

Argentina



“Our country must open to the world, but open to the world in a realistic way, that is to say, to be prepared to compete on the framework of regional political preferences fundamentally by going through the Mercosur and with combined and flexible policies according to our productivity and related to circumstances of international context...” Presidential Speech by H.E. Dr. Nestor Kirchner to the Honorable Legislative National Assembly, 25th May 2003.



Dr. Nestor Kirchner, President of Argentina, talking to the press, University of Matanza, Buenos Aires province. (May 2003)

Argentina is the eighth country in the world for its surface and mostly populated in the urban areas presenting wide natural areas which are almost uninhabited. Although it is one of the main barns of the world only 30% of the country has been ploughed. The rest of the land still shows beautiful landscapes from the semi-arid environments, to jungles and forests where nature still prevails. The **Pampas**, one of the three largest fertile plains in the world cover around a third of the country's surface with a temperate and humid climate. To the south is **Patagonia** an immense plateau bordered in the west by the southern end of the **Andes** range. In the **Northwest** region the Andean mountains, the desert plateau of the Puna, the valleys, the gorges, the hills and the picturesque villages endowed the area with vigorous and contrasting physical and cultural features. In the central region the **Pampa Hills** a feral area of hills, escarpments and waterfalls alternate with valleys and plains with a temperate climate. The **Chaco** in the country's middle north is a vast wooded plain with marshes and lakes. To the northeast, backed by the big Paraná and Uruguay rivers is the region known as **Mesopotamia**. In the north, a subtropical climate and jungle areas, and in the south temperate weather with plains suitable for farming.

GOVERNMENT

It is republican, representative and federal, as determined by the Constitution. Politically the country is divided into 23 provinces and the federal capital is the City of Buenos Aires. The national president and vice-president, as well as the heads of the City of Buenos Aires, the provincial governors and the members of the legislative bodies are chosen by the universal, secret and compulsory vote of citizens of either sex above the age of 18. Presidential re-election is allowed for one consecutive 4 year period.

MERCOSUR

The Mercosur or Mercado Común del Sur, known as the Common Market of the South is an ambitious economic integration project which includes Argentine, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Other South-American countries are in different stages of association with Mercosur among which Chile and Bolivia, and others are considering the formal request to begin the association process: Colombia, Perú and Venezuela. Mercosur's main objective is to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of the four economies by opening markets and accelerating economic development, making better use of available resources, conservation of the environment, improvement of communications co-ordination of macroeconomic policies and the complementation of the different industries.

Although the final target of Mercosur is to become a common market with free movement of all productive and financial resources, as well as have a common trade policy, which will demand the co-ordination of macro-economic policies and the harmonisation of legislation, since January 1995, with the gradual elimination of regional tariffs and a common external tariff. Mercosur really operates as a customs union.

CULTURE

The Colón Theatre is ranked among the top opera houses in the world with its beautiful architecture and perfect acoustics. In Buenos Aires there are about 90 theatres and 100 cinemas with a large variety of shows.

Five Nóbél awards in diverse fields have been won by Argentina men: in physiology and medicine, B. Houssay (1947) and C. Milstein (1984); in chemistry, L. F. Leloir (1970) while C. de Saavedra Lamas (1936) and A. Pérez Esquivel (1980) received for peace award. The Argentine *gaucho* should be specially mentioned as described in “Martín Fierro” by José Hernández because Argentines have inherited from the *gauchos* a strong personality, the love of freedom and permanent quest for justice.

TANGO: Known world-wide, tango is the dance “par excellence” in the city of Buenos Aires. Born in the bars of the poorer quarters, it was looked down upon by high society until it became fashionable in Europe during the Great War. It being returned in triumph and came to be identified as a symbol of the city, reaching its peak with Enrique Santos Discépolo and Carlos Gardel.

SPORTS: One of the great obsessions of Argentines is soccer. The city of Buenos Aires has 17 stadiums many of them sitting more than 40,000 spectators. Another genuine sport is Polo which has acquired international reputation due to the dexterity of its players considered the best in the world. Notable is the fishing for its quality and quantity of their species found in the Paraná and Uruguay rivers in the northeast; and in Patagonia, the Andean rivers and lakes from the province of Neuquén to Tierra del Fuego. Golf is also played in most provinces. Most noteworthy golfing centres are the seaside resorts of Pinamar and Mar del Plata. Also in the provinces of Córdoba, Entre Ríos, Santa Fé y Río Negro, where the celebrated international Llao-Llao Hotel course is located.