

# BUENOS AIRES

*Born in the 17th Century, Buenos Aires is a city of immigrants, and perhaps more so than any other great city, a city living precariously on the edge of what it was, what it appears to be, and what it might yet become.*



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We came from different locations around the States: I'm from Seattle, Washington, Jim Stenson is from Mobile, Alabama, Bill and Jean Weaver are from Missoula, Montana, Larry and Besty Willey are from Ann Arbor, Michigan, John and Barbara Freeman are from Venice, Florida and Bob Stranton is from Boston, Massachusetts. [Sweet Waters Adventure](#) arranged the trip for the group of us, and it all began a week earlier in [Buenos Aires](#). Late summer in one of the world's great cities.

Born in the 17th Century, Buenos Aires is a port city of 13 million people, a city of immigrants, and perhaps more so than any other great city, a city living precariously on the edge of what it was, what it appears to be and what it might yet become.

We found the [Miravida Soho](#), a small boutique hotel in the *barrio* of [Palermo Soho](#) in northwest Buenos Aires. *We profile Miravida Soho in "Road Less Traveled" section of Backcast.* Palermo itself is Buenos Aires' largest *barrio* and home of parks, botanical gardens, shops, galleries and, of course, great food. Palermo Soho has a very hip bohemian feel to it, with local fashion boutiques, artisan shops, small theaters, trendy or traditional restaurants, nightclubs and bars that pulse into the very early morning.

With a bit of time to spare before leaving for Patagonia and evening closing in, food was high on everyone's mind, and when you're hungry in Argentina, that only means one thing. The average Argentine eats a pound of it every day. A hint: It's red and it's not wine. Before I left Seattle, I asked a couple of tango dancing friends who live in Buenos Aires for part of every year if they knew where I could go to get a good steak. In unison, they both

replied, "just about anywhere." Well, that's relative I suppose, but it's close enough. There are an amazing number of terrific neighborhood steak bistros around the city. *In the "Bar and Grill" section of Backcast magazine we profile a great one called La Cabrera,* but if you check with your hotel, they can make a neighborhood connection for you that you'll never forget.



### Go For A Walk

Argentina is a country of immigrants. In Buenos Aires, the largest group of immigrants is from Italy. It's everywhere; you can feel it all over the city. Pizza and pasta hold their own right alongside red meat and Malbec. For pizza, head directly downtown and take in one of the city's oldest at [Pizzeria Guerrin](#). Founded in 1932, it has the same tenor to it as Lombardi's in New York's Little Italy. As you know, pizza is subjective as hell, but the melted moz-





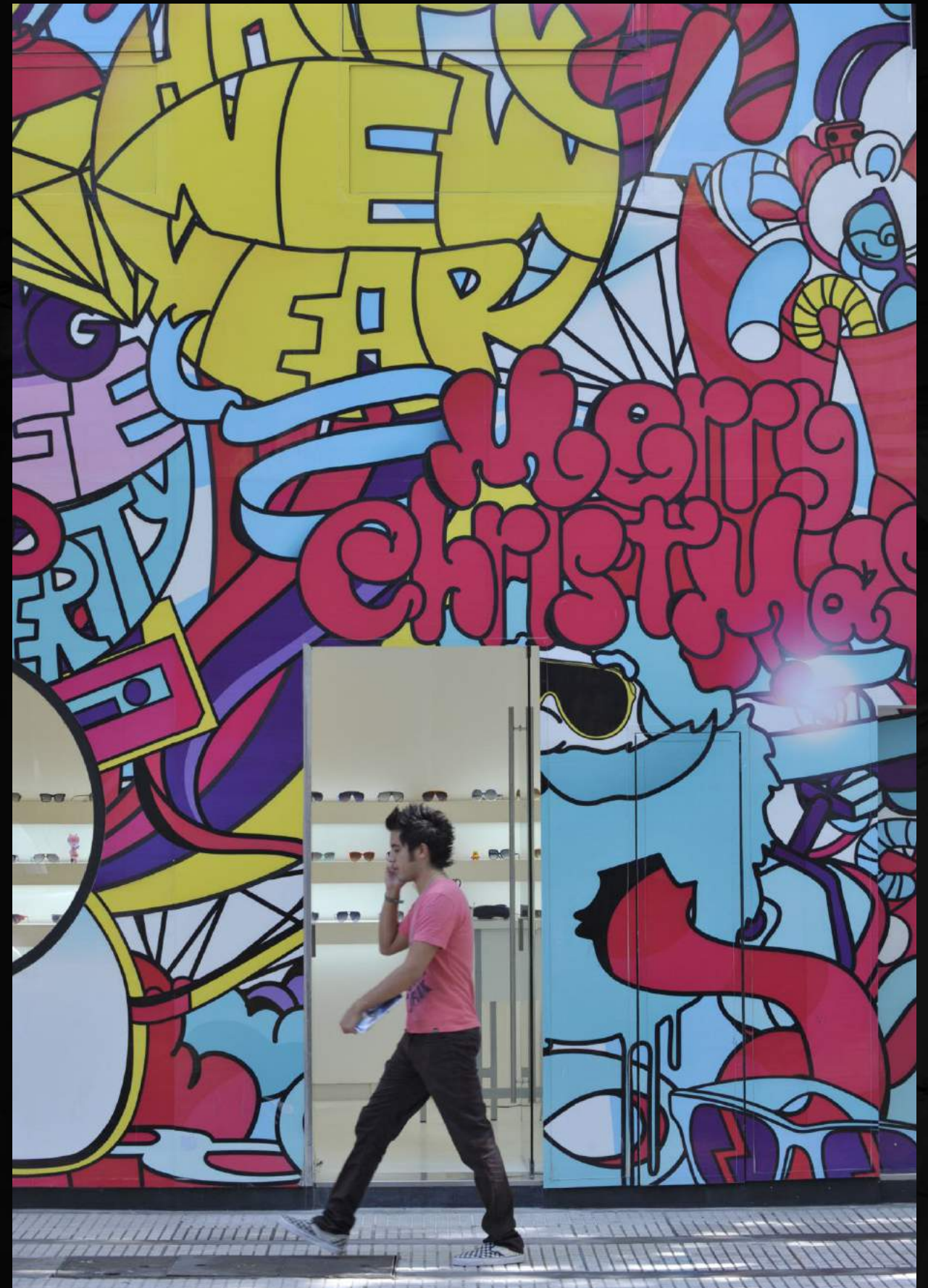
zarella floats on the tomato sauce and the whole thing fits snugly into that zone of comfort we all recognize as home.

That being said, you can't talk Italian without talking ice cream, and as you know, ice cream is God's way of leveling the playing field and allowing all us children a common playground. Simply put, I would walk over my grandmother to get to good ice cream. After Italian gelato in Florence, I swore I would never see anything better. So this is a major subjective opinion on my part, but Argentine ice cream is better. It has less cream than American impostors and reminds me of my father's hand-cranked versions from back in the early '60s. I spent an entire afternoon searching for the best Argentine ice cream and I suggest you do the same. You'll run into all sorts of stuff along the way, like the huge

Sunday Flea Market in the *barrio* of [San Telmo](#), or a walk around the incredible waterfront. Maybe visit the Government House and the ghost of Eva Peron at the [Pink House](#). Perhaps you'll have lunch in [Café Tortoni](#), the oldest café in the city and visit the famous [cemetery in Recoleta](#). The architecture around the city is amazing. Take in a soccer game in the historic Bocca area. The list is endless.

Go for a walk through Argentine history and look for ice cream. I ate it 'til I fell over, and at the end of the day, a few things stood out. Fredo is a local chain of ice cream stores, and as a baseline, it's not bad. Ice cream snobs might turn up their cones at the thought, but it's a place to start.







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*Dulce de Lecce* is a caramel milk mixture flavor that's generally rated as top of the line in Buenos Aires. After eating a lot of it, I'd have to agree. In fact, I'd consider taking a bath in the stuff with my wife, but that's another story. The true measure for me, however has to be vanilla. If you can do vanilla right, you can do anything.

We were wandering downtown near the world famous [Alvear Palace Hotel](#). A couple blocks away was a *heladería* (ice cream shop) called Florencia. I had what amounted to a smallish double dip on a cone. We walked a couple of blocks and I asked my guide Alejandro to turn around. We walked back and I had another one. We walked the same few blocks and I asked him to turn around again and had yet another. You get the point. Go for a walk and look for ice cream. You'll find a lot more and you won't regret the journey.

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## RIDE SMART

The next day, most of the group headed off on a city tour arranged by the folks at the hotel. Jim and I took a cab into the center of the city to find a fly shop called Buenos Aires Anglers, owned by Marcelo Morales, which of course brings up a whole different experience: riding in a Buenos Aires cab—which, in turn, brings up the issues of personal judgment, faith, life, death and counterfeit cash.

There are dishonest cab drivers in Buenos Aires. The best policy is to make certain you ride in a Radio Taxi. You'll easily see the name on the side of the cab. Bring a lot of smaller peso bills because Argentines also hate making change, so many will not take larger bills at all. And if they do, you never know if the driver is handing you back real or fake bills in change. It happens. Believe it. Just use more caution and logical judgment than you would normally and you'll be fine.

Taking a cab in this city demands some fairly serious tools a tourist needs to experience Buenos Aires. First and foremost are faith and an understanding that there are no rules. Generally, Argentines hate rules about anything and there's no better display of that aversion than behind the wheel. The odd thing here is the whole gig appears to work, precisely *because* no one follows the rules. It's the immaculate conception of driving. If you drive carefully and follow rules, you will have an accident. If you don't, you might make it. Actually you will make it, but you might have a different emotional outlook at the end of the experience.

From the back seat of the cab, we finally quit gasping in the

middle of sentences and gave ourselves up to the primary tool of the cab rider: faith. A cab ride can make you believe in divine intervention. If your intention is to move to Buenos Aires and open a new business, Jim and I suggest you open a brake pad and suspension business. It's recession proof in this city.



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## THE PHANTOM FLY SHOP

I dare you to try and find Buenos Aires Anglers. It's there, and they have what you need for fly fishing in Argentina, I just dare you to find it. It's right in the middle of a huge metropolitan area: Skyscrapers, five-star hotels, commerce on parade.

We Mapquested the address. We asked people. We asked more people: people in uniforms; store owners; information booth employees. We asked everybody. All of them directed us, and all of them were wrong. We were standing right where it was supposed to be. Not there. Sooner or later we asked the right person who told us to go into an older office building, down the hall and around the corner.

No reader-board. No sign. Nothing.

Into an old elevator and up six floors we went, into what appeared to be absolutely the wrong hallway in absolutely the wrong building. Sort of old, sort of dull green, sort of like an old Russian government building used for Stalinist interrogations. Down the hall on the left. A clinical looking aged pale green door bore the number 76, smudges all over it. Still no sign, nothing except a six-inch long plastic brown trout glued an inch above the peek hole in the door. We knocked. Someone who was not Russian unlocked and opened the door. Buenos Aires Anglers. Inside a very well-stocked smallish fly shop, a very fly-fish knowledgeable Ramiro Jaurez explained to us in perfect English that everyone who fly fishes and is in Buenos Aires knows where they are, so they don't need to direct anyone from the street to the shop.

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Uhhhh... there's a uniquely linear Argentine logic to that. Sort of.

Anyway, back to the original point: It's worth the trip, but still, Google it up and go find it. I dare you.

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