

BUENOS AIRES SUMMER LAW PROGRAM TIPS FOR TRAVELING & LIVING IN ARGENTINA

Southwestern Law School recently sat down with participants from the 2009 and 2010 Buenos Aires Summer Law program to learn more about their experiences in one of the world's great cities. They also filled us in on how to find comfortable housing, navigate the immense nightlife scene, and discover out of the way spots to soak up the history.

This is what Elissa Felman and Iorai Cohen had to say:

Arriving in Buenos Aires

How much did your ticket cost?

Elissa: I purchased in advance and spent around \$900, my advice is to buy as soon as you are certain you are going. Also, there is a \$131 entry fee for US citizens arriving in Argentina that's good for 10 years. I recommend bringing US dollars to pay the fee.

How did you get from the airport to Buenos Aires and how much did it cost?

Iorai: The easiest, least expensive way to travel from the airport is to take a shuttle bus that will drop you off in the *centro* where you can take a taxi to your destination. Travel from the airport takes about 1 hour.

Did you change money in the airport or prior to arriving?

Elissa: If you want to change money at the airport then by far the best choice is Banco de la Nacion. Once you exit customs make an immediate right (almost a U-turn) and you will most likely see a line and the blue sign. Airport ATM fees are more expensive, you can withdraw a smaller amount there, but ATMs are easy to find in Buenos Aires. I relied mostly on ATMs while in Argentina.

Housing

What were your living arrangements like? How did you organize this part of the trip?

Elissa: I joined forces with 3 other students from Southwestern to rent a 5 bedroom, 2 bathroom apartment in the Palermo neighborhood. I believe we found it on Craigslist. I would recommend corresponding with the landlord in Spanish as they will be less likely to give you the inflated 'American' price. Also, check in with Prof. Faerman before renting, she will help you determine if it's a good value and in a safe area. Our home in Buenos Aires was on the 1st floor with a patio, wireless internet, and cable TV. The kitchen was also stocked with plates and cutlery. It cost us \$2,000 for the month with a \$1,500 deposit.

Iorai: I benefitted from having close family in Buenos Aires and was able to stay with them. I would recommend finding a place in Palermo, Recoleta, or Barrio Norte.

Buenos Aires

Could you describe Buenos Aires for us?

Elissa: Buenos Aires has all the features of a great, large city. There is an amazing array of cultural attractions from theatre, museums, as well as a great café and bar scene. Though coming from Los Angeles, Buenos Aires does feel like it's in a time warp.

Iorai: The city is full of Italian & French architecture, mostly from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Lots of baroque and art deco buildings. It's actually quite sprawling and each neighborhood has a lot of pride (mostly corresponding to their soccer club) and its own unique character.

Is Buenos Aires safe?

Elissa: Yes, Buenos Aires is quite safe. I felt safer than I do in many parts of LA. That said, the most common crimes are pickpocketing and purse snatching, never leave your purse unguarded. It is one of the largest cities in the Americas, about the size of LA, so use the same precautions you would use at home. Do exercise caution on the subway, and if it's too crowded, wait for the next train. Separate your credit cards and don't keep all your money on you.

What are some of your favorite cafés, restaurants, and shopping experiences in Buenos Aires?

Elissa: I really enjoyed trying out all sorts of different cafés, restaurants, and neighborhoods. Plaza Serrano is a great place to head to in the evening. To eat, try La Gran Parilla del Plata, Desnivel, Café Tortoni, Cabrera, Mirandas, Pippas, California Burrito Company, El Alamo, and Las Cabras. Also, Natural Deli is a great place to study. You **need** to visit La Bomba De Tiempo at the Konex on Monday nights for an awesome percussion performance! Many of us made it a Monday night tradition, it's amazing. For cheap, wholesale shopping, go to Once. You can find leather goods near the Malabia subway stop. For boutique shops, head to Santa Fe in Palermo.

What's the weather like in the summer, or should I say Argentina's winter?

Iorai: Buenos Aires in winter has more of a biting cold from the higher humidity. Highs were in the mid-50s during the day, near freezing at night, and it rained a couple of times.

Elissa: But a word of caution, *porteños* (Buenos Aires residents) really like to crank up the heater once indoors, so wear layers because you will be blasted by hot air all day. There will be some days that are quite pleasant, into the 70s at mid-day.

Perhaps most importantly, how's the nightlife?

Elissa: Buenos Aires nightlife starts later than any other place in the world and it is deservedly world-famous. Pace yourself by sleeping a little bit in the early evening and having dinner after

9pm. Generally, clubs don't begin filling up till 1am. One place we liked was *Mansión*. Plaza Armenia in Palermo is full of great spots as well. *Kika* was a faithful stand by.

Iorai: Going out mid-week is a challenge if you are externing or taking early classes. Pace yourself and remember you have a whole month to enjoy the nightlife. One place to keep an eye out for concerts is Luna Park, lots of big acts pass through there.

The Buenos Aires Program

Could you describe a typical day in Buenos Aires for a Southwestern student?

Elissa: I'd wake up between 7 and 8am and head to class at 9am, a 15 minute walk. Lunch would run from noon till about 2pm when I would return to class till 4pm. After that, we had time to explore the city, read, and visit a café.

Iorai: As an extern, I would arrive in the judge's office by 9am and do research on my case by reading code for the first few hours of the day. I would continue my work after lunch till about 5pm. Externs have class a couple of nights a week.

Tell us about the classes and professors.

Elissa: The professors were very interesting and have incredibly accomplished legal careers. One of our professors, Mónica Pinto is Dean of the *Universidad de Buenos Aires* Law School and has had a great impact on human rights issues in the Americas. We also took the occasional field trip. One was to visit civil society groups in a poor neighborhood near the center, another was to the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*. Finally, we visited the Supreme Court and with members of the Argentine congress. Fascinating!

Iorai: Externs take an evening class on Argentine legal institutions. It's really a great class on comparative constitutional law. The professor gives excellent lectures and his Spanish his very clear. This class was invaluable to us as we could ask questions and receive guidance on everything we were learning in the office on a daily basis.

Elissa: We also took our classes with English-speaking Argentine law students. They were full of advice and very welcoming. They were also quite serious students and a good example to follow.

What were the facilities like?

Elissa: Classes are held in the middle of the city off Callao, a major street, at the *Universidad del Salvador* Law School. Argentina's Congress is 2 blocks away. The classrooms are quite small and it's typically warm inside so remember to layer!

Did you participate in the judicial externship portion of the program?

Iorai: I completed an externship with a judge assigned to the Commercial Court of Appeals. The members of the judge's staff were extremely helpful and patient with me as a novice of the

Argentine legal system. There were 6 other externs in the program my year. They were placed at the Supreme Court, the Federal Public Defender's office, and in a criminal court. My work consisted of writing a brief for the judge on a breach of contract case that arose after the Argentine peso devaluation in 2002. Because Argentina follows a civil law system, much of the time was spent reviewing code pertinent to my case. Ultimately, the judge's clerk made some small changes to my brief and submitted it to the judge who issued his ruling in line with my findings. That was a really satisfying moment.

What challenges did you encounter as an extern?

Iorai: Learning legal Spanish tested me and will be something that you get the hang of little by little. Buy the recommended legal dictionary and look up every word you don't know. Also, gathering a sense of the legal structure and the distinctions between civil law and common law systems was daunting. As I already mentioned, the accompanying class on Argentine legal institutions made the whole experience much more meaningful.

What advice do you have regarding attire?

Iorai: A suit and tie is the norm. You will find that the legal community in Argentina is a little more formal in their attire. I brought 2 suits, 7 shirts, and a couple of ties. Buenos Aires is also a great place to buy a custom suit at a great price. If you are interested, ask a colleague for advice.

Can you tell us about the program-sponsored excursions? Did you take any other trips out of town?

Iorai: The trip to Iguazú Falls is incredible. A sight you truly have to see to believe, don't miss out. It's also a great opportunity to get out of town, take in some fresh air, and enjoy a warmer part of the country. Closer by is El Tigre, an old canal system on the northern edges of town. Here you can walk, sit by the canals, and take a boat ride. Pretty relaxing.

Elissa: I second that recommendation, Iguazú is amazing! Also, since you're in South America you should consider all the great places you can visit before or after the program. On this trip, I went to El Tigre, la estancia with everyone else, and Mendoza for wine tasting. I always take buses and definitely recommend it. Bus travel in Argentina is amazing, inexpensive, and you get to see the country. I've also been to Salta, Jujuy (Quedabra de Humahuaca), El Calafate, Ushuaia, Puerto Madryn (for whale watching), Bariloche, and Colonia Del Sacramento, Uruguay. I recommend going to any or all of these places!

Health & Other Practical Information

What sort of health precautions should a student take?

Elissa: If you have allergies bring Claritin! There are lots of crowds in Buenos Aires and buildings are not always well-ventilated. This combined with the cold weather and the urge to stay out late can take its toll and cause respiratory illness. You don't want to be sick on your summer

abroad trip. By the way, there is no need to worry about the water, it is safe to drink from the tap in Buenos Aires.

Did your cell phone work in Buenos Aires?

Elissa: If you would like to use your phone in Buenos Aires you should have it “unlocked” in the US by your provider. Plenty of people were able to do this and used their phones in Argentina after buying a local SIM card for a few dollars.

Where did you do your grocery shopping?

Elissa: There are grocery stores all over. Bring peanut butter though if you want some because they don't have any. Also, they don't do drip coffee there.

Iorai: Hot sauce is non-existent. If you need Tapatio or Cholula with anything bring your own supply! Some of us carried it everywhere we went. Black pepper is also oddly missing from restaurant tables.

How did you get your laundry done?

Elissa: We took ours to the laundry mat and had them do it. Be careful with delicates or shrinkables!

Iorai: Walk your neighborhood, you'll find quite a few options for a fluff and fold service. You'll pay by the kilo.

Any last pieces of advice?

Elissa: Be extroverted and open to meet people. Also, if you need to stay at a hostel, the best hostel in Buenos Aires is Hostel Estoril.

Iorai: Don't pass up the opportunity to really improve your Spanish and pick a soccer team to follow. The two biggest clubs in this soccer-crazy country are in Buenos Aires; Boca Juniors and River Plate, though *River* just got relegated to the 2nd division for the first time in its storied history, a crazy set of affairs. Go to a game, take it all in, and join the others in the singing and yelling.