Exploring the Cultural Landscapes of Argentina
ON-SITE GUIDE 2012–13

THE AMERICAS
STUDY ABROAD

LEARNING ABROAD CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Important Names and Addresses

To assist you with your study abroad planning, the Learning Abroad Center provides a full range of services from preliminary program advising to assistance with re-entry. As you read through this handbook, do not hesitate to contact the Learning Abroad Center with any questions.

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In case of emergency, you or your friends and family members should feel free to contact the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000. After business hours, there will be a recording giving a pager number to call for emergencies. The Learning Abroad Center has someone on-call 24 hours per day to deal with emergencies. This person will contact the on-site staff as needed.

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We encourage you to make a copy of this page to give to your friends and family members.

Know Before You Go

Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, Online Orientation (www.UMabroad.umn.edu/onlineOrientation/sponsored/index), and the Learning Abroad Center's policies (www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies/index). These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Friends and Family Resources

Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/parents. Topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel are discussed.
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Introduction

By Angela Carlson-Lombardi

“What I would like the most is to sit beside you and to tell you everything, just tell you.”

-Matilde Mellibovsky, Mother of Plaza de Mayo, Founding Line

Martin

I saw you
you were the same
but you were not

I dreamt you alive
and left
with your smile at the wheel
to wander
the dreams we had together

I touched you
but you were not
We ran companionable races
like before
on the road that went to the same place

I continued on, alone,
carrying your presence

-Marcelo

These two excerpts, one from a mother whose daughter became one of the thousands of Argentines who “disappeared” in the 1970s, and the other from a photographer who fondly remembers his best friend who was kidnapped during the Argentine regime, are vivid testimonies of the need to give voice to the longing of those whose loved ones were so cruelly torn from their sides during the dark years of the last Argentine dictatorship. Drawing together these accounts are ways of restoring a history that, despite attempts to blot out of the memory of the disappeared, lives strong, even 32 years after the 1976 coup.

In our time in Argentina we will piece together these memories, discovering how individuals in the legal, social and cultural realms have salvaged the collective memory of the past. We will visit long-standing human rights organizations like The Center for Legal and Social Studies. Founded by lawyers during the time of the authoritarian regime, this is one of the foremost locations for contesting violations of the past and present. We will speak with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, who, wearing their emblematic white scarves bearing the embroidered names of their children, still march on a weekly basis in front of the seat of power of the country. And, we will meet with artists and writers who have given voice to both the atrocities of the past and the tender memory of those who no longer remain. The collective efforts of these individuals have changed the cultural landscape of the country. Their works create a type of memory map endowing physical space with personal history and emotion.

We will balance our time between these site visits and exploring the spectacular cultural life Buenos Aires offers. In our excursions we will uncover the elegance of Europe and the spirit of South America that live side by side in this capital city of over 8 million. Ambling along the grand boulevards, relaxing in café’s bordering expansive parks, you will be amazed by the capital city’s magnificent architecture. Taking in a tango show, enjoying Argentina’s fabulous food and perusing the many street fairs are other ways you can spend your free time. A Sunday visit to the Feria de Mataderos, a local fair that offers demonstrations of gaucho horsemanship, traditional crafts and regional food is also on order.

Other features of this Global Seminar include side trips such as an all-day visit to San Antonio de Areco, a ranch just outside Buenos Aires; a half-day boat tour of the Tigre Delta to survey its islands and inlets; and a weekend trip to Montevideo, Uruguay, where we will visit the Museum of Memory and learn of the Uruguayan response to the military take over in that country. Back in Argentina, you will have the option to volunteer at a local service organization for two afternoons which will provide you with an opportunity for experiential learning.

I look forward to sharing this stimulating and concentrated Global Seminar experience with you!

About This Guide

This handbook provides information about the academics and housing of your Global Seminar. It also begins to familiarize you with some cultural specifics of your host country. The information is intended to prepare you for your upcoming experience. It offers an overview on certain topics, but not comprehensive information. You are encouraged to read other sources of information about your destination city and country in preparation for your stay. You will find a resource list at the end of this handbook. You may also want to check your local library for additional resources. The better prepared you are prior to your departure, the more quickly you will adjust and be able to function effectively in your host country.

As you read through this handbook, do not hesitate to contact the Learning Abroad Center at the University of Minnesota with any questions.
About Global Seminars

Global Seminars are an amazing way to learn about a subject in another country. You not only learn in the classroom and from a professor, but also from the culture and people around you. All of your senses will be stimulated and this experience can feel overwhelming at times.

Your classmates, program leader, and on-site partner can all be a source of support as you adjust to your new environment. However, the ultimate success of this unique opportunity depends on your ability and commitment to make the most of the experience and to adjust effectively to the changes you will encounter.

Global Seminars are an academic experience. As is expected when you are on campus, on the Global Seminar you are expected to attend classes and fulfill all of the course requirements. Remember, since this is a three-week condensed course, missing one day of class can mean missing a lot of material. You are also encouraged to take advantage of being in such a unique location by experiencing the culture you are visiting. Be prepared to manage your time so you can achieve both academic success and cultural exploration. It is best to plan most independent travel after the program.

Preparation and Planning

Documents

For information on obtaining a passport, contact the Learning Abroad Center. You may also want to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC), which can get you additional discounts if you plan to travel independently after the program. Applications are available online. You can find more information on both documents at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/travel/travDocuments/index.html.

If you are not a US citizen, it is your responsibility to check with your own consulate and the host country’s consulate or embassy for special travel document requirements (re-entry permits, etc.). This process may also take time to complete, so it is very important to take care of this immediately.

Your passport and other vital travel documents should be kept in a travel pouch around your neck or waist if they cannot be placed in a safe. If your passport is lost or stolen, you should contact the local police and the American Consulate or Embassy immediately.

Keep copies of all of the following documents and phone numbers to report them if they are lost or stolen. Store these in a safe place, such as in your carry-on luggage.

- Passport
- Airline ticket
- Insurance policy
- ATM card and credit card with emergency number
- Phone numbers at home in case of an emergency
- Driver’s license

Money

Personal spending habits vary too greatly to state exactly how much it will cost to live abroad. The amount depends on your personal spending habits, the amount of traveling you plan to do, and the value of the dollar. Take these into consideration when planning. You may want to refer to the budget estimate for this program, which can be found at: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/GLOBAL_SEMINARS/argentinaHumanRights/fees/BSArgHR_May10.jpg.

Currency

Argentina’s currency is the peso. One peso is divided into 100 centavos. You can check the current exchange rate at www.xe.net/ucc. Check before you travel since the value fluctuates daily.

Debit Card

One of the easiest and least expensive means of obtaining money is at an ATM. If you have debit card, it takes money directly out of your account and does not incur interest or a cash advance fee. A debit card works exactly like a credit card but you must have the money available in your account. This is very convenient because you do not have to worry about bank hours or pay the commission for converting your money. The drawback is that if you have a problem with your magnetic strip, as frequently happens, or your card is lost, you will have to wait for another card to be sent to you. This problem can be avoided by having a back-up method. If you chose to get a debit card it should be on the Cirrus or Plus networks and you will need a 4-digit personal identification number (PIN). Contact your bank for information on obtaining a card and to find out if your card can be used internationally.

Credit Card

Money can be transferred to you easily from the US with a credit card (ask your bank if you will be able to use your card abroad). A credit card is also a good resource for emergency situations. Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in larger cities. However, when traveling outside of Buenos Aires, it is advised to carry cash.
Lost or Stolen Debit/Credit Cards
Carry phone numbers of the debit/credit card company with you on your Global Seminar (make sure you have numbers that can be accessed from abroad), and keep them separate from your cards. This way you can report the missing cards without delay.

Safeguarding Your Money and Documents
Be careful with your money. Pickpockets do exist and generally strike when you are in a crowd. Another common place to lose money to thieves is on trains when traveling at night. A money belt is a good idea to have when traveling. If your money is lost or stolen, your international insurance can assist you in obtaining emergency cash.

Health and Safety
Refer to these sites for health and travel information:

Consular Information Sheet
www.travel.state.gov

Health Information for Travelers to Argentina
wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/argentina.aspx

AIDS/HIV Prevention

Food & Water Precautions
wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/safe-food-water.aspx

Health Insurance
Every student will be provided with CISI international health insurance while participating in a Global Seminar. Pay attention to the Online Health & Safety orientation to get more information about your insurance coverage and health and safety issues.

You will receive an email from enrollments@culturalinsurance.com prior to your departure. This email will provide information about your insurance plan as well as a card that you can print out and carry with you.

Immunizations and Vaccinations
We recommend that you consult with a travel physician or travel nurse prior to departure to discuss your travel plans and what immunizations or vaccinations may be required.

Safety Precautions
It is important to consider safety issues and use common sense while traveling. No students should travel alone at night, and you should always keep your personal belongings hidden. Use caution when giving out your address or phone number.

You should consult the US State Department Travel advisories for up-to-date information on travel precautions for the country where you will be studying. Travel advisories are available for reference in the Learning Abroad Center or at www.travel.state.gov.

Arrival
The group flight itinerary for this program is available here: http://www.villageinc.com/Global Seminar Buenos Aires Winter 2012 - 13.htm

When you arrive in Argentina, you will be met by Fundación José Ortega y Gasset staff and transferred from the airport to your housing.

Practical and Program Information

Group Dynamics
Global Seminars are unique within study abroad programs because of the strong emphasis on the group. Studying abroad in a group can be a very rewarding experience. It is common to form strong bonds with people and make life long friends. Working together and relying on each other has led to positive and successful study abroad experiences. Many Global Seminar groups organize reunions long after the program has ended.

In order to make the most of the group experience it is important to maintain some basic principles of living and studying together. Respect for each other’s differences is intrinsic to living and studying in a group successfully. Some
differences can be obvious such as gender, religion, disabilities, or national origin, while others are less obvious such as learning disabilities or social class. As you are preparing to be open-minded and respectful to the differences of another culture, also prepare to be open-minded and respectful to your fellow classmates.

Another characteristic of a successful group can be seen in the interaction of its members. Finding the strength in each person and letting them do what they are good at is useful to the group. Likewise, supporting each other in moments that are difficult is also important. In this way the group can use the different skills of each member to surpass any challenge.

FERPA

It is important to be aware that the Learning Abroad Center and the Office of Student Finance, in compliance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and Regents policy, cannot share financial information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without your written permission. You can download a Student Information Release Authorization at onestop.umn.edu. Complete the form and send it to OneStop Student Services, 200 Fraser Hall, 106 Pleasant St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. The Learning Abroad Center must receive a copy of a notarized Power of Attorney form in order to share any program-specific information.

Considerations During Planning

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Issues

Attitudes towards sexuality vary greatly from country to country. Some cultures are open about homosexuality, and strong gay communities exist in many cities. However, some cultures and peoples are intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos or laws against such relationships may exist. We encourage you to find out how different sexual preferences are viewed overseas and where your support may exist, so that your time overseas can be as enriching as possible. Consult your program guide or program sponsor for more information on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues in your country of choice.

For additional resources, you can contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at www.academic.umn.edu/equity.

Students With Disabilities

Many of the disability accommodations or services that are provided at US universities may be different or unavailable overseas. Being in a new environment can also be stressful, and accommodations that you may not have needed at home may become necessary in an unfamiliar setting. Participants with any kind of disability, whether hidden or visible, should contact the Learning Abroad Center in advance to discuss their particular needs.

On-Site Support

The Fundación Ortega y Gasset in Buenos Aires will provide the on-site support for this course. The Learning Abroad Center partners with them to offer the University of Minnesota’s semester-long program in Buenos Aires. You can learn more about Fundación Ortega y Gasset by visiting their website: http://www.ortegaygasset.com.ar/

Housing and Meals

Students will live in shared host families in both Buenos Aires and Bariloche, Argentina. Host families will provide breakfast and dinner daily. Students are responsible for their own lunches while on the program.

Communications

Telephone

Buenos Aires is four hours ahead of Minneapolis (CST). Phone rates in Argentina are affordable at $0.03 to $0.06 per minute. You can purchase international calling cards in Argentina. You may also bring an international calling card from home, but it may be more expensive. To make an international call from Argentina, dial 00 to get a line outside the country, then the country code (1 for the US), city (area) code, and finally, the number. To make a collect call, phone AT&T at 0800.555.4288. A pre-paid phone card is cheaper than the methods described above. Phone cards are available in various denominations at kiosks and telephone companies offices located throughout Buenos Aires.

Past participants have said it is worthwhile to purchase a cheap $50 cell phone while in Argentina. Doing so avoids having to worry about tracking minutes used.
Mail
Argentina’s postal service is fairly slow. Letters to the US can take between 10–14 days while postcards, classified as low-priority, take even longer, up to several weeks. When sending a postcard, place it in an envelope as it will be processed more quickly, and this will ensure faster delivery to the US. Since you will not be in Argentina for very long, do not arrange to have any mail sent to Buenos Aires.

Post offices are located throughout Buenos Aires. They are open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. There are several private companies that deliver packages both locally and internationally: Federal Express, DHL, UPS, Andreani, and Oca.

Email
You will have limited access to a computer lab with internet. You may be able to access your email in internet cafes, but we recommend that you spend your free time exploring the city since you are there for a short time.

Academics

Program Leader
Angela Carlson-Lombardi of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese will be your program leader. As the program leader, she will be in regular communication with the Fundación administrative staff and should be your first contact for academic matters. For emergencies and logistical concerns while in Buenos Aires, please contact Bea Comte whom you’ll meet upon arrival.

Program Structure
Classes will be held Monday through Thursday. Instruction will consist of a combination of classroom discussion, journaling, and assignments that will require visiting various locations. Participants will gain hands-on experience by working with a human rights NGO. The course is capped off with a final project. Weekends are free for studying and exploring Buenos Aires and its surroundings.

The program is designed to be academically rigorous, but it is up to each individual student to maintain good study habits and complete assignments on time. It is also mandatory to be on time for group excursions.

If you have a personal emergency that requires you to return from the program early, you must speak with the program leader in advance to discuss the possibility of an incomplete.

Course
Classes will be held at the Fundación Ortega y Gasset’s classroom facilities located in downtown Buenos Aires. Instruction will consist of a combination of classroom discussion and group projects as well as field trips to significant sites.

The program is designed to be academically rigorous, but it is up to each individual student to maintain good study habits and complete assignments on time. It is also mandatory to be on time for group excursions.

If you have a personal emergency that requires you to return from the program early, you must speak with the program leader in advance to discuss the possibility of an incomplete.

Books and Materials
You will be required to purchase textbooks before your departure, unless otherwise indicated by your program leader. You will also need to purchase a reading packet in Argentina. Also bring a notebook and pens/pencils for class. These can be brought from home or purchased abroad, although they are often more expensive than US products.

Student Grievances
Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota sponsored or cosponsored learning abroad programs offered through the Learning Abroad Center, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the Learning Abroad Center, the Director of the Learning Abroad Center, the Student Dispute Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel.
For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.

Life in Argentina

Geography and Climate
For residents of the Northern Hemisphere, Argentina offers travelers the possibility of enjoying two summers in one year, but the country’s great variety and elongated geography means visiting is pleasant during any season.

Argentina’s climate ranges from subtropical in the north to humid and steamy in the center, and cold in the south. The upper Andes region has erratic rainfall, flash floods (in
summer), searing heat, snow at higher elevations, and the Zonda—a hot, dry wind. The lowlands receive sufficient rainfall to support swampy forests and upland savanna, but rainfall decreases towards the west; shallow summer flooding is common in the east. The winter dry season is pronounced, and the summer heat can be brutal. The flat Pampas areas are also vulnerable to flooding. Patagonia is mild year-round in the east and glacial in the south. Patagonian weather ranges widely during the year, from relatively temperate in the northeast to glacial along the Andes to fairly chilly in the far south.

**Government and History**

Buenos Aires was established as the capital of the new Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata in 1776. This naming was an acknowledgment that the region had outgrown Spain’s political and economic domination. European immigration, foreign investment and trade were hallmarks of the new liberalism. However, excessive foreign interests made the economy particularly vulnerable to world economic downturns. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of very few, unemployment rose as smallholdings failed, and farmers were forced to leave the land and head for the cities.

The beginning of the 20th century saw increasingly weak civilian rule and economic failure, leading to a military coup in 1943 that paved the way for dictator Juan Perón. An obscure colonel with a minor post in the labor ministry, he won the presidency in 1946 and again in 1952. With his equally popular wife Eva, he instituted a stringent economic program that stressed domestic industrialization and self-determination. He was ousted in 1955 and banished to Spain; this move initiated almost 30 years of disastrous military rule. Perón returned to rule briefly in 1973; he died in office in 1974, bequeathing power to his third wife, Isabel. Her government fell in 1976, and the new military government instituted a reign of terror called the Dirty War, during which paramilitary death squads crushed government opposition and up to 30,000 people ‘disappeared’.

This internal conflict ended in 1983 as Argentina seized the British-controlled Falkland Islands (Malvinas to the Argentinians). Britain declared war and eventually won them back. Ownership, however, remains disputed.

This failure helped end military rule, and the Argentina returned to the 1853 constitution. Carlos Menem instituted major economic changes, pegging the peso one-to-one with the US dollar in 1991, which reduced inflation from 5000% in 1989 to 1% in 1997.

Fernando de la Rúa, elected in 1999, promised a crackdown on corruption, and tough fiscal measures to balance Argentina’s budget. But austerity plans prompted nationwide strikes and demonstrations, which grew violent after the government instituted harsh restrictions on bank withdrawals. Argentina plunged into economic and political turmoil in December 2001 when it defaulted on a 132 billion US dollar loan repayment - the largest default in history.

On January 1, 2002, Eduardo Duhalde became president. A staunch Perónist, Duhalde took a populist and protectionist stance by unpegging the peso from the dollar, which caused the peso to lose almost 70% of its value.

**Life in Buenos Aires**

More European than South American in flavor, Buenos Aires’ heart boasts bustling streets, grand avenues, old-time cafes and stylish restaurants. It’s a city of tragedy and elation; a vibrant, cosmopolitan capital where locals are renowned for their flair and cockiness, even in times of adversity.

For the traveler, Buenos Aires delivers. Wander the cobbled streets, marveling at faded architectural glories and colorfully painted metal houses; talk world politics and *fútbol* (soccer) in an atmospheric old cafe; then tuck into a famously delicious Argentine steak.

**The People**

European influences permeate Argentina’s art, architecture, literature and lifestyle. With an excellent university level education, the citizens of Argentina have quite modern and refined tastes and customs. Argentine arts and sciences have achieved international renown among many audiences. Probably the best known manifestation of Argentine popular culture is the Argentine Tango, a dance and music which has captured the hearts of romantics world-wide.

Argentina is primarily a country of immigrants. The 1850s and the 1930s saw the most concentrated influx of immigrants with over 3.5 million people relocating to Argentina—primarily from Italy but also from Spain, Wales, England, Germany, Switzerland, France and Poland. The influx was dramatic and unlike many other countries, which absorbed immigrants over a long period of time, it led to a sudden and vibrant mix of cultures and language.

**Language**

The official language of Argentina is Spanish and when visiting Argentina, it is advisable to learn some of the language prior to visiting. This will ensure that you gain maximum enjoyment from the trip and that you are not constantly referring to language phrase books—which can prove cumbersome.
For those visiting Argentina with an understanding of the language (even if very basic), you may find it slightly difficult to understand the spoken dialect at first as the language is usually spoken with a distinct accent and a strong Italian lilt. However, most people quickly become accustomed to the differences and are able to overcome them.

Although Spanish is the official spoken language, the history of Argentina makes for an interesting mix of other spoken languages.

**Solutions for Common Communication Difficulties**

You can hear and decipher language better in context. If you know the subject matter, you will better anticipate what you will hear. For example, if you ask how much something costs, you will hear numbers. If you ask where the supermarket is, you will hear directions and distances.

Carry a small Spanish-English dictionary or phrase book, such as the “Berlitz Spanish Phrase Book and Dictionary.”

Practice Spanish pronunciation. When you learn a new phrase or expression, use it as frequently as possible, to reinforce it in your memory.

Carry a small notepad and pen with you. If you are having trouble hearing names, prices, addresses, etc., ask the person to write them down for you.

**Entertainment**

**Activities**

The arts are king in Buenos Aires; there is only one activity to master in this city and it is, without doubt, dancing. Luckily, tango, flamenco, Latin, salsa and folk dance lessons are widely available (details can be found at tourist offices).

Fútbol (soccer) is a national obsession, and witnessing this passion at a live game is part of the Buenos Aires experience. Tickets for entradas populares (bleachers) and plateas (fixed seats) are relatively cheap, but they can skyrocket if a team is doing well. Tickets are available at stadiums, or try www.ticketek.com.ar, which sells tickets to certain games.

**Shopping**

As the saying goes, ‘An Argentine will make one peso and spend two’. Buenos Aires residents love to shop; and they love to look good while doing it. After all, you never know who’s checking you out (or who you’re going to run into). Try Avenidas Florida and Santa Fe for two splendid starters.

**Nightlife**

After dinner, Buenos Aires is your oyster. Take in a film, sit at a bar or cafe until three, then head off to the clubs—they’ll just be heating up. For the hippest scene in town, head to Plaza Serrano (in Palermo Viejo).

**Food and Meals**

Local dining is famous for the quantity and quality of meat offered, but visitors may choose from a wide variety of regional dishes and cuisine influenced by the immigrants who settled here from across Europe and Asia. In Buenos Aires there are Italian, Spanish, Japanese, French, Nordic, Mexican Chinese, Arab, Turkish and Armenian restaurants.

The most popular meal is el asado or parrillada, a mixed grill of steak and other cuts which no visiting carnivore should miss. A traditional parrillada includes meat, sausages, chinchulines (small intestines), riñones (kidneys) and morcilla (blood sausage), but do not let that put you off unless you are a vegetarian. It is prepared over charcoal or a wood fire and accompanied by chimichurri, a tasty marinade and often served with different types of salads and/or fried potatoes.

There are also restaurants often referred as Parrilladas that strictly serve barbecued meat and chicken. Some of them are called Tenedor Libre and they are “All You Can Eat” for a fixed price.

There are a number of local fast-dishes called minutas. Not to be confused with fast-food chains. Minutas are dishes that take a short time to prepare but are not as unhealthy as the famous fast food. They are often served in restaurants and bars, and the most popular are: milanesa (breaded meat) with fried potatoes, the empanadas (dough filled small portions of ground meat, olives, boiled egg and spices. There are many other combinations, too), pizzas, salads and pasta among others.
As dessert, it is common to see Porteños having fresh fruits, ice cream or flan with dulce de leche (sweet caramel). We recommend that you try the flan because it is delicious and a typical delicacy.

In Buenos Aires people are used to eating dinner rather late, around 10 p.m., in both homes and public places.

**Vegetarians**

There are very few strictly vegetarian restaurants. However, vegetarian dishes can be found on most menus. Mark that you are a vegetarian on your housing form so we may inform your host family.

**Tipping**

In the restaurants tipping 10% of the bill is standard. It is also curious to tip 15–20% at spas and 50 centavos to movie theater ushers who show you your seats. Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped unless they perform extra services such as carrying luggage, etc.

**Water**

Tap water in Buenos Aires is potable, however each individual is different. If you are concerned, it is best to buy bottled water.

**Electricity**

You should avoid taking electric appliances such as hair dryers, curling irons, shavers, etc., with you, as these types of appliances will not operate without adapters. Voltage in Argentina is 220V 50Hz and the outlets take different plugs than in the US.

**Cultural Adjustment**

Global Seminars are group oriented in nature. The group aspect and the length of the program together provide some interesting challenges to cultural integration. While you will be forming bonds with people in the Global Seminar group it is important to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the program and by being in another country to interact with the host people and culture.

Here is a list of some ways that you could take advantage of these opportunities:

- Frequent places like markets, local restaurants, or a bakery.
- Do what the locals do. Don’t spend a lot of time in touristy hangouts.
- Ask your hotel concierge about his/her favorite restaurant/shop/activity.
- Participate in activities your program may offer that includes host country nationals.
- Spark up conversations when possible with host-country nationals (such as with your restaurant server, shop owner).
- Venture out in smaller groups to make it easier to meet people.
- Make an effort to speak the language.

You can minimize the stress involved in adjusting to life in your host community and get maximum benefit from your experience abroad by preparing adequately. The cultural differences you encounter can enrich your life by presenting you with a different worldview and new approaches to solving problems.
Cultural Adjustment

The On-Site Experience

What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another or you may skip a step entirely.

Initial Fascination: On arrival your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic, you feel like the focus of attention and activity.

Initial Culture Shock: The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

Surface Adjustment: After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

Feelings of Isolation: Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process.

Integration/Acceptance: After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, professional, and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

Return Anxiety: Just when you feel at home in the new country it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person and apprehension grows when you think about people at home that may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

When in any of the above phases you may experience: changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment, however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your programs onsite support staff.

A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn (1963)
Appendix

Packing

It is extremely important that you pack lightly, as you will be carrying your luggage yourself during the program, often for long stretches in airports, bus, and train stations. Take only as much as you can carry easily by yourself. One way to measure what is “easily carried” is to pack everything you would like to take, pick it all up, and walk around the block. If you are not comfortable doing so, you may want to re-evaluate what you have packed.

Important: Take clothing that needs a minimal amount of care. This is especially important if you plan to do any independent traveling. Rolling your garments reduces wrinkling and saves space. You might also want to pack your clothing in plastic bags inside your suitcase to prevent rainwater from leaking into your clothing.

The following is a suggested, basic packing list. Remember to bring only what you think you will really need.

Packing List

You should adjust according to your own personal tastes and style!

- 1 sweater or jacket for chilly days
- 2 pairs jeans or pants
- 1 skirt
- 1 nice outfit (for evening wear)
- 3–4 shirts
- 2 t-shirts
- 2 pair shorts or capris
- 1 pair nice shoes
- comfortable walking shoes/sandals
- 1 pair pajamas
- 1 swimsuit
- raincoat or umbrella
- 7 or more sets underwear
- 7 or more pair socks
- course materials, textbooks, this student handbook
- photocopies of your passport

Other necessary items may include: toothpaste, toothbrush, shaving kit, deodorant, comb, washcloth and towel, a temporary supply of soap, shampoo (in unbreakable container), small packet of detergent, aspirin, supply of necessary prescription medicine, extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses, safety pins, and small flashlight. Most of the above personal items can be found abroad; however you may want to bring enough of your favorite brands to last you during your stay.

Resource List

Centers for Disease Control travel information
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/

US State Department Travel Advisories and Consular Information

Travel/study abroad information for GLBT students
www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/

Argentina Travel
www.lonelyplanet.com/argentina/
www.fodors.com/world/south-america/argentina/buenos-aires/
www.allaboutar.com/

Argentina News
www.buenosairesherald.com

Guidebooks

It is recommended that you purchase a travel guidebook before you leave. Guidebooks explore regions, countries, and cities and offer invaluable information such as maps, recommendations, background information, and travel tips. Some of the more popular guidebooks that are geared towards students include Lonely Planet, Let's Go, Footprints, and Rough Guides. You can browse through guides in the travel library at the Learning Abroad Center in 230 Heller Hall. Lonely Planet Guides can be purchased there as well.