

BUENOS AIRES GUIDE

VOLUME 1 OF 2

Known and unknown sites



Illustration: Federico Firvida

ARCHITECT

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ABASTO

- Abasto Market
- Carlos Gardel's Birthplace

Abasto Market

Abasto



Photo: Flickr user "ha_mas" · Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 2.0)

The Abasto Market has one of the most fascinating architectural histories in Buenos Aires. Originally built in 1893 as the city's central fruit and vegetable market, it was demolished and rebuilt between 1928 and 1934 in a rationalist Art Deco style that made it one of the most notable buildings of its era in Argentina. Its concrete vaults, its large stained-glass windows, and its steel-and-glass structure were, in the 1930s, a display of constructive modernity that few buildings in Buenos Aires could match.

The market operated as such until 1984, when it was closed and wholesale supply moved to the Mercado Central on the city's outskirts. For more than a decade the building sat abandoned. Its conversion into a shopping mall, inaugurated in 1998, saved the structure but transformed its use: the facades, vaults, and stained glass were preserved intact while the interior was reorganized for shops, cinemas, and restaurants.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Abasto is the most visible case in Buenos Aires of the tensions generated by recycling industrial heritage. The structure was saved, but the original use disappeared. As an architect I prefer that outcome to demolition, but I understand those who lament that the popular market was replaced by a mall full of international brands. The building won; the neighborhood lost something.

Carlos Gardel's Birthplace

Abasto



Photo: Solana Malacco · Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0)

On a quiet street in Abasto, a few blocks from the market that gives the neighborhood its name, a low house with a plaque on its facade marks the place where the man who became tango's most universal symbol grew up. Carlos Gardel lived at Jean Jaurès 735 from his arrival in Buenos Aires as a boy from Toulouse, France, until fame carried him to other stages. The house now operates as a museum.

The mystery of his origins is one of the most persistent debates in Argentine culture: was he born in Toulouse, or in Tacuarembó, Uruguay? What no one disputes is that Buenos Aires was his city: Abasto shaped him, tango crowned him, and Argentina adopted him with an intensity reserved for very few. The museum holds scores with his own annotations, stage costumes, photographs from his international tours, and documents tracing the path of an artist who, in the 1930s, was as famous in Paris, New York, and Madrid as he was in Buenos Aires.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Gardel is the artist who most clearly put Buenos Aires on the world map. Before Gardel, Buenos Aires was a city under construction. After Gardel, it was a city with an identity.

AGRONOMÍA



— School of Agronomy, University of Buenos Aires

Built up around the grounds of the old School of Agronomy in the late nineteenth century, it keeps broad green spaces and a residential pace unusual for the city. Today it's a quiet neighborhood, associated with university life, parks, and low houses.

For the traveler:

Lose yourself among the gardens of the School of Agronomy, where century-old trees whisper botanical secrets to anyone who stops to listen. In autumn, the neighborhood turns shades of yellow and ochre that look pulled from an Impressionist painting.

School of Agronomy, University of Buenos Aires

Agronomía



Photo: Wikimedia Commons (free license; author to confirm)

The School of Agronomy of the University of Buenos Aires, founded in 1904, occupies a 35-hectare campus on the city's northern edge. Its grounds hold an arboretum with more than 500 tree species, experimental gardens, and historic nurseries and greenhouses that make up the largest university green space in Buenos Aires.

The main building, in an eclectic style with neocolonial elements, was designed in the early twentieth century and forms part of the city's university architectural heritage. The gardens are open to the public and offer an unusual experience: walking through a park-scale green space in a quiet residential neighborhood, far from the usual tourist circuits.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The School of Agronomy is one of Buenos Aires's best-kept secrets. Thirty-five hectares of green space with a botanical collection that few museums could match.

ALMAGRO



- Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro
- Basilica of San Carlos and María Auxiliadora

Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro

Almagro

Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro was founded in 1908 in the Almagro neighborhood, on the block bounded by the streets Treinta y Tres Orientales, Avenida La Plata, Jean Jaurès, and Estado de Israel. According to club lore, the Salesian priest Lorenzo Massa organized the first matches on that corner to keep the neighborhood's kids off the street. The club's name honors both its founding priest and its home neighborhood.

In 1979, during the last military dictatorship, the club was stripped of that historic ground through a forced expropriation. A supermarket was built in its place and still operates there today. San Lorenzo then relocated to the Flores neighborhood, where it built the Pedro Bidegain Stadium — popularly known as the Nuevo Gasómetro, at Av. La Plata 1782 — inaugurated in 1993. For more than four decades, its fans campaigned for the return of the original Almagro site: the 'Volver al Gasómetro' ('Back to the Gasómetro') movement is one of the most sustained expressions of neighborhood identity in the history of Argentine football. In 2015 the club legally recovered the land; the project to build the new stadium in Almagro is now underway.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

San Lorenzo is the football club with the most complex urban history in Buenos Aires: born on a corner in Almagro, evicted by a dictatorship, exiled in Flores for forty years, and now on its way back to where it started. That story of dispossession and resistance makes it something more than a football club.

Basilica of San Carlos and María Auxiliadora

Almagro



Photo C. Firvida

At the corner of Avenida Hipólito Yrigoyen and Quintino Bocayuva stands one of the most imposing basilicas in Buenos Aires, and one of the least visited by tourists. The Basilica of San Carlos and María Auxiliadora, built between 1900 and 1910 to a design by the Salesian architect Ernesto Vespignani, is the largest religious work the Salesian Order built in Argentina. Its cornerstone was laid in 1900 with President Julio Argentino Roca as godfather of the ceremony.

The interior surprises every visitor. The 45-meter-high central nave, the stained-glass windows depicting scenes from the lives of Don Bosco and María Auxiliadora, the marble main altar beneath a granite baldachin, and the vault frescoes painted by Italian artists create an atmosphere that few churches in Buenos Aires can match. Its walls hold two ties to central figures of Argentine culture: Carlos Gardel sang here as a boy in the parish choir, and Jorge Mario Bergoglio — who would become Pope Francis — was baptized here on December 25, 1936.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Basilica of San Carlos is the building in Almagro that most surprises the unsuspecting visitor. That Gardel once prayed in its pews and Bergoglio was baptized here makes this one of the buildings most steeped in popular history in the entire city.

BALVANERA

- Casa Calise — the sculpted facade
- Palace of Running Waters
- Casa Moussion

Casa Calise — the sculpted facade

Balvanera

On Hipólito Yrigoyen street, in Balvanera, stands a building that stops passersby with the force of the unexpected. Casa Calise, built in 1911, has a facade covered with thirty-nine sculpted figures: atlantes, caryatids, busts, reliefs, and ornaments piled onto the brickwork with an exuberance unmatched by any other building in the city.

The building was commissioned by the Calise family, Italian immigrants who wanted to build something in Buenos Aires that would showcase their prosperity and culture. The architect interpreted that brief quite literally, turning the facade into an exhaustive catalogue of early twentieth-century decorative sculpture: allegorical figures, mascarons, garlands, columns, and cornices layered into a composition that takes several visits to fully take in. Casa Calise is listed as Historic Heritage of the City of Buenos Aires.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Casa Calise expresses, better than any other building in Buenos Aires, immigrants' desire to prove they had arrived. Thirty-nine sculpted figures on a neighborhood facade are a statement of ambition that the city, generously, accepted.

Palace of Running Waters

Balvanera



Photo C. Firvida

On Avenida Córdoba stands a building that stops first-time viewers with the force of something that shouldn't exist where it does. The Palace of Running Waters (Palacio de Aguas Corrientes) — built between 1887 and 1894 to house the city's drinking-water distribution tanks — is one of the most extraordinary works in Argentine architecture: sanitary infrastructure disguised as a palace, with an extravagance that, a hundred and thirty years on, still stands as an argument for beauty in everyday things.

The building was designed by the Norwegian architect Olaf Boye, of the British firm Bateman, Parsons & Bateman, under the direction of the Swedish engineer Carlos Nyströmer. The facade combines 130,000 glazed bricks and 300,000 ceramic pieces imported from England and Belgium, with influences from the French Second Empire and Victorian architecture. It was declared a National Historic Monument in 1989.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Palace of Running Waters is the strongest argument for investing in the beauty of public infrastructure. The government of the day decided that a water-tank building deserved to be beautiful. That decision has kept giving us pleasure 130 years later.

Casa Moussion

Balvanera



Photo C. Firvida

At the corner of Callao and Sarmiento — which in 1910 was still called Cuyo — stands an Art Nouveau building that, in Centennial-era Buenos Aires, made news for a single reason: its windows. Casa Moussion, inaugurated around 1910 by architects Emilio Hugé and Vicente Colmegna, had curved panes of glass twelve meters tall, imported from France, which at the time represented a genuine technical feat: manufacturing and transporting curved glass panes of that size was a challenge very few cities in the world could solve.

The building was constructed for Gustave Moussion, a millionaire hairdresser and beautician whose salon — the most prestigious in the city — sold perfume, hats, dresses, gloves, and corsets to the ladies of porteño high society. Over time, the premises passed to the Bazar Dos Mundos, a chain of stores founded in 1915 by the Catalan J. Roger Balet. The building still stands today, and its curved windows remain, more than a century later, one of the most remarkable pieces of carpentry on Avenida Callao.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

What interests me most about Casa Moussion is that its value lies not in the ornamentation but in the carpentry itself. Curving glass of that size in 1910 was an engineering problem, not a stylistic one. Every time I pass Callao and Sarmiento, I think about the technical effort it took to make that curve — so simple to the eye — possible.

BARRACAS

- Pasaje Lanín — the mosaic passage
- Hijos del Trabajo Masonic Temple
- Café El Progreso
- Farmacia Iriarte — the museum pharmacy
- Los Laureles — neighborhood milonga
- Pasaje El Renacimiento
- Pasaje Darquier
- Pasaje Agustín Bardi
- Barrio Monseñor Espinosa
- Colonia Sola — Barracas's railway neighborhood

Pasaje Lanín — the mosaic passage

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

There's a passage in Barracas that looks torn out of another city. Its two blocks of low houses are completely covered in mosaics and ceramic murals in intense colors — human figures, animals, geometric patterns, and symbols that run without pause from one facade to the next. Pasaje Lanín is one of the most sustained and most extraordinary public art projects in Buenos Aires.

The work is by the artist Marino Santa María, who began covering the facades in 1990 with the neighbors' permission and the city government's support. What started as an intervention on his own house kept growing, year after year, until it covered every facade on the block. Santa María designs each mosaic in collaboration with the homeowners, which explains the diversity of styles and themes within a recognizable overall aesthetic. On the corner with Avenida Suárez stands La Flor de Barracas, an old neighborhood bar that has watched decades of local life go by from that privileged corner.

In November 2014, the passage was declared a Site of Cultural Interest and Cultural Heritage of Barracas by the City of Buenos Aires Legislature.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Pasaje Lanín is one of the places I use as an argument whenever someone asks me whether street art can make a city better. Santa María didn't decorate the passage: he transformed it. The same modest houses as always, turned into something no one can ignore.

Hijos del Trabajo Masonic Temple

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

On a quiet street in Barracas, among low houses and warehouses, a facade suddenly appears that belongs to no conventional architectural style. The Temple of the Hijos del Trabajo Masonic Lodge is one of the most singular and least known buildings in Buenos Aires: its front is covered in symbols, inscriptions, and decorative elements that narrate, in a hermetic language, the history and values of Freemasonry.

The lodge was founded in the late nineteenth century by immigrant workers — mostly Italian and Spanish — who found in Freemasonry a space for sociability, education, and mutual aid. The current building was constructed in the early decades of the twentieth century, and its facade carries an extraordinary density of symbols: squares, compasses, five-pointed stars, columns, and a series of inscriptions mixing Spanish with Latin. It is one of the very few Masonic temples visible from the street anywhere in the city.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Barracas Masonic Temple is the building in Buenos Aires that has stopped me in my tracks the most times. The symbolic density of its facade on such an anonymous street creates a dissonance that forces you to look. It's exactly the kind of find that makes walking Buenos Aires with your eyes open worthwhile.

Café El Progreso

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

The great bars of Buenos Aires have their names and their streets listed in the guidebooks. But the city also has its neighborhood bars: the ones that don't show up in rankings, that exist because a neighborhood needs them and keeps them going with the quiet loyalty of lifelong regulars. Café El Progreso in Barracas is one of them. It has spent decades on the same corner, with the same counter and the same light as always.

Barracas is one of the most underrated neighborhoods in Buenos Aires. Its industrial history, its late-nineteenth-century architecture, and its still-intact neighborhood life make it one of the most interesting parts of the city's south side. The tourist pressure that transformed San Telmo and La Boca never arrived here with the same force. El Progreso is part of that resisting Barracas: a bar that doesn't need to reinvent itself because it never stopped being what it always was.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Café El Progreso is the kind of bar Buenos Aires needs to preserve more urgently than any monument. Monuments don't disappear overnight; neighborhood bars do. Every time one closes, it takes decades of social history with it that no book can recover.

Farmacia Iriarte — the museum pharmacy

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

On the corner of Iriarte and Suárez, in Barracas, stands a pharmacy that seems frozen in time. Farmacia Iriarte keeps its early-twentieth-century interior intact: carob-wood shelving that reaches the ceiling, display cases with original bottles, period laboratory equipment, and a limestone mosaic floor that no renovation ever touched. It is one of the best-preserved historic interiors in Buenos Aires.

The pharmacy still operates as one. That detail matters: it isn't a frozen museum but a living business that simultaneously preserves the material culture of an era when pharmacies were centers of a neighborhood's scientific and intellectual life. The pharmacist was a figure of authority and knowledge — the person who diagnosed, advised, and prepared medicines. The interior of Farmacia Iriarte is a physical record of that role and that era.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Farmacia Iriarte is the place in Barracas that moves me most as an architect. Not for the architecture itself, which is modest, but for the decision to preserve it: someone decided that interior was worth keeping intact, and that decision is a form of intelligence that big heritage projects rarely manage.

Los Laureles — neighborhood milonga

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

There are milongas for tourists and milongas for locals. The first kind has a show, mood lighting, and a menu in four languages. The second kind has tango, neighborhood regulars, and the chance to sing, dance, and eat in the same night with the ease of someone enjoying themselves without putting on a show. Los Laureles belongs, without question, to the second category: a neighborhood milonga where tango is practiced the way it always was.

The chance to sing is one of the most distinctive features of Los Laureles. At most milongas tango is danced but not sung: the live voice was displaced by recordings. Here the tradition of sung tango survives — anyone who wants to step up and sing with the orchestra can do so. The result is that mix of professionalism and amateurism that neighborhood tango always had. It's one of the few places in Buenos Aires where tango still happens rather than being performed for an audience.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Los Laureles is where I went to see and hear tango in the neighborhood. There's something about the informality of a neighborhood milonga — the mix of ages, the absence of posturing, people who come to dance and not to be seen — that tourist tango can never reproduce.

Pasaje El Renacimiento

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

The name of this passage doesn't honor any national hero or any specific historic event. Instead, it speaks of an aspiration: that of a working-class, immigrant neighborhood that, in the early twentieth century, chose to name itself with the most future-laden word the language had. From the late nineteenth century on, Barracas was home to Italian, Spanish, and Eastern European Jewish workers who built, in its tenements and workshops, an idea of a fresh start.

El Renacimiento ("The Renaissance") captures that idea exactly. It's a block of low houses between Perdriel and Santa Elena streets, a hundred meters of working-class city built at human scale with modest materials and a dignity that time hasn't erased. The facades combine exposed brick with simple decorative elements — cornices, lintels, moldings — that show how the popular architecture of immigrant Buenos Aires had aesthetic ambition even without large budgets.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Pasaje El Renacimiento is the kind of place that makes walking Buenos Aires worthwhile. A block that named itself with the most hopeful word in the language, built by immigrants who believed in the future more than the present.

Pasaje Darquier

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

There's a passage in Barracas shaped like a capital C. It was built that way to embrace, within its curve, the Hipólito Yrigoyen station building of the Roca railway line — a red-brick block that the passage wraps around as if trying to protect it from time.

Pasaje Darquier is one of the most unexpected finds in the south of Buenos Aires: a block of low, early-twentieth-century houses that curves around the train station, creating a geometry no city map would anticipate. The original cobblestones, the exposed-brick facades, and the vegetation that grew up between the houses and the rail embankment give the passage the atmosphere of a neighborhood from another era, one that time chose to respect. It's one of those places you only find on foot.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Pasaje Darquier is the place in Barracas where the relationship between the neighborhood and the railway is most clearly felt. The curve the passage draws to embrace the station is also an embrace of time gone by.

Pasaje Agustín Bardi

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

A few meters from Pasaje Darquier, right against the embankment of the same elevated tracks, runs Pasaje Agustín Bardi. The name is a musical statement: Bardi was one of the most important composers of the old guard of tango, though he lived with the discretion of someone who didn't need to be seen to be heard.

Born in Las Flores in 1884, he came to Barracas as a child and spent decades in this neighborhood playing in bars and cafés while leading a parallel life as an employee of an insurance company, where he eventually became a manager. That double life — artist by night, office worker by day — is deeply porteño. Tangos like *Gallo ciego* and *El abrojo* rank among the most interpretively rich pieces in the classic repertoire. The passage that bears his name is modest and intimate in scale, lined with low, early-twentieth-century houses: a faithful portrait of the man it honors.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Agustín Bardi composed some of the finest tangos in history and died a manager at an insurance company. That a passage in Barracas bears his name is the kind of posthumous justice only Buenos Aires practices.

Barrio Monseñor Espinosa

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

In the heart of Barracas, on the block bounded by Perdriel, Alvarado, California, and Santa Elena streets, a great red-brick arch announces the entrance to one of the best-preserved working-class housing complexes in Buenos Aires. Barrio Monseñor Espinosa was built between 1917 and 1923 through the efforts of the Unión Popular Católica Argentina, which organized a nationwide collection of materials — lime, brick, cement — to build sixty-four houses for large, low-income families.

The land was donated by Leandro Pereyra Iraola, and the project — designed by architect Alfredo Cucullu Curuchet — arranged the houses in eight pavilions around a central green space, with tree-lined internal streets that still give the complex the feel of a gated community today. The name honors Archbishop Mariano Antonio Espinosa, known as "Father Antoñito," who died the very day the neighborhood was inaugurated, in 1923. Over time, these working-class houses became one of the most sought-after addresses in Barracas.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Barrio Monseñor Espinosa is a paradox I find endearing: a complex designed for families with no resources ended up, a century later, as an exclusive enclave. The architecture didn't change; the city around it did. That, too, is a form of heritage.

Colonia Sola — Barracas's railway neighborhood

Barracas



Photo C. Firvida

On Avenida Australia, between Perdriel and Santa Elena streets, a cluster of brick houses with two-story wooden galleries preserves the memory of one of Buenos Aires's earliest railway worker neighborhoods. Colonia Sola was built in 1890 by the Ferrocarril del Sud — an English company — to house workers from the nearby Sola Station, a freight station that no longer exists.

The complex consists of four ground-plus-one-floor blocks, with sixteen units each, built in an architectural style that echoes directly the working-class neighborhoods of London's East End and Liverpool: exposed brick, wooden carpentry, and running galleries that served both as circulation space and as a stage for social life. Over the decades, residents organized into a mutual association and today own the property, which remains inhabited just steps from the tracks and the shipping containers of the railway that gave rise to it.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Colonia Sola is proof that railway-era Buenos Aires didn't just build stations: it also brought along a complete model of working-class housing, imported from England's industrial cities. That its residents ended up owning these houses, more than a century later, is a quiet vindication few neighborhoods can claim.

BELGRANO



- Museo Larreta and the Andalusian Garden
- Barrancas de Belgrano
- Belgrano's Chinatown
- La Redonda — Basilica of the Immaculate Conception

Museo Larreta and the Andalusian Garden

Belgrano

On a residential street in Belgrano that tourists rarely walk stands one of the most beautiful, least-known museums in Buenos Aires. The Enrique Larreta House Museum occupies the residence the Argentine writer and diplomat built in 1916, and its garden — designed on the principles of Andalusian gardening — is a rarity in a city that never cultivated the enclosed, shaded garden.

Enrique Larreta wrote *La gloria de don Ramiro*, a historical novel set in sixteenth-century Spain that became an international success in the early twentieth century. His passion for medieval Spain wasn't confined to writing: the residence replicates the architecture and gardens of Andalusian manor houses, with a central fountain, orange trees, cypresses, and an arched gallery that looks transplanted from Córdoba or Seville. The museum holds the collection of Hispanic art he gathered over his diplomatic career.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Larreta garden is the most convincing argument I know for visiting Belgrano. It's a perfect anachronism: sixteenth-century Spain in twenty-first-century Buenos Aires, working with a naturalness no theme park could imitate.

Barrancas de Belgrano

Belgrano

Barrancas de Belgrano is one of the most beloved, least-known public spaces in Buenos Aires. The park, laid out by Carlos Thays in the late nineteenth century along the edge of the old bluff that once faced the river, combines a topography unusual for Buenos Aires with lush vegetation and the calm atmosphere of a quiet neighborhood the rest of the city has largely lost.

The slope of the land — which in places drops more than ten meters — creates perspectives and scales that the city's flat parks can't reproduce. The paths that descend the bluff, the stairways connecting the different levels, and the benches at the lookout points make for a park that feels different depending on the hour and the season. On Sundays, the craft fair that sets up along its inner paths turns Barrancas into one of the neighborhood's liveliest meeting points.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Barrancas de Belgrano proves that good topography can make a great park. Thays understood that the slope was the site's most valuable asset and turned it into the organizing element of the design.

Belgrano's Chinatown

Belgrano

Buenos Aires's Chinatown is the only one in Argentina and one of the smallest in the world: barely two blocks of Arribeños street between Juramento and the Río de la Plata. What it lacks in size it makes up for in density: those two blocks are packed with Asian grocery stores, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese restaurants, shops selling decorative goods, and herbalist stores.

The Chinese community began settling in this part of Belgrano in the 1980s, drawn by affordable rents and proximity to the Belgrano market. Today Buenos Aires's Asian community includes Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, and Japanese residents, and Chinatown is the most visible expression of that presence. The Chinese New Year celebration — with its dragon parade, fireworks, and the crowds that spill beyond the two blocks — is one of the city's most popular street events.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Chinatown is small but dense. Those two blocks hold more variety in Asian products, cuisines, and cultures than much larger Chinatowns in other Latin American cities. Its compact scale makes it easy to walk and hard to forget.

La Redonda — Basilica of the Immaculate Conception

Belgrano

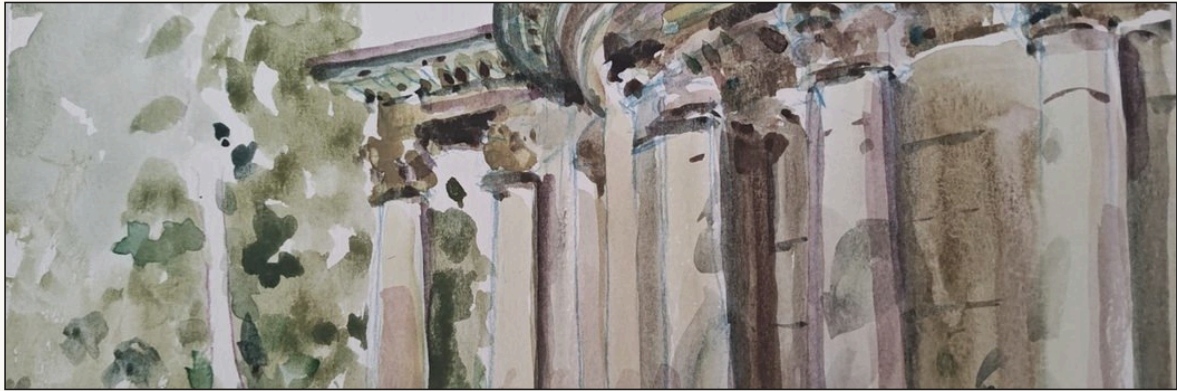


Photo C. Firvida

Locals call it La Redonda — "the round one" — and the name says it all: the Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception has a circular floor plan with a large central dome that makes it a unique architectural object in Buenos Aires. Inaugurated in 1878 to a design by the architect Ernesto Bunge, its 35-meter-diameter dome is one of the largest in the city.

Bunge designed a temple in a neo-Byzantine style, drawing on the great domed buildings of the Christian tradition: Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and the Pantheon in Rome. The dome, supported by eight pillars that leave the central space free, creates an interior luminosity uncommon in Argentine religious architecture. The interior is decorated with mosaics and frescoes covering the surfaces of the dome and side chapels with an ornamental density that contrasts with the austerity of the exterior facade.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

La Redonda is the building in Buenos Aires that most surprises architects visiting it for the first time. That circular floor plan in the heart of Belgrano has no precedent in local architecture and remains as strange and as beautiful today as when it was inaugurated.

BOEDO



— Café Margot — the bar of Boedo

Café Margot — the bar of Boedo

Boedo

Avenida Boedo has its own celebrated bar and its own culinary legend. Café Margot, listed as a Bar Notable of the City of Buenos Aires, has been the neighborhood's meeting point since the early twentieth century: its marble tables, wooden counter, and big windows onto the avenue have watched decades of Buenos Aires life go by with barely a change to the décor or the spirit of the place.

Boedo is the neighborhood of tango, of the sainete (Argentine comic theater), and of popular literature: the neighborhood of Homero Manzi, of José González Castillo, and of the 1920s generation that argued about politics and art in the same cafés where they played chess. Café Margot survived that history and keeps it in its walls. The turkey sandwich has been the neighborhood's most-ordered dish for decades — an institution as deeply rooted as the bar itself.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Café Margot is the kind of place that makes Boedo Boedo, rather than just another neighborhood. Without that bar on the corner, Avenida Boedo would be just another avenue. With it, it's the center of gravity of a neighborhood that still recognizes itself.

CABALLITO

- Barrio Cafferata — a porteño garden city
- Caballito Historic Tram
- Parque Rivadavia and the used-book fair
- Pasaje Florencio Balcarce

Barrio Cafferata — a porteño garden city

Caballito

In the Parque Chacabuco neighborhood, a few blocks from Avenida San Juan, stands a cluster of houses that seems to belong to another city. Barrio Cafferata was built between 1912 and 1921 by the National Commission for Low-Cost Housing as one of Argentina's first social housing projects. Its hundred single-story houses with front gardens, its cobblestone streets, and its tree-lined sidewalks create an intimacy and calm that downtown Buenos Aires lost long ago.

The project followed the principles of Ebenezer Howard's English garden cities: low-density, single-family houses with private and shared green space, set back from the street by front gardens that create a gentle transition between public and private space. That model found in Cafferata its most modest, and most successful, version in Buenos Aires. The complex has been declared a Historic Protection Area.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Barrio Cafferata proves that social housing can be beautiful, dignified, and durable when it's conceived as an urban project rather than an emergency fix. Those 1912 houses are still lived in and still desirable — that's the ultimate proof of good design.

Caballito Historic Tram

Caballito

Buenos Aires once had the most extensive tram network in Latin America. Hundreds of lines connected every neighborhood in the city with an efficiency that the private car destroyed within a few decades. In 1963, the last regular tram disappeared from the streets of Buenos Aires, a victim of the same logic that, worldwide, favored the car over public transit.

The Caballito Historic Tram is the sole survivor of that history: the only tram that still runs through the streets of Buenos Aires. It travels a short circuit of a few blocks in Caballito, on the original tracks preserved when regular service was suspended, and it operates as a rolling museum on Saturdays and Sundays. The cars are original, restored by the neighbors who founded the association that keeps this relic of urban transit alive.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Caballito tram delivers an emotion out of all proportion to its size. Those few minutes riding a 1930s streetcar through the neighborhood's streets are a time machine no static museum could replace.

Parque Rivadavia and the used-book fair

Caballito

Caballito is Buenos Aires's most central neighborhood, and Parque Rivadavia is its heart. The park — a little over four hectares — combines lush vegetation with sports facilities, play areas, and a used-book fair that has run along its inner paths for decades and, for many porteños, is the main reason to visit.

The used-book fair at Parque Rivadavia is the oldest and most popular in Buenos Aires. The stalls that set up under the trees on weekends offer everything from classics of world literature to old magazines, Argentine comics, and secondhand technical books. The booksellers of Parque Rivadavia have worked the same stall for decades and know their stock with a precision no digital bookstore algorithm can match.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Parque Rivadavia book fair is one of the few places in Buenos Aires where the pace of commerce matches the pace of reading. You can spend an hour hunting for a book at those stalls with the same unhurried attitude you'd bring to reading it.

Pasaje Florencio Balcarce

Caballito



Photo C. Firvida

This passage had three names before settling on the one it keeps. It was first called Videla Dorna, after the family that, until the 1920s, occupied a mansion built on this land in 1886. Then, in 1933, the city renamed it África — no one quite knew why, and the neighbors didn't like it.

In 1945, two writers who lived there, Rafael Alberto Arrieta and Conrado Nalé Roxlo, convinced the authorities to change the name again. They proposed honoring Florencio Balcarce, a poet who died at twenty-one in the nineteenth century but left behind work full of feeling. He was the son of General Marco Balcarce, for whom the Buenos Aires Province city is named, and lived just long enough to write verses his contemporaries recognized as exceptional. The passage is quiet and tree-lined, flanked by the single-story houses typical of early-twentieth-century Caballito.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Pasaje Florencio Balcarce holds a piece of cultural history few people know. That two writer-neighbors talked the city into renaming a street after a poet who died at twenty-one is a story worth telling.

CHACARITA

— Chacarita Cemetery

Chacarita Cemetery

Chacarita

Chacarita Cemetery is the largest cemetery in Argentina and one of the largest in Latin America. Its seventy hectares hold more than a million graves — ten times as many as Recoleta — and its history is tied to the tragic origin of the 1871 yellow fever epidemic, which killed more than thirteen thousand people in Buenos Aires and forced the city to open a new emergency cemetery far from downtown.

Unlike Recoleta Cemetery — aristocratic, compact, sculptural — Chacarita has the scale and diversity of the working city. Buried here are Carlos Gardel, Juan Domingo Perón, Aníbal Troilo, Osvaldo Pugliese, and dozens of figures from tango, politics, and Argentine culture. Gardel's tomb is the most visited: his admirers leave lit cigarettes between the bronze fingers of the statue that crowns it, keeping alive a tradition that has repeated since 1935.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Chacarita is the Buenos Aires cemetery that interests me most as urban space. Its scale is that of a city within the city, with avenues, squares, and neighborhoods of its own. Recoleta is a museum; Chacarita is a neighborhood.

COGHLAN



— Coghlan Station and its neighborhood

Coghlan Station and its neighborhood

Coghlan



Foto C. Firvida

Coghlan is one of the least-known neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, and one of the quietest. It began as a railway village in the late nineteenth century, when the Central Argentine Railway set up its workshops at the city's northern edge, and it takes its name from the Irish engineer John Coghlan, the company's director at the time. The wooden station and the brick houses around the tracks still carry the look of that origin.

The neighborhood has barely four thousand residents — the least populated in Buenos Aires — and that intimate scale is its most distinctive feature in a city of three million. Tree-lined streets, single-story houses with front gardens, and the absence of tall buildings create the atmosphere of a quiet village that contrasts with the intensity of the rest of the city. Coghlan Station, with its wood-and-painted-sheet-metal structure, is a relic of the English-built railway that the neighborhood has preserved with a faithfulness few places in Buenos Aires can match.

The green space surrounding the station, Plazoleta Coghlan, has been declared a Historic Protection Area. The station's community library also operates there, recognized by the City Legislature, and since the 1970s the Friends of Coghlan Station Association has organized cultural activities that keep the neighborhood's spirit alive.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Coghlan is the Buenos Aires neighborhood where it's clearest that the city could have turned out differently. That village scale, those streets without tall buildings, that relative silence — they show that density wasn't inevitable. It was a choice.



COLEGIALES

— Silos de Dorrego — the converted Molino Minetti

Once farmland and country estates, it began to urbanize with the expansion of the railway. Today it blends residential areas with dining, cultural, and creative hubs.

For the traveler:

Colegiales is the neighborhood that wakes up late and goes to bed late. Its bars and emerging-art galleries are a refuge for those looking for something beyond the obvious.

Silos de Dorrego — the converted Molino Minetti

Colegiales



Photo C. Firvida

On Dorrego street, at the border between Colegiales and Palermo Hollywood, stands a complex of buildings whose real origin few porteños would guess. Silos de Dorrego was, starting in 1921, the Molino Minetti: a flour mill with its own brick building and a battery of silos connected by dedicated rail lines that brought in wheat from the pampas and shipped out the milled flour.

The mill operated until the 1980s. In 1993 the industrial complex was converted for residential and office use, preserving the original structure of its two brick buildings — roughly 30 by 80 meters each — and reinterpreting the silos as curved residential volumes. The result is a complex with a park, a pool, and the scale of a gated community, one that still carries, behind closed doors, the industrial logic that gave rise to it, even though most of its neighbors don't know it.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Silos de Dorrego is a good example of the fact that recycling doesn't always mean turning something into a museum. Here, industry was transformed into housing so completely that the building lost its original reading. As an architect, I'm drawn to that kind of quiet recycling — the kind that doesn't put its past on display but simply inherits it.



CONGRESO

- Avenida Corrientes — the street that never sleeps
- Plaza Lavalle and its monumental ensemble
- Confitería del Molino — restored heritage
- Bar La Paz — the chess bar
- National Congress Palace

Avenida Corrientes — the street that never sleeps

Congreso

Avenida Corrientes is the most culturally rich street in Buenos Aires and one of the most singular in Latin America. Its nickname — the street that never sleeps — isn't an exaggeration: bookstores open until two in the morning, theaters that let out well past midnight, and bars that welcome actors and audiences after the show create a nightlife with no equivalent elsewhere in the city.

The stretch between Callao and the Obelisco holds the highest concentration of secondhand bookstores in Argentina. Those bookstores — many with decades of history in the same location — are also places for conversation and discovery: the bookseller who knows his stock by heart, the philosophy section blending into the poetry section, the unlikely book that turns up exactly where you weren't looking for it. Corrientes's theater tradition is just as powerful: from official state theater to small independent stages, the avenue holds the largest concentration of live performances in the city.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Avenida Corrientes is the only place in Buenos Aires where, at two in the morning, there can be more people buying books than drinking beer. That cultural anomaly — a city that reads at night — is what makes Buenos Aires a different kind of city.

Plaza Lavalle and its monumental ensemble

Congreso

Plaza Lavalle is one of the most remarkable urban ensembles in Buenos Aires, though few tourist guides give it the attention it deserves. The green space stretching between Talcahuano, Tucumán, Libertad, and Lavalle streets is framed by three of the city's most important buildings: the Teatro Colón to the west, the Palace of Justice to the east, and the Teatro Nacional Cervantes to the north.

That concentration of first-rate institutional architecture around a single public space is exceptional not just in Buenos Aires but in any city in the world. The Teatro Nacional Cervantes, inaugurated in 1921, was built by the Spanish actors María Guerrero and Fernando Díaz de Mendoza and later donated to the Argentine state. Its Spanish Plateresque facade contrasts with the academic eclecticism of the Colón and the neoclassicism of the Palace of Justice, creating a dialogue between three European architectural traditions within the same public space.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Plaza Lavalle is the public space in Buenos Aires with the highest concentration of first-rate institutional architecture. Three monumental buildings and three different stylistic traditions coexisting on the same square without clashing: that's what a good city looks like.

Confitería del Molino — restored heritage

Congreso

Confitería del Molino is one of the most beloved, and most suffered-over, buildings in Buenos Aires. Inaugurated in 1916 to a design by the architect Francisco Gianotti in an exuberant Italian Art Nouveau style, it was for decades the meeting point for politicians crossing the street from Congress. Its closure in 1997 — after decades of decline — was felt by porteños as a major cultural loss.

The building sat closed and deteriorating for more than twenty years, becoming the most visible symbol of heritage neglect in Buenos Aires. Its restoration, begun in 2018 and completed in 2022, recovered the mosaics, stained glass, domes, and polychrome ceramic facade with a faithfulness that specialists have called one of the most thorough restoration projects in Argentine history. It now opens for guided tours, though it doesn't yet operate as a commercial café.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The restoration of the Molino was the best heritage news Buenos Aires had had in years. That a building with that level of ornamental complexity — mosaics, stained glass, domes, polychrome ceramic — could be recovered with that much fidelity shows it's possible when there's political will and resources.

Bar La Paz — the chess bar

Congreso

On the corner of Corrientes and Montevideo, steps from the Obelisco and a few blocks from Congress, Bar La Paz has spent decades as one of the meeting points of Buenos Aires's intellectual and bohemian life. The La Paz most porteños know — the ground floor, with its tables and its counter — is only half the bar. Upstairs, with its more secluded tables and quieter atmosphere, was for years the space where chess players would settle in for hours with their boards.

Avenida Corrientes had a tradition of bars with chess tables that ran from the 1940s well into the twenty-first century. That tradition made La Paz one of the centers of chess life in Buenos Aires. The bar was declared a Bar Notable of the City of Buenos Aires, a distinction that recognizes its value as a space of cultural sociability.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Bar La Paz was one of my chess bars for years. There's something about the combination of the coffee, the noise of Corrientes outside, and the silence of the game that can't be reproduced in any other setting. A bar that allows for that silence amid so much noise is a bar that understands the city.

National Congress Palace

Congreso



Photo C. Firvida

The National Congress Palace is one of the most recognizable buildings in Buenos Aires and one of the largest legislative buildings in the world. Built between 1896 and 1906 to a design by the Italian architect Vittorio Meano, its great bronze dome, eighty meters tall, dominates the skyline around Congress from every avenue that converges on the Plaza del Congreso.

Meano designed a building in an academic eclectic style, drawing on the US Capitol and the Hungarian Parliament: a central dome, two symmetrical wings, and a facade with colonnades and pediments that expresses in stone the republican ambitions of turn-of-the-century Argentina. The interior — with its session halls, marble staircases, and allegorical frescoes — can be visited with a guide on days when Congress isn't in session.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Congress Palace is the building in Buenos Aires that most clearly expresses the political and architectural ambition of the Generation of 1880. That bronze dome visible from the Obelisco was designed to be seen: it's a statement that Argentina wanted to be taken seriously as a nation.

CONSTITUCIÓN

- Constitución Station
- The giant Maradona mural

It grew up around one of the country's main rail terminals. Historically tied to transit and commerce, it remains a key node of transportation and urban activity.

For the traveler:

Constitución Station is a cathedral of iron where millions of stories cross paths every day. Stand in its hall and feel the energy of a city that never sleeps.

Constitución Station

Constitución

Constitución Station is the most important rail terminal in the south of the country. Inaugurated in its current form in 1887, the building was rebuilt and expanded in several stages before taking on its definitive look in the twentieth century. Its central hall, with iron beams and skylights, handles the daily flow of hundreds of thousands of people connecting the city with the southern suburbs.

The station is also a symbol of the complexity of life in Buenos Aires: no other space in the city packs so much human diversity into so little time. Immigrants, workers, street vendors, students, and tourists share its platforms in a chaotic dance that captures the real twenty-first-century Buenos Aires better than any museum could.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Constitución isn't a beautiful station. It's a true one. And in that truth — in that hall worn down by millions of footsteps — there's more Buenos Aires than in any restored facade.

The giant Maradona mural

Constitución

On the corner of Avenida San Juan and Salta, in the Constitución neighborhood, one of the largest murals in Buenos Aires has stood since 2016. The image of Diego Armando Maradona — painted by the artist Martín Ron — covers the entire side wall of a six-story building, reproducing at monumental scale the player's most iconic photograph: the curly hair, the Argentina jersey, the focused gaze.

Martín Ron is the Argentine muralist with the greatest international reach, known for his hypnotic, large-scale portraits in cities around the world. The Maradona mural in Constitución is one of his most-visited works: the technical precision of the portrait, which keeps its realism despite the scale, and the choice of Constitución — a neighborhood with a strong working-class identity — as the location, make the mural one of the most authentic monuments to the player anywhere in the city.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Maradona mural in Constitución is a more honest monument than any bronze statue. It's in a working-class neighborhood, painted on a side wall, visible from the street with no entrance fee and no opening hours. That democratic quality of public art is exactly what Maradona represented.

FLORES

— Basilica of San José de Flores

A onetime independent town absorbed into the city in the nineteenth century, it played an important role in Argentine political history. Today it's a diverse, densely populated neighborhood with intense commercial activity.

For the traveler:

Flores was the neighborhood of Hipólito Yrigoyen, twice president of Argentina, whose house still stands as a witness to an era of radical dreams.

Basilica of San José de Flores

Flores

The Basilica of San José de Flores, built between 1831 and 1883 on the footprint of an earlier colonial chapel, is one of the most important churches in Argentine religious history. Its neo-Romanesque architecture, with twin towers and a soaring central nave, has dominated the neighborhood's skyline for nearly two centuries. It has been declared a National Historic Monument.

The basilica holds a unique place in contemporary history: Jorge Mario Bergoglio was baptized here, and here, at seventeen, he felt the religious calling that would eventually lead him to become Pope Francis. A plaque marks the moment when the future pontiff, in front of Father Carlos Duarte Ibarra's confessional, felt that God was waiting for him.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are more monumental churches in Buenos Aires, but few with a history so charged with the present. The Basilica of Flores connects the nineteenth century to the twenty-first through the most recognized figure in world Catholicism.

FLORESTA

— Estadio Islas Malvinas — Club All Boys

Born around the railway and the suburban country houses of the western side of the city, it retains a strong residential identity. Today it combines neighborhood tradition with local-scale commercial activity.

For the traveler:

Floresta is the neighborhood of maté on the sidewalk and conversations that stretch on until dawn.

Estadio Islas Malvinas — Club All Boys

Floresta

The Islas Malvinas stadium of Club Atlético All Boys, inaugurated in 1913, is the oldest football stadium still in use in Buenos Aires. Its original structure was replaced with concrete stands over the course of the twentieth century, but the neighborhood spirit that has defined the club since its founding remains intact.

All Boys is one of the most beloved clubs in Argentine football despite never having won a top-division championship. Its story is the story of grassroots football: outsized passion, scarce resources, and a neighborhood loyalty that, generation after generation, fills its stands with the same fervor. The stadium, tucked into Floresta, is proof that porteño sport doesn't need a big budget to have identity.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

All Boys is the club of people who choose the neighborhood over the scoreboard. Its hundred-year-old stadium is more honest than many new ones: it says exactly what it is, without pretense.

LA BOCA

- Caminito
- La Bombonera — Estadio Alberto J. Armando
- Fundación Proa
- La Vuelta de Rocha
- Nicolás Avellaneda Transporter Bridge
- La Boca Fine Arts Museum — Quinquela Martín
- The conventillo — living heritage of La Boca

Caminito

La Boca

Caminito is probably the most photographed place in Buenos Aires. Facades of corrugated sheet metal painted in bold colors, tango figures on the corners, and restaurants with checkered tablecloths make up a postcard the world instantly identifies with the city. But behind that image lies a more complex, more interesting story.

Caminito wasn't always a promenade. Until the early twentieth century it was simply the course of a stream that drained into the Riachuelo, flanked by the tenements of the immigrants arriving at the port. It was the painter Benito Quinquela Martín who, in the mid-twentieth century, drove the transformation of the site into an open-air walkway, convincing neighbors to paint their facades with leftover paint from the shipyards. What tourists usually don't see is that Caminito is just the tip of the iceberg of a neighborhood that extends far beyond that one street.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Caminito is where Buenos Aires decided to show itself to the world in its most picturesque version. That has its problems — the touristification is real — but there's also something genuine in that collective decision to turn necessity into identity.

La Bombonera — Estadio Alberto J. Armando

La Boca



Photo C. Firvida

There are football stadiums, and there are temples. La Bombonera is both. The Alberto J. Armando stadium, universally known as La Bombonera ("the chocolate box") for its square, compact shape reminiscent of a candy box, is one of the most singular architectural spaces in the world.

The building was designed in 1938 by the architect Viktor Sulčič, with the engineers José Luis Delpini and Raúl Bes, and inaugurated in 1940. The decision to build three vertical stands and a single low terrace — forced by the dimensions of the plot in the heart of the neighborhood — produced an acoustics and a closeness between the crowd and the pitch that no modern stadium has managed to replicate. When La Bombonera shakes, it shakes literally: the structure resonates with the synchronized jumping of fifty thousand people. Guided tours take visitors through the original locker rooms, the tunnel onto the pitch, and the Boca Passion Museum.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

La Bombonera is the only stadium I know where the constraints of the site produced better architecture than open space would have. The need to fit the stadium into the urban fabric is what generated the verticality that makes it unique.

Fundación Proa

La Boca

At the southern end of Caminito, where the tourist walkway dissolves into the bank of the Riachuelo, stands one of the most important contemporary art spaces in Latin America. Fundación Proa occupies a carefully restored early-twentieth-century building, with direct views of the river and a program that has included exhibitions of Duchamp, Mondrian, and Warhol, among many others.

The foundation was created in 1996 with the goal of bringing a world-class art space to La Boca. The building was renovated by architects Guillermo Bhrom and Federico Cairolí, who preserved the historic facade while turning the interior into a flexible, modern exhibition space. The rooftop terrace, with views of the Riachuelo and the Nicolás Avellaneda Bridge, is one of the most distinctive viewpoints in the city. Proa's café, with its terrace over the river, is a destination in its own right.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Proa proved it's possible to bring a first-rate art space to a historically overlooked neighborhood without leaving that neighborhood out of the project. The decision to locate it in La Boca was also a statement about what kind of city Buenos Aires wanted to be.

La Vuelta de Rocha

La Boca

There's a place in La Boca where the Riachuelo bends and the city seems to pause. La Vuelta de Rocha — named for the curve the river draws at that point — is one of the most frequently painted and photographed urban landscapes in the city, and one of the least known to the general public. Quinquela Martín painted it dozens of times. Local photographers return to it every season.

From the bank, the view takes in the Nicolás Avellaneda Transporter Bridge in the background, the barges and tugboats that still ply the Riachuelo, and the facades of the warehouses and industrial sheds that line the river. It's an image that combines the monumental scale of port infrastructure with the rough texture of a neighborhood that built itself out of the port's own materials. The name comes from Tomás de Rocha, one of the first settlers along that bank in the late eighteenth century.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

La Vuelta de Rocha is the place in Buenos Aires that most resembles a Quinquela painting. Not because it's idealized, but because the painter saw exactly what was there: a rough beauty that most people walked past without seeing.

Nicolás Avellaneda Transporter Bridge

La Boca

Few works of engineering in Buenos Aires carry the physical presence and historical weight of the Nicolás Avellaneda Transporter Bridge. Its steel structure, painted oxide red, has dominated the Riachuelo skyline since 1914, linking La Boca and Barracas with a monumentality no other bridge in the city can match.

The transporter system — a suspended platform that carried vehicles and people from one bank to the other without touching the water — was an engineering solution that allowed deep-draft ships to pass without interrupting river traffic. The bridge stopped operating in 1960 and has stood ever since as a monumental record of early-twentieth-century port engineering. It was declared a National Historic Monument in 1997. Its 55-meter towers and lattice girders leave every component of the structure in plain view.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Avellaneda Bridge is the only piece of engineering in Buenos Aires that rivals the great bridges of European cities in sheer presence. That it stands in La Boca — the most overlooked neighborhood in the city — says something about how urban beauty gets distributed.

La Boca Fine Arts Museum — Quinquela Martín

La Boca

Benito Quinquela Martín was born in a La Boca tenement in 1890, abandoned at birth, and adopted by a family of coal dealers. He died in 1977 as Argentina's most popular painter and one of the best known in Latin America. The museum that bears his name occupies the same building where the artist lived and worked for decades.

The painter's studio, kept exactly as it was in Quinquela's lifetime, is one of the museum's most moving spaces: the brushes, palettes, and easels speak of a way of working inseparable from the place where the work happened. The permanent collection includes more than nine hundred of the artist's works, alongside pieces by other painters of the La Boca school. Quinquela was also an extraordinary philanthropist: with the proceeds from his painting he built a school, a theater, a kindergarten, and the museum itself, all donated to the neighborhood.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Quinquela is the artist who best explains La Boca. Not because he beautified the neighborhood, but because he saw in its roughness a dignity the rest of the city took decades to recognize. His generosity — giving everything back to the neighborhood that shaped him — is also part of that portrait.

The conventillo — living heritage of La Boca

La Boca

The conventillo (tenement house) was mass immigration's housing solution. When more than three million European immigrants arrived in Buenos Aires between 1880 and 1930, the city had no infrastructure to house them. Old houses in the south side were subdivided into tiny rooms rented out to entire families. Those rooms opened onto a shared courtyard where people cooked, did laundry, raised children, and built a new collective identity.

La Boca was the tenement neighborhood par excellence. Immigrants arriving at the Riachuelo settled near the port: southern Italians, Spaniards, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Eastern European Jews. The facades of sheet metal painted in bright colors aren't an original artistic choice: they're the result of using whatever materials were on hand at the port — leftover sheet metal from ships, leftover paint from the warehouses. The La Boca conventillo is the architecture of necessity turned into identity.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The conventillo is the origin of almost everything that makes Buenos Aires unique: tango, lunfardo slang, the mixing of cultures, porteño cuisine. That shared courtyard where ten different languages coexisted is the laboratory where the city's identity was made.

LA PATERNAL

— Diego Armando Maradona Stadium

Formed in the early twentieth century around working-class subdivisions and new urban infrastructure, it keeps a strong community identity. Today it's a mid-scale residential neighborhood with active local life.

La Paternal is known for its deep ties to Diego Maradona, who lived here between 1978 and 1980 during his time at Argentinos Juniors. The club's stadium — renamed Diego Armando Maradona — is where the golden boy came of age as a professional.

For the traveler:

La Paternal is Maradona's neighborhood: he was born here, he learned to play on its dirt streets, this is where the golden boy was forged. At Lascano 2257, the small house-museum where Maradona lived with his family is open to visitors, and the Argentinos Juniors stadium — the smallest in the top division — holds the memory of the greatest player in Argentine history. A neighborhood that doesn't need monuments: it has something better.

Diego Armando Maradona Stadium

La Paternal

The stadium of Club Atlético Argentinos Juniors, renamed Diego Armando Maradona in honor of the player who came up through the club between 1976 and 1981, is the smallest of Argentina's top-division stadiums. With room for barely 26,000 spectators, its compact geometry creates an acoustic intensity that stadiums ten times its size can't replicate.

It was in this stadium that a 15-year-old named Diego Maradona made his first-division debut on October 22, 1976. The small pitch, the boxes that nearly touch the field, and the standing terrace that leans over the grass form a space where the closeness between players and crowd reaches a level rarely found in modern football.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There's something fitting in the fact that the greatest player in history was footballing-born in the smallest stadium. But that's Maradona: the greatest things always came from the humblest places.

LINIERS

— Las Mil Casitas — Liniers's railway neighborhood

Las Mil Casitas — Liniers's railway neighborhood

Liniers

Las Mil Casitas ("the thousand little houses") is one of those neighborhoods within a neighborhood that Buenos Aires produces spontaneously. The popular name refers to a cluster of single-family homes built in the 1920s to house railway workers — many of them English immigrants — who laid and maintained the tracks of the northern line.

A hundred years later, those exposed-brick houses with front gardens and tiled roofs are still lived in, and remarkably well preserved. They reproduce the model of the English suburban cottage that British railway companies exported around the world along with their locomotives: small, with a garden, with a sense of privacy and domestic scale that contrasts with the density of the surrounding city. It's a surviving fragment of the Buenos Aires the English-built railway shaped in its own image, in the neighborhoods that grew up around its workshops and stations.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Las Mil Casitas is one of the few places in Buenos Aires where you can still see the physical imprint of the English-built railway beyond the stations themselves. Those brick-and-tile houses, built for the line's workers, are a record of urban history that few books ever mention.

MATADEROS

- Feria de Mataderos
- Barrio Los Perales — Peronist social housing
- Mataderos Livestock Market

Feria de Mataderos

Mataderos

The Feria de Mataderos is the most authentic experience of Argentine popular culture Buenos Aires has to offer. While the fairs in San Telmo and Recoleta cater mostly to tourism and urban design consumers, the Feria de Mataderos is something else: it's the pampas set down in the city, the folklore of the Argentine interior transplanted to the historic stockyards of the city's most cattle-driven neighborhood.

On the Sundays it runs — from March to December — Mataderos turns into a piece of the provinces inside the capital. The fair fills the streets around Plaza de los Corrales with crafts from all over the country, displays of criollo horsemanship, gaucho skills, and live folk music. Food is central to the experience: empanadas, locro, chorizo, and country-style pastries are sold at the stalls ringing the square. The crowd mixes neighborhood families, tourists, and porteños from other parts of the city who come specifically for the experience.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Feria de Mataderos is the place in Buenos Aires where the Argentina of the interior — of the gaucho, of folklore — shows up with the least artifice. It isn't a show for tourists: it's a neighborhood recognizing itself.

Barrio Los Perales — Peronist social housing

Mataderos

On Avenida Eva Perón and Lisandro de la Torre, across from the Nueva Chicago stadium, stands one of the most significant, and least known, housing complexes in the urban history of Buenos Aires. Los Perales is a working-class housing development built during Juan Domingo Perón's first presidency in the 1940s, part of a social housing policy that transformed the south side of the city.

The complex was built on the principles of the modern urbanism of its time: mid-rise blocks with generous green space between the buildings, community facilities built into the residential complex — a school, shops, meeting spaces — and a scale that humanized mass housing without falling into the giantism that marked the great European housing blocks. Los Perales is an example of how state-built architecture can be generous and dignified without being monumental.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Los Perales is the clearest example that Peronism understood popular housing as a matter of dignity, not just quantity. The complex's human scale, its green space, and its integrated facilities are an urban-planning lesson that the private developments of recent decades have rarely matched.

Mataderos Livestock Market

Mataderos

The Buenos Aires Livestock Market is the largest cattle market in Argentina and one of the largest in the world. Its two hundred hectares of pens, chutes, auction rings, and packing plants in the city's far southwest corner mark the final stop of a chain that begins in the fields of the humid pampas and ends in the city's butcher shops and supermarkets. It's infrastructure most porteños never see but rely on every day.

The market was set up in Mataderos in the late nineteenth century, when the city's growth made it untenable to keep slaughterhouses downtown. Railway tracks running directly to the pens allowed cattle to be moved in from the pampas without driving them through city streets. The complex's architecture — brick-and-iron sheds, wooden pens, and the central plaza where auctions are held — is one of the best-preserved groups of late-nineteenth-century industrial architecture in Buenos Aires.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The livestock market is the place in Buenos Aires where the historic relationship between the city and the pampas is felt most clearly. All the wealth that built the country in the nineteenth century passed through here — literally.

MONTE CASTRO

— Parque Monte Castro

Developed on former suburban farmland, it grew mainly over the course of the twentieth century. Today it's a quiet residential neighborhood, known for its low houses and community spaces.

For the traveler:

Monte Castro is the neighborhood of silence and open sky. Its unhurried squares and streets are the perfect antidote to the rush of downtown.

Parque Monte Castro

Monte Castro

The 22-hectare Parque Monte Castro is the central green space of the neighborhood that shares its name. Built on land that was once part of the old farm of Pedro Fernández de Castro — from whom the neighborhood takes its name — the park was designed with an artificial lake, an open-air amphitheater, sports courts, and broad tree-lined areas that make it the green lung of the western part of the city.

The park is little known outside the neighborhood, which gives it a calm that's hard to find in the city's more popular green spaces. Its tree-lined paths keep the spirit of a neighborhood park that the great parks of Palermo lost decades ago.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Monte Castro is proof that Buenos Aires has more green space than its residents realize. Its neighborhood parks, ignored by the tourist circuits, may well be the city's most genuine.

MONTSERRAT

- Edificio Otto Wulff — eclecticism taken to the limit
- Casa Palanti — Palanti on Avenida de Mayo
- Los 36 Billares

Edificio Otto Wulff — eclecticism taken to the limit

Montserrat

Avenida de Mayo holds some of the most ornate buildings of porteño eclecticism, but few reach the exuberance of the Edificio Otto Wulff. Built between 1910 and 1913 for the German merchant it's named after, it occupies a corner of Avenida de Mayo with a presence that blends Viennese Art Nouveau, German Baroque, and French academicism into a mix that only turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires could have produced.

The Wulff building's facade is an iconographic program that takes time to fully read. The female figures holding up the cornices, the medallions with allegorical scenes, the domes crowning the corners, and the windows with vegetal moldings make up a visual language that blends the mythological with the decorative seamlessly. On Avenida de Mayo — where ornamental competition was the rule — the Wulff fits right in.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Wulff building sits right at the edge of porteño eclecticism. One step further and it would be kitsch; one step back and it would be just another building on Avenida de Mayo. Its value as an architectural object lies exactly on that edge.

Casa Palanti — Palanti on Avenida de Mayo

Montserrat

Mario Palanti is the most singular architect in the history of Buenos Aires. The creator of the Palacio Barolo — a three-dimensional rendering of Dante's Divine Comedy — Palanti left the city other works that share the same symbolic ambition and the same formal exuberance. Casa Palanti, on Avenida de Mayo, is one of the most interesting: an apartment building the architect designed with the same creative intensity he brought to his best-known works.

Palanti arrived in Argentina from Italy in 1909 and found in Buenos Aires a city willing to embrace his visionary, eccentric architecture. The blend of medieval Italian references, Eastern elements, and symbolic decoration that marks his work feels as strange today as it did when it was built. Every detail of the facade bears the mark of an architect who treated each project as a chance to express a worldview.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Palanti is the Buenos Aires architect who fascinates me most, precisely because he's the most eccentric. A man who built the Divine Comedy in reinforced concrete on Yrigoyen street has a relationship with architecture no history textbook can fully explain.

Los 36 Billares

Montserrat



Photo C. Firvida

At Avenida de Mayo 1271, a few steps from Congress, one of Buenos Aires's most beloved bares notables has operated since 1894. Los 36 Billares opened its doors just as the avenue itself was finished, combining the everyday café with the great porteño passion of the time: billiards. Its name is no accident — it refers to the number of tables it once had — and its legendary basement still holds eight restored billiard tables more than a hundred and twenty years old, alongside nine pool tables.

The building that houses it, in the French academicist style, was built in 1914 by architects Tiphaine and Colmegna for the La Franco Argentina insurance company. Writers such as Federico García Lorca, who stayed at the nearby Hotel Castelar, played at its tables, along with several generations of porteño journalists and intellectuals. The bar closed in 2013, when it was bought by a pizza chain, but reopened in 2014 after a thorough restoration that returned the basement to its old splendor. Today it is officially recognized as a Living Testimony of Civic Memory.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Los 36 Billares has something few bares notables still keep: its original use, intact. It isn't a café that once had billiard tables; it's a billiard hall that also happens to serve coffee, just as it has since 1894. That continuity of function, more than the decor, is what makes it irreplaceable.

NUEVA POMPEYA

— Uriburu Bridge over the Riachuelo

Tied to the industrial development of the south side and the working-class expansion of the early twentieth century, it keeps a strong popular tradition linked to tango and the culture of work.

For the traveler:

Nueva Pompeya is the neighborhood of the milonga and of Homero Manzi, who knew how to sing of the south side with a sadness that still resonates.

Uriburu Bridge over the Riachuelo

Nueva Pompeya

The Uriburu Bridge, built in 1914 by the English firm Dorman Long, is one of the last swing bridges still in use in South America. Its rotating mechanism — which lets boats through by swinging the deck on its central axis — was designed for the shipping traffic of the Riachuelo, back when the river was a busy commercial artery.

Today the bridge connects Nueva Pompeya and Barracas with Avellaneda. Although the Riachuelo no longer carries the river traffic it once did, the swing mechanism is still kept operational. Its riveted iron structure is an exceptional record of early-twentieth-century industrial engineering.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Riachuelo has a bad reputation it doesn't fully deserve. The Uriburu Bridge, its centuries-old mechanism still working, is proof that there's more history along its banks than in many museums.

NÚÑEZ

- Estadio Más Monumental — River Plate
- Parque de la Memoria

Estadio Más Monumental — River Plate

Núñez

Estadio Más Monumental is the largest football stadium in South America. Its 85,018 seats — the result of a renovation completed in 2023 that removed the running track and brought the stands closer to the pitch — form an architectural mass that, seen from Avenida Figueroa Alcorta, reads as a city within the city. Inaugurated in 1938 by River Plate, the stadium's official name took on the naming rights of the Chango Más supermarket chain in 2022, though fans still just call it the Monumental.

The stadium hosted the final of the 1978 World Cup, in which Argentina defeated the Netherlands. An expansion currently underway will bring its capacity above 100,000, making the Monumental one of the largest stadiums on the planet.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Monumental is human scale taken to its extreme: 85,000 people singing together create an experience with no equal anywhere else in Buenos Aires. As an architect, what interests me about the stadium is what it achieves without ornament: pure form in the service of collective emotion.

Parque de la Memoria

Núñez

On the bank of the Río de la Plata, along the Costanera Norte, there's a park that is at once a sculpture garden, a memorial, and a lookout point. Parque de la Memoria was inaugurated in 2007 in tribute to the victims of state terrorism during Argentina's last military dictatorship (1976–1983). Its fourteen hectares along the river hold the Monument to the Victims and a collection of sculptures by Argentine and international artists.

The monument — designed by architects Claudio Ferrari, Adriana Lauría, Anabel Stoppani, and Noemí Smolensky — consists of a 200-meter zigzagging trench with the names of the 30,000 disappeared engraved on granite slabs. Orienting it toward the river carries a deliberate symbolic weight: many victims were thrown into the Río de la Plata from airplanes during the so-called death flights.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Parque de la Memoria is the most successful public memory space in Buenos Aires. The trench with the names, facing the river that received the disappeared, has a restraint and a force that grander monuments can't match.

PALERMO

- Carlos Thays Botanical Garden
- Japanese Garden
- Galileo Galilei Planetarium
- MALBA — Museo de Arte Latinoamericano
- National Museum of Decorative Arts
- Palermo Racecourse
- Palermo Woods — Parque Tres de Febrero
- Palermo Soho and Palermo Hollywood
- La Viruta — tango school and milonga
- Salón Canning — the milonga of tradition
- Pasaje Bollini
- Pasaje Convención
- Mercado de las Pulgas

Carlos Thays Botanical Garden

Palermo

In the heart of Palermo, surrounded by the noise of Avenida Santa Fe and Avenida Las Heras, lies a seven-hectare garden where time seems to stop. The Carlos Thays Botanical Garden was inaugurated in 1898 and bears the name of its creator: the French landscape architect Carlos Thays, who also designed the Palermo Woods and dozens of the city's squares and parks.

Thays conceived the garden as a space for botanical research, but also as a pleasure garden in the tradition of nineteenth-century European gardens. The 5,500 plant species it holds are organized by geographic region and botanical family, creating paths that take you from temperate forest to tropical jungle in just a few steps. The late-nineteenth-century iron-and-glass greenhouses are themselves works of industrial architecture of great heritage value. The garden is also home to hundreds of urban cats cared for by volunteer neighbors.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Botanical Garden is the place in Buenos Aires where the contrast between city and nature is felt most clearly. Walking in through any of its gates produces an immediate disconnection from urban noise that few other experiences in the city can match.

Japanese Garden

Palermo

The Japanese Garden in Buenos Aires is the largest outside Japan. Its 5.5 hectares of grounds, designed on the principles of classical Japanese gardening, with koi ponds, wooden bridges, and pagodas, make it a space that deserves to be taken seriously as a work of design.

The garden was inaugurated in 1967 as a gift from Argentina's resident Japanese community to the Argentine people, as part of the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of independence. The donation included not just the design but the plants, stones, and architectural elements, all brought from Japan. The principles of Japanese gardening — asymmetry, emptiness as a compositional element, nature evoked in miniature — create a spatial experience completely different from any other garden in the city.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Japanese Garden shows that the principles of Japanese design — asymmetry, silence, nature suggested rather than shown outright — work as well in Buenos Aires as they do in Kyoto. The human scale of the space, which never makes you feel small, is its greatest virtue.

Galileo Galilei Planetarium

Palermo

In the Palermo Woods, above an artificial lake, stands one of the most singular buildings in Buenos Aires. The Galileo Galilei Planetarium, inaugurated in 1966, is shaped like a flying saucer resting on three concrete legs — a silhouette that in the 1960s read straight out of science fiction and, nearly six decades later, is still strange and fascinating.

The building was designed by the Argentine architect Enrique Jan, who solved the problem of housing a large spherical dome — essential for astronomical projections — with a structure that turns that technical requirement into the building's dominant formal feature. The twenty-meter dome crowning the building isn't an afterthought: it's constructive logic taken to its most expressive conclusion. Planetarium shows project the night sky onto the interior dome with a precision and scale unique in the city.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Planetarium is the building in Buenos Aires that most clearly belongs to its era without feeling dated. The scientific and spatial optimism of the 1960s — the belief that the future was in the stars — was immortalized in that dome floating above the Palermo lake.

MALBA — Museo de Arte Latinoamericano

Palermo



Photo C. Firvida

MALBA is the most-visited contemporary art museum in Argentina and one of the most important in Latin America. Inaugurated in 2001 with the collection of the businessman Eduardo Costantini, it holds works by the great masters of twentieth-century Latin American art: Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Tarsila do Amaral, Xul Solar, and Antonio Berni, among many others.

The building was designed by the Córdoba-based architects Gastón Atelman, Martín Fourcade, and Alfredo Tapia, winners of the 1997 international competition. Their design solves the problem of housing large artworks with a concrete-and-glass structure that creates double-height spaces with overhead natural light, ideal for viewing large-format paintings. The facade on Avenida Figueroa Alcorta, with its great sloped concrete plane, is one of the boldest architectural interventions in contemporary Buenos Aires.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

A few years ago I went to the cinema at MALBA. I walked into a nearly full theater, sat down, and found myself right behind the back and the neck of Clorindo Testa, with whom I had worked for almost two years before graduating. I said hello, he turned his head, stood up, and we hugged. The lights dimmed, and turning around, he asked: how are you? I told him I was doing well... and that now that I was sitting behind the greatest architect, even better. Clorindo finished turning his head, looked at me smiling, and said: Carlos, there are no great architects... only great clients. Truly a great man, Clorindo.

MALBA solved a problem in Argentina that few Latin American museums had seriously tackled: how to build a building for contemporary art that doesn't compete with the works but strengthens them instead. The solution — natural light, neutral spaces, generous scale — is modest and perfect.

National Museum of Decorative Arts

Palermo

The National Museum of Decorative Arts occupies the Palacio Errázuriz, built between 1911 and 1918 for the Errázuriz-Alvear family to a design by the French architect René Sergent. The building is a Louis XVI-style palace so faithful to its Parisian models that it's hard to believe it stands in Buenos Aires.

René Sergent was the favorite architect of the European and American aristocracy of the early twentieth century. The Palacio Errázuriz is his only work in South America and is considered one of the most important private palaces on the continent. The museum's collection includes eighteenth-century French furniture, European silverware, Flemish tapestries, Sèvres porcelain, and paintings by El Greco, Manet, and Rodin. The whole ensemble — architecture, gardens, and collection — is a full immersion in the aesthetic of Argentina's Belle Époque elite.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Palacio Errázuriz is the place in Buenos Aires where the Argentine oligarchy's European fantasy was expressed with the greatest coherence and the greatest luxury. It isn't nostalgia: it's an extraordinary historical record of what a certain Argentina wanted to be.

Palermo Racecourse

Palermo

The Palermo Racecourse is one of the most underrated architectural complexes in Buenos Aires. Inaugurated in 1908, its eclectic-style grandstands, paddocks, stables, and two-kilometer oval track form a complex of more than fifty hectares that operates as a self-contained world within the city.

The main grandstand building was designed after the great European racecourses of the Belle Époque: Longchamp in Paris and Ascot in England. The covered galleries, private boxes, betting halls, and terraces overlooking the track create an architecture of spectacle with few equivalents in the city. The racecourse's scale — which you only sense once inside — is one of the surprises it holds for a first-time visitor: those fifty hectares of green in the heart of Palermo are invisible from any street in the neighborhood.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The racecourse is porteño architecture's best-kept secret. Its Belle Époque grandstands are as good as any building from that era in the city, but because they sit inside an enclosed venue, few people ever see them. It's one of the best-kept secrets in Palermo.

Palermo Woods — Parque Tres de Febrero

Palermo

The Palermo Woods are the largest green space in Buenos Aires. Its more than four hundred hectares of parks, lakes, gardens, and tree-lined avenues were designed by Carlos Thays in the late nineteenth century on the principles of English landscape design: organized nature that imitates spontaneous nature, with paths that curve to create surprises and pools of water that mirror the sky.

The Rosedal (Rose Garden) is the most formal and most visited garden within the park. Its eighteen thousand rose bushes, in six hundred different varieties, put on a spectacular bloom every spring. The Rosedal's design, with its Venetian-style bridge and central pergola, is an example of the European romantic garden successfully transplanted to the climate of Buenos Aires. The park also holds the Japanese Garden, the Botanical Garden, the Planetarium, and the Racecourse, making the Woods the largest open-air cultural complex in the city.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Palermo Woods are the most lasting gift the nineteenth century gave Buenos Aires. Thays understood that a city without a green lung is a sick city, and he designed a park that works just as well today as it did in 1900.

Palermo Soho and Palermo Hollywood

Palermo

Palermo Soho and Palermo Hollywood are the names popular usage gave to two areas of the Palermo neighborhood that began transforming rapidly in the 1990s. What had been a middle-class residential neighborhood with a scattering of industry and warehouses became the epicenter of design, dining, and nightlife in Buenos Aires.

Palermo Soho takes its name from the New York neighborhood because the process was similar: artists and designers looking for cheap space set up workshops and studios, and restaurants, boutiques, and crowds followed close behind. Palermo Hollywood owes its name to the concentration of TV production companies that moved into the area in the 1990s. Today the two micro-neighborhoods are practically indistinguishable in function — design, dining, nightlife — though each keeps its own identity.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Palermo Soho and Hollywood are the clearest example of how a city transforms from the bottom up when urban policy doesn't get in the way. The problem is always the same: the people who drove the transformation eventually get displaced by the people who profit from it.

La Viruta — tango school and milonga

Palermo

You don't learn tango by watching: you learn it by dancing. And in Buenos Aires, the place where that truth gets practiced with the most intensity and the most diverse crowd is La Viruta. Set in the basement of Club Armenia in Palermo, La Viruta is simultaneously a tango school, a milonga, and a meeting point for an international community that comes to Buenos Aires specifically to learn and dance.

The format combines beginner classes with milongas that run until dawn. The classes held before the dancing — starting around nine at night — let dancers of every level warm up and learn before the milonga proper gets going. That format, a class followed by dancing in the same space, is what sets La Viruta apart from other milongas and explains how well it blends beginners with experienced dancers.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

La Viruta is the milonga that most clearly shows tango's international reach. Hearing someone ask for a class in Japanese, German, or Hebrew while Di Sarli plays in the background is an experience only Buenos Aires can offer.

Salón Canning — the milonga of tradition

Palermo

If La Viruta is the milonga of the new generation, Salón Canning is the milonga of tradition. Located on Avenida Scalabrini Ortiz, the Canning is the place where porteño tango is practiced with the greatest fidelity to its historic codes: the ronda (counterclockwise flow around the floor), the cabeceo (the nod that invites a dance), the tandas and cortinas (music sets and their breaks), the close embrace, and silence as a form of communication.

Salón Canning has a history that predates the milongas held there today. The building was constructed in the 1940s as a dance and party hall, and its architecture — with its large wooden dance floor, a stage for the orchestra, side boxes, and a bar at the back — was designed specifically for social dancing. That fit between the space and its use is what makes the Canning one of the most complete dance halls in the city.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Salón Canning is where tango is practiced with the most seriousness and, at the same time, the least pretension. That combination — the rigor of milonga etiquette with the ease of people who've been dancing for decades — is exactly what tango needs to survive.

Pasaje Bollini

Palermo

In the heart of Palermo, steps from the busy avenues and trendy bars, there's a street that seems to belong to another city and another time. Pasaje Bollini is one of the most photogenic streets in Buenos Aires: two cobblestone blocks lined with low houses, gardens, and trees that form a green canopy over the roadway.

The passage takes its name from Pedro Bollini, an Italian merchant who, in the late nineteenth century, subdivided his land to create this private street of single-family houses. The layout — an internal passage with narrow-fronted lots and front gardens — was common in the Buenos Aires of the immigration era, and Bollini is one of the few examples that survived without any change in scale. The houses are a compressed catalogue of porteño domestic architecture: Italianate style, Art Nouveau, and eclecticism coexist on facades each owner modified to their own taste.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Pasaje Bollini is one of those places I recommend to architects visiting Buenos Aires to understand how human scale works within the urban fabric. The passage's proportions — width, height, greenery — create a spatial experience no urban planning textbook can describe better than simply walking through it on a Tuesday at five in the afternoon.

Pasaje Convención

Palermo



Photo C. Firvida

Buenos Aires has a habit of naming itself. Its streets and passages record battles, presidents, poets, provinces, and civic dates. Pasaje Convención recalls the constitutional conventions that gave the country its institutional shape in the second half of the nineteenth century, in particular the 1853 convention that enacted the National Constitution.

The passage sits in the heart of Palermo Hollywood, surrounded by the bars, restaurants, and production studios that define the neighborhood. Its intimate scale — just a few meters wide, lined with two- and three-story buildings — contrasts with the bustle of the surrounding streets and creates a pocket of calm in one of the city's busiest neighborhoods. The restaurants occupying its ground floors have turned it into a nighttime destination that mixes neighborhood regulars with visitors who come specifically for its restaurants.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Pasaje Convención is the perfect example of how intimate scale can coexist with urban intensity. Right in the middle of Palermo Hollywood, those few meters of passage create a pause the neighborhood needs and that no one ever planned.

Mercado de las Pulgas

Palermo



Photo C. Firvida

The Mercado de las Pulgas (Flea Market) is the most active antiques and vintage market in Buenos Aires. Open Tuesday through Sunday on the block bounded by Dorrego, Álvarez Thomas, Concepción Arenal, and General Martínez streets, on the border between Colegiales, Palermo, and Chacarita, it combines a classic antiques fair with contemporary design, secondhand books, and vintage clothing in a single space.

Here, a serious antiques dealer selling nineteenth-century furniture shares space with a young designer offering upcycled pieces, and a vinyl record collector with a seller of clothes from another era. That diversity is what makes the market hard to define and easy to spend hours wandering. No two visits are ever the same: stalls rotate, the objects change, and something unexpected always turns up.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Mercado de las Pulgas is one of those places where Buenos Aires looks most like itself. There's no curation, no thought-out design: it's porteño cambalache — jumble — in its purest form, with everything chaotic, surprising, and one-of-a-kind that implies.