

ARGENTINA

Written by

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“Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above.” Cole Porter (1893–1964), U.S. songwriter. “Don’t Fence Me In,” Harms, Inc. (1935). Music composed by Jerome Kern (1885-1945); written for never-released film *Adios, Argentina* (1935); used in the film *Hollywood Canteen* (1944).

With a population of over 36 million, Argentina is the second largest nation in South America. Nearly 18 million people live in Greater Buenos Aires alone, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, is the country's social, cultural, financial, economic and political hub.

During the nineteenth century, Italians, Spanish, French, Welsh, English, Ukrainians and people of other nationalities immigrated to Buenos Aires, making it one of the most culturally diverse cities in the Americas.

Although Spanish is the official language of Argentina, English and other foreign languages can be heard within immigrant communities. Most Argentines are fluent in Spanish, but English is taught at schools,

and most young people either speak or understand English. As a result, it may be a good idea for anyone moving to Argentina to gain at least a fundamental grasp of Spanish.

Argentina's national currency is the Argentine Peso, which is directly tied to the rate of the US dollar. Thus, Argentina is a dual-currency country where either monetary system can be used.

Climate

As the eighth largest country in the world, Argentina covers several different climactic regions. Precipitation is common in the Andes Mountains in the western region of the country, but some areas are drier than others. Although the weather is hot and the sun can be dangerous in the summer, nights are cool and sometimes frosty. The summer rainy season may bring flash floods. Except during the summer, the weather is quite cool.

To the east of the Andes, in the northern section of the country, subtropical and tropical climates prevail. This is known as the Chaco region and consists mostly of open savannah.

The Pampas, or the central area bordering the Atlantic ocean on the eastern coast, is where the majority of the country's industry lies. The

area is mostly level plains, marsh grass and beach. Summers here are quite humid, particularly along the coast. Towards the interior of the country, the climate is much drier. In the southern portion of the country, Patagonia, the weather is very cool and dry.

Due to the fact that Argentina lies below the equator, the seasons are opposite those in Asia, Europe, and North America.

Argentina's mean annual temperature is 17 degrees Celsius (61 degrees Fahrenheit), with a maximum temperature of 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) in January and a minimum temperature of -5 degrees Celsius (22 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

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Culture

Although Argentina can be cosmopolitan and progressive, when relocating here it is better to err on the conservative side. In most aspects of Argentine culture, dress, lifestyle and business, being conscious of the country's traditional cultural aspects will be beneficial. However, with such a young core population, a youthful, more accepting, and casual atmosphere is beginning to arise; this is

particularly true of life today in the suburbs.

In Argentina, people are more open and affectionate publicly and are not afraid to get closer to others--a cultural practice which may not be considered the norm in other societies. Argentines tend to stand very close and touch each other while talking.

Doing Business

Argentines tend to start a little later in the morning than the time to which foreign nationals may be accustomed. As a result, it may be very difficult to make a meeting before 9:30 a.m. It is now customary for everyone to be on time for meetings as they have been scheduled. It is no longer acceptable to be late on either part.

If planning a meeting during a meal, there are several things to keep in mind. It is not customary to have meetings during breakfast.

Argentines tend to work late into the night rather than start early in the morning. The best time to have a business meal is during lunch. Do not try to talk about business solely, however. Argentines tend to believe that meal times are a social time, and not a time to talk business. The common dinner hour is around 10:00 p.m.

Although organizational structures are sophisticated and business dealings formal, Argentines do business in a relaxed, friendly fashion. They tend to create alliances, work well in teams, and share credit for accomplishments. Although they are very argumentative, they avoid open conflict and direct opposition to viewpoints, especially those of their superiors.

When socializing with Argentines, try to avoid the topics of politics and religion. As Argentines tend to feel passionately about both, they may not be immediately receptive to a foreigner's perspective. Still, it is a good idea for all foreign nationals to have at least a general knowledge of both. Several safer topics of conversation include music and sports. Argentines are quite often passionate fans of football (soccer), so this is always a good topic.

In general, conservative business dress is the rule, but this may vary depending on the region. While Argentines in general are informal in the way they dress, men and women should make a point of dressing formally when doing business. This does not necessarily mean wearing a suit; rather, business casual attire is more appropriate. It is only necessary to wear a tie when dining in very exclusive places or attending a formal social event.

Most businesses are open from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Thus, an Argentine workweek can be almost 48 hours. Government offices have varying availability, with some open from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and others from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday; it is usually best to call beforehand. Retail stores are always extending their hours, which were typically from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Social Customs

When arriving at a meeting or small party, you should make a point of greeting everyone in the room. (Likewise, it is customary to say goodbye to everyone before departing.) Formal titles may be used upon first meeting, but after that will be more relaxed.

Argentines generally do not exchange gifts when visiting the homes of colleagues, unless they are fairly good friends with the host in question. However, if invited to a dinner party or a reception, it is a good idea for the guests to bring flowers, a good wine, chocolates or some small gift for the host or hostess.

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