



Buenos Aires No time for sleep

Like the steamy throb of the tango, Buenos Aires is a city of passion and excess. In all the important areas of life - food, art, music, love, politics – the local residents known as porteños never hold back. Despite some bad luck in the last couple of years, the residents of Argentina's capital haven't let it stop them from enjoying all the good things in life.

We start our day in Plaza de Mayo, the city's main square which is always hosting some sort of protest (the country's second national sport). We soak up the splendour of the Presidential Palace, Catedral Metropolitana and Casa Rosada before grabbing a table at the landmark Café Tortoni – a 149-year-old institution which provides a glimpse back into the splendour of the country's aristocratic past. Sipping on a café cortado – an espresso with just a drop of milk – we watch the city go past in true belle époque style.

The upmarket Recoleta district - full of French inspired architecture, tree-lined boulevards and fashionable shops – is next. The district also houses the city's famous Cementerio de la Recoleta; a maze of huge marble tombs overflowing with angels, cherubs and gargoyles and where the country's most famous First Lady, Eva Peron, is buried.

It's the weekend, so we jump on the underground and head for the oldest district in town – San Telmo. It's a jumble of cobblestone streets, crumbling mansions, colourful cafés, tasty (as always) restaurants, hidden tango palours and wonderful art galleries and bookshops. We stroll through Plaza Dorrego, which hosts a weekend antiques market... if only our suitcases were bigger. The plaza is also filled with young Argentineans who have brought their portable stereos and are practicing the country's national dance – the tango. We look on enviously as young couples lock arms, legs and bodies in this most passionate of dances.

For dinner we head over to Palermo, the city's hippest neighbourhood. Only the tourists eat early in Buenos Aires. At 11pm, we find space in a packed restaurant and are brought a steak as big as the table and bottle of local red wine. After eating a whole lot of cow, we walk through the main plaza, filled with buskers and young couples in love. Romance is always in the air – and on show – in this city.

It's just past 1am – time to hit the clubs. No self-respecting porteño would dream of turning up to a club before now. The night is just getting started and in this city there is no shortage of options.

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