

5 Hotels

Buenos Aires by David Duran



photo courtesy Mansion Vitraux

There's no place more unique and special in South America as Argentina. The country that somehow stands out above the rest has so much to offer, but for now, I am focusing on the city everyone knows and loves; Buenos Aires. Maybe it's the beauty of the accent heard from the Argentine people, or the smells of fresh empanadas baking in ovens. Or it's possibly the tastes of some of the best wines in the world. There's just something extra spectacular about Buenos Aires. Honestly, for me, it's a combination of all of the above, mixed with the overwhelming feeling I get each time I walk past the La Casa Rosada (the pink house). I know the story of Evita might be controversial to some Argentinians, and I don't pride myself as being an Argentinian political aficionado, so let's just leave it at that. The pink house is stunning, day and night, and I can't help but hum the tunes of the beloved musical.

While visiting, I was able to master three neighborhoods and visit many others. I opted to stay in various hotels as to help acclimate myself in the city and improve my orientation of where everything is located.

My first stop was San Telmo, one of the most beautiful areas of the city, and also the oldest. Artists dominate this part of town, and it is clearly evident by all the fantastic street art. On each Sunday of the month, there is a fabulous artisan street fair that takes over. The street food and amazing finds will easily take up your entire day.

In an area filled with antique shops, there is a completely modern and oddball (in the best way possible) boutique hotel. *Mansion Vitraux* is architecturally stunning. From the outside, the simplistic block design leaves you pondering what could possibly be inside. Entering through

the massive wooden door, answers your curiosities and excites your senses. The hotel makes up for its small size by offering a top-notch spa and spectacular pool. I am such a fan of this unique spa that even if you don't stay the night here, it's worth booking a treatment just to enjoy it. Each room is different from the others. Some offer up



photo courtesy
Hotel Club Frances



photo courtesy
Loi Suites Recoleta



photo courtesy
Panamericano Hotel



photo courtesy
Four Seasons Hotel Buenos Aires

projector televisions on electronic black out shades, while others have an interesting mix of furniture style. Perfectly located within San Telmo, and walking distance to a subway line, Mansion Vitraux will not disappoint.

My next stop was to the Recoleta area of Buenos Aires. This posh neighborhood that is home to designer shopping, high traffic tourist areas, and great dining options is located just close enough to the city center and Palermo (another hip neighborhood of BA). Since shopping is big on my list, and the massive Recoleta Mall has an overwhelming selection of shops, I decided to focus the majority of my time here. First stop was **Hotel Club Frances**. Plain and simple, this place is just beautiful. The attentiveness of the staff and grand lobby are so inviting. The rooms are oversized and comfortable, with spacious workspace, eating area and a giant bathroom with an equally giant tub. The property truly has the feel of an upscale apartment building rather than a hotel, making it more like home.

Just down the street and conveniently located just feet from the Recoleta Mall is **Loi Suites Recoleta**. This new concept in hotel services has a tropical winter garden accompanied by a swimming pool and restaurant. More simplistic and light in nature, the hotel rooms are romantically sized and tastefully decorated. There's a calming feeling when you enter the property and for a more affordable price comes the same level of service you would expect from the more costly competitors. Museums, art galleries and parks are also within walking distance.

To round out my Recoleta experience, I stopped by **Four Seasons Hotel Buenos Aires**. You can't go wrong with this hotel brand. The superb service level and exceptional service is standard at every Four Seasons property, and the Recoleta location is no exception. This massive property exudes superiority and with good reason. It's a true spoil, but definitely worth every penny. For the quality foodie, Elena, a stunning two-story courtyard restaurant, is the newest hot spot for dining, drinking and socializing. The restaurant is named after Elena Peña Unzué, the bride of La Mansión, a historic building that plays host to the most opulent suites and well-to-do social events. The menu has a wide selection of the beloved meats by locals like Argentinian kobe beef. Fresh seafood

is abundant and of the highest quality. The restaurant is a must when visiting, especially if you are trying to make an impression on friends or work colleagues.

When visiting Buenos Aires, the city center is truly the epicenter of where it all happens. My last stop had to be here. The streets are packed with locals going to and from their offices, as well as visitors exploring the government buildings in addition to structures that are highly noted as the best of the best in the world, like the Teatro Colón, considered one of the best theaters in the world for acoustics and artistic value of its construction. Across the avenue of the opera house is another iconic building and one of the country's best hotels. The **Panamericano Hotel** is 23-floors of pure perfection. Entering the lobby, one senses exactly what they experienced just outside the doors; Argentina. There is an ambiance within the lobby that excites the senses; the open-air concept restaurant is always packed with locals and hotel guests; and the quality of service is one step beyond exceptional. There is a cigar bar for cigar enthusiasts as well as late night drinkers. Also within the hotel is Tomo 1, a luxurious award winning high cuisine private restaurant that periodically changes its menu and offers a carefully chosen wine selection. On the top floor is an out of this world spa and indoor pool with the best views of the city and beyond. There are two floors dedicated to all suites. It's obvious a talented high-end decorator took charge of the room décor, making them feel cool and modern while still welcoming.

"Buenos Aires es lo maximo." Meaning, it offers everything and anything you could possibly want. It's historic, modern and full of culture. People are welcoming and the streets are relatively safe. There is useable public transportation and a variety of neighborhoods to keep anyone more than entertained. The spontaneous tango dancing in the streets, as well as musicians and artists that dominate major corners, makes it uniquely wonderful. In a city that has it all, hotel options are endless. For me, the ones I highlighted stand out. Are there others? Of course there are. Finding the right hotel in a foreign city is like searching for a needle in a haystack. My hopes are that my 5 needles will guide you in the right direction.