

# ARGENTINA

University of Belgrano

## **Student report**

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This is the student report for the Bilateral Program to the UNIVERSITY OF BELGRANO in Argentina.

### **Obtaining your Visa**

As soon as you receive your acceptance form Belgrano, call the Argentine consulate in Los Angeles to get a list of the items you will need for a student visa. The items vary depending on the length of the visa. Cost approx. \$280.

### **What to bring**

Argentina has four seasons with winter (June-August) lows in the high thirties and with summer highs (December-February) in the nineties. You will need to bring clothing for all seasons.

### **Arrival**

When you arrive at Ezeiza the international airport of Buenos Aires, you will need to take a bus or a *remis* from the airport to your living arrangements. Manuel Tierra Leon offers bus service to the center of Buenos Aires for \$14 and then take a tax to your living arrangements. If you are uncomfortable doing this, take a *remis* from Manuel Tierra Leon. This service is rather expensive \$49, but it is safe and will take you directly where you want to go. **DO NOT TAKE A TAXI FROM THE AIRPORT!**

### **Orientation**

In the middle of March and the end of July the University of Belgrano has an orientation for incoming international student. In the orientation they will explain how you enroll in classes and whom you can talk to if you run into problems. On the 17<sup>th</sup> floor is the International Office where Gaby and Jimena are the most helpful in any situation.

### **Language**

The official language is Spanish. They use "vos" instead of "tu" and have some different vocabulary from Spain and Mexico. The four-week intensive language program that is

offered in February and in July is very worth while, with excellent professors. This program will help you get adjusted to the Argentine accent.

### **Money and Banking**

The exchange rate is one dollar to one peso (2001 exchange rate). Many places accept US\$. On the plane I brought with me a small amount of cash and a substantial amount of money in American Express Traveler's Checks. American Express Traveler's Checks are exchanged for US dollars without any charge at the American Express office. There is a very small fee for exchanging travelers' checks for Argentine pesos. I did not withdraw money with my ATM card, I used my American Express and my Visa credit card to withdraw money from the ATM machine. You can contact your credit card for a pin number if you do not already have one. For my Visa statement I changed my address to my address in Argentina, and then mailed the payment with a check from my checking account in the United States. Citibank Visa has a phone number you can call collect when you are out of the country. Check with your credit card to see if they have a something similar.

When my financial aid check came, I had a friend in San Francisco deposit it into my checking account. I used Correo Argentina to mail things to the US. This cost about \$1.25 for a stamp to the US. If you have someone in the United States with whom you share a checking account, you can have her write your checks and mail them to your credit card. Do some research before hand to decide what will work best for you.

### **Housing**

You have a couple different housing options available to you. You can arrange to live with a family. This cost approximately five hundred dollars a month. You will have your own room and will eat dinner and breakfast with the family. For lunch you make your own arrangements. Usually the family asks that you limit your phone calls since local calls are charged by the minute. (Cell phones are more expensive than here, too.) Another option is to live in pension where you just rent a room. Some students stayed in Georgina's house for four hundred dollars a month for a shared bedroom and access to the kitchen. This house is two blocks from school and a good way to meet other exchange students. E-mail the Belgrano international office for further housing information.

I lived with a family for the first two months and then rented a furnished apartment with an Italian exchange student. We each paid \$225 a month plus utilities (roughly \$75 a month). We lived five blocks from the University. We enjoyed living in our own apartment with the freedom to invite people over when we choose to, and I picked up a little Italian.

### **Health Insurance**

The University police states that it is mandatory for exchange student to have insurance. I used a local health insurance called CEMIC that charges \$50 a month for health and dental. You do not have to pay anything when you go to the doctors and, if you are extremely sick, the doctors make house calls. You receive a 50% discount on prescriptions with your CEMIC card.

### **Registering for Classes**

You should have an idea of what classes you want to take when you get down there, but you will also need to be very flexible. You can change classes the first two weeks of the semester. I recommend that students sign up for more classes than they are going to take and see which ones sound interesting, and then drop the other classes. Remember to pass your attendance card every time you go to class. If you have a class at 1pm be sure to pass your card after 12:59 and before 1:10. If you pass your card after ten past the hour you are not counted present during the first hour. Please note that students must have 80% attendance in all courses. The International Office at Belgrano can answer any further questions you have regarding classes.

### **Shopping**

Grocery shopping is similar here in the United States except for the produce; you must have your fruits and vegetables weighed before you go to the checkout counter. Shopping for clothes can take a bit of patience in getting adjusted to European sizes. But shop around as there are a variety of different stores with cheaper prices.

### **Laundry**

In Argentina laundry mats are rather uncommon, however, wash and folds are very common and usually every couple of blocks. One load washed, dried and folded runs about five or six dollars. If you want to save money you can just have them wash the clothes and you can hang them on the line to dry.

### **Health, Diet and Exercise**

There are plenty of gyms, that charge around \$40 a month, where you can go to get some exercise. The Argentine diet: breakfast is usually coffee with milk and a "medialuna" (a small croissant). For lunch they have a large meal around noon, and then "merienda" at 5-6 pm with tea and cookies, dinner is around 10pm. The diet consists of lots of meat, pasta, and pizzas. After all, Argentina is famous for their beef. Argentina does not have the same health concerns as other South American countries. You should have a current tetanus shot. If you will be traveling to other countries in South America, call the Center for Disease Control to find out what shot other shots you might need.

### **Transportation**

Public transportation within Buenos Aires is inexpensive and runs twenty-four hours a day. The buses cost seventy cents and run all through out the city at all hours. The subway is fifty cents and is open until ten o'clock at night. The train is forty cents and stops running between one in the morning until six in the morning. The best guide transportation guide is the Lumi guide that can be purchased at a "kiosko" or a newsstand. This guide has detailed maps of the city with the bus, train and subway routes.

Other forms of transportation are *remis* and taxis. For a *remis* you call and ask them to pick you up and you tell them where you are going. This is a safe way to travel- however the fare is usually slightly higher than a taxi. But if you don't know your way around the

city, a taxi driver could drive you in circles or, worse yet, you could be robbed. I usually took public transportation when I was by myself or with one or two other people. Usually four or five people can fit into one taxi and it costs a dollar or two each. **DO NOT TAKE A TAXI ALONE.**

### **Telephone**

There are public telephones all over the city that accept telephone cards. The telephone card can be purchased at any "kiosko" or a telephone center. For international calls, use the telephone centers. It costs about seventy cents a minute during the evenings to call the United States. If you are living with a family, they will ask that you limit your calls. If you have an apartment and don't make long distance calls, the bill is about sixty dollars every two months.

### **Mail/Internet**

You can mail things via Correo Argentina or Federal Express. There are some other companies, but I recommend the two previously mentioned. You can receive mail at the University or at your place of residence. It usually takes about seven to eight days for things to arrive. If you are expecting a package, you may have to go to the international airport to pick it up. If someone is going to send you a package, have them mark "gift" on the custom form so you won't have to pay the import charge. The University is connected to the internet and they will give you a free "pine" account. They have an internet lab with thirty computers. The lab fills up so you should make a reservation in advance.

### **Employment**

You can look for a job under the table. Some students in the past have taught English as a second language while others have worked in a bar.

### **Class Structure and Studying**

The University has a set up similar to the British. Students enter in their freshman year and take the same classes as other students with the same major until they graduate. As a result of this, when you take a class, everyone will want to know who you are and why you have not been in their class previous years. Most classes are one year in length with two midterms and a final. The midterms are written exams and the finals are usually oral exams. Finals are in July, November, December and in February. During each month you have one opportunity to take the final. If you do not pass, you can take the final again during one of the other months if you are still going to be in Buenos Aires. If you are taking interdisciplinary classes that are offered to exchange students they are a semester in length and usually don't have a midterm, just a final at the end. Some interdisciplinary teachers will give a written final, while others opt for an oral final. Most students put off studying until the last minute. However, as an exchange student, I suggest you stay on top of your studies so you will understand the vocabulary of the lectures.

### **Books**

Most teachers have photocopies of the readings at the university and you can just make photocopies.

### **Calendar**

The school year starts in mid-March and ends in the end of June with finals in July. The second semester starts in August and ends at the end of October, with finals in November and October. The Thursday and Friday before Easter are holidays. There are other holidays through-out the year that are observed on Friday or Monday. Check with Belgrano's International Office for the holiday schedule.

### **Initial Expenses (1999 Estimates)**

- ◆ Intensive Spanish course \$700
- ◆ Plane flight \$1500
- ◆ SFSU tuition \$952 each semester

### **Monthly Expenses**

- ◆ Housing \$300-500
- ◆ Insurance \$50
- ◆ Food \$100
- ◆ Transportation \$30 (this is based on taking taxis a couple times a month and the bus a few times a week)
- ◆ Telephone \$20
- ◆ Utilities \$50
- ◆ Going out money varies on your taste. Mixed drinks start at \$7, sodas and water \$2.50-\$3., and club covers are between \$10 and \$30.

### **Other**

Be sure you have Robert Chang's (financial aid), Mr. Yarabinec's, and your advisor's e-mail. They come in handy if you are having problems with financial aid, academic or just want to let everyone know how you are doing.

Make two photocopies of all your documents including passport, driver's license, traveler's checks and credit cards. Leave one copy in the United States and keep the other copy with you.