cloudy decreasing from 25% to 19%. The lowest chance of overcast or mostly cloudy conditions is 19% on August 31.

The chance of a wet day over the course of August is essentially constant, remaining around 3% throughout.

By the end of August, the day has 11 hours, 36 minutes of daylight, with sunrise at 7:34 AM and sunset at 7:09 PM.

The information on this site is provided as is, without any assurances as to its accuracy or suitability for any purpose. Weather data is prone to errors, outages, and other defects.

Health

Medical facilities are good, but can be expensive. Public hospitals tend to be crowded. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation. If you have a specific condition you should bring a sufficient quantity of medical supplies and medicines with you.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 107 or 911 and ask for an ambulance. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.

Seek advice from locals on the quality of water and whether it is suitable for drinking. Tap water in the richer areas of Buenos Aires is usually fine to drink but this can vary. If you're staying in hostels ask the people in reception for advice and if you're in doubt purchase mineral water which is fairly cheap. Things



are a little different when travelling in more remote parts of Argentina where the water is generally not safe to drink - it's a good idea to always drink mineral water in these locations.

The sun tends to be very strong in the Puna region so it's important to take precautions: wearing a hat and using copious amounts of sunscreen and lip protection. Try to avoid spending time in the direct sun, especially from 1100-1400 and take lots of fluid to avoid dehydration.

The best way to avoid stomach upsets is to drink bottled water (especially in the interior) and to avoid purchasing foodstuffs (particularly uncooked fruit and vegetables) on the street. However, when travelling it is quite possible that you'll get some form of stomach upset. If you are affected get plenty of rest and drink lots of liquids. Oral Rehydration Solutions (ORS) are available from pharmacists and can help you to replace the fluids lost. If you are affected for more than three days and/or you have a fever, you should visit a doctor. Pharmacies are generally very well stocked and easy to find particularly in larger urban areas of Argentina.

Those staying in Buenos Aires and nearby won't need to worry about altitude sickness but if you do decide to visit places in the west or northwest of the country (i.e. in or close to the Andes) you need to be aware of the associated dangers. Some people experience discomfort at higher altitude - the symptoms include headaches, dizziness, stomach upset and tiredness. These symptoms can be managed by reducing alcohol intake; drinking lots of fluids; eating light meals and getting plenty of rest.

Communications

The communication infrastructure is fairly sophisticated in Argentina and you'll have no problems contacting home by phone, fax or internet. Postal services are a little less reliable and letters/parcels can take an extremely long time to reach their destination. It's possible to find phone cards for long distance calls to Europe and the US for 2-3 US\$ for one hour. There are hundreds of cyber cafés with good connections in Buenos Aires and indeed throughout the towns and cities of Argentina (although connections in the north can be a little less reliable). The price for an hour varies but is usually somewhere between 1.5-2 US\$.

Money

The currency of Argentina is the peso and there are 100 centavos to each peso. Clearly exchange rates are variable but at the time of writing 1 US\$ = 28 ARG\$. There are banks with ATMs in towns and cities throughout Argentina and it's very easy to withdraw money with debit/credit cards (instructions are in English and Spanish usually). Many tourist-oriented services also accept payment in US\$ so it's worth bringing some reserve currency. Visa and MasterCard are accepted in many shops and restaurants, particularly in cities.

Try to avoid changing money upon arrival at the airport as the rates can be extremely unfavorable.

Avoid changing money on the street with the service of the so-called "arbolitos". It can be risky although the exchange rate may seem favorable.



Check in the web the appearance of the bills as there are different versions in circulation for the same value, and different value bills have similar colors.

Business hours

Many businesses and shops in Buenos Aires are open from 0900-1000 and close in the evening at around 2100 (many supermarkets stay open until 2200, although banks generally close earlier at 1700). Very few shops in the capital take a long break for a siesta at lunchtime, although some shops do close for an hour or two. Elsewhere in Argentina, siestas are more common and shops can close for three or four hours from midday, reopening later in the afternoon and closing at 2100.

Shopping

The range and quality of shops is very good especially in Buenos Aires and it's usually possible to pick up some bargains. The prices are not ridiculously lower than those in Europe or North America but you will certainly notice a welcome reduction when shopping for clothes in particular. Palermo has a great range of independent clothes stores which will keep those on the cutting-edge of fashion happy, as well as a large shopping centre called Alto Palermo. Good shopping can be found throughout the different barrios of the city. For example, San Telmo has some trendy design and fashion stores, as well as plenty of shops to hunt for those important souvenirs to take back home. Santa Fe and Florida, two of the main streets in Buenos Aires are lined with clothes shops, many of which stock major international brands although you may find cheaper prices elsewhere (shops along the streets Cordoba and Corrientes are usually slightly cheaper).

Items in shops in Argentina have fixed prices and bargaining is extremely rare. The situation is different when purchasing from street traders or market stalls and it's possible to get cheaper prices, although this can be a challenge for foreigners. A good tip is to make friends with a local who can do the bargaining for you and agree a reasonable price. Tourists are often targets for scams and it's necessary to be vigilant with your money in Argentina. Shops can sometimes give you less change than you should be getting and restaurants/bars are prone to overcharge so check the bill carefully. There's also an abundance of counterfeit peso notes in circulation so make sure you check your change as well.

Culture in Argentina

Many people comment that Argentina seems to be more like Europe than Latin America. Culturally and emotionally this seems to be true, and physically too as most Argentines are primarily of European descent. In the Northwest of the country the influence of the original inhabitants culture is stronger.

The standard greeting for men and women in Argentina is a single kiss on the right cheek.

Religion is very important to Argentines; most people are Catholic and the current Pope, Pope Francis, hails from Buenos Aires.

Locals may call you gringo (male) or gringa (female).



Don't mention las Islas Malvinas, and definitely don't call them the Falkland Islands! Argentines are sensitive about the Falkland war.

Meal times in Argentina are around 1pm to 1:30 pm for lunch, with a snack at 5pm–6pm and dinner typically after 9pm and as late as 11pm on weekends. Bars get busy close to midnight and nightclubs after 1am.

A tip of around 10% is optional but appreciated at restaurants.

Argentines tend to arrive fashionably late to social gatherings – 20 minutes at the minimum.

Carry small change.

The mate ritual

If you're offered mate (pronounced mah-tay), a tea-like hot beverage made of the yerba herb, follow the rules below to do it right (and to avoid offending your server!).

Mate is served in a communal cup with a bombilla, or metal straw.

The person who serves the mate is called a cebador.

Those partaking in the ritual sit in a circle. The cebador brews the mate and then takes the first drink.

The mate is then passed around the circle to the right, with each participant drinking all the liquid in the cup before passing it back to the cebador to be re-brewed. (You'll know there's no more water in the cup when you hear a sucking sound).

If you don't want any more, say gracias to indicate you're finished. Don't say it unless you don't want any more mate.

Language and communication style

The official language in Argentina is Spanish. But even if you speak Spanish, you may struggle to understand Argentinians – the language sounds different to elsewhere in the region both due to the local accent and because there's a lot of slang, or lunfardo.

Don't be offended when an Argentine is open, blunt and direct. That's just the way they are! They're often able to remain tactful and diplomatic though. Along with their openness comes their warmth and passion and a tendency to be quite physical when speaking. They maintain little distance between speakers, it might be a bit closer than you're used to but again, that's just the way they are.

Safety

Travelling in Argentina is easy, cheap and secure, especially when compared with other countries in Latin America. Long-distance buses between cities are extremely safe, regular and comfortable, and the same can be said for internal flights. Argentine airlines have an excellent safety record despite their ageing fleet



of aircraft. Take a little extra care with taxis in Buenos Aires as there have been reports of drivers ripping off tourists. Taking the train in and around Buenos Aires is a little less predictable (although still fairly safe) and you should keep your belongings close to you - generally it's a good idea to travel with others if you decide to take the train. It's more secure to ring for a radio-taxi rather than hailing a taxi on the street in Buenos Aires, although you won't usually encounter problems either way.

There are dangers and risks to travelling in Argentina but these are not unusual to those which apply to travelers throughout the world. You should take extra care when moving around busy places (such as bus/train stations) as opportunist crimes do occur but violent crime very rarely affects tourists. Muggings are perhaps most common but even these tend to take place in notorious crime hot-spots/neighborhoods and can be avoided with a little common sense (e.g. not flashing money or expensive technological equipment). Most visits to Argentina are trouble-free, but the most common incidents affecting tourists are distraction thefts, bag snatching, pick pocketing and street robberies.

Protests and strikes take place regularly, often without warning, particularly in Buenos Aires.

Keep a close eye on your personal possessions at all times. Thieves normally work in teams of two or more and tend to target small bags and pockets. Don't carry all your valuables in one place. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing jewelry. You might be asked for a photo ID when paying with a credit card so carry one with you but keep it secured. A money belt under your clothes is the safest option. Keep a photocopy or scanned copy of your passport somewhere safe. Avoid isolated or poorly lit areas at night.

Thieves posing as hotel guests are known to snatch bags while tourists are checking into hotels or hostels. Keep your belongings close to you in restaurants and bars. Don't hang bags on the back of your chair but keep them on your lap instead.

Mobile phones are snatched while being used on the street. Thieves on motorbikes are known to snatch bags from pedestrians.

Common scams

Here are some of the common scams to watch out for in Argentina. If you need to contact the emergency services, call 911 or 101 (police), 107 (ambulance) or 100 (fire).

If possible, book taxis in advance. If you hail a taxi in the street, only use a 'radio taxi'. These have a clearly visible company logo on the rear passenger doors. Some taxi drivers may give you change using fake peso bills, or swap your real pesos for fake ones and claim you've given them a forged bill.

A taxi "handler" at the airport may ask you to pay a prepaid fee for your ride, but the taxi driver claims to know nothing about this and asks you to pay again. Hire official drive services at the airport.

Someone might spill some mustard or sauce on you, and then pretend to help you clean up. While you're distracted, an accomplice steals your belongings. If you find yourself in this situation, politely but firmly refuse assistance and walk away.