Argentines

The people who live in Argentina, known as Argentines, believe in being open, frank and direct, but conversely take pride in being tactful and diplomatic. In speech and writing, they may be indirect, elaborate and complimentary. They can be almost poetic in the way they express themselves, and place a premium on not offending.

It is a matter of pride for Argentines to know the correct response to any query, and they will offer detailed directions if asked for help in finding a destination. Both social and business invitations may be accepted, even if the person invited does not plan on attending the event.

Argentines are very warm and effusive, showing large amounts of gratitude and thanks towards people, seldom trying to hide passion or sentimentality.

They may touch each other when speaking, and they maintain little physical distance between speakers, much less than is customarily maintained in many other cultures. In their earnest desire to compliment and be warm and friendly, Argentines will lavish praise and compliment extensively even something that, from another point of view, could be considered an insignificant event or achievement. This is not insincerity, and a visitor would make a great mistake by misinterpreting these expressions as such.

Ernesto “Che” Guevara

“Che” Guevara was born in Rosario Argentina in 1928. He completed training as a medical doctor and decided to tour through South America, starting in Argentina and ending in the north. Throughout this tour, he observed many injustices being inflicted on the poor indigenous people of South America, and decided that he wanted to be a part of bringing change to the many afflicted countries.

He is known as a Marxist revolutionary for the work that he did along side Fidel Castro in Cuba. Many people have mixed opinions about Che Guevara’s work and ideals, for while he seemed to dream of a better life for many people, the way he worked to bring about this change was often very violent and unjust. He is known for being ruthless and ordering that prisoners be executed without trial in Cuba.

Guevara was ultimately captured and killed by a Bolivian army during one of his rebellions in Bolivia. He is still held as a great revolutionist by many young people, and despite the controversy behind his political ideals and manners of bringing about change, he is an iconic symbol of the change that many hope to see come about in South America.

Eva Perón

Eva Perón was born in a humble town on the edge of the vast Argentine pampas and was raised as the daughter of a ranch manager. Her whole life, she dreamed of greatness and admired the Hollywood stars of the American cinema. When she was seventeen, she left her small hometown for
the capital city of Buenos Aires. Within three years, she had gained recognition as a radio and film actress.

In January of 1944, Eva met Juan Perón, who became her husband and partner in political pursuits. Together, they worked to bring change for their beloved country of Argentina. After being imprisoned after unrest in the wake of World War II, Perón was made president of Argentina by popular demand.

Their political ideals were dubbed “Peronism”, and together they fought to bring justice and a better life to the impoverished lower classes of Argentina.

Eva was beloved by the whole country, held as an icon of beauty and goodness by Argentina. She dreamed of bringing new life to Argentina, but tragically, she was diagnosed with cancer and died at the young age of 33. She is still held as a beloved icon of Argentina to this day.

**Gauchos in Argentina**

Argentines place a high value on individuality. One of the most vibrant symbols of the past, which is supposed to represent that national character, is the *Gaucho*. In many rural areas in Argentina, there are cattle ranches. The people who work on these cattle ranches are traditionally referred to as *Gauchos*, and can be identified by wearing baggy pants and a flat-topped hat. These *Gauchos* are depicted as brave, athletic, a bold warrior, loyal and generous. A *Gaucho*-like act of generosity, called a *gauchada*, can be expressed by going out of one’s way to help someone else solve a problem. Argentines take great pride in being in a position to offer a *gauchada*.

**Jorge Luis Borges**

Jorge Luis Borges was born in August of 1899. He was raised by his father, who was a lawyer and a psychology teacher, and his mother, who was a translator in Argentina. His heritage was mixed between a myriad of backgrounds. His father was part Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and British. His mother was Spanish, Catalan, and possibly Portuguese.

Borges grew up speaking both Spanish and English, so from his earliest childhood memories Borges was effectively bilingual, and learned to read in English before Spanish. He grew up in a suburban neighborhood of Palermo in a large house with an extensive library.

Borges is considered to be one of the foremost writers of the 20th century. As a poet and essayist, Borges is best known for his short stories, many of which are included in his most famous work, *Ficciones* (Fictions). Borges wrote about the universe, and did not write merely to make a point, but to explore a vast world of surrealistic thoughts and ideas.

He died in July of 1986, and is still held as one of the most prolific writers of the 20th century.
Fútbol

Argentina's national game is fútbol (soccer), which was introduced in the 1860’s by the British soldiers. The Argentinian national team has become one of the best in the world and won World Cup titles in 1978 and 1986. In the streets, you may hear “Boca or River?” on the day of a fútbol game between the Boca Juniors and the River Plate team. Some Porteños ask this to strangers because they assume that everybody is interested in fútbol.

Polo

Since an Argentinian team won the first Olympic gold medal in polo in 1924, Argentines have dominated the sport. Polo is played by teams of four on horseback. Players use long wooden mallets to hit a wooden ball the size of a tennis ball towards a goal at the end of the field. Polo ponies are small thoroughbreds that are specially trained for the sport. Both Argentine ponies and Argentine polo players are sought by polo teams in other countries.

The Dirty War

The Dirty War is a very violent political war that was fought in Argentina for seven years, between 1976 and 1983. During these years, any people who opposed the government, and often innocent people who were loosely associated with those who rebelled against the government, were “disappeared” in the middle of the night, often never to be seen again by their families.

These people who disappeared in the middle of the night are referred to as “los desaparecidos”, or “the disappeared”. Because of how many people disappeared without notice of where they went or what became of them, death counts of “the disappeared” range between 10,000 and 30,000 people within those 7 years.

After the war ended, it was discovered that many “political” headquarters were actually places where prisoners were being held captive, often tortured and killed, which is why the war is referred to as the Dirty War.

Today in Argentina, mothers still march in the streets holding signs of their “disappeared” children or grandchildren, holding out hope that perhaps their loved ones will some day return to them.