



# THE GLOBAL MANAGER'S GUIDE TO LIVING AND WORKING ABROAD

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Western Europe and the Americas

**Mercer**



*Greenwood*  
PUBLISHING GROUP

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# Introduction

The decision to accept a job in another country is an important one, fraught with both great possibility and great challenge. Depending on how mobile your own family was when you were growing up—and on how much you have traveled as an adult—the prospect of leaving your current home and country for another country can be both exciting and daunting at the same time.

The amount of social, cultural, psychological, and linguistic change you will face depends, of course, on how different your new locale will be from the one you are in now. A move from the United States to Canada, or from Germany to Austria, could prove to be no more difficult than a move to another part of your current country. But a move from Tokyo to Johannesburg, or from Helsinki to São Paulo, could be much more challenging.

Another major factor is whether you will be making the move alone, with your spouse, or with your spouse and children. Each of these scenarios presents its own level of challenge and change. It may seem that going alone would be the simplest—yet, depending on how collegial your new work environment is and how big the cultural change is you will face, going alone may turn out to be more difficult than going with your spouse. But there is no denying that going with your spouse and one or more children will have the same sorts of day-to-day involvement with your new city that can put even well-adjusted families under stress.

In this book, we have assembled some advice on how to plan for your move to a new city as an expatriate employee. Ideally, you will learn something about your host city that helps you make the transition more smoothly.

We present some concise chapters addressing the major issues expatriates will face: preparing for the move, what to expect on arrival, managing “culture shock,” staying connected to your home, and coping when things go wrong.

The bulk of this book, though, is city-specific advice on personal safety and security issues, healthcare, environment issues, a snapshot of economic data, the city’s infrastructure (utilities, air travel, ground transport), where to shop, recreation and entertainment, the sociocultural environment, some demographic data, workplace culture (including how to interact with business associates and how to dress for work), the natural environment, the housing market, financial issues (including banking and personal taxation), and education (for children).

Of the cities we cover, most are the only ones in their country, so all the above topics are covered in one chapter. But for the countries for which we present reports on two or more cities, we have consolidated some of these topics in a country-specific chapter, followed by city-specific information.

Appendices collect specific information on securing work permits and visas, salary/price differentials (with New York as the base), safety issues, and healthcare issues.

If you are considering a job in another country—or are already committed to one—we hope you find the following information valuable as you make this exciting transition.

# Part One

## The Logistics and Psychology of Moving Abroad

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# Getting Ready to Move

## INTRODUCTION

It is time to move out of the country. The excitement of travel is definitely there—but along with it come the problems of moving out, especially if you are planning to move with your family. Dozens of questions cross your mind: How will my family adjust in the new place? How will the kids like the new place? Can I learn the foreign language quickly enough? How do I transport my things? Are pets allowed?

## PREPARING THE FAMILY

Moving out of the country where you may have been for a long time can be difficult, especially for children. Sometimes, expatriates have had to return home prematurely due to their families' inability to cope in the new environment. So it is critical for expatriates to prepare the family before moving out of the country.

The move to a new country may present an attractive career opportunity for you, but your spouse and children will have many questions and concerns. It can be very difficult to break the news to your family. It is always good to discuss the pros and cons of the move with your family before committing to the move.

Learning as much as possible about the host country is the best way to prepare your family for the move. They should be aware of the cultural, climatic, and social differences in the new country.

You have a wide range of information sources you can consult for information on your new host country, including this book. Your local library and the Internet will be other good resources. You may also want to connect with the

## 4 Getting Ready to Move

host-country expatriate community in your home country and your colleagues or friends who live or have lived there. These resources will give you a better idea on the local customs, practices, and culture. It is also advisable to visit the host country embassy in your home country.

### BRINGING CHILDREN

Moving to a new country with children adds a lot of responsibilities and anxieties. There are certain things that you need to know before you enter the host country with your children.

- Is the school certificate in my home country valid in the host country?
- Is there a good foreign language school in the neighborhood?
- Can I find a good childcare service for my child?

To ensure that your child gets enrolled in the international school in the host city, it is advisable to file your child's following educational documents:

- child's marks (or report) card;
- letter from the school head or the teachers and the syllabus followed for the most recent year of schooling;
- copies of assignments done by your child;
- copies of certificates showing extracurricular achievements;
- proof of vaccinations.

You must also check with the host country embassy about the documents to carry and the vaccinations needed to take before traveling there. If it is a long journey, it is important to travel with something to engage your children throughout the trip.

In addition, you need to prepare them for the new country. Adults are mostly unaware of their children's feelings during the move. But children, though they adjust quickly to the new environment, are more worried about their new place.

Suppose you are moving into a country where the cultural and social system is totally different from your home country. Without some preparation, your child may not have the maturity to understand and adjust to the system. Of course, very young children need less advance preparation.

For school-aged children, though, the effect of the stay could be both psychological and sociocultural. Its impact will depend to an extent on the length of your stay. But even with shorter-term stays, children will be concerned with their school, acceptance among peers, making friends, the games they play, and learning the new language.

Longer stays may pose more of a challenge in adjusting to the social system in the host country. If your family maintains its “home” culture at home, but your children see a totally different culture around them, they can have some trouble figuring out their true “identity.”

To minimize the shock in the children, it is advisable to give them as much information as possible on the new country. If they are old enough, encourage them to read or get information online about their new country.

## LEARNING A LANGUAGE

Learning the language of your host country will ease your transition. Even if you know the host country language, pronunciation and usage may vary in different countries. So it is necessary to learn the specific style of usage of the language in the country you are planning to move to, especially the business usage of the language.

In this electronic age, it is can be relatively easy to learn a new language. There are a number of Web sites which will help you learn the language even before you reach the new country. See [www.bbc.co.uk/languages](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages), [www.early-advantage.com](http://www.early-advantage.com), and [www.word2word.com/coursead.html](http://www.word2word.com/coursead.html).

Then there are a number of audio tutorials, tutor-led classes, and books that will also help you learn the language. You can further improve your language skills once you reach the host country. In your new country, you can go for an extension course with your family. It is advisable, also, to try to use the language at home so that you get comfortable with it.

## TAKING CARE OF PETS

When moving to a new country, what to do with the pets is an important question many people ask. There are several options. You can take the pet along with you, or you can leave it in the care of someone you know if you are moving for a shorter period of time. You can also sell or give away the pet before you go. Whatever you do you have to plan it accordingly.

Suppose you are taking the pet along with you. The first thing you have to do is ask the specific country consulate about the process of moving your pet. Most countries need a certificate from a vet showing prior vaccination up to a certain month. Clarify the following items with the country consulate:

- Is there any breed, type, or age restriction on moving pets?
- What documents should one have in place to move the pet?
- What vaccinations are needed before the move? How much lead time does the host country need?
- Can I carry the pet on the airplane or train or must I leave it in the baggage area?
- How long will it take to clear customs?



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- What is the fee structure for moving a pet?
- Who will feed the pet during travel time?
- Should I put the pet in a cage and should I give it a sedative?

Once all your doubts are cleared, take some copies of your pet's photograph and its documents. Then attach each of these with the pet and keep one in your hand. Write down the name of your pet and also your name and your contact details in case the pet is lost on the journey. Chances are, it will come back to you safely.

### PLANNING THE MOVE

Once you have decided on the move and the date is fixed, it is time to plan the move. There are a lot of things you have to take care of before you move out of your home country with your family. List all the things to do and check each off your lists as you finish the task. These lists should have some tasks under various headings: documents to take; people to call; information to get, and so on. Following are some guidelines:

- Ensure all passports, visas, and necessary permits are in order.
- Confirm journey dates and travel tickets/documents.
- Remember to change your address with all companies and persons you correspond with and arrange a mail forwarding service with the post office.
- Cancel all utilities and services you will no longer need and settle all accounts with these companies.
- Decide what essentials you need to carry with you when traveling.
- When packing, take into consideration the climate and availability of products within the host country.
- Find out what you can and cannot take through customs.
- Be aware of any particular rules and regulations in the country.
- Make sure you have some local currency for your arrival in the country, and try to get small denominations of bills and coins, which will be needed to pay the taxi/bus fares from the airport to your hotel or apartment.
- Check whether you have copies of all important documents, such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, wills, insurance policies, deeds, medical records, driver's license, bank statements, school records, and vet records. Leave copies with a friend, an attorney, or a family member at home and take the originals with you. (You may want to scan all these documents and send them to yourself on a noncorporate email account such as Yahoo, Gmail, or Hotmail. Then you can find them again and print them anywhere you have Internet access.)
- If possible, get a plan of your new house and then decide what household items you should take and what you can leave behind.
- List all items you are planning to take. If possible, get a picture of these items. Leave a copy of the list with a friend and take the original with you. It will help you in

calculating the moving charge, and after moving you can check to ensure all your items have arrived in the host country. (Again, you may want to send the pictures to yourself on your personal email account.)

- Decide how you are moving things, whether by yourself or through a moving agency. If you use a moving agency, contact more than one (unless your employer uses only one) and get an estimate of the cost and delivery time. See if the company will cover the insurance for the goods moved or whether you should take additional insurance.
- Arrange for storage of the items you are leaving behind.
- Keep all the papers and receipts related to your move.
- Check whether you have the telephone numbers and contact details of all the people you should contact after you reach the new country. Take along contact information for your children's friends as well.
- Complete any home improvements/repairs you have agreed to do before renters or the new owners of your house move in.

## TRANSPORTING PERSONAL ITEMS

Unless you are driving to your new country, you can either transport your items by air or by sea. Both options have advantages and disadvantages.

By air, your things will reach you quickly. But it is expensive, so you should take only essential personal belongings. Sea transport is less expensive but slower. Before you decide on the mode of transport, it is advisable to check the costs and other facts for both modes of transportation. Whatever your chosen mode of transportation, it is advisable to seek the help of a professional mover to pack your household items.

Many countries have restrictions on the import of certain products, so you should learn about what you can import to the country and the quantity allowed. That is one reason why it is a good idea to work with a relocation consultant. That person will help you with moving your belongings, housing, schooling, and also take you and your family through a short course on your host country.

Once your items reach the host country, they will go through customs clearance, a process that can vary considerably by country.

If you are moving your household items through a moving agency, you can cut costs by

- taking only those items that are very important for you;
- choosing a less expensive time to move, like off season (June or July or middle of the month), if possible;
- checking with various moving companies and their tariffs and special rates.

## SAYING GOODBYE

Before you leave, you may want to visit each of your friends or schedule a bit of time with them to say goodbye. Save some time for your relatives, too, before you leave. Even if everything goes according to plan, departing can still be

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difficult. There will be times when you are physically and emotionally exhausted but try not to let things overwhelm you. Do not be shy about asking for help or support, because there are plenty of people who have been there before.

# Arriving: What to Expect

## INTRODUCTION

Expatriation poses opportunities as well as challenges for one. There can be cultural as well as climatic differences between the home and host country. When these differences are large, the expatriate finds it difficult to adjust to the new circumstances. So, it is advisable to gather some basic information about the host country before he or she makes the actual move. This will considerably reduce the time taken to adjust.

## FIRST DAY

An expatriate's first day in the host country can set the whole tone for the foreign assignment, for better or worse. Most employers have expatriate assistance programs to help employees. Usually an expert or an agency that specializes in this field takes care of expatriate employees in the host country—in matters such as finding accommodation, searching for schools, finding ways to commute to the office and home and so on. Some agencies may also conduct language and cultural coaching for new employees.

An expatriate without the assistance of such agencies must find and arrange for everything alone; the challenges faced can add to tension and stress—or can be considered part of the adventure of changing work venues.

## GETTING SETTLED

Following is a list of items for an expatriate to handle first:

- Register with the host country government.
- Find a home within a suitable budget.
- Look for foreign language schools in the vicinity.
- Apply for a health card and social security number in countries that require them.
- Open a bank account.
- Learn the local laws.
- Figure out basic transportation.
- Find fellow expats and build contacts.

Settling down can be tough when reality falls short of one's high expectations for the host country. But an expatriate can settle down comfortably and quickly when the host country offers more than what he expects.

The climatic condition in the host country is also a factor that slows down an expatriate's adjustment to this new life—an example would be when a person moves from colder regions of the world like Europe to hotter areas like South American countries or vice versa.

The difference in the natural environment in the expatriate's home and host country may also pose problems to him or her. In any circumstance, a good social network will help expatriates to smoothly transition into their new host environment.

## **INVESTIGATING SCHOOLS AND HEALTHCARE FACILITIES**

One of the first questions that crops up in an expatriate's mind on reaching the host country is "Are there any good foreign language schools available in the neighborhood?" Many expats ask the question the other way round: "What decent housing is available that is reasonably close to good foreign language schools for my children?" Fortunately, finding a good school in any country is not a difficult task. Most countries have quite a number of international, American, and British schools.

It is always advisable to get references from within the expatriate communities and from friends and colleagues before settling for a school. Some agencies assist in finding appropriate school facilities, too.

The schooling system in the host country may differ from that in an expatriate's home country. So parents should help in preparing their kids to face the new scene before they actually get enrolled. In some countries, there is an option of home schooling, which prepares kids to adjust to the local school. This option may not be feasible for everyone. But an expatriate needs to keep an open mind and make the best choice from the array of options available.

It is necessary to have information on good quality medical facilities in the host country, especially if the expatriate has a medical condition. In some countries, healthcare facilities are good, but the cost of treatment is high, unless an expatriate is adequately insured. It is recommended that one check with the country consulate or fellow expatriates about these factors even before leaving for the host country. Expats should keep in mind that in some countries healthcare systems are not funded by the government.

## **ASSESSING SECURITY ISSUES**

In the wake of terrorist attacks and political disturbance in many parts of the world, an expat should research how secure the host country is and what personal safety measures he should take. This is extremely important when a person moves to the host location with his family. Local real estate agents and local consulates are good sources of information on what security matters are paramount in the host city and how most expats address them.

# Managing Culture Shock

Culture shock (which can include surprise, disorientation, confusion, and even disgust) is a typical reaction to fundamental change—an honest reaction to living and working in a completely different culture. Recovering from it is a process of adjusting to a new environment—realizing, completely, that it is difficult to communicate and get things done and, more importantly, understanding that one never gets the same ease and comfort zone of living on one's home turf. The reaction to this situation will differ from individual to individual. Generally, an extrovert can adjust to a new lifestyle faster than an introvert—although even introverts may learn new levels of self-esteem and motivation as they assimilate.

Basically, there are four stages of culture shock: honeymoon, rejection, adjustment, and recovery. During the honeymoon period, a person is excited about almost every aspect of the new place. But as in the case of marriage, reality slowly dawns on the person. This is the time when the person starts comparing her home country lifestyle with that of the host country. The new place seems strange and frustrating, which leads to stress. The periods of rejection, adjustment, and recovery can be long or short, depending on circumstances, temperament, and time spent in the new culture. (Note that “reverse culture shock” upon returning home after an extended stay in the host country is also quite common and should be expected; fortunately, it generally passes more quickly than the initial shock.)

One of the major causes of culture shock for an expatriate is being cut off from familiar cultural patterns. This sense of loneliness in the country adds to one's level of stress. This stage is characterized by a person's inability to work effectively. Therefore, it is important to examine this phase of intercultural adjustment. Sometimes it can be alarmingly scary, but the shock slowly dies down as the person starts understanding the new culture. It is necessary for an expatriate to realize that opinions and reactions of locals and expatriates are not always based on personal evaluation but can be based on cultural values. Once a person becomes skilled in assessing cultural norms and can understand which of her cultural values and behaviors clash with those of others, it is easier to make adjustments that help in overcoming serious issues.

Throughout the period of cultural adaptation, it is necessary to equip oneself with adequate knowledge on local culture and practices. It is good to read a book or watch a movie in the local language, take a short trip, relax, communicate with friends or family, and spend time with friends. Having a positive approach and concentrating more on the available good things about living in the new country definitely helps. The relative availability of cheap phone and Internet access has helped many expats stay in close contact with their home country family and friends.

Culture shock is normal for any person moving into a completely new environment. It does not mean that the person has made a wrong choice in life. This is one phase that an expatriate generally faces and works through; normally, it passes quickly.

## UNDERSTANDING VALUES AND BELIEFS

Reducing culture shock, difficult as it can seem, is all about understanding the values, beliefs, and the traditions in the host country. Each part of the world varies considerably from the rest in many aspects, such as climate, food habits, living style, and so on.

The Internet has made life easier in giving us access to information regarding the sociocultural and culinary habits of any country in the world. An expat needs to start learning about the values, beliefs, and living style of the host country as much as she can before arriving. Doing so will minimize the time it takes to adjust to the new circumstances.

The first few months may pose problems for an expatriate in terms of adjusting. Ideally, a co-worker in the host country will be available to mentor each expat and smooth the transition. Absent such a mentor, the expat should consult others to help her understand the culture better and minimize confusion or misunderstanding. When an expatriate's cultural ignorance may have offended a local person, seeking forgiveness and expressing interest in understanding and learning more about the local culture can ease the tension.

Learning the new culture can be difficult and stressful. A person may commit blunders at the initial period of learning. Instead of taking it gravely, laughing it off saves one from an awkward situation. This lightens and hastens the learning experience.

## DEALING WITH DIFFERENT CULTURAL NORMS

The first few days for an expatriate can be full of excitement, challenges, and education. It is common for culture shock to set in after the initial euphoria of arriving in a new country fades out. At this point, one starts to feel frustrated, angry, or sad. Language differences between the home and host country worsen matters further.

Anyone who has moved out of his country or city for whatever reason has experienced some degree of cultural shock. After the initial shock, an expat tries to adjust to the new culture, which can take up to six months. This involves everything from getting used to the food and language to learning how to use the telephone. No matter how patient and flexible an expat is, adjusting to a new culture can, at times, be difficult and frustrating. To ease the shock, one should try the following:

- Get out and explore the neighborhood. Try to interact with neighbors. Check whether any locals speak English. Check out the local cuisine and local shops. Try to use the local transport.
- Understand the similarities and differences between host and home country cultures; understanding similarities will help in coping with the foreign culture better, while understanding differences will help in analyzing and addressing the area of discomfort.

## 12 Staying Connected to Home

- Try to learn the local language—at least some commonly used words and phrases. Generally, locals will enthusiastically appreciate an expatriate's effort to learn the local language.
- Find a club or social group to join. Involve yourself in collective activities. Examples include the Canadian Women's Club in the United Kingdom and the Amsterdam Book Club for Australian expatriates.

# Staying Connected to Home

Distance from family can often be overwhelming when moving overseas, especially when children are involved. Establishing and maintaining a solid home base while staying abroad is more important and challenging than it may seem. In this Internet age, it is less challenging than when the fastest written communication was by air mail. But expatriates placed in locations where the Internet is unreliable or not available face special challenges.

## CONNECTING WITH THE OFFICE

Staying connected with the office in the home country is also important. “Out of sight, out of mind” can apply to an expatriate's professional life as well. It is important for the expatriate to stay connected with colleagues and the home office, as it will help him to stay in the loop of what is happening in the home country and also to reduce the stress and tension in the host country. There are numerous ways to keep the contact alive. It can be done through email, online chat, telephone, and also—increasingly popular—by blogging.

## CONNECTING WITH FAMILY

After moving out of the country, it is necessary for an expatriate to stay connected with family and friends at home. It is helpful when family members and friends get regular updates on the life and adventures of the expatriate. It helps them feel a part of the expatriate's overseas life and not excluded bystanders. If an expatriate remains available and interested in their lives, even from a far-off country, they can stay close rather than growing apart. Options to stay connected include cellular phones and voice-over-Internet phone services (VoIP) such as Skype or Gizmo.

## FINDING AND SOCIALIZING WITH FELLOW EXPATS

You may find a ready-made community of expats in your host city, which can be a two-edged sword. These communities can provide a welcoming, safe environment in which to learn about the host city. But they can also inhibit one's adaptation to the foreign culture.

Expat communities vary in size and geographic coverage. There are a number of online support groups for expatriates also. It is easy to find these expatriate groups. Just ask colleagues or friends how to find these forums.

When choosing an expatriate group, note that there may be a difference in choice for long-term and short-term expatriates. Long-term expatriates may not be there in the expat groups' arena. They might have blended with the host country culture. Short-term expatriates are therefore more active in the expatriate forums and groups.

## **MAKING TRIPS HOME**

Before accepting an overseas offer, a potential expat should clarify with the company what the policy is for leaves and trips home. Most employment contracts address this topic directly, but the terms may be negotiable.

Most companies pay for the annual home trip with full pay only for the employee, while others might pay out half of the total cost of travel. Some companies pay for a family vacation.

## **WORKING WITHOUT A "NET"**

Not all countries have speedy, reliable Internet connectivity. Some simply lack the infrastructure, while others discourage Internet use in an effort to control personal expression.

Even without the Internet, work will happen, just as it has for centuries. There are always the telephone, fax, air mail, and other offline methods for communicating.

# **Coping When Things Go Wrong**

Life rarely stays on a steady course wherever one lives and works, and expats should anticipate some bumps in the road when they relocate to their host country. Emotional problems, financial struggles, illness, accidents, and more trivial issues can be challenging enough on familiar ground, but they can seem harder and less tractable without the support of family, friends, or colleagues. Anticipating challenges, planning how to handle them, and maintaining an optimistic attitude can go a long way in resolving the personal challenges that may arise once in the host country.

## **AVOIDING PROBLEMS**

The best way to deal with problems in a foreign country is to stay away from them. Learn what parts of town are riskier than others, know your own limits when it comes to personal behavior such as consuming alcohol, and stay alert.



## 14 Coping When Things Go Wrong

### **SOLVING PROBLEMS**

Expats, especially those with less knowledge of the language, can face a number of petty problems due to misunderstanding. Clear thinking helps rather than panicking over petty issues. Dealing with the problems as they arise is best. Talking to friends or relatives also helps. During the course of a conversation, an expat could gain insight into solving her problem or come across a fellow expat who may be going through the same issue or might have undergone a similar experience in the past.

### **DEALING WITH CRIME**

Be vigilant in buses, bars, and around railway stations, where thefts frequently occur. In case of theft, contact the local police. Reporting a theft helps for insurance purposes.

### **CONTACTING EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES**

It is prudent for you as an expatriate to register with the local office of the embassy upon your arrival so they know who you are if you need legal help. Consuls, although not able to help an expat in all cases, can help citizens living or visiting foreign countries by

- retrieving lost money or tickets;
- contacting relatives or friends back home;
- transferring money and funds;
- assisting in emergencies by referring to local social services;
- locating local lawyers who can assist in legal matters;
- arranging for messages to be sent to friends and relatives when expats are arrested in a foreign country; and
- sometimes make representations on an expat's behalf to local authorities.

### **RETURNING HOME**

On return to their home countries, expats can get restless with the relative sameness of everyday life. They can lose their drive because they miss the stimulation of the new. Expats can face depression and feelings of dislocation. In some cases, the existing culture will have changed, prompting new feelings of alienation. Some return to an environment where the international experiences they have gained will seem unimportant or misunderstood. Life will also have changed for friends and family at home. Talking to them about what has changed could help. Maintaining relations with overseas friends helps to keep the connections built on the trip abroad. Much of the readjustment depends on how long an expat has lived abroad and the experiences faced there.

# Part Two

Living and Working in  
Western Europe and the  
Americas

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# Argentina: Buenos Aires

## **PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES**

The relationship between Argentina and other nations is generally good. The status of the Falkland Islands remains unresolved, and Argentina has some minor border issues with Chile, but the country has no major international disagreements. The internal situation has stabilized somewhat, but a few economic and political tensions still exist. Demonstrations and strikes occur often. Unemployment has been steadily decreasing in recent years, and living standards have improved. The rate of violent crime, including armed robberies, has risen. Travelers should exercise caution in areas such as San Telmo, Puerto Madero, Plaza San Martin, Avenida 9 de Julio, and La Boca. Kidnapping has become more frequent in Buenos Aires. Common sense precautions should always be taken when traveling within the city.

In general, only a valid passport is required to enter Argentina. Applicants for work permits require a local sponsor, usually their employer. If during your stay in Buenos Aires you suffer any ill treatment, abuse, or discrimination, you can contact the Defensoría de Turista (tourist defense office), Tel: +54 11-4302-7816.

## **MEDICAL ISSUES**

The general standard of medical care and sanitation is good. Buenos Aires has modern hospitals and clinics, which are able to deal with emergencies and

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administer basic treatment very well. For major procedures, however, many expatriates prefer to travel to North America. Most medical supplies are available, although there may be some more expensive medicines that are difficult to obtain locally. Medical facilities in Buenos Aires are of a high standard, but outside the capital there are variations in standards and quality. You should visit your doctor or travel clinic prior to departing for Argentina to ensure that you are up to date with basic immunizations. Hospitals in Buenos Aires include Clinica y Maternidad Suizo-Argentina ([www.cymsa.com.ar](http://www.cymsa.com.ar)), British Hospital ([www.hospitalbritanico.org.ar](http://www.hospitalbritanico.org.ar)), and German Hospital ([www.hospitalaleman.com](http://www.hospitalaleman.com)).

Often, the best way to find a good general practitioner is by asking colleagues or friends. Embassies and consulates usually have names of doctors serving the expatriate community. Dental care is usually of a good standard. It is important to ensure that your health insurance policy covers dental costs. There are many dentists working in Buenos Aires. Often, the best way to find a good dentist is by asking colleagues or friends. Embassies and consulates sometimes have lists of dentists serving the expatriate community. Information regarding dentists or dental care is available from the National Dental Association ([www.cora.org.ar](http://www.cora.org.ar)). In general, pharmacies (*farmacia*) are well stocked and some products, which are available only by prescription in North America and Europe, are available over the counter in Argentina. However, brand names may vary, and if you require a prescription drug, it is advisable to ask your medical practitioner at home to make out a prescription using the generic name. Pharmacies in large towns and cities generally take turns at staying open late (*farmacia de turno*), and each pharmacy has a sign in the window detailing the pharmacies that are open, with times and addresses. In Buenos Aires, the late-night pharmacies are also listed in the local newspapers. Cosmetics and toiletries are sold in *perfumerías*, not *farmacias*.

## ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

Infectious diseases of any kind are rare in Buenos Aires. Although the change in diet and climate may cause temporary stomach upsets for visitors, tap water is safe to drink in the main towns and cities. However, outside these areas it is advisable to boil water prior to drinking. Bottled water is widely available. Most dairy products are pasteurized and are safe to consume. Local meat products and fruits and vegetables are also usually safe to consume.

## ECONOMIC OVERVIEW, 2007

GDP growth	8.7%
Inflation	8.8%
Unemployment	7.5%

## INFRASTRUCTURE

**Utilities and traffic:** The electricity supply is usually reliable but some voltage irregularities may be experienced. The city has a dependable water supply, but minor interruptions sometimes occur. Telecommunications services have improved markedly in recent years. The postal service was privatized (an action later reversed), and the quality of services has decreased. Public transport in Buenos Aires is extensive and reliable. The metro system has been privatized and has improved substantially. The bus network is fairly comprehensive and dependable. Traffic in the downtown area may be congested at any time of the day. In other areas of the city, few traffic problems are experienced outside of the rush hour. It is advisable to drive with caution at all times, as traffic lights and speed limits are not always observed by local drivers.

**Air travel:** Ministro Pistarini International Airport is located 50 km from the city center and is accessible within 50 minutes by bus. A good selection of flights is offered to destinations in North and Latin America, as well as to Western Europe.

Argentina's national airline is Aerolíneas Argentinas, which provides both domestic and international services. Many other international airlines have flights to Argentina, including Air France, Alitalia, American Airlines, British Airways, Air Canada, Iberia, Lufthansa, and South African Airways. The airport is located in the town of Ezeiza, 47 km (29 miles) southwest of downtown Buenos Aires. Airport facilities include banks, restaurants, bureaux de change, shops, a post office, pharmacy, and car rental agencies.

The airport has two terminals (A and B). There is a departure tax of USD 18 for all international flights, except for flights to Montevideo (Uruguay), for which the tax is USD 20 (children under two years old are exempt). It is advisable to check with the airline or a travel agent, as the departure tax is subject to frequent change. There is also an immigration tax of USD 10 for international flights.

Taxis are available 24 hours and cost around ARS 45 to ARS 50 for the 35-minute trip downtown. For security reasons, it is advisable only to use official airport taxis (Municipalidad de Ezeiza) or official city taxis (Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires), as they are secure and reliable. Taxi stands are located outside Terminals A and B. Chauffeured cars (*remises*) can be hired from Manuel Tienda León, Transfer Express, VIP Cars, and other vendors. All have desks in the arrivals halls.

There are two car rental companies represented at the airport, located in Terminal A on the ground floor: Avis and Annie Miller Hertz.

Two shuttle bus services are available from Manuel Tienda León: one to the city center and one to the domestic airport (Aeroparque Jorge Newbery [AEP]). The fare downtown is ARS 25. Buses leave every 30 minutes and the journey takes around 50 minutes.

Public bus services are available from the airport to various destinations in and around Buenos Aires. Fares are inexpensive (minimum fare ARS 0.75; fare

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downtown ARS 1.35), but the travel time is long. Bus Route 394 takes you into the city center, but it takes around two hours. It is located in the River Plate, between Av. Sarmiento and La ted along Avenida Costanera, opposite Pampa Streets, in the City of Buenos Aires. The most remarkable feature is that the airport is merely two kilometers from the downtown area. Airport facilities include banks, bureaux de change, and information services. Taxis are available and cost between ARS 20 and ARS 30 for the trip downtown. Shuttle bus services are also available. Long-distance bus travel is considered to be more reliable than the long-distance rail services. Frequent and regular services link Buenos Aires with all the provinces of Argentina, and with neighboring countries. Bus services are cheaper than domestic airfares, but traveling times are very long. There are many bus companies, which offer competitive rates and comfortable service.

**Transport in Buenos Aires:** The city has efficient, inexpensive public transport systems. Subway (*Subte*) ([www.metrovias.com.ar](http://www.metrovias.com.ar)) is the easiest way to travel around the city. The subway services are operated by Metrovias ([www.metrovias.com.ar](http://www.metrovias.com.ar)). There are five metro lines (Lines A–E) and two pre-metro lines (Lines P and U) which cover travel throughout the city. The service operates Lines A to E Monday through Saturday, 5 A.M. to 10:30 P.M., and Sunday, 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. Line P is open from Monday through Saturday, 5:30 A.M. to 9 P.M., and Sunday, 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. Single-journey tickets (tokens) cost ARS 0.70 and are purchased from the ticket booths in the stations. A subtecard is available (details at [www.subtecard.com.ar](http://www.subtecard.com.ar)), which is a rechargeable card.

Bus services are provided by minibuses (*colectivos*), which operate 24 hours a day. Fares around the city center cost ARS 0.80 and fares to outside of the city cost ARS 1.25. You should board the bus at the front and exit from the back (press the stop bell just before the bus stop to indicate that you wish to get off). Automatic ticket machines are located on the bus. The machines accept only coins but will return change if you do not have the exact amount. Drivers will not change paper money, so be sure to have coins when you get on the bus. There is no central terminal; the routes are marked on blue signs at the stops and the numbers are clearly marked on the front of the buses. Information on routes can be found at [www.loscolectivos.com.ar](http://www.loscolectivos.com.ar).

Train services are run by the following companies: Trenes de Buenos Aires ([www.tbanet.com.ar](http://www.tbanet.com.ar)), Metropolitano ([www.metropolitano.com.ar](http://www.metropolitano.com.ar)), and Ferrovias ([www.ferrovias.com.ar](http://www.ferrovias.com.ar)). Schedules, fares, and routes can be found on the Web sites.

Taxis are widely available and are easily recognized by their yellow and black colors. Taxis can be hailed on the street, taken from taxi stands, or called for in advance. In general, radio taxis called for in advance from home are the safest and most reliable. The initial meter charge is ARS 1.60, then ARS 1 per kilometer after that. Surcharges are usually added for night services. Radio taxi companies include City Taxi and Radio Taxi Pidalo.

## SHOPPING AND AVAILABILITY OF CONSUMER GOODS

Most luxury items and consumer goods required for day-to-day use are available in Buenos Aires, although you may not always find the same type, model, or quality that you are used to at home. The city is particularly renowned for its quality clothing, furs, and leather goods. There is a wide choice of alcoholic drinks available. A good range of brands and models of cars is available locally, although the purchasing process can be time consuming.

Buenos Aires has an abundance of bookstores that sell an impressive variety of books from all over the world. All the stores on Calle Florida sell books in English. The number of bookstores with online purchasing facilities is also increasing. The following is a list of some of the stores in Buenos Aires selling English language books:

- Ateneo Grand Splendid is the largest bookstore in Latin America and it is well worth a visit. Located in a renovated 1919 building, which used to be a cinema, the décor and atmosphere alone make the place unique. The bookstore stocks an ample selection of English- and foreign-language books.
- Walrus Books stocks both new and used books and covers a wide variety of genres. KEL Ediciones offers a range of English books including fiction, nonfiction, travel, and teaching books. Purchases can be made online.
- Librerías ABC has both new and used books in English and German.

Shops in Buenos Aires are open weekdays from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M. (and in summer time, some up to 8:30 P.M.) and on Saturdays from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. However, large shopping malls are generally open weekdays from 10 A.M. to 8 or 10 P.M. and weekends from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. Most Argentine shops have fixed prices but some will give a discount for cash payments.

Shopping malls in Buenos Aires, listed below, usually have restaurants and cinemas, as well as shops and department stores.

- Alto Palermo is an impressive building which has won awards for its architecture and is the city's principal shopping mall.
- Paseo Alcorta is an elegant and classical shopping center located close to the embassies and theaters. It was once the building that housed the cattle market in Buenos Aires.
- Buenos Aires Design has around 60 stores represented in this mall devoted entirely to interior design. Popular with locals and tourists alike, this shopping center is surrounded by an enormous park, some museums, fairs, and cultural centers.
- Galerías Pacífico, Unicentre, Abasto de Buenos Aires (a visually stunning art deco building that used to be the fruit and vegetable market in the city) is now one of the top shopping malls in the country with 12 movie theaters and over 250 boutiques spread over four floors.

There is a wide variety of department stores to suit all price ranges. Department stores are located in most of the shopping malls and in the main shopping



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areas. There are supermarkets located throughout the city. Companies include Norte, Carrefour, and Jumbo. Branches are found at Viamonte 1571 and Lima 1553 in the city center.

### RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

In Buenos Aires, there is a good choice of restaurants offering European and Latin American cuisine. The selection of cultural events, such as opera, concerts, theaters, and ballet is reasonable, but international talent rarely performs in the city. Cinemas are plentiful and most of them screen the latest releases. Sports and leisure facilities of a high standard are available. International associations and clubs include the British Council, Alliance Française Buenos Aires, and the Goethe Institute.

**Restaurants:** Several types of restaurants are available in Buenos Aires. *Churrasquerías* are all-you-can-eat-meat restaurants where waiters circulate with huge skewers of grilled meats and diners simply indicate what they want and how much. *Carritos* are basic steak restaurants usually open from lunchtime until 2 A.M. *Picadas* specialize in hundreds of different appetizers, from seafood to beef, cheese, and even nuts. In addition to more than 6,000 restaurants in Buenos Aires, there are hundreds of cafés and *confiterías* (a cross between a café and a snack bar where one can find small sandwiches, pastries, coffee, tea, and other drinks). Café Tortoni ([www.cafetortoni.com.ar](http://www.cafetortoni.com.ar)), which was founded in 1858, is a popular tourist attraction. *Heladerías* are ice cream shops and the best shops make their own. Look for the words *elaboración propia* or *elaboración artesanal*. The Recoleta at the far end of Av. Alvear is one of the most fashionable dining areas in the city, with several good restaurants and street-side cafés. There are so many recommended restaurants in Buenos Aires that it is possible to mention only a handful. The best restaurant recommendations usually come from friends, colleagues, or business associates. Some popular restaurants include Argentine Cuisine, Aires de Patagonia, Cabaña las Lilas, and La Caballeriza.

**Culture and entertainment:** There are listings of entertainment and cultural events in English in the English language daily newspaper, the *Buenos Aires Herald*. Buenos Aires offers a wealth of theatrical and musical entertainment, and there are around 40 theaters in the city. A wide variety of the performing arts can be seen at the municipal theater complex, Teatro San Martín, and at the open-air La Plaza. Theater performances usually start at around 9 or 9:30 P.M. The world famous Teatro Colón is home to the National Symphony Orchestra and to the National Ballet Company. The opera season runs from April to November. Events are often fully booked well in advance. Theaters and concert halls include La Plaza ([www.lunapark.com.ar](http://www.lunapark.com.ar)), Teatro Colón ([www.teatrocolon.org.ar](http://www.teatrocolon.org.ar)), and Teatro San Martín ([www.teatrosanmartin.com.ar](http://www.teatrosanmartin.com.ar)). There are many historic and theme museums throughout the city, including the Museo Historico Nacional.

**Cinemas:** The majority of the city's traditional movie theaters are located on two streets: Corrientes and Lavalle. There are also many theater complexes inside

malls and shopping centers (Abasto de Buenos Aires: 12 movie theaters; Alto Palermo: 2 movie theaters; Patio Bullrich: 2 movie theaters). All but children's movies are shown in their original languages with subtitles. Certain venues show uncommon and alternative films, including the Sala Leopoldo Lugones, the Ti ta Merello Complex, and the Cosmos theater on Avenida Callao. Check the local newspapers or Internet movie listings to get the current schedules. In Buenos Aires there are cinema centers such as Village and Cinemark (located across Buenos Aires and Granenos Aires). For more information, see [www.holacine.com.ar](http://www.holacine.com.ar). Other cinemas include Belgrano Multiplex, Galerías Pacífico, and General Paz.

**Entertainment for children:** Museo de los Niños Abasto (Children's Museum) offers a range of educational and creative activities (in Spanish) for children. Buenos Aires Zoo ([www.zoobuenosaires.com.ar](http://www.zoobuenosaires.com.ar)) covers 18 hectares and is home to 2,500 different species of animals. Tierra Santa Theme Park ([www.tierrasanta-bsas.com.ar](http://www.tierrasanta-bsas.com.ar)) is another. The Web site [www.eduguia.net](http://www.eduguia.net) contains a list (in Spanish) of classes for children in fine arts, dance, music, theater, computing, and cookery. It also lists children's sports activities such as horseback riding, swimming, and martial arts.

**Nightlife:** Buenos Aires has a very active nightlife, which usually starts getting really lively between midnight and 2 A.M. A huge variety of pubs, clubs, and cafés are available to choose from. Live entertainment such as tango shows is popular here. A selection of popular bars include Franz Wine Bar, Gran Bar Danzon, Hard Rock Café, Henry J. Beans, Liverpool Bar, and Spell Café. After a disastrous fire in a disco in December 2004, which claimed more than 190 lives, dance clubs in Buenos Aires were shut down for several months. Most of the clubs are now open again. Some popular nightclubs, such as El Living, La Morocha, La Trastienda, and Club Torquato Tasso, offer the dance and music scene. The Casino Flotante de Buenos Aires in Puerto Madero is actually a boat. The minimum age is 18 years. Smart-casual dress is required.

**Sports:** Argentina boasts a wide variety of spectator sports and some of the best sportsmen in the world. Soccer is played year round in Argentina and local teams are well supported; in fact, Argentina's soccer team won the gold medal in the Beijing Olympics in 2008. One of Argentina's chief spectator sports is horse racing, and the country is well known for its quality thoroughbreds. There are two main tracks in Buenos Aires. Schedules are advertised in the English language newspaper, the *Buenos Aires Herald*. Generally, races take place on Wednesdays and weekends at the Hipódromo de San Isidro, which is located in the center of town. Polo is also a popular spectator sport. The seasons run from March to May and September to December. The Canchas Nacionales draws crowds of 20,000, and many polo players are national heroes. Information regarding matches is available from the Asociación Argentina de Polo ([www.aapolo.com](http://www.aapolo.com)). Pato, played on horseback, is a combination of polo and basketball; it is the national sport, only played in Argentina, and is played on the same fields as polo and draws large crowds.

**Outdoor activities:** Indeed, Argentina offers a vast array of naturalist experiences, from the tropical forests surrounding Iguazu Falls to the Antarctic environment of Tierra del Fuego, and from the Andes Mountains to the Patagonian steppe. The National Parks Authority runs an information office in Buenos Aires that can supply useful material about nature sites throughout the country. With over 50 different venues to choose from, Buenos Aires is considered the golf capital of South America. A number of golf courses, tennis clubs, and swimming pools are located all over Buenos Aires. For more information call toll free: Tel: +54 0800-555-0016. For tourist information on Buenos Aires, visit [www.buenosaires.gov.ar](http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar).

**SOCIOCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT**

In Argentina, there are no limitations on freedom of speech and movement, although identification must be carried at all times. A few cases of arbitrary arrests have been reported. The constitution gives state protection to Roman Catholicism, but other religions are not restricted. The local media is fairly independent. There are four national television channels, and satellite television is also available. Many international newspapers can be purchased in Buenos Aires.

**DEMOGRAPHIC/WORKFORCE OVERVIEW**

Population	40,301,927 (July 2007 estimate)
Population growth rate	0.94% (2007 estimate)
Age structure	0–14 years, 16.725%
	15–64 years, 64%
	65 years and over, 11%
Life expectancy at birth	
Total population:	76.3 years
Male	72.6 years
Female	80.2 years

**WORKPLACE CULTURE**

Argentina combines European traditions with a Latin American way of life. In general, Argentines are renowned for being friendly, welcoming people. Establishing relationships takes time and effort, but once established, they endure. Family relations are strong, and family often comes before all other matters, including business. Personal impressions and relationships remain a critical part of every business deal.

Argentine business tends to be formal, and good manners and politeness are extremely important. Confrontation and threats, either real or implied, are frowned

upon. It is advised to remain polite and cooperative. Punctuality is expected from visitors, although this may not always be reciprocated. Argentines keep late hours and often prefer meetings later in the afternoon and early evening.

Business entertaining is important, for example, lunches and refreshments prior to meetings, but it is advisable to leave it to your Argentine counterpart to take the lead on whether business is to be discussed on these occasions or whether they are aimed purely at promoting your personal relationship. Although business gifts are common, they are best kept until the business relationship is well established. Business discussion opens with personal small talk. Sports are a favorite topic. Fishing, hunting, skiing, food, and wine are other typical topics. Remember that criticism of Argentina (politics, history, society) from outsiders is not appreciated. If asked for an opinion, try to provide a polite non-answer unless speaking to a long-standing acquaintance.

Business topics are always introduced indirectly and concluded the same way, even at a business gathering. When a meeting is concluded, it is important to not act hurried as this may give the impression that another engagement is more important than the present company. Allow the person in charge to initiate concluding remarks and gestures, then leave gracefully after a few minutes of small talk. Business cards are usually given and business people expect to deal with someone of equal status. Contacts, and the building of relationships, are very important in business. Building business networks is an essential aspect of getting to meet and do business with the right people. In general, Argentines prefer to do business face-to-face rather than on the telephone and do not like to be rushed into business decisions. Office hours begin between 8 and 9:30 A.M. and end between 5:30 and 7 P.M. Monday through Friday. Upper management may arrive later in the morning and stay later at night. Government offices' working hours may vary in the winter months from the summer months. Some offices, especially those in the provinces, are closed between noon and 3 P.M.

Dress is not usually formal but it is generally appreciated if you dress smartly, conservatively, and elegantly and if you are well groomed. In general, Argentines are very fashion conscious. Formal wear is expected at official functions and dinners, particularly in exclusive restaurants. A firm handshake is the accepted greeting. Prior appointments are necessary. Avoid discussion of controversial subjects such as politics and religion. Good eye contact is important. Argentinians can be quite demonstrative; it is not uncommon for them to exchange kisses on the cheek when they meet one another, even among men. But it would be advisable to avoid such demonstrative gestures yourself unless you are certain it is appropriate in context. Have business cards printed in Spanish, as well as in your native language.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Buenos Aires has a temperate climate with hot, humid summers and winters that are sometimes cold. There is no record of natural disasters occurring in the

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city. In Buenos Aires, the average temperature range is 20°C–30°C (67°F–86°F) in January and 8°C–15°C (46°F–60°F) in July.

### HOUSING

There is a good choice of accommodations available in Buenos Aires, both in houses and apartments. Districts popular among expatriates include Palermo Chico, Recoleta, and Barrio Parque. Property for rent or sale is advertised in the *Buenos Aires Herald*, in the classified section ([www.buenosairesherald.com](http://www.buenosairesherald.com)). Rental agents and house-hunting services are available and generally charge about 5 percent of the annual rent. Some agents may ask for significantly more but can usually be bargained down to a reasonable level. Real estate agencies include Tizado Propiedades ([www.tizado.com.ar](http://www.tizado.com.ar)); Antonio Mieres Propiedades ([www.mieres.com.ar](http://www.mieres.com.ar)); and Luciano Cazenave, Real Estate and Corporate Relocation ([www.cazenave.com.ar](http://www.cazenave.com.ar)).

Two-year rental contracts are common, with rent payable monthly in advance. In general, the equivalent of two or three month's rent is required as a refundable deposit. The deposit is usually reimbursed 30–60 days following the rescission date. Owners are not required to pay interest throughout the rental term. Currently, many landlords are adding a clause whereby the rent will be adjusted to a fair market value every six months. Contracts should contain a rescission clause authorizing the tenant to leave after the first six months of the term with 60 days' prior notice. If the rescission date were to take place between the end of the six-month period and the end of the first year, a penalty of one-and-a-half month's rent is assessed. After the first year, the penalty is restricted to one month's rent. A guarantor will be required and most owners prefer a firm with legal status in Argentina. A letter of credit, bank guarantee, or insurance guarantee may be accepted but the process can be costly, and owners may be reluctant to accept these in place of a corporate guarantee. One way to get around the guarantor requirement is to prepay several months' rent.

**Houses in districts in Buenos Aires:** good areas: La Lucila, Nuñez, Olivos; very good areas: Martínez, Acasusso, Beccar, Tigre; best areas: San Isidro, Barrio Parque, Pilar.

**Apartments:** good areas: Belgrano, Palermo; very good areas: Puerto Madero, Av. Del Libertador, Av. F. Alcorta; best areas: Palermo Chico, Recoleta, Barrio Parque.

Currently, there is a good choice of unfurnished accommodations in Buenos Aires, as well as a fair choice of furnished accommodations. Rents are subject to wide variations according to the area and the type of accommodation. The average cost of a two-bedroom, unfurnished apartment in a very good area is USD 1,800 per month. Garage space is usually included in apartment rentals; if not, the average monthly charge for a garage is between USD 100 and USD 150. Good quality household appliances and furniture can be purchased locally. Maintenance and repair services of a high standard are available, although there are sometimes delays.