



Buenos Aires Trip Notes **October 4-13, 2012**

Since the impetus for the trip was a marathon, we'll start there. For what it was, here's my initial report and some initial pictures of the area:

Know when to hold 'em; know when to fold 'em. Or DNS as in "Did Nothing Stupid" in Buenos Aires -- in marathon jargon. I quit early and walked home and if I really believe my own propaganda that it's all about the travel, then it's all totally fine. I will celebrate my 8th DNS and be grateful for 101 previous finishes. I don't think there's another marathon registration in my future that has a 6 hour cut off.

Here's my story and I'm sticking to it: I started this morning at 5:15, got a taxi at 6:30 and arrived in plenty of time for the 7:30 start. It was cool at 60 degrees with quite a bit of wind (from 13 to 20mph), very light rain with heavy rain expected. Walking to the start I was pretty sure that 42 kilometers was not in my future both because I didn't 'want' to do it and because of various nitpicky excuses: Last night I had limped home from a long day touring, this morning my hips felt awful, and who likes to run in the wind, rain and with slippery cobblestones.



By the time the three huge sag-wagon buses were right behind me and they were tearing down the barriers and power washing the trash away right at (on!) my feet, the writing seemed on the wall. And that despite my still being on time to my usual 5:45 pace band (I usually hold that until about the half-way point to take advantage of the cooler morning temps.) I did see a unique and mystery occurrence: runners around me were gleefully accepting the sag wagon ride and waving to me as to suggest I get on the bus too. Do you suppose they take them on the route then drop them at the finish line? Had I not seen the course by car the day before I might have checked it out. But I don't need another medal and I didn't need the very long walk or taxi home (a 20 minute ride.)

There is so much the same with marathons in the US and marathons in other countries but also some major differences that I'll try to list in a trip report eventually.

All very interesting as is Buenos Aires with none-the-least challenge being finding so few folks who speak English. Even at the Sheraton Hotel where I went for bearings after doing about 10 kilometers and trying to call Tom on my borrowed cell (it was giving me an error message that was Greek to me), it was a challenge to find an English speaker. Wouldn't you think there would be a concierge or desk clerk who spoke English?

So I came home, had a big breakfast with Tom, a nap and just now I'd be coming in from a 42 kilometers so I trust and hope I did the right thing and live to not regret finishing the Buenos Aires Marathon.

We have tickets to a Tango Show this evening at a famous old time café called Café Tortoni. We might hire a private tour guide again. We love the Parisian scenes but they sure are intermixed with junk and poverty, dog poop and a mixture of people. This is after all South America but with a distinctive European flair that we like.



Marathon notes

- Registration is a challenge because there is no English translation and inserting the link into 'Google Translate' only goes to the home and second page – then up pops a note suggesting "illegal."
- Medical form appeared to be required but none supplied.
- Confirmation of registration is equally difficult.
- "Kit Removal" email reminds registrants that a medical form on doctor's letterhead is required as well as two separate declarations. Ugh. Then double ugh when they never asked for it at kit-removal – after my extensive efforts to get a form and the doctor's appointment.
- T-shirt is a high quality bright orange but with the CLARO cell advertisement and a long torso, huge, sleeveless model. That's what we got in other foreign locations such as Stockholm and Rio. Here they wear the marathon shirt on race day and up to two names can be imprinted without charge.
- At "kit retrieval" at a convenient expo center there were many differences: many volunteers taking a very long time to go back and acquire one's goody bag and shirt; no official merchandise; lines for getting name onto shirt; lines for getting wrist band imprinted.
- While kit retrieval was nearby in Ricoleta, the start and finish line was about a 20 minute cab ride northerly.
- One of the host hotels was in Ricoleta and seems to be in a good area. It's the same hotel used by one of my hiking companies so must be okay.
- Start line had usual porta-potty lines with what's becoming the norm at foreign marathons – gross toilets that are so bad as to not be mentionable or useable.
- Start line oddly didn't begin forming up until about five minutes prior to the start with no one paying attention to the wrist bands given us for our starting time.

- Security guards were lined up facing the spectators, one about every ten feet, for nearly a mile. Have they had spectators rushing onto the course? Security is a big thing here with guards at every store and police on every corner.
- Big red school buses (sag wagons) followed the runners who were still on a 5:45 finish pace at 10K. They did have a 6 hour cut off. Runners oddly and happily got onto them; I can't explain that unless it's like we saw at Jacksonville where the slow runners got a ride to the finish then got out and finished.
- Course follows many of the main tourist sites and only one small part is iffy. Our tour guide had taken us through much of the course the day before.
- Finish line? I have no idea. But if it is typical Argentine, it was exuberant, a little bit lacking in organization but fun and plentiful.
- Cut off? I can see by the results that they really did cut off at 6 hours.
- Website – despite my complaints, here's a picture from their front page web site about results and photos. Of course they couldn't know I didn't finish but they probably liked the Liberty Lady crown. I'm not so sure they could read the "Kicked Asphalt" shirt from Philadelphia 2008. (My uniform.)

Rules from the marathon website – for your amusement

For your safety during the race note:

located in the row according to their estimated time career. Note that there are signposts to the time estimated to reach the goal. The test is long, avoid a push or fall.

Do not leave the official route of the race, you run the risk of accidents, and can also be disqualified.

Avoid spitting or blowing your nose. If you must take care to affect others.

taper the running speed when approaching a water station or relief.

If you decide to slow down or walk, slowly veer to the side of the road and do not stop in the middle of it, think of others.

Do not take with one hand along the route. Is forbidden and dangerous.

No Apine around the first tables of hydration, continue a few meters ahead, volunteers will do their best to serve you.

When disposing of bags of water or hydration drink glasses, do it to the side of the street, outside the "race track".

Inform family and friends who will compete in the event and possibly make the trip with his training partners, this is encouraging and safer.



Our apartment is an important aspect of travel

We enjoy learning the local community and how better than to shop and live within it? And we can't see any reason for traveling with less than we have at home so our apartment(s) represent that philosophy. This one had been found by Tom last summer for friends so this feels like a second time.

From www.vrbo.com

Luxury & Elegance in Fabulous Recoleta 2+2 Apt

Ultra-Elegant Modern LUXURY in Vintage RECOLETA building. This beautiful Apartment is a HUGE 1800sq ft (170 meters), 2 bedroom/2.5 bath, office, art studio and loft, combining antique and modern furnishings, high 16-17 foot ceilings, broadband with WIFI, LCD TVs, and air/heat in every room. It is located the top floor of a 19th Century French style corner building with marble entrance and period wrought iron elevator. This is a "WOW" property! Located in the most desirable BA neighborhood of Recoleta, this ultra-luxury apartment is just 2 blocks from the famous Recoleta Cemetery and village. Wonderfully spacious with huge formal dining area, modern gourmet kitchen, expansive tiled entry, and incredible light from floor to ceiling windows and cathedral lighting from both vintage crystal chandeliers and new Designer Art lighting.

Living/dining area The((18x36) living room, includes two 16 foot double French doors that lead to wrought iron balconies and two antique crystal chandeliers reflected in antique mirrors, as well as a 42" flat screen TV/DVD player.

Master bedroom features Carrera marble staircase to an all marble bath lit by more chandeliers. Private office space and art studio loft overlook living areas. Both bedrooms have king beds and generous floor to ceiling closets of beveled mirrors and 32" flat screen TVs. The kitchen is gourmet equipped with temperature controlled "wine cellar" and all new appliances. On longer stays (7+ days) a washer drier are made available. Maximum capacity 6 people. Not recommended for children under twelve years of age.

This 5 star property has been completely renovated with the amenities you have grown to expect while honoring the elegance of time past, and is managed by a professional mgmt team. A wonderful melding of antique and modern, is reflected in both the architecture and the furnishings. The property is rightfully featured on the 'estudiohoma' website for award winning Buenos Aires based Hitzig Miletello Architectos. For music buffs, it is the former home of the famous Argentine rock star, Andres Calamaro, who composed much of his music here.

Living Room: A lovely tiled entrance frames the fabulously spacious (18x38) living area with 16 foot ceilings with elegant contrast of antique moldings and modern exposed brick walls. Furnishings are a combination of antiques and modern comfort. Authentic Antique crystal chandeliers completely refurbished and multiply reflected in floor to ceiling (16') mirrors 42" Sony LCD TV with enhanced cable and DVD. 2 small wrought iron balconies entered via floor to ceiling double French doors. Light filled both day and night

Dining Room: French Antique formal dining table with Raiz Denogal hardwood. Opens to bar fronting the kitchen to facilitate entertaining and casual use. Fabulous modern Designer Chandelier. 16' ceiling with French coving.

Bedroom #1: King sized bed with luxury mattresses and bedding; Electric, programmable safe; Custom made designer, floor to ceiling closets featuring beveled mirrors. 32" LCD TV with enhanced cable. Mood lighting plus 2 reading lamps. Custom stairway leading to private office. 16 foot ceiling.

Master bath: Accessed via Carrera marble steps, double sinks & luxury bath with shower and sitting area. Mood lites and Designer chandeliers. Bidet.

Bedroom #2: King sized bed with luxury mattresses and bedding. Custom made designer, floor to ceiling closets featuring beveled mirrors. 32" LCD TV with enhanced cable. Mood lites plus 2 reading lamps. 16 foot ceiling,

Bathroom #2: Luxury bath with custom designed tub/ shower and sink, combining stone, cemento lisado and exotic woods. Bidet. Designer modern art lighting. Hairdryer

Guest 1/2 Bath: Mood lites. Designer sink. Custom designed.

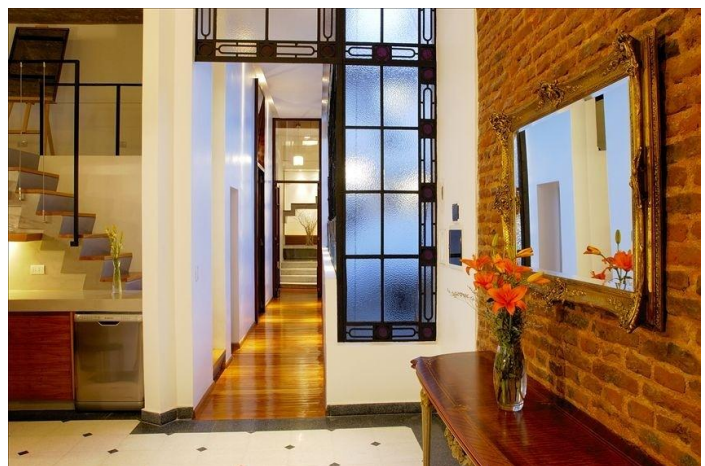
Kitchen: Custom kitchen combining high end cemento lisado with custom made black marble sink. Architecturally designed to insure an open airy feeling allowing for fun and formal. Full sized microwave and refrigerator/freezer Built in dishwasher, Domec oven and in counter stovetop with Franke stainless hood. Equipped for your gourmet dining with dishes from Claudia A.

Art Studio/loft: Quiet light space for art, reading or quiet contemplation. Optional sleeping for 2 people in 2 twin beds. Electric piano.

Miscellaneous: -Wi-Fi throughout the apartment (2 routers wired for extra coverage); -Comp cell phone with local number (you buy the minutes). -Local phone line with unlimited free local calls. -Optional unlimited calls to the USA/Canada with IP phone. -Extensive cable featuring local along with CNN, BBC, Fox, ESPN, E!, MTV, Hallmark, TNT, WB, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, etc. -Individual Air/Heating in each room for optimal comfort. -Iron and ironing board. -Washer/ Dryer for stays +7 days. -Wkly maid service included (stays +7 days). -Daily housekeeping service available at a fee. -A cook is available optionally



Night view from balcony; 1895 French style building; Entrance with antique cage elevator



High beamed ceilings with French coving accentuate the exposed brick; Glass and Old Brick frame the View down the Hall



Master Custom Closets with Beveled Mirrors and architectural stairs to office; Master bath with Custom Carrera Marble and Chandeliers

Touring has become a First Priority

This trip was made easier by an excellent tour guide. Our rental apartment had a concierge and he set up a reasonable taxi (\$47) for the 45-60 minute ride from the airport into town. He also set up a wonderful tour guide with private car and driver but we knew it was a wild price at \$80 an hour which we were assured was the going price. (NOT! As we would learn from tourist offices later.) But our guide was wonderful and since he took our offered card and later went onto Tom's website, we heard from him in due course. I can guess that he came through an agency with a commission to at least a couple people and that contacting him at another time would be better pricing. Yet I'd still use the agency with the stupidly high price if that were the only way to get Sebastian Airaldi. We now have contact at Sairaldi@hotmail.com. He is the son (aged 42) of an recently retired Argentine diplomat who lived in many places in the world thus the son is fluent in English (born in London), French, Portuguese, Italian (mother's family is Italian) and of course Spanish and is a font of information on Buenos Aires.

Buenos Aires has 3 million inhabitants in city center and another 9 million in the surrounding but still greater Buenos Aires so it can be hustle and bustle like most of us rarely see. A tour guide is handy to have.

The city reminds us of Paris in the early 70s before it got cleaned up, complete with broken sidewalks and dog poop everywhere. But when you consider that they were bankrupt in 2001, it's amazing what they've done. I suspect in another 10-20 years that it will be a tourist mecca – though some think of it that way now due to its Parisian look. It is interesting that one of the calling cards for us was that it would remind us of Paris. So why not just go to Paris? That we will do again next March taking Marie along. We were there this April.

I will leave the photo taking to Tom's photo show at www.TomsKoi.com – click on photo shows.

How does Argentina compare to Switzerland – where we were a couple weeks ago?

- Upon landing in Argentina and having to pay \$160 per person visa charge I thought NOT very well.
- Upon finding the first toilet, I thought NOT very well.
- Upon having the first Argentine offer to help us read our map, VERY well. Twice in the first day someone found us on a street corner looking at our map and insisted on helping. Once in the supermarket a sweet lady asked for Tom's glasses so she could read his list in order to help.
- Personalities? Extreme! Our super smart friend Ellen summarized it this way: I'm guessing that the essence of the difference is that Switzerland is more structured, "buttoned down" and precise while Buenos Aires is more exuberant. There's also a very different social structure. But you're so right to feel gratitude that you can enjoy both!
- Language? Nearly everyone in Switzerland speaks English. Almost no one does in Buenos Aires.
- Garbage, broken or torn up sidewalks, and dog poop everywhere in Buenos Aires; the Swiss would never allow a spec of trash to be dropped and always maintain perfect maintenance.
- Argentina prices are pretty reasonable; Swiss is out of sight.
- Switzerland has fountains; Argentina has fountains PLUS more statues than even Paris.

Eating in Buenos Aires

My favorite was a little French café near to the famous Florida shopping street (not far from Harrods) and on Place St Martin. Near to our apartment we were directed to a local haunt with many casserole type dishes from the French bean casserole to a British shepherd's pie. A Spanish restaurant behind the famous Palace Alvear might not have ever seen a tourist and had all the usual empanadas and tamales with their different and flavorful corn. At one old mansion converted into a museum was a

gatehouse made into Madame Croque where of course the French croquet monsieur was the usual. Pastry shops gave us empanadas and the Delta gave us a magnificent fresh whole fish dinner like we've never encountered before. Always there was the quality Argentinian wines as well as inexpensive carafe wines that could have been from anywhere. Rarely was there an English speaker oftentimes resulting in some amusing choices.



Panorama of downtown.

The Pink Presidential Palace and also home to a lot of demonstrations, something the Argentines know how to do as well as the French. It is said to be a national sport but the 'mothers' who demonstrate for the missing 30,000 children and grandchildren of the last torturous regime have a good reason. An old regime was known for missing people and the dumping of bodies in the ocean is a known fact. The Palace is at the Plaza de Mayo; the demonstrations can and are everywhere.



Theaters are said to be more plentiful here than anywhere in the world. Yet apparently they don't all survive because El Ateneo is listed in the World's Ten Best Bookshops and it's in this gorgeous and huge theatre. The stage is the café. Argentina folks have the highest percentage of reading books in Latin America. I never saw a Kindle or Nook. Just like in Paris – books everywhere on the subway but NO e-readers whereas get onto any American transport and that's about all you see.

Here's from the web: *The bookstore to end all bookstores, at least in South America, is the majestic and stunning El Ateneo on Avenida Santa Fe in Buenos Aires. Where else can you sit in a theater box and leisurely read a volume of Neruda, or sip a cortado where Carlos Gardel once performed? In a city with a rich literary history and excellent bookstores, this theater cum bookstore is a historical and beautiful building to visit, and a great place to stock up on books and music. In 1919 a young man named Max Glucksman decided to construct a theater house that would be both grand and splendid. Newly immigrated to Buenos Aires, Glucksman was a visionary who saw his dream realized and opened his new theater, appropriately named The Grand Splendid. For years the theater presented Argentines with performances of all kinds and local greats such as Gardel and Corsini graced the stage. In 1924 Glucksman began broadcasting Radio Splendid from the fourth floor of the building, and his recording company Odeon recorded some of the early Tango greats. In the late twenties the theater was converted into a movie house and in 1929 showed the first movies ever presented with sound. In its final metamorphosis the Ateneo was converted into the bookstore that it is today, but despite the abundance of books, the building still feels very much like the glorious theater it once was. The ground floor is home to the main collection of works, everything from Borges and the classics to Asian cookbooks and Lonely Planet travel guides; the stock is vaguely reminiscent of a massive Barnes and Nobles, only in Spanish. There is a small selection of English books, but it is mostly standard airport fare with a few volumes of Shakespeare thrown in for good measure.*

Theatre Colon or Opera House



I collect tours of opera houses and I can see where this one deserves to be listed among the five top and most famous in the world. It's been in this location since 1908. It seats 2,500 and has hosted the greats from Maria Callas, Enrico Caruso, Luciano Pavarotti, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini and Igor Stravinsky. Musical activity covers all genres especially the tango. According to aficionados, the theatre acoustics are almost perfect. Its dome was is both painting and stained glass, and the theatre has a gigantic crystal chandelier with more than 700 lights. It's said to have more magnificent acoustics, opulence and even grander than Milan's La Scala. It has an interesting beginning with an eventful 18-year building process involving the death of two architects and the murder of another. Pavarotti said that the Colón has only one flaw: the acoustics are so good, every mistake can be heard. The golden room reminded me much of the Stockholm opera house only larger. We fortunately had a tour guide who sang to us.



The Republic of La Boca and Petite Camilito

To see street performers of tango, and hippy residents and junk art shops, this is probably the oldest place in Buenos Aires to go and it sits right at the harbor. It's colorful and very run down with shacks painted in odd but vibrant colors (whatever colors they got from the ships) and cobblestone streets and a plethora of pickpockets. It is at the stadium for soccer a major event in this country. I wouldn't walk there alone at night but was glad to have a tour guide take us from one side to the other with a car meeting us on the far side. It was a world apart from their SoHo of nice designer shops and little coffee bars. Yes, they tried to succeed and become a republic something like Christiania in Copenhagen and Fremont (sp?) in San Francisco.

Café Tortoni and Tango

We would have front row seats for their tango show as set up by our guide; we would return still another time for coffee and drinks. Both Tango and Café Tortoni are a Buenos Aires tradition and the café is pretty much copied from a Parisian brasserie. See pictures on Tom's photo show. www.TomsKoi.com.

From the web: *Founded in 1858, Café Tortoni is the oldest coffee shop in the whole country. With a very rich history, it is visited at all times by intellectuals, politicians and artists. Going into the Tortoni to have a cup of coffee, to meet someone there, to attend any of the innumerable cultural functions offered there, is getting into the very kernel of tradition. Tradition is not the past. Tradition, transmission, comes from tradere, to give. Tradition is the offering of the best of the past to the men of the present and the future. It is not only in the walls of the Tortoni - which in themselves are worthy of a museum - but mainly in the spiritual climate that its management has wisely created, that the best of our porteño past can be found. And one day we shall find the best of the present there, once it has aged enough. The tourist who arrives in Buenos Aires has the entire city in the Tortoni: the past, in its walls; the present, sitting at its tables; the future, in the enthusiasm of the people who work there for the sake of culture.*

Listed as one of top 10 cafes in the world at <http://www.acityguides.com/cities/top-10-cafes.html>: Inspired by late 19th-century European coffeehouses, this art nouveau café became an essential cultural stop in Buenos Aires over the years. Many of the city's famous names made it their second home, and it remains a must-see for its stained glass, marbles, bronzes, woods, and photos on the walls. In addition to coffee and some wonderful pastries, it also offers tango shows and poetry recitals at night. Locals still outnumber tourists, who especially love the "chocolate con churros" specialty surrounded by the timeless atmosphere.

Tango has an odd history. It was the lower class if not the prostitutes that developed the tango in Buenos Aires and thus it was basically outlawed or at least shunned. Yet the wealthy kids learned it and on their European adventures they taught it to the French and thus it returned to Argentina as an art. Their tango dancers are treated as heroes and idolized.

Ricoleta Cemetery

The Ricoleta cemetery where Eva Peron (Evita - 'Don't cry for me Argentina') is buried alongside BA's elite families was almost as fascinating as the famous cemetery of Milan. This one is quite condensed but with majestic tombs that cost the same as a house and is a status symbol to have. It is a city within a city with its layout reflecting the design of BA and of course Paris. It also gives an historic overview of the rise and fall of the politicians of Argentina. We had a guided tour and then returned the next day to check it out even more. I don't think it's possible to see it all in a week. Yet there are always crowds of hero worshipers there to see Evita's tomb.



San Telmo

This is the oldest barrio (neighborhood) of Buenos Aires from the 17th century when the Jesuits established it and it remains well-preserved with all its original colonial buildings. Cafes, tango parlors, antique shops, junk shops all in a narrow cobblestone street atmosphere complete with the oldest church and an old market where they still sell product like in the 40s. The main public square of



Plaza Dorrego would be a Montmartre were it on a hill. Our super guide knew a shop serving locals unique pizza type food; the three of us ate and drank beer for a song.

Old wealthy estates can still be imagined but they moved out in the 1870s when a yellow fever epidemic required moving towards the newly established Ricoleta area. The estates later were cut into numerous small tenant dwellings and that's primarily what is seen now. It's said to currently be an important art center.

Yes, there's even a Japanese Garden

Said to be the largest in the world outside of Japan it was worth a visit but if Kyoto is a 10 and Portland an 8, this was a 4 or 5. Each immigrant group has their own park or plaza or statuary and Japan has the garden.



Hotels

Some pretty fine and ritzy hotels are available to include the 5-star Palace Alvear, the Park Hyatt in an old estate but modernized and the Marriott which was the old Plaza Hotel is listed as being one of the ten best bars in the world. We made an effort to have a drink in all of them and I'd intended to have the pricey tea in Palace Alvear but oddly it didn't start until 5pm which is too close to dinner hour.

Subway

Like most European or big cities, except those in America.... there are good and cheap subway systems. We would ride the early 1900 wooden cars Line A. Budapest retains their original wooden subway cars too. From the web: *The subte, from "subterráneo" meaning underground or metro, is a high-yield system providing access to various parts of the city. Opened in 1913, it is the oldest underground system in the Southern Hemisphere and second oldest in the Spanish-speaking world after Madrid's in Spain. The system has six lines, named by letters (A to E, and H) There are 74 stations, and 32 mi of route. An expansion program is underway to extend existing lines into the outer neighborhoods and add a new north-south line. Line "A" is the oldest one (service opened to public in 1913) and stations kept the "belle-époque" decoration, the trains still sport incandescent-bulb illumination and doors must be manually opened by the passengers, as in 1913. Daily ridership on weekdays is 1.7 million and on the increase. Fares remain relatively cheap, although the city government hiked the fares by over 125% in January 2012. A single journey, with unlimited interchanges between lines, now costs AR\$2.50, which is roughly USD\$0.60.*

Outside of Buenos Aires – The Delta

There are only a handful of Deltas in the world and this one is one of the largest with the Ganges in India being larger. We would take a train to San Isidore where the rich live and where the living is much slower and calmer and the streets are tree lined with shops only a couple stories high. Then onto Tigre where it's the same sort of thing but more mixed economically but where it's the start of

living on the water. A boat trip is needed to see the multitude of islands connected only by ferry or private boat and where both the rich and the poor co-mingle. Quite interesting.

From the web: *Tigre is a town in the Buenos Aires Province situated 17 mi north. Tigre lies on the Paraná Delta and is an important tourist and weekend attraction, easily reached by bus and train services, including the scenic Tren de la Costa. It is the principal town of the Tigre Partido. The town sits on an island created by several small streams and rivers and was founded in 1820, after floods had destroyed other settlements in the area, then known as the Partido de las Conchas. The area's name derives from the "tigres" or jaguars that were hunted there, on occasions, in its early years. The area was first settled by Europeans who came to farm the land, and the port developed to serve the Delta and to bring fruit and wood from the Delta and ports upstream on the Paraná river. Tigre is still an important timber processing port. The "Puerto de Frutos" (fruit port) is now a crafts fair located in the old fruit market by the riverside. Antiques shops, riverside restaurants and pubs, the casino and Parque de la Costa, an amusement park and its renowned natural beauty make Tigre a popular tourist destination throughout the year. Tigre is also the starting point for a visit to the Paraná Delta. For locals and tourists alike, vintage mahogany commuter launches and motorboats are the favorite way to travel through its web of inter-connecting rivers and streams. English-style rowing clubs, countless marinas, humble dwellings and elegant mansions from the "Belle Époque", such as the Tigre Club, are to be seen, as well as small pensions and upscale lodges, restaurants, teahouses and simple picnic sites. Tigre has, in recent years, seen an influx of people relocating to the city from other parts of Greater Buenos Aires. In recent years it has seen a rise in upmarket tourism, spawning new spa developments and clientele such as the pop star, Madonna.*

Directional challenges south of the equator?

Tom has an amazing sense of direction and it is rarely to be questioned; he remembers streets and restaurants many years later. Me, I have no sense of direction and get turned around so I'm always especially impressed. Note that Tom has never been to South America, never south of the equator. While on this trip I decided there must be some reverse magnetism because he continually got totally turned around. Something interesting was going on so I asked smart friend Ellen what she thought. Her response, in part:

Is it possible that the sun at noon is actually north? I'm used to it being in the south. Most people who have good directional sense are used to locating themselves by where the sun is. It comes up in the east, moves to the south at noon, and sets in the west. In Buenos Aires, it appears (see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecliptic> for a diagram) that the sun rises in the east, moves NORTH at noon, and sets in the west. If Tom is used to the sun being south at noon, it can be very disconcerting to have it appear in the North.

At my mention of the reverse winds in typhoons and hurricanes, she added: That makes sense. The moon also moves along the ecliptic. The moon's magnetism causes the tides, as the moon's movement around our planet attracts the water molecules so that a rise in sea level sweeps around the earth pulled by the moon. If the moon is north in the southern hemisphere and south in the northern hemisphere, the spiral movements of water would turn in opposite directions.

Ego of Argentinians

It is said they have no end to big egos. Our tour guide told us a number of jokes:

- *How does an Argentine commit suicide?*

He jumps off his ego.

- *How do you recognize an Argentine spy?*

From the sign on his back that says "I am the greatest spy in the world."

- *A man meets an Argentine on the street and asks him for a light. The Argentine starts patting his pants, chests and back pockets. "Sorry", he says, "I can't find my lighter-but man, do I have a great body."*

- *Why does an Argentine look up in the sky when there are storms and lightning?*

Because he thinks that God is taking pictures of him.

- *What is the best deal on earth?*

To buy an Argentine for his true value and then sell him for what he thinks he's worth.

- *What is ego?*

Ego is the little Argentine inside each of us.

- *Why does the Argentine climb to the top of the Eifel Tower?*

To see if Paris is still pretty without him.

- *An Argentine asks a Spaniard, 'Friend, do you know which country is closest to heaven?*

Argentina, I suppose, retorts the angry Spaniard. No, friend, says the Argentine. It's Uruguay! (Argentina's neighbor)

- *A psychologist calls her colleague at 2 am. It's an emergency! she says. At two in the morning? It better be good, says her colleague. I have a unique client, says the first. It's an inferiority complex! An inferiority complex? But they're so common!' shouts the colleague. The psychologist responds, Yes, but ... an Argentine?*

My take: There's a bigger 'BUT' here I can't buy the ego theme as it simply doesn't stand up to logic. I understand that plastic surgery is very common and even a bragging right; anorexia and bulimia are common; they refuse to ask for plain water in a restaurant or for a doggy bag for fear of soiling their image; having a plot in Ricoleta cemetery is a status symbol; there are more psychologists in Argentina than in any other country; winning at soccer and polo is a life and death deal, etc., so if image is such a frail thing, then is not their ego going in quite the opposite direction?

Medical, taxes, nationalization, language, etc.

We learned a lot from the locals but nothing as important as on our own. Tom forgot one of his prescription medications and it was somewhat vital. Just on the off chance we went into a pharmacy and inquired and for a very fee smaller than most American deductibles, he got a full box of a medicine! We learned that medical care is reasonable and totally free. That unions are obligatory but generally accepted since there are so many perks that come with them (such as social clubs and camp grounds in the Delta.) Maybe as bad or worse than in America, everyone looks to earn money in the black so as to avoid taxes.

The Argentine history of nationalization is almost amusing. They keep going back and forth and have just nationalized a major Spanish oil company that's now in the courts. Once they had no assets left and couldn't get a loan. Everyone wants US dollars now and probably because they've been through so much inflation that this is a reasonable safety net. Once inflation was something like 5000%. Yes, all those digits. They'd buy something and by the time they got to the cash register it had gone up. So they lopped off a bunch of zeros once the peso stabilized. Even the tour books say not to save pesos for the next trip because inflation would eat it up. Then we found unmarked doors where we learned we could exchange dollars for 6.20 instead of the official 4.60. If this keeps happening the possible next tour to Mendoza and Patagonia might be a real deal

But overall when it's considered that the country was bankrupt in 2001, it's amazing how well they do.

Oddly we found very little English spoken. Though it's taught in school, very few owned up to having even a word or two. We can only surmise that it's somewhat like us Americans – English, like Spanish, is such a familiar and common language that they don't need it.

Landlady coincidences

One of those small worlds or six degrees happened when I found that the landlady lives in Point Reyes California where I go next. She has two other homes under www.vrbo.com there too as well as a B&B. Then another coincidence – she and husband are from Peru where I go on the trip after next.

Population

The population of Buenos Aires has hovered around 3 million since 1947 due to low birth rates and a slow migration to the suburbs. The surrounding districts have expanded over fivefold (to around 10 million) since then. The majority of porteños have European origins, with Italian and Spanish descent being the most common. Others include Polish, Arab, German, French, Irish, Dutch, Greek, Portuguese, Norwegian, Russian, Swedish, Croatian, and British. In the 1990s there was a small wave of immigration from Romania and Ukraine. The Criollo and Spanish-aboriginal (mestizo) population in the city has increased mostly as a result of immigration from the inner provinces and from other countries such as neighboring Bolivia, Paraguay and Chile and Perú, since the second half of the 20th century. Important Syrian-Lebanese and Armenian communities have had a significant presence in commerce and civic life since the beginning of the 20th century. The Jewish community in Greater Buenos Aires numbers around 250,000 and is the largest in Latin America and the second largest in the Americas.

Political side per New York Times - April 2012

Argentina rebounded from its economic crisis of 2001 with steady economic growth, disrupted only briefly by the global slowdown triggered by the financial crisis of 2008. In 2010, the economy grew by 9.2 percent, the fastest in Latin America. And as its economy recovered, so did the political prospects of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who was re-elected by a wide margin in October 2011. Mrs. Kirchner, who succeeded her husband, Néstor Kirchner, in 2007 to become the country's first female president, made a remarkable comeback. By 2009, her combative style, highlighted by a heated dispute over agricultural export taxes, sent her approval ratings below 30 percent, and economists predicted doom for the subsidy-heavy economic model first orchestrated by Mr. Kirchner. By the time of her re-election campaign, by many measures Argentina was booming: the economy was expected to grow by 8 percent in 2011, the fastest growth in Latin America; employment had reached record levels; and the poverty rate had been cut by more than half since 2007, the government said. The country continues to benefit from heavy government spending, high commodity prices and strong demand from China for its agricultural products.

Still, in re-electing Mrs. Kirchner, voters seemed willing to look past some troubling signs. Inflation soared to over 20 percent in 2011, second only to Venezuela's among major Latin American economies, economists said. And the government has continued to govern with a heavy hand and little tolerance for opponents, including among the news media. Opposition candidates tried to seize on those issues but gained little traction with voters.

Nationalizing the Nation's Largest Oil Company- In April 2012, Mrs. Kirchner announced that the government would seize a majority stake in YPF, the nation's largest oil company. The expropriation would reassert state control over an important pillar of Argentina's economy, but it has increased diplomatic tensions with Spain and the European Union.

Under Mrs. Kirchner's plan, which she announced on national television, Argentina's government would take a 51 percent controlling stake in YPF, which is now majority-owned by a Spanish energy company, Repsol YPF. Of that new stake, Argentina's central government would get 51 percent and the country's provinces 49 percent. The plan is part of a bill submitted to Argentina's Congress that is widely expected to be approved. The Spanish government repeated its earlier pledge to retaliate, though it did not specify how. Following an emergency cabinet meeting in Madrid on Monday evening, José Manuel García Margallo, the Spanish foreign minister, said that Madrid "condemned with the utmost energy" Argentina's move. The European Union also criticized the plan. Repsol owns 57 percent of YPF and said Monday that it would study "all legal options available" to defend its interests and those of shareholders against a forced sale. It was not immediately clear how YPF's shareholders would be affected by the takeover. A tribunal would determine how much compensation that Repsol and other shareholders would receive for their YPF shares. Mrs. Kirchner said that the

expropriation of YPF, a company founded by Argentina's government in the 1920s and privatized in the 1990s, was a "recovery of sovereignty and control." She said the move would allow Argentina to raise production, after the country had recently become an energy importer. For months, the central government and provincial officials had pressured YPF to raise its investments in Argentine production. The government's tactics had included revoking concessions for coveted fields. Seizing YPF appears to be a popular move in Argentina, where caps on residential energy prices and a growing economy have helped push energy demand to new highs. And many Argentines still resent the privatization of state-owned companies in the 1990s, so taking on YPF gives Mrs. Kirchner the opportunity to go after a symbol of that time.

Mrs. Kirchner had already nationalized Argentine Airlines and pension funds, while also pressuring companies in Argentina to repatriate export proceeds in an effort to slow capital flight. Seizing control of YPF sent a new signal about Argentina's policies toward foreign investment, especially in the energy sector.

Background - During the 1990s, seeking to tame hyperinflation, Argentina had tied the value of its peso to the American dollar — a "convertibility" strategy that proved unsustainable because of rising global interest rates. The country privatized many industries, which led to high unemployment but also made Argentina's economy more efficient. By 1999, however, it was clear to most economists that Argentina was marching inexorably toward a default and devaluation. The number of people under the poverty line was growing — it peaked at more than 50 percent of the population in 2002 — and unemployment was soaring.

Social tensions rose. There were eight general strikes in Argentina in 2001, with looting and thousands of roadblocks. Huge lines formed outside many European embassies as waves of Argentines fled their country. In December, the government fell, and the departing president fled as a riot raged below. Over the next 10 days, four presidents assumed power and then quickly resigned before a fifth, Eduardo Duhalde, declared the currency devaluation. A short time later, Congress formally approved the debt default that was already a de facto reality.

In 2003, Mr. Kirchner was elected to succeed the interim president, Mr. Duhalde. Mr. Kirchner embarked on a new economic model — the one that his wife continued to follow. Its pillars are sustaining a weak currency to foster exports and discourage imports, and maintaining fiscal and trade surpluses that can be tapped for financing government and paying down debt.

The Argentine government waited until 2005, when its economy was already in recovery, to conduct the first of two debt States — took haircuts costing them two-thirds of their investments. Notably, the one creditor that was paid back in full — in 2006 — was the International Monetary Fund, to which Argentina owed \$9.8 billion dating to the 1990s. Since paying off the International Monetary Fund, Argentina has not borrowed from the fund. That enabled the Kirchner governments to avoid the agency's typical prescription of cutting state spending.

The Argentine government has maintained hefty subsidies on energy and some food to avoid public discontent — steps that would be anathema to the monetary fund. But high commodity prices have helped let Mrs. Kirchner maintain popularity at home through generous government outlays.

Next? Unusually Tom is now home until the Vienna trip for Christmas and New Years with Marie. And now unusual is that I'm immediately off to a hiking trip at Point Reyes National Seashore after a couple days in San Francisco and ending with a few days in Morgan Hill south of San Jose for a marathon. Then it's another hiking trip in the Tucson area with favorite leaders Steve and Nola before a very quick turn-around to Peru. That's all before December when I go to Dallas for a marathon, then later to Houston for End of the World Marathon and Day After (for optimists). Marie comes on December 23rd. Big deal Vienna trip! Life is good.

Itinerary

Thu Oct 4

4:30pm Depart Newark EWR via CO/UA#1178

7:25pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

9:00pm Depart Houston IAH via CO/UA#53

Fri Oct 5

9:25am Arrive Buenos Aires EZE

Apartment Pacheco de Melo 2009, 4th floor, Apartment #10
Located at corner of Junin, 1 block from Las Heras. Recoleta area
www.vrbo.com/240928
Martin Aguilera is property manager - meet at apartment; standard check in is 2pm
Martin's email martin@excelsiorba.com Cell: +549 11 6093-4184 or US: 917 463 0005

Hostess: Mila Caceres Schuler at 415 663 8866 or 866-663 8866

Fri or Sat Oct 5 or 6

Expo and bib pick up at EXHIBITION CENTER CITY OF BUENOS AIRES

Avenida Figueroa Alcorta Avenue and Pueyrredón

Friday October 5, from 10.00AM to 20.00hs and Saturday October 6th from 10.00AM to 18.00hs

Sat Oct 6

Guided tour arranged through Martin

Sun Oct 7

7:30am Marathon start - <http://www.maratondebuenosaires.com/> - NO English!

Enjoy the springtime while running the marathon in one of the most beautiful and vibrant cities in the Southern Hemisphere, Buenos Aires. The journey starts and ends at the charming Parque de Febrero in the Palermo Neighborhood, reminiscent of New York's Central Park, and winds through Callao Avenue, next to the River Plate Stadium, through Libertador Avenue, and by the renowned Gardel's neighborhood, passes near the waterfront, and finally returns through the city center. If the 42K race seems to be too much of a challenge for you, you can still opt for 21K half-marathon, which starts at the same place, but passes through the northern half of the route. Don't miss this exclusive chance to get a full city tour without the headphones, buses and tour guides. All that you need is a fair pair of running shoes and a strong determination so as not to get distracted by tango dancers, numerous monuments and other breathtaking sights, and other contestants' conversations. If you would like to feel like a Buenos Aires porteño or porteña for a day, join the Buenos Aires Marathon.

The Buenos Aires Marathon has a course for athletes looking to enjoy the beautiful city of Buenos Aires, visiting the most emblematic and historic city. During the 42 km, find beautiful lakes and forests, the luxurious Alvear street with the best hotels, the financial world in the downtown, the Government House, next to the town hall and the cathedral, also the obelisk, the tourist district of San Telmo The famous stadium of Boca Juniors and River Plate, the colorful La Boca, the upscale neighborhood of Puerto Madero, the widest river in the world and the new, modern tunnel Av Sarmiento, ending this amazing journey in the wooded Av . Figueroa Alcorta

Tue-Fri Oct 9-12

Second city tour? Walking tour? Eva Peron history. Opera. Hotels on Avenue Mayo. Day tour to Uruguay Colonia town. Cemetery tour.

Fri Oct 12

8:10pm Depart Buenos Aires EZE via UA#846

Sat Oct 13

6:13am

Arrive Newark

From: One Mesa Reservations <reservations@onemesa.com>
To: Thomas D Burton <tomskoi@juno.com>
Date: Fri, 2 Dec 2011 19:43:02 -0800
Subject: Re: Inquiry from Tom Burton - Oct 3 to 13 - Listing #240928

Hi Tom

I thought I'd give it a try and didn't find a date myself. THE WEBSITES I FOUND MOST HELPFUL FOLLOW:

<http://www.destinationargentina.com/agenda/mes/10-october-2012>

<http://runinfinity.com/race/maraton-buenos-aires>

<http://www.maratondebuenosaires.com/>

http://joobili.com/buenos_aires_marathon__buenos_aires_17145/

<http://www.marathonguide.com/races/races.cfm?Sort=RaceDate&Place=intl&StartDate=8/9/12>

I spent some time on line and it looks like the date is not set. The last web site above shows international marathons and you will note a few months out the date is ??? on most. Am not sure Martin will have better access than your wife might with her running contacts. It look like the organizer web site is <http://www.maratondebuenosaires.com/>

<http://www.maratondebuenosaires.com/contacto.htm> I sent a request for you to their email address on the afore pasted page with the answer to be sent to you directly. Here is their tel #: 54 11 4867-3400.

Hope this helps!

mila

36 Hours in Buenos Aires

"It is better to look good than to feel good," the Argentine actor Fernando Lamas once remarked. He could have been talking about Buenos Aires after its 2002 peso crisis. The financial meltdown emasculated the Argentine economy, but it also made Buenos Aires, the expensive cosmopolitan capital, an attractive and suddenly affordable destination. Now largely recovered from "La Crisis," the city is being energized by an influx of tourists, expatriates and returning Argentine émigrés, and its glamorous night life and conspicuous consumption have reached a fever pitch. While inflation is now reappearing, Buenos Aires, at least for the moment, not only looks good but feels that way too.

Friday

2 p.m.

1) UNDERGROUND CITY

For a fascinating peek into Buenos Aires's history, start at El Zanjón de Granados (Defensa 755; 54-11-4361-3002), a 175-year-old mansion that leads to a series of underground tunnels that go back to the city's early settlements. (The city was founded in 1536.) Now a museum, El Zanjón offers intriguing one-hour tours (20 pesos, or about \$6.30 at 3.16 pesos to the dollar) through a cross section of the city's archaeological layers.

4 p.m.

2) ICE CREAM AND ART

Explore present-day Buenos Aires in the cobblestoned district of San Telmo. While best known for its weekend antiques market, the neighborhood now has plenty of cool shops and restaurants. The ice cream parlor Nonna Bianca (Estados Unidos 407; 54-11-4362-0604) balances rustic Patagonian décor with adventurous flavors like kumquats in whiskey (small cone: 3 pesos). San Telmo is also home to a growing gallery scene including the swank Wussman Gallery (Venezuela 574; 54-11-4343-4707; www.wussmann.com) and Appetite (Chacabuco 551; 54-9-11-6112-9975; www.appetite.com.ar), which specializes in punk-rock-style art.

9:30 p.m.

3) LITTLE ITALY, ARGENTINA

More than a third of Argentina's population is of Italian descent, and Guido's Bar (República de la India 2843; 54-11-4802-2391) fulfills all the Little Italy tropes, from "Volare" on the stereo to the New York City skyline on the ceiling. But the crowd is Argentine and the food is varied and tasty. There is no menu and after one question — "Red or white?" — the waiters bring a seemingly random assortment of plates, like a cold appetizer of spinach and red bell peppers in a paprika mayonnaise sauce, followed by Spanish tortillas, stuffed eggplants, penne in red sauce and pignoli nuts. How the waiter figures your bill (45 to 60 pesos a person) remains a mystery.

11:45 p.m.

4) PLAY IT AGAIN, CARLOS

The spirit of Carlos Gardel, the godfather of Argentine tango, lives on in the Almagro neighborhood, where Bar 12 de Octubre (Bulnes 331; 54-11-4862-0415; www.barderoberito.com.ar) offers weekly music shows. Started in the mid-90s when the famed tangoist Roberto

Medina stopped in to play a few songs, the shows run Tuesday to Friday nights between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. Arrive early to get a good spot, before the crowds of tattooed 20- and 30-somethings jam the tiny, grungy space.

Saturday

11 a.m.

5) CAFE CULTURE

With its prime location and literary clientele that included Jorge Luis Borges, Café Tortoni (Avenida de Mayo 825; 54-11-4342-4328; www.cafetortoni.com.ar) is the most famous of the cafes from Buenos Aires's belle époque. But more magnificent is Las Violetas (Avenida Rivadavia 3899; 54-11-4958-7387; www.lasvioletas.com), a 123-year-old French-style cafe. After closing briefly in the late 1990s, Las Violetas's interior, including its gorgeous stained glass, has been restored. The white-jacketed waiters serve the classic breakfast of café con leche with three croissants (5.40 pesos), but the shocker of the menu is the María Cala tea service, an eye-popping pile of cakes, scones, finger sandwiches and pan dulce pastries (29 pesos for three people).

1 p.m.

6) DON'T CRY FOR HER

To most visitors, the Recoleta Cemetery in the upscale Recoleta district (intersection of Junín and Guido) is known as the place where Eva Perón's body is buried. But the graveyard is also the final home of several presidents, scientists and other influential Argentines. Urban Explorer (54-11-4813-0385; www.urbex.com.ar) offers a history-filled recorded tour through the Art Nouveau, Art Deco and Modernist-style mausoleums (\$20 for 90 minutes). Highlights include the tomb of Luis Ángel Firpo, an Argentine heavyweight who once knocked Jack Dempsey out of the ring.

3 p.m.

7) THE LAND OF POLO

To marvel at Argentina's longtime obsession with horses, head to the Hipódromo Argentino de Palermo (Avenida del Libertador 4101; 54-11-4778-2800; www.palermo.com.ar; entrance fee 5 pesos). Opened in 1876, the elegant racetrack has a French neo-Classical grandstand, the Confitería París restaurant and a basement casino. For up-close action, sit at the wooden tables that dot the flowery lawn. There are 10 race days a month.

7 p.m.

8) DRINKING AND NOT DRIVING

Malba, short for Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, is considered to have one of the finest Latin American art collections in the world (Alcorta 3415; 54-11-4808-6500; www.malba.org.ar; entrance fee 12 pesos). In addition to a permanent collection that includes Frida Kahlo, Xul Solar, Diego Rivera and Guillermo Kuitca, the cavernous museum has also had traveling shows by Lichtenstein, Stella and Warhol. Afterward, head next door to the Museo Renault (Alcorta 3399; 54-11-4802-9626; www.mrenault.com.ar) for one of the city's best martinis and one of the city's weirder new trends: car-branded bars. Audi, Ferrari, Maserati and Mini Cooper have opened up their own boîtes nearby.

10 p.m.

9) MEAT, MEAT AND MORE MEAT

In the shopping-friendly district of Palermo Soho, La Cabrera (Cabrera 5099; 54-11-4831-7002) is a French bistro that takes Argentina's amazing steaks in a new direction. The chef, Gastón Rivera, serves classic beef cuts like juicy ojo de bife (30.50 pesos), but serves it alongside an impressive array of untraditional side dishes including mashed pumpkin with raisins, beet purée and baked pearl onions in red wine. Arrive early to take advantage of the free champagne at the sidewalk waiting area, while you listen to tango-themed electronica music and watch the beautiful crowd of jet-setting locals and trendy visitors.

12 a.m.

10) HASTA LA MAÑANA

If you're looking to dance, head to the consistently trendy Niceto Club (Niceto Vega 5510; 54-11-4779-9396; www.nicetoclub.com), a multistory venue on an industrial strip lined with auto repair shops. Local bands like Los Alamos and the French Kid Loco play before midnight; afterward, D.J.'s play psychedelic trance and dance music. The crowd peaks around 3 a.m. If you prefer places that get going before 1 a.m., head to Mundo Bizarro (Serrano 1222; 54-11-4773-1967; www.mundobizarrobar.com), a night-life mainstay decorated with 50s pinup posters and a stripper pole. For other hot clubs, check out WhatsUpBuenosAires.com (bilingual) and BuenosAliens.com (Spanish).

Sunday

10 a.m

11) ROSES AND ROSAS

For a break from the careering colectivo buses and bumblebee-colored cabs, go to Parque Tres de Febrero (also known as the Bosques de Palermo) on the city's northern edge. The 965-acre park fills on weekends with runners, cyclists, sun worshipers and the odd club kid unwilling to let Saturday end. Stroll past the placid lake, the whiffle ball-shaped planetarium and the Rosedal garden, which has about 12,000 roses. Those club kids are heading to Arkos (Avenida Casares and Avenida Sarmiento; 54-11-4804-2512; www.clubarkos.com.ar) an after-hours party inside the park that starts Sundays at 7 a.m.

1 p.m.

12) LUNCH + DINNER = BRUNCH

Sunday brunch at Olsen (Gorriti 5870; 54-11-4776-7677; prix fix, with champagne, 27 to 39 pesos) has become a mainstay of expatriates, filmmakers and wealthy Argentines by offering two Buenos Aires rarities: brunch and ethnic food. The décor is pure Scandinavia, with curvy plywood furniture and 60 types of vodkas. Dishes include herring and smoked salmon with Argentine bondiola (pork tenderloin). Call ahead to get an outdoor table on the heated deck, or on the couches around the fireplace (avoid the frenetic tables near the kitchen). In a concession to Argentines' overheated night life, brunch goes on until 8 p.m.

The Basics

Many major American and Latin American airlines fly to Ezeiza International Airport near Buenos Aires from Kennedy Airport in New York. A recent Web search showed round-trip fares starting at around \$900. The 20-mile taxi ride to the city's center runs about 60 pesos.

The Art Hotel (Azcuena 1268; 54-11-4821-4744; www.arthotel.com.ar), opened in 2004, was among the city's first boutique hotels. The 36 rooms are housed above an art gallery in exclusive Recoleta. Room rates, quoted in United States dollars, start at \$65.

The Scandinavian-style Home Hotel (Honduras 5860; 54-11-4778-1008; www.homebuenosaires.com) has become a de rigueur stop for the Wallpaper* magazine set and the place where the rock groups U2 and Franz Ferdinand held concert after-parties. On summer Fridays, Tom Rixton, a co-owner and English record producer, spins what he calls "stupid party music for girls to dance to." The 18 rooms start at \$115.

Palacio Duhau-Park Hyatt Buenos Aires (Avenida Alvear 1661; 54-11-5171-1234; www.buenosaires.park.hyatt.com), opened in July 2006, has 164 rooms split between the renovated 1934 Duhau family mansion and a recent wing. Rooms start at around \$370.