



# When in ... Buenos Aires



Dan Perlman

Buenos Aires is one of those unique and absolutely fabulous cities that you can not help falling in love with. And as soon as you leave the city, you want to return.

Buenos Aires has a very special, unique buzz - sensual, hip, artistic, flamboyant and very sophisticated.

The people, the European architecture with Art Nouveau and Neo-Classical buildings mixed with Latin spirit, culture and charm, make this city a wonderful place to discover.

We asked Dan Perlman, trained chef and sommelier as well as co-owner of the private restaurant Casa SaltShaker in Buenos Aires, to share some of his favourites.





Palacio Duhau - Park Hyatt



Fierro Hotel

## Where to stay

### Best Grand Hotel

#### Palacio Duhau - Park Hyatt

A century ago, a couple of local multimillionaires built themselves adjacent mansions in the heart of old Recoleta. Over time, those mansions became one – the Palacio Duhau. Renovated a few years ago, half of the block square complex has become one of the finest luxury hotels in Argentina, if not all of South America, with world-class restaurants, one of the city's best wine cellars, a cheese bar, amazing spa, art gallery and terraced gardens. One wing of the old mansion remains, occupied by a dowager descendant of one of the city's wealthiest families. Since she is the last of her line, one can only speculate on the Park

Hyatt's expansion into this stunning property sometime in the future.

Avenida Alvear 1661 in Recoleta  
[www.buenosaires.park.hyatt.com](http://www.buenosaires.park.hyatt.com)

### Best Boutique Hotel

#### Fierro Hotel

Casually located on a leafy street in the midst of Palermo's hottest restaurant zone is this strikingly designed hotel that offers a mix of casual, with touches of luxury. The rooms are ample, clean and impeccably designed. The hotel staff are gracious and welcoming and happy to assist with any request. The ground floor features one of the city's hottest restaurants, Hernán Gipponi (or simply "HG"), where a visitor may get anything from a delicious breakfast to one of the best tasting menus

around. The wine cellar is spectacular and is overseen by a couple of the country's most noted sommeliers.

Soler 5862 in Palermo  
[www.fierrohotel.com](http://www.fierrohotel.com)

### Posada Palermo

Located on a quiet street and ideally situated on the border between trendy Palermo and chic Recoleta, the B&B is the perfect home away from home for travellers. Small, well kept, and beautifully appointed, it's an oasis from the bustle of the city, a place to relax, to sleep, and to get to know fellow visitors to the city. The hosts speak flawless English and are happy to help with arrangements for tours, reservations and pretty much anything. A fantastic breakfast spread greets the morning and

provides visitors with ample fuel for a day of Buenos Aires sightseeing.

J. Salguero 1655, between Paraguay and Soler in Palermo  
[www.posadapalermo.com](http://www.posadapalermo.com)

## Where to eat

### Best Brunch

#### Chez Nous

A relatively new venture, the restaurant in the delightful Algodon Mansion Hotel turns out some of the better food in the Recoleta neighbourhood. Sunday brunch is the star, with a choice between a reasonably priced a la carte menu or, for those with a healthy appetite, the truly all-you-can-eat menu.



But this is no buffet. Instead, armed with the aforementioned a la carte menu, guests just keep ordering anything and everything on the menu that strikes their fancy. Portion sizes are cut down in keeping with the idea of a self-designed tasting menu, which allows putting together a selection of eggs, pastries, soups, pastas, sandwiches, main courses and dessert. The menu also includes mineral water, coffee or tea, and a glass of wine.

Montevideo 1647 in Recoleta  
[www.algodonmansion.com/restaurant](http://www.algodonmansion.com/restaurant)

### Best Dinner

#### Pura Tierra

Going on half a dozen years, this has been our first choice for a special occasion night out. Located in a stunning converted house in one of the more coveted neighbourhoods, one

can't help but feel taken care of from the very first moment. The chef's deft touch with local ingredients, ranging from vegetables to fish and poultry to game meats, always delights the senses. Local tradition meets creative impulse in well-thought-out dish after dish. Impeccable service just adds to the experience, as does the brilliantly fashioned wine list. If just one night in Buenos Aires was possible, this would be the not-to-be-missed spot.

3 de Febrero 1167 in Belgrano  
[www.puratierra.com.ar](http://www.puratierra.com.ar)

### Best for Steak

#### Don Julio

Everyone in town has their own favourite spot to grab a steak and after all, that's a big part of what dining out in Buenos Aires is all about. It's quite possible to dine at over-hyped, high-



Chez Nous



Pura Tierra

priced spots in some of the posher neighbourhoods, or else dine at little holes-in-the-wall on any random block. We opt for somewhere in between, with great steaks, an amazing wine list (available in interactive form on computer tablets brought to the table), classy service, and an atmosphere that provides that touch of that classic smoky ambiance, great fun, and delicious food.

Guatemala 4691 at the corner of Gurruchaga in Palermo.

### Best for Sushi

#### Yuki

Sushi is a relatively new phenomenon to this generally fish-phobic culture. After all, if you're not going to eat it cooked, are you really

going to consider it raw? That means that the average sushi spot often serves nothing more than salmon, smoked salmon, and cooked shrimp sushi rolls and pieces, and inexplicably, almost always laden with cheap quality cream cheese. Yuki is at the far other end of the spectrum. The chef is the second-generation in a 50-year-old restaurant. His father sent him as a teen to train with his own master back in Japan, and only let the son return to take over the reins after more than a decade of training. The fish is flown in, fresh daily, and varies with the season, as any good sushi bar should. Sit at the bar and accept the chef's whims for a fantastic omakase menu accompanied by a selection of sakes. Reservations are a must. Pasco 740 in Congreso.



## Best for Fish

### Oviedo

For years, this was one of the few spots in town to offer great seafood, creatively prepared. Until recently, the supply of fish and shellfish often arrived in town on a bed of ice in the back of a pickup truck, driven 1,000 or more miles over a couple of days from either Patagonia to the south, or Brazil to the north. Bringing fish in by freezer truck or flight was relegated to a few top restaurants, and this was one of them. Even with the expansion of the delivery network, Oviedo maintains its top-of-the-heap ranking, turning out some of the most interesting and beautiful fish dishes in the city. For the non-fish eaters, the kitchen has an equally winning way with meats. A

well-selected and interesting wine list is available, with bottles to accompany any dish on the menu. It all comes at a price, but one well worth it.

Beruti 2602 in Recoleta,  
[www.oviedorest.com.ar](http://www.oviedorest.com.ar)

## Best Tasting Menu

### Aramburu

A tough category. Until recently no one – literally no one – offered a real tasting menu in this city. Like mushrooms after a storm, however, the last couple of years have seen them springing up on, or in place of, regular menus in high-end restaurant after high-end restaurant. Many are molecular cooking-driven, though not all. Aramburu, which

until early 2011 was a good, but relatively unknown neighbourhood restaurant, has taken a middle ground, using molecular technique to enhance solidly good, delicious cooking that blends Argentine and Spanish flavours and ingredients in a dozen gorgeously presented plates. The restaurant is located on a seemingly abandoned block in an iffy neighbourhood and from the outside, may appear to be somewhere you probably shouldn't be. But ring the bell and enter into the serenity and beauty of the space. Service is among the best in the city, from both the waitstaff and the house sommelier, who has won awards as one of the best in the world.

Salta 1050 in Constitución  
[www.arambururesto.com.ar](http://www.arambururesto.com.ar)

## Best Regional Cooking

### El Sanjuanino

Not every meal needs to be about dining at the luxury end of things, especially at lunchtime, when there are museums to visit and sights to see. Nestled right in the heart of old Recoleta, a short walk from all the major luxury hotels in the zone, this spot has been turning out some of the best northern regional cooking in the city for decades. It is THE place to get one's bearings when it comes to Argentine classics like empanadas and the national stew, locro, while any of dozens of other dishes are sure to please the palate. It's the sort of place where it's best to go with the house wine, served in a pitcher, rather than ordering anything off the supremely average



Oviedo



Palacio Duhaupark Hyatt





Aramburu

wine list. Just dig in, relax, let the wickedly funny waiters take care, and slum it a bit.

Posadas 1515 at Av. Callao in Recoleta.

### Best Creative Argentine Food - Casual

#### Las Pizarras Bistro

Blackboards, blackboards and more blackboards. It seems like every surface of this small, café-style spot is covered with them. But then that's what the name means. Visitors might think they're in some spot they'd have frequented back in their college days, on a budget, but they're in for a treat. The chef is one of the rising rock stars of local cuisine, and is turning out soul-satisfying creative versions of classic local dishes. At whim, the menu may change, even during the middle

of dinner service. The blackboards, an eraser, and some chalk make it easy. Service can be a trifle slow, and at moments a bit frustrating, but the food is well worth the wait, and in the end, after a glass or two of wine from an equally fleeting and changeable selection, it's best to just relax and get with the neighbourhood vibe.

Thames 2296 in Palermo  
[www.laspizarrasbistro.com](http://www.laspizarrasbistro.com)

### Best Creative Argentine Food - Elegant

#### Tarquino

Not an easy find, this restaurant is located in the back of what appears to be a multi-storey apartment building off to the side and behind the Park Hyatt Palacio Duhau. There's a teeny

plaque for a sign and a guy with a walkie-talkie in front blocking the way. Guests advise him they have a reservation and they will be escorted through a winding hallway into a beautiful greenhouse, with trees growing right up through the middle of the dining room and out through the roof into the night sky. The menu is focused on red meat and more red meat. There are other things available, but this is where the chef's talents shine. Touches of molecular, or as it's called here, *cocina de vanguardia*, abound, but not at the expense of solid, delicious cooking. Great wine selection, stellar service and a top-class bar all add to an experience worth writing home about.

Rodriguez Peña 1967 in Recoleta  
[www.tarquinorestaurante.com.ar/](http://www.tarquinorestaurante.com.ar/)

## Cafés

### Best Café

Seriously, there is no best café in this city. There are tons of best cafes in this city – it's a café culture. The best coffee? Any of the branches of Establecimiento General de Café

[www.estcafe.com.ar](http://www.estcafe.com.ar)

The best people-watching relaxing outside? La Biela across from the famed Recoleta Cemetery, at Av. Quintana 600

[www.labiela.com](http://www.labiela.com)

The best people-watching inside? The famed Café Tortoni near the Casa Rosada and main square of Plaza de Mayo

Av. de Mayo 825

[www.cafetortoni.com.ar](http://www.cafetortoni.com.ar)



Sitio oficial de turismo. Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires [www.bue.gob.ar](http://www.bue.gob.ar)

Café Tortoni



## Where to drink

### Best for Cocktails/Wine Bar

878

Simply known by the numerals of its address, "ocho siete ocho" started off a few years ago as a traditional, hidden away speakeasy that required guests to not only know it was there, but be convincing to the black-suited thug at the door in order to be allowed in. Turns out he's the nicest possible guy, and so are the rest of the staff in this now popular bar and lounge. The best cocktails in the city, great lounge food, and a backroom cigar bar for those into stogies. Grab a table or grab some lounge seating, and order away. A great place for a pre-dinner drink, an after-dinner drink, or to just stay and have a casual bite. Service can be a little scattered and slow, so if time is limited, let the waitress know upon ordering, and maybe even ask for the bill at the same time.

Thames 878 in Palermo  
[www.878bar.com.ar](http://www.878bar.com.ar)



878

## Where to shop

### Best Wine Shop

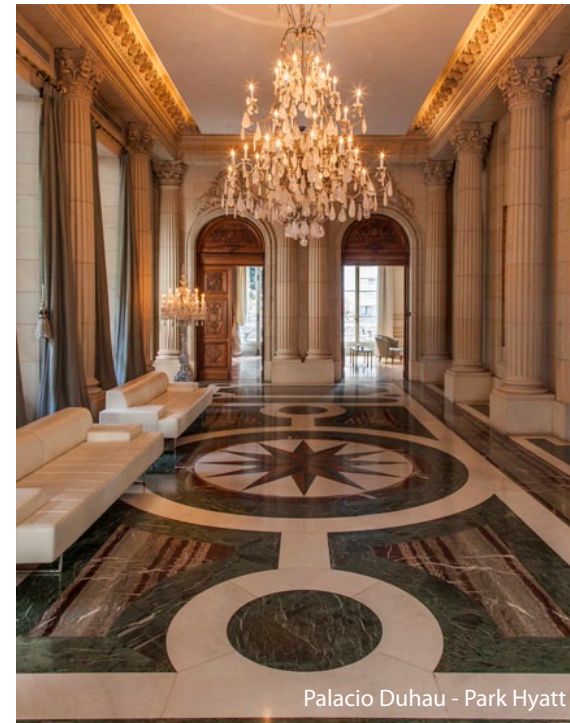
Terroir

While numerous wine shops dot the city and many are worth visiting, what makes this place stand out is its commitment to the harder-to-find bottles from different parts of the country. The owners curate a great collection in a comfortable, if out-of-the-way space that is a converted house.

They will arrange tastings, ship wines overseas, and basically take care of all one's wine-related needs.

They also both speak fluent English, a plus in a country where the language is neither the first nor second idiom of choice. Spend some time searching the bins, or come in with some criteria in mind and let them help with a selection.

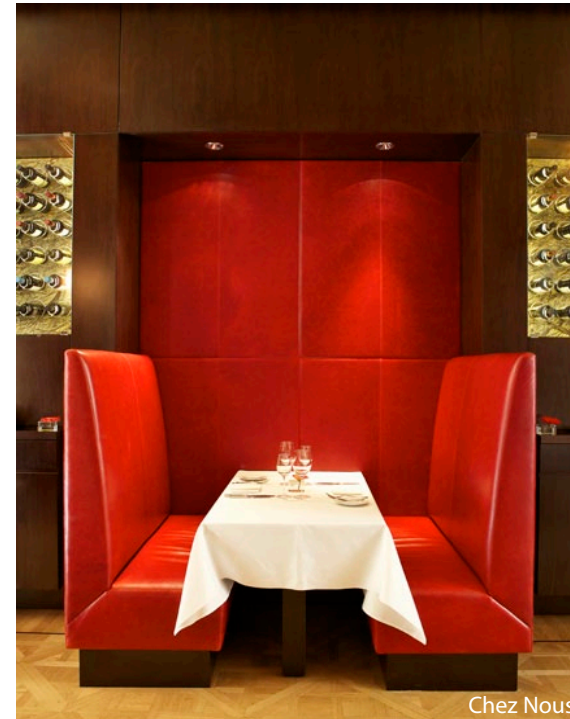
Buschiazco 3040 just off Av. del Libertador in Palermo  
[www.terroir.com.ar](http://www.terroir.com.ar)



Palacio Duhau - Park Hyatt



Fierro Hotel



Chez Nous



Las Pizarras Bistro



## Best Ice Cream

Cadore

Oh, the heat I'll probably take for this one! First, there are the chains, from the ubiquitous Freddo, sort of the 31 flavours chain of Argentina, to Chungo, Volta, and Persicco, all of which have their ardent fans. And then there are the standalones, mom-and-pop shops that generally only people in the same 'hood know about, or perhaps a fervent group of foodies from other parts of town. But no one who's ever set foot in this teeny spot in the heart of the theatre district has ever stepped out without being completely blown away by the quality and selection of the gelatos on offer. One of the closest versions of Argentine helado, to traditional Italian gelato, this spot traces its roots back to a cart in Milan in the 19th century. Not too shabby.

Av. Corrientes 1695 in San Nicolas  
[www.heladeriacadore.com.ar](http://www.heladeriacadore.com.ar)

## What to do

### Best Major Museum

National Museum of Decorative Arts

Anyone can give directions to one of the city's major art museums – the Bellas Artes (Fine Arts), the MALBA or Fortabat (Modern) are going to pop up on any tourist-centric list. But go a little off the beaten path – although still in the same area as the first two – and enter the grandeur that is the Museo Nacional de Arte Decorativo. A former palace that has been maintained, salon after salon contains period art, furniture, clothing, and more from the history of Argentina through the last two centuries, in situ. The museum's main salon is also the site of monthly concerts and opera "readings". There's a great café on the museum grounds. For the avid museum goer, this one's not to be missed.

Av. del Libertador 1902 in Palermo  
[www.mnad.org](http://www.mnad.org)



### Best Small Museum

Xul Solar

One wants to say "only in Argentina", but the truth is there are quirky museums dedicated to local art icons in every major city in the world. Xul Solar is Argentina's, well, Picasso.

A bit of a nut, he was a supremely talented artist who also designed his own religion, language, music system and instruments to go with it, and probably more, all because he felt that the "human versions" of these things were not quite adequate for his purposes, whatever they may have been.

Wandering through this museum is like a glimpse into the mind of someone who truly was a bit alien, and it's completely fascinating. The only unfortunate thing is that the only literature and labelling in the museum is in Spanish, with no translations to other languages (not even his own), and the daily

tour is also Spanish only. It's no matter, really, because just the visuals are enough to keep one going for an hour or two.

Laprida 1212 in Recoleta  
[www.xulsolar.org.ar](http://www.xulsolar.org.ar)

### Best Galleries

Arroyo Street

The city of Buenos Aires is packed with art galleries and picking any individual one that is tops would be near impossible because it's so dependent on personal taste. But the clear place to go is the two-block stretch of Arroyo Street in the heart of Retiro, where both sides of the street are lined with gallery after gallery. There's even a sort of shopping mall that contains a couple of dozen smaller galleries. Everything from contemporary and modern art, to European and Argentine classics, can be found on this strip, with a range of prices from reasonable to wallet-shocking.



## Best Parks & Gardens

### 3 de Febrero - El Rosedal

The entire northeastern edge of the city is lined by a huge, multi-kilometre-long park called 3 de Febrero that encompasses everything from playgrounds and sports fields, to wooded areas, lakes and themed gardens and more.

One could spend a day or two wandering it and discovering all of its secrets. One of the best parts is El Rosedal, one of the world's largest rose gardens, with more than 11,000 rose bushes representing about 3,000 varieties. No matter what time of year, there are always plants in bloom, though not surprisingly, the best time to visit is late spring and early summer.

Enter off Av. Sarmiento, just north of the corner with Av. del Libertador.

## Best Tour

### Ernesto Yattah

While it's tempting to recommend one of the major tour agencies that offers bike tours or double-decker bus tours or walking tours with groups of folk, one of the best ways to see this city is on foot with a personal guide. It gives a whole new dimension to what is on offer with a one-on-one conversation with someone completely knowledgeable about the city.

Ernesto is a local historian, scholar and rabbi and offers up both regular and Jewish city tours that cover the history, important buildings, politics, culture, and more of the core of the city, starting with the earliest points of immigration and following the growth of the city out to the more residential areas.

He offers several options for different sorts and lengths of tours. Each is customized to individual interests and timing.

Contact is via e-mail at [eyattah@hotmail.com](mailto:eyattah@hotmail.com)

## Best Bookstore

### Liberia Fernandez Blanco

While it would be easy to just go with the flow and recommend the same place everyone recommends – the converted grand theatre that is now Ateneo bookstore – the main reason to go there is simply to gawk at what they've done to what used to be one of the city's most important theatres. The book selection, while extensive, is all just whatever's come in to print in the last few months. Where Buenos Aires excels is in its numerous historical bookshops that offer books that are simply unobtainable anywhere else – not just in BA, but often in the world. One of the best for finding the hardest-to-locate historical tomes on Latin American history and literature is this library-like spot in the midst of the downtown business district. If they don't have it, and can't get it, it's likely no one can. For the true book lover.

Tucumán 712 in Retiro/Microcentro.

Dan Perlman is co-owner of the highly regarded private restaurant Casa SaltShaker in Buenos Aires. As a trained chef and sommelier he worked in some of the top restaurants in New York City before moving to Argentina in 2005.

A long time food, wine and travel writer his work has been internationally published in a wide range of magazines and newspapers. He is the author of the indispensable Saltshaker Spanish-English-Spanish Food & Wine Dictionary and has both a cookbook and a restaurant guidebook to Buenos Aires in the works.

Casa SaltShaker - [www.casasaltshaker.com](http://www.casasaltshaker.com)

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