



Fabulous Buenos Aires

Learning Spanish in the Argentinean capital of Buenos Aires is a lively and exciting experience for language students. With so much to see, do and eat, students have a strong motivation to improve their Spanish and fully explore the city known as the Paris of South America. **BETHAN NORRIS** reports.



Tango

Buenos Aires is synonymous with the famous dance of tango. In many areas of the city, alfresco tango dancers can be seen performing, and in San Telmo, passers by are invited for an impromptu lesson!

PHOTOGRAPH: SIMÓN BAKER

Cecilia Sartori from IBL School relates that Argentina's capital city has much to offer in terms of culture, cuisine and nightlife. "Students choose Buenos Aires as a place to study Spanish because the city is relatively safe compared with other cosmopolitan cities in South America and offers a unique European style architecture that make students feel as though they are in a dynamic part of the world," she adds.

And, according to Cecilia Quezada at Ecela, the city is a lively and exciting place to learn Spanish and has something to offer all age groups. "Buenos Aires has space for everyone," she says. "Young people, adults and mature adults can enjoy Buenos Aires. Many simple streets are like museums with people dancing tango in the streets."

For European students, learning Spanish in Argentina represents something of an adventure due to its distance and distinct Latin American culture. However, some parts of Buenos Aires might seem familiar to

European visitors, due to its close links with European settlers in the past. "Buenos Aires is the most European city of Latin America, very similar to Paris and also called the Paris of the South," says Florencia Bozzano from Ibero Spanish School. "For the traveller, Buenos Aires delivers. Wonder at the cobbled streets, marvel at faded architectural glories and colourfully painted metal houses at La Boca, talk world politics and football in an atmospheric old café, then tuck into a famously delicious Argentine steak to power a long night's partying."

Partying is something that Argentineans know all about and dancing the night away until the early hours is a favourite pastime with locals. Buenos Aires itself is the home of the tango and is credited with being the birthplace of the dance in the 19th century, which sprung up among the impoverished neighbourhoods. Students can take tango lessons or see a live show and one of the best places to see a tango show is in the neighbourhood of San Telmo, where musicians and artists entertain visitors on Sundays.

Sartori says that visiting the San Telmo market on Sunday is a favourite activity with their students as well as visiting the "Plaza de Mayo [the city's main square], Plaza Italia and the cemetery where Evita was buried." Eva Perón (Evita) is probably Argentina's most famous citizen and the city bears many memorials to her popularity as the wife of President Juan Perón from 1946 until her death in 1952. Her body was embalmed when she died and went missing for 16

years during the military dictatorship until finally turning up in Milan, Italy, in 1971. The body was returned to Argentina and now lies in La Recoleta Cemetery where her tomb is a popular tourist attraction.

Another famous Buenos Aires legend is the footballer Diego Maradona and his hero status reflects the country's obsession with football. Quezada says, "[Argentinean] people are addicted and have a real passion for soccer. [Argentina] was the 1978 and 1986 World Cup champion." Watching a football match and supporting a local team is one way of getting into the psyche of the local people and Lorena Hebe Sinso from Bue Spanish Language School advises students to "watch a River-Boca football match in La Bombonera or River Plate stadiums".

A typical Buenos Aires pastime is eating out at cafés and restaurants throughout the city, something that visitors are keen to emulate. One famous place to pass the time of day is Café Tortoni in Avenida de Mayo, which was set up by a French immigrant in 1858 and is a favourite of locals and tourists. The café was visited by artists, writers, painters and journalists and in 1926, La Pena – a movement to promote arts and literature – was set up in the basement. Visitors can

take advantage of the café's library, play billiards, dominoes or darts or simply "have some hot chocolate and *churros* (a sweet made of fried dough)", according to Hebe Sinso.

Food and eating is an important aspect of local life and Quezada says that they offer all students a free lunch on their first Monday at the school "where students can enjoy a typical meal and meet the staff and learn what to do and what not to do in the city". Argentineans are real meat lovers and experiencing an *asado* or barbecue where all cuts of meat are cooked over hot coals is a must. Many local restaurants have an *asado* on the menu while some specialise in this cooking style.

Hebe Sinso says that their students really enjoy tasting the local food delicacies. "They love to go to a *parrilla* (grill house) and taste traditional dishes from Buenos Aires," she says – also recommending *mate*, an infusion of yerba mate leaves; *empanadas*, small pasties with different fillings; *dulce de leche*, a toffee-like milk-based syrup and *alfajores*, a traditional biscuit made of two biscuits joined together with jam or *dulce de leche*.

With so many new foods to try, taking some exercise around the city would seem to be a good idea and



Puerto Madero
This region, along the Rio de la Plata riverbank, represents the latest architectural trends in the city and a waterfront revival. The bridge, *Puente de la Mujer* (Woman's Bridge), was finished in 2001

PHOTOGRAPH: LAURIE NOBLE

Agent registrations are now open!

Information and registration at:

www.ialc.org



International Association of Language Centres

ATA Executive Hotel, Milan, Italy 30 APRIL - 3 MAY

WORKSHOP
2009 **MILANO**

Quality language schools worldwide

The IALC Workshop: guaranteed quality, guaranteed value, guaranteed results

- 100s of classic and innovative language programmes
- Accredited language schools from all corners of the globe
- Appointments with school owners/decision-makers
- Hosted package of 3 hotel nights and 3 fabulous parties
- Fam trips to Florence, Sicily and Lignano



Agent viewpoint

"Buenos Aires is becoming more popular [as a study destination]. It's a neighbouring country so is easy to fly or drive to. It has very reasonable prices, low living costs and many shopping and cultural opportunities. Students enjoy the nightlife, city atmosphere and excellent food and wines as well as the soccer games. They also like sightseeing, nice galleries and tango and salsa lessons as an option with their Spanish courses. We send teenagers and adults for short-term programmes of one or two weeks."

Maura Leão, Director, Yazigi Travel, Brazil

"Buenos Aires is well known as the "Paris of South America" and it is known as a quite safe place. So whoever wants to study in a big city instead of, for example, at the beach, Buenos Aires is the choice. Language schools like Ecela offer a variety of activities [such as] soccer, horseback riding, cultural activities and, of course, parties. Buenos Aires also offers a lot of events like professional soccer or tennis matches or theatre and opera. In addition, Argentines are usually very open to Europeans and like to go out with them. In addition Buenos Aires is a perfect place to go out at night."

Jan Eichel, Villa Latina Sprachreisen, Germany

"Buenos Aires is becoming accepted as one of the few places with European flair where the tourist dollar still goes far. Our Argentine travelers are generally younger in age and crave the hip art scene, nightlife, and fantastic food and wine. Palermo Soho, the Museo del Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), and renovated tango halls-turned-nightclubs are the most popular new places for students to visit, along with the classic stops to Evita's tomb in Recoleta, tango lessons, and even the literary cafés. Some even combine their study with the great skiing found in Argentina."

Meredith B. Butler, Language Link, USA

Hebe Sinso says that "many students like to travel around the city on a bike tour". One of the most popular neighbourhoods or *barrios* to visit is Puerto Madero, which has been completely redeveloped from its original port origins and features some of the city's newest architecture. The area, where all the streets are named after women, sits on the Rio de la Plata riverbank and, according to

Sartori, "walking the boardwalk of Puerto Madero" is one of the key things a first time visitor to the city must do.

Sartori adds that having lunch in Palermo, another famous area, is also popular with students. Palermo is the largest neighbourhood of Buenos Aires and in the old part of Palermo is Palermo Soho, the fashionable place to visit with its fashion boutiques, restaurants, bars and vibrant street culture. The largest green space in Buenos Aires is also located in Palermo and the Parque Tres de Febrero – also known as the Bosques de Palermo (Palermo's Forests) – is a popular spot for relaxing after much socialising.

All in all, Buenos Aires offers language travellers the experience of a lifetime, as Bozzano observes. "There is much to love about the city, including its renowned nightlife, gastronomical pleasures, cultural pride, welcoming citizens and historical charm," she enthuses. Wenderson Mota at Austral Idiomas in the city agrees, saying Buenos Aires "uniquely blends Latin American and European influences, combines the artistic and avant garde with business and tradition, and the aristocratic with the working class."

La Recoleta cemetery

A famous cemetery in the exclusive Recoleta neighbourhood of the city, this is where Eva Perón is buried. Her tomb is one of many grand mausoleums organised in avenues, akin to a small city



PHOTOGRAPH: WILLY LAMERS

The friendliest Spanish school in Buenos Aires!

Agents are our priority.

Learn Spanish Buenos Aires

Volunteer and Immersion Programs

Austral Idiomas
ARGENTINA

To prove our level of excellence to you, we are offering 50% commission on tuition for the first three students sent by your agency.

www.australidiomas.com info@australidiomas.com
Tte. Juan D. Perón, 1515 - 7 A - C1037ACC - TEL: (005411) 4371-7068 Bt. As. - Argentina

ECELA
Español y Cultura en Latinoamérica

New Lima
New Cuzco
Santiago
Buenos Aires
Bariloche

Spanish Abroad

info@ecela.com / Tel: +1-866-577-8693
www.ecela.com