

CONVENTION CAPITAL: *Buenos Aires cityscape*

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# Número Uno

When it comes to meetings in the Americas, Buenos Aires tops the list. BY IRVINA LEW

Travelers call Buenos Aires the “Paris of South America” for its broad boulevards, Belle Époque architecture and vibrant European lifestyle. In 2012, about 400,000 conference goers were among its 5 million visitors. As a meeting destination, Buenos Aires is *número uno*, hosting about 815 events in 2012 (665 meetings plus 150 fairs).

In 2013, the International Congress and Convention Association ranked Buenos Aires the No. 1 city of the Americas for the fifth year. Buenos Aires organized 20.8 percent of the total meetings in Latin America with more than 3,000 attendees and — between 2003 and 2012 — hosted 32.5 percent more 3,000-person events than Washington, D.C.; Toronto; Montréal; or Vancouver. Bilingual MICE experts at the Buenos Aires Tourist Office and Convention & Visitors Bureau support every endeavor.

Meeting planners appreciate that two airports and 31 airlines provide ample transportation access. Buenos Aires lies just 15 minutes from Aeroparque Jorge Newbery, the regional airport, and 45 minutes from Ministro Pistarini (Ezeiza) International Airport. Aerolíneas Argentinas, LAN Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines are among the services. Getting around is easy with

city trains, subways, 144 bus lines and 40,000 very affordable taxis to hail or call (phone numbers are valuable late at night or in the rain).

Currently, two major exhibition venues provide 40 acres of exhibition space and 500 conference rooms. La Rural, the flagship convention center, in prime Palermo, hosts more than 200 annual events in seven modern pavilions that encompass 860,000 square feet for up to 8,900 attendees. La Rural launched as an agricultural fairground in 1886, and its 107,000-square-foot outdoor expanse still hosts Argentina’s Exposition on Livestock and Agriculture.

Centro Costa Salquero, the riverside trade center, opened in 1993. Conveniently located near the regional airport, it accommodates 6,000 in an area measuring 335,000 square feet.

A third venue, the Buenos Aires Convention Center, scheduled to open this year, illustrates the city’s commitment to invest (\$41.3 million) in both the MICE market and the city’s Green Agenda. BACC features one divisible space for 4,500 attendees; another for 800; and indoor parking for 900 vehicles. This high-tech, mostly underground, 234,000-square-foot, tri-level space incorporates solar panels and rooftop greenery. It is designed to meet sustainability standards, enhance the quality of life and attract expo-tourism. According to *La Nación’s* Angeles Castro, “BA’s visionary Urban Greening Plan will create another ... 16 acres of public green space.” Its location, adjacent to Parque Carlos Thays in Recoleta — named for architect Carlos Thays, who designed the botanical garden and the terraced garden at Palacio Duhau — is within walking distance of 5-star hotels, the imposing University of Buenos Aires School of Law, MALBA (Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires) and the impressive Recoleta Cemetery.

**MICE:**  
meetings,  
incentives,  
conventions and  
exhibitions

“The Culture Capital of Latin America” also provides event space in unique venues. Among them, the exquisite, horseshoe-shaped Teatro Colón seats 2,600; The Usina del Arte, a recycled former electric factory, holds 1,250; and El Centro Metropolitano de Diseño (IncuBA), a contemporary design center, accommodates 200 to 800.

Outdoor stadiums have capacities ranging from 20,000 up to 74,624 (at the River Plate Stadium). The 20 existing sport sites will increase in number before Buenos Aires hosts the 2018 Youth Olympic Games.

Among the international corporate convention center hotels, the Hilton Buenos Aires in Puerto Madero is the newest and largest (71,000 square feet for 2,700 attendees) and convenient to the high-rise financial district.

A handful of exclusive 5-star hotels in posh, aristocratic Recoleta offer extraordinary settings, state-of-the-art meeting spaces, world-class dining and extensive wine programs.

Mirrors, bronze and marble decorate the grande dame, Alvear Palace Hotel. Along with meeting rooms, its ballroom hosts banquets for 700. Kosher meals can be provided for up to 400 people.

The Four Seasons Hotel Buenos Aires boasts seven newly completed salons including a 4,478-square-foot ballroom for 450; smaller groups gather in, or with a view of, 1930s-era La Mansión.

The art-filled Palacio Duhau – Park Hyatt Buenos Aires hosts attendees within the formal Duhau Palace, circa 1934, in terraced gardens, in the elegant underground art gallery and in modern meeting rooms where 450 gather in its 3,200-square-foot ballroom.

Two ultra-luxe, boutique hotels in Recoleta welcome small, private groups. Algodon Mansion features 10 Argentinean-style suites, a restaurant and a covered outside patio plus a rooftop

pool. HUB Porteño offers 11 individually decorated guestrooms, two intimate living rooms, a rooftop terrace and restaurant Tarquino (accessed without disturbing hotel guests).

Across the river, Faena Hotel Buenos Aires — once a Puerto Madera grain warehouse — transformed into a Philippe Starck-designed hotel with meeting rooms and a 250-seat ballroom. Nearby, the Faena Art Center offers spacious special event space for 700 on each of two floors.

Beyond meetings, the delightfully green and monument-studded city lures visitors to its outdoor cafés and restaurants, which fill at about 9:30 p.m., and to tango salons to listen, watch, learn, participate and admire the fluid dance.

Culture lovers flock to opera (Teatro Colón), theater (Teatro Cervantes) and museums (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes). History buffs head to Plaza de Mayo to see the Casa Rosada, the president’s mansion. Photographers flock to La Boca, the historic port, to capture its multicolored tin houses on La Caminito and to the boat-shaped Fundación PROA art museum. Sports enthusiasts play or watch soccer, *pato* (basketball on horseback) and polo. Gourmands relish grass-fed Argentinean beef at *parilla* barbecue restaurants and *vinotecas* for wine tastings in Palermo SoHo. Shoppers value the advantageous exchange rate and tax-free status in designer boutiques in Recoleta and independent design stores in Palermo Viejo. On Sundays, they leave their jewelry in the safe and browse the vendors at the open-air San Telmo market and the side streets leading to the open-daily El Mercado.

The LGBT community extends throughout the neighborhoods in the first country in Latin American to legalize same-sex marriage (in 2010). And between the multitude of pasta and pizza outposts; the avant-garde design options; and the exquisitely crafted leather bags, shoes and jackets for sale, it’s no wonder some Porteños say, “We are Italians who speak Spanish.”

**Algodon Mansion**  
algodonmansion.com

**Alvear Palace Hotel**  
alvearpalace.com

**Buenos Aires Convention Center**  
buenosairesbureau.com

**Buenos Aires Tourist Board**  
turismo.buenosaires.gob.ar

**Centro Costa Salguero**  
ccs.com.ar

**Faena Hotel Buenos Aires**  
faena.com

**Four Seasons Hotel Buenos Aires**  
fourseasons.com

**Fundación PROA**  
proa.org

**Hilton Buenos Aires**  
hilton.com

**HUB Porteño**  
hubporteno.com

**Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes**  
mnba.gob.ar

**Palacio Duhau – Park Hyatt Buenos Aires**  
park.hyatt.com

**La Rural**  
www.la-rural.com.ar

**Teatro Cervantes**  
teatrocervantes.gov.ar

**Teatro Colón**  
teatrocolon.org.ar

**FULL CAPACITY:** Hilton Buenos Aires meeting space  
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