

PALERMO, BUENOS AIRES

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When Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges lived in quiet, suburban Palermo at the beginning of the 20th century, he could scarcely have imagined what it would turn into.

Now, everyone wants in on Palermo, a once run-down neighbourhood where independent fashion designers, daring chefs and bearded barbers clamour for

commercial space in graffiti-covered buildings and crumbling mansions.

The gentrification of Palermo, the biggest barrio in Buenos Aires, began in the late 1990s, when artists and designers moved north to escape soaring rents. Today, it has reached the apex of its ascent to stardom, with star chefs like Peru's Gaston Acurio opening new restaurants

and the price of real estate increasing faster than anywhere else in town.

But the cobbled, tree-lined streets still retain their charm, and many property owners would rather restore their antiquated townhouses than sell to developers, preserving the character of this quintessential Buenos Aires neighbourhood.



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TEGUI



Palermo's rough-around-the-edges aesthetic meets Manhattan chic at Tegu, Germán Martitegui's third and most daring Buenos Aires restaurant. The star chef commissioned Argentine stencil artist Cabaio to turn the façade into a colourful mural, behind which lies a world of dimly lit splendour, with rows of intimate tables and smartly dressed waiters pouring wine for a discerning clientele. After proving his worth at Olsen and Casa Cruz, two other acclaimed Palermo institutions, Martitegui has created in Tegu a showcase kitchen where his culinary artistry runs wild. Tasting menus of four or eight courses (with optional wine pairings) change frequently; one day he might present his take on traditional Argentine dishes, the next it might be classical French fare, all created in an open kitchen that takes up the rear of the restaurant. Experiments with texture, colour, aroma and taste have earned Tegu a just reputation as one of the best restaurants in Latin America.

Costa Rica 5852, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +54 11 4770 9500 | tegui.com.ar

LAS PIZARRAS BISTRO



Things move fast in Buenos Aires. Locals wake up every morning wondering whether the cost of living has crept up overnight, and more enthusiastically, what the chalkboard menus at Las Pizarras Bistro will have to offer on that day. Brainchild of chef Rodrigo Castilla, who opened the restaurant with his savings following several years working in kitchens across Europe, this unassuming Palermo Soho bistro prides itself on its fresh, rustic, organic cuisine and homemade products. Menus change daily following morning trips to local markets, and the availability of products from local organic suppliers. Think deer with parsnip purée, baby carrots and cherry chutney, or cured trout and herb aioli with a salad of apple, almond and cucumber. The extensive wine selection, curated by Castilla, is also in a state of constant flux, with plenty of refreshing whites and fewer oaky reds in the summer months, and the reverse in the winter.

Thames 2296, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +54 11 47750625 | aspizarrasbistro.com

HOLLYWOOD IN CAMBODIA



Freedom of opinion has its limits in Buenos Aires, which is perhaps why street art, graffiti or muralism, as it is variously known, has been a popular act of self-expression for almost 50 years. Although it remains illegal, graffiti is gaining traction as a legitimate art form in the city. At Palermo's Hollywood in Cambodia gallery, visitors can view and purchase individual works of art from some of the scene's main protagonists – the likes of Bs As Stencil, Malatesta and Pum Pum – who can sometimes be found working in the rooftop gallery-cum-workspace or hanging out at the graffiti-covered Post Street Bar below. Run by several street art collectives, the space also holds interactive workshops and hosts live painting sessions on its huge roof terrace, which doubles as a living canvas: new murals are made and painted over continually, creating a living and constantly evolving piece of art in the heart of the neighbourhood.

Thames 1885, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +54 911 3683 3219 | hollywoodincambodia.com.ar

LAB. TOSTADORES DE CAFÉ



Buenos Aires is not renowned for quality coffee, but that's all changing, as a new wave of young, passionate barristas set up shop in the city. In Palermo, LAB is leading the charge. The entrepreneur-led business started roasting its own beans in 2012 and opened its training centre and coffee shop in October 2014. Inside you'll find shelves stacked high with home-roasted beans and a gleaming Italian espresso maker behind the bar; a welcome sight in a city whose relationship with coffee has been limited to the ubiquitous café cortado for decades. Stop by for a Colombian Yumai Estrella Dorada espresso, or join a class to learn how to roast your own beans. Professional classes are also available for aspiring baristas. You can buy any of the coffees sold at the store's Brew Bar in bean form – ask nicely and they'll grind them for you while you sup on a fresh, bitter espresso.

Humbolt 1542, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +55 11 4776 7167 | labcafe.com.ar

HOME HOTEL BUENOS AIRES



You'll feel at home as soon as you walk into this Palermo Hollywood bolthole, a labour of love for owners Patricia O'Shea and Tom Rixton, who bought the property in 2003 and spent two-and-a-half years turning it into the neighbourhood's first boutique hotel. The couple have fitted out Home's common areas and 20 rooms, suites and lofts – including the apartment where they lived while restoring the property – with antique furniture bought from the nearby Mercado de las Pulgas (flea market) and vintage wallpaper, an effect that has earned Home a handful of awards from the likes of Mr & Mrs Smith and *Wallpaper**. Even if you're not staying the night, pop in for a pre-dinner drink or Sunday brunch in the lush jasmine-scented garden, or treat yourself to a spa day and spend the afternoon on the pool deck in the shade of the native palo borracho tree.

Honduras 5860, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +54 11 4778-1008 | homebuenosaires.com

MALBA



New York has MOMA; London has Tate Modern; Buenos Aires has MALBA, the Museum of Latin American Art. It might be a stretch too far to say that MALBA single-handedly revived global interest in Latin American art, but it was certainly the most important institutional innovation of the new millennium in Argentina. MALBA opened its doors in September 2001, months before the Argentine economic crash that followed in December. In doing so, it ignited a newfound appreciation for 20th century Latin American artists like Xul Solar, Jorge de la Vega and Antonio Berni, whose work is currently celebrated in a huge exhibition. The rest of the space is filled with the permanent collection of Argentine tycoon Eduardo Constantini, who built MALBA to house his vast accumulation of Latin American treasures, as well as a cinema showcasing local films and an educational centre with regular workshops and talks.

Av. Figueroa Alcorta 3415, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +54 11 4808 6500 | malba.org.ar

SALON BERLIN PELUQUERIA Y BAR



If you're wondering where all the smartly-coiffed hipsters in Buenos Aires go to have their plumage preened, look no further than Salon Berlin Peluqueria y Bar. Part old-world barber shop, part bar, Salon Berlin is an ode to times gone by, where professional barbers specialise in classic haircuts for gentlemen and all manner of beard and moustache styles. The Palermo institution is filled with vintage barbershop paraphernalia: there's a collection of old shaving brushes and a colourful array of straight razors used for close and clean shaves, while faces wearing luxuriant beards peer down from framed prints on the walls. It gets busy in the evenings, but no one minds the wait, since well-crafted classic cocktails and other beverages are prepared at the bar on the other side of the room, and gentlemen waiting their turn can play ping-pong and darts while admiring each others' facial grooming.

Humboldt 1411, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +54 11 4771 5000

FRANK'S MOMENTS & DRINKS CO.



Palermo's charming old buildings seem haunted by the ghosts of a bygone era, lending themselves perfectly to this retro-style speakeasy. If you have a reservation for dinner at Frank's Moments & Drinks Co., the bouncer will give you a code to dial into a telephone booth, which swings open to reveal the not-so-secret bar and restaurant within. Inside, vintage wallpaper and crystal chandeliers set the mood for a sultry evening of bacchanalian pleasure, and barmen in waistcoats, bowties and creative facial hair make some of the best cocktails in the city. Tapas-style bar snacks include traditional Argentine cuts such as mollejas (sweetbreads) and grilled octopus, with decadent deserts drizzled in the ubiquitous Argentine caramel sauce dulce de leche. Find your spot in the downstairs bar, which reeks of moustache wax and aromatic bitters, or make your way upstairs to a VIP area looking out over the stylish crowd below.

Arévalo 1443, Palermo, Buenos Aires | Tel: +54 11 4777-6541 | franks-bar.com