

BUENOS AIRES REVIVAL

FROM ART DECO MANSIONS TO HISTORIC RESTAURANTS, A SERIES OF RENOVATIONS IS BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO ARGENTINA'S BELLE

ÉPOQUE CAPITAL. **BY COLIN BARRACLOUGH**



Algodon Mansion, one of the latest additions to Buenos Aires' hotel scene. Right, from top: An Algodon suite; the wine bar at Recoleta's Palacio Duhau-Park Hyatt Buenos Aires.



ROOMS The French Classical **Algodon Mansion** (1647 Montevideo; 54-11/3530-7777; algodonmansion.com; suites from \$400), in upscale Recoleta, became the city's most exclusive boutique hotel when it opened in September. Inside the landmark building, expect discreet luxury rather than glitz: 10 ebony wood-floored suites have been decorated with a spare, masculine hand, and guests are given round-the-clock butler service. A block away, centennial magnolia trees shade a 1934 palace, part of the 165-room **Palacio**

Duhau-Park Hyatt Buenos Aires (1661 Avda. Alvear; 800/233-1234;

park.hyatt.com; doubles from \$495). Inside, crystal chandeliers and ornate plasterwork are offset by sleek Modernist furniture. Tucked among the early-20th-century town houses in the fashionable Palermo neighborhood, the restored **GREAT VALUE Magnolia Hotel Boutique** (1746 Julián Álvarez; 54-11/4867-4900; magnoliahotel.com.ar; doubles from \$180) has an original stained-glass ceiling in the foyer and antique furnishings in the eight bedrooms. The fluted façade of the **GREAT VALUE Moreno Hotel Buenos Aires** (376 Moreno; 54-11/6091-2000; morenobuenosaires.com; doubles from \$148), located two blocks from the Casa Rosada, where Eva Perón gave her famous address, dates to the 1920's—when Argentina embraced Art Deco. A concertina-gated elevator ferries guests up to the 39 ample rooms, fitted with furniture upholstered in sea greens or crimsons. »





Handwoven chairs at Arte Étnico Argentino, left. Right: wool fabrics at the shop.

SHOPS For contemporary crafts, head to the Palermo showroom **Arte Étnico Argentino** (4656 El Salvador; 54-11/4832-0516; arteenicoargentino.com). Ricardo Paz and his staff hand-finish the rustic furniture he sources from villages in the Santiago del Estero province in the country's northwest. Look for cupboards made of naturally felled chanar wood and colorful hand-woven textiles. Amid San Telmo's antiques galleries, **ArtePampa** (917 Defensa; 54-11/4362-6406; artepampa.com) sells pre-Columbian-style dolls, llama-motif mirrors, and lampshades of lacquered, textured paper, all handcrafted in the central province of La Pampa. A block away, master silversmith **Marcelo Toledo** (462 Humberto Primo; 54-11/4362-0841; marcelotoledo.net) creates ornate, silver-lined gourds for sipping mate, Argentina's national drink. In Retiro, book dealer **Poema 20** (869 Esmeralda; 54-11/4312-0199) offers first editions and historical paraphernalia. Our favorites: Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* and pictures of Jorge Luis Borges at his family's kitchen table.



BEST OF BUENOS AIRES

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FOOD Four Argentine presidents have been members of the stately **Club del Progreso** (1334 Sarmiento; 54-11/4372-3380; dinner for two \$45), in the Tribunales district. Since the restaurant's revamp two years ago, politicians have returned for the modern takes on classic Porteño fare—mushroom-stuffed squid and tender suckling pig roasted in a clay oven—in the classic oak-paneled dining room. Highballs and Hurricanes are served with just the right degree of gravitas at the lacquered mahogany bar in Recoleta's **Hotel Club Francés** (1832 Rodríguez Peña; 54-11/4812-5235; dinner for two \$75). A recent makeover lightened the marble-clad interior with contemporary splashes of purple and ultramarine. In-the-know diners reserve a table at one of the city's *puertas cerradas*, or closed-door restaurants, where chefs open their houses to a handful of patrons two or three nights a week. One of the movement's founding institutions, Palermo-based **Casa Coupage** (5518 Soler; 54-11/4777-9295; dinner for two \$190), is a wine lover's dream: the sommelier-owners pair mineral-rich Chardonnays and dense Argentinean Malbecs with local dishes such as skirt steak with quinoa and portobello mushrooms. An unmarked doorway in Villa Crespo conceals **Almacén Secreto** (1242 Aguirre; 54-11/4854-9131; dinner for two \$30), the private kingdom of chef Abigail Machicado, who prepares dishes from Argentina's south (venison *raviolones*), center (oven-baked Paraná River fish), and north (*charquisillo*, a stew made with cured meat). In a country built on immigration, Koreans are among the latest wave of newcomers. At **Cocina Sunae** (address by appointment only; 54-911/4870-5506; dinner for two \$50), Christina Sunae serves delicate pork dumplings and salads bursting with papaya and mango; save space for her green-tea ice cream.



Club del Progreso's *revuelto gramajo*, potatoes with ham, eggs, and olive oil, above. Left: The restaurant's dining room.



- CULTURE** After tango shows and *fútbol* matches, there are plenty of ways to access Buenos Aires's rich traditions. The labyrinth of dwellings, cisterns, creeks, and courtyards below San Telmo at **El Zanjón** (755 Defensa; 54-11/4361-3002; elzanjon.com.ar) reveal centuries of urban living dating back to the 1500's, when the city was founded. In neighboring Montserrat, the recently restored **Palacio Barolo** (1370 Avda. de Mayo; 54-11/4381-1885; palacio-barolotours.com.ar) became the city's first skyscraper when it opened in 1923. A tour of the Art Nouveau-inspired building offers some of the best views of the skyline. Argentina's leading folk musicians stamp out complex rhythms at



Raúl Escobar, a fruit vendor at Recoleta's Pick Market, left. Right: The market's selection of blended spices.



Palermo's popular music hall **La Peña del Colorado** (3657 Güemes; 54-11/4822-1038; delcolorado.com.ar). In less-visited Caballito, locals have bargained with butchers and green-grocers for more than 100 years under the iron arcades of **Mercado del Progreso** (5430 Avda. Rivadavia; 54-11/4901-3038). If you're looking for the perfect souvenir, visit the **Pick Market** (1212 Libertad; 54-11/4519-8046; thepickmarket.com.ar), Recoleta's airy new food hall. ✚



AIRPORT NEWS

The much-anticipated Terminal Cat **Ministro Pistarini International Airport**, where foreign traffic has grown significantly in the past five years, will open in May with new shops, restaurants, and entertainment options. In the meantime, the best amenities can be found in Terminal A: for last-minute shoppers, **Los Robles** sells handmade polo boots along with leather belts, hats, and bags. The **Duty Free Shop** sells the best *alfajores*, chocolate-coated cookies filled with *dulce de leche* (milk caramel).



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