

Style

Bolder Than Ever

REINVENTION LOOKS GOOD ON BUENOS AIRES.

BY GINA DECAPRIO VERCESI PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATALIA FAVRE

Wrapped up
at Casa Ayma.

Marcelo Toledo in his gallery and (opposite) *Liquid Emotions*.



It's an exciting time to be in Buenos Aires, fresh off Argentina's monumental World Cup victory and brimming with new cultural spaces, creative cocktail bars, and tradition-pushing projects. Here's what not to miss – and how to get the real insider access.

The King of Silver: Marcelo Toledo

Porteños make their way to San Telmo for its high-end antiques shops and famous Sunday flea market, but the historic barrio is also home to Marcelo Toledo, a longtime silversmith and contemporary artist whose recent work beautifully bridges the gap between the country's traditional craft and modern art. Inside his gallery, Toledo showcases some of his early work (baroque and colonial-style goblets, cutlery sets, and maté cups), but it's the unconventional, large-scale installations, inspired by his interest in issues such as climate change, diversity, and gender violence, that command attention. "Even when I was very young, I felt that metal was my way to communicate," Toledo says.

Across the walls of the airy space, brightly painted mosaics made from hand-cut tiles of alpaca silver (an alloy made from copper, bronze, and white metal) depict the faces of Che Guevara and Eva Perón. In another room, a collection of copper- and brass-wire sculptures inspired by the ancient Paracas people of Peru – Toledo's latest project – hang from the ceiling. They captivate in their three-dimensional glory, but Toledo notes that they can collapse into themselves for safe transport home.

Gauche Chic: Ayma

Laura Basile and Carlos Carro launched their line, Ayma, with a simple concept: elevate the traditional gaucho's poncho from humble cloak to luxury garment. That magic happens on restored antique European looms at Maison Borel, a nineteenth-century textile mill in the Villa Crespo neighborhood. There, artisans weave guanaco, vicuña, and alpaca fibers sourced from the Andes, as well as superfine merino wool and mohair, into supple ponchos, shawls,

BUENOS AIRES is deeply stylish: sultry tango clubs and speakeasies, avant-garde theater, and shopping that screams "Buy a second suitcase!" But ever since Argentina reopened its tightly closed pandemic borders nearly two years ago, South America's coolest capital city is even cooler. "Lately, I'm seeing both new and established artists, chefs, and designers revamp their roots and draw on Argentina's heritage to create fresh projects," says Maita Barrenechea, founder of Maio, a Virtuoso tour connection in Argentina. "It's like a new city altogether."

and capes threaded with Argentinian heritage. “There’s nothing more avant-garde than the resurrection of high-quality craftsmanship,” Carro says. Visit Maison Borel by appointment or browse the women’s and men’s items, plus blankets and other housewares, at Casa Ayma, the duo’s flagship in Palermo Viejo. Also on display is Ayma’s newest project, 11 perfumes created using essential oils derived from native Patagonian plants, which Carro spent a decade studying.

Pinkies Up: Liquid Emotions

Afternoon tea is a staple of Buenos Aires culture, whether it’s a cup of Earl Grey in Recoleta’s La Biela café or a yerba maté gourd passed among friends. Porteños have long frequented master tea blender Inés Berton’s Tealosophy shop in Palermo Soho for custom concoctions, and earlier this summer, she expanded her empire with the opening of Liquid Emotions, a jewel-box cocktail bar, in collaboration with bartender Lean Milan. Berton’s

Legendary chef Francis Mallmann occasionally invites guests into his home for private dining experiences.

teas – such as the Tea-groni, a classic negroni infused with a black tea blended with almonds and cocoa – are the foundation of every drink. Artistry precedes alcohol in the all-day, glass-walled space: Berton invites visitors to pop by in the late morning for tea-tonic mocktails made with chamomile, ginger, and verbena.



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Set-piece splendor at Colón Fábrica.

Urban Legacies: Colón Fábrica and Francis Mallmann

In La Boca, a former working-class port neighborhood turned gritty-hip waterfront, the new 80,000-square-foot Colón Fábrica introduces visitors to the spectacle of theater design. The warehouse showcases the work of designers from Buenos Aires' Teatro Colón, who create every set, prop, and costume for its ballets and operas. Although the pandemic ended tours of Teatro Colón's subterranean workshops, sets from *Turandot*, *Aida*, *Tosca*, and other shows are re-created here, preserving the city's rich theater culture.

An even more exclusive set is just down the street: Legendary Argentinian chef and restaurateur Francis Mallmann occasionally welcomes guests into his impeccably furnished home for private dining experiences, an invite that can only be secured by a select few, including Maiio's Barrenechea. The meal begins with Champagne and empanadas in the living room before a seven-course feast. If he's in town, Mallmann himself may even make a cameo.

Secret Garden: Marti

Chef Germán Martitegui surprised *porteños* when he shuttered his acclaimed, fine-dining Tegui in 2021. But the chef had a new concept in mind, swapping the *parrilla* (grill) for the greenhouse and debuting Marti, a plant-based concept tucked into a hidden Recoleta courtyard. Diners reach Marti through Tramando, couture designer Martín Churba's sleek and spartan boutique. An unmarked door at the back leads to a glass-walled, terrarium-like space with a 60-seat bar surrounding an open kitchen, where Martitegui and his team craft artful, vegetarian plates ideal for sharing. The highlight is his luscious spin on Middle Eastern shawarma, which involves a thick stack of oyster mushrooms (grown in an on-site greenhouse) shaved onto fresh lettuce leaves. "There's nothing formal here," Martitegui says. "At Marti, everyone participates in the creativity of what we're doing."

Style



Sleek silhouettes
at Tramando.

Wake Up in Buenos Aires

GO For VIP access and recommendations only the best-connected *porteño* would have, Virtuoso travel advisors work with **Mai10**, a Virtuoso tour company in Argentina, to create custom Buenos Aires itineraries. Founder Maita Barrenechea can secure one-on-ones with the artists and designers mentioned in this story, plus a coveted invite to lunch at Francis Mallmann's home.

STAY Two buildings – a 1930s belle époque palace and a modern tower – comprise the 165-room **Palacio Duhau – Park Hyatt Buenos Aires** in the Recoleta neighborhood. Besides easy access to some of the city's best dining and shopping, the hotel brings its own cool factor with a contemporary art gallery, a 7,000-plus-bottle Argentinean wine bar, and gorgeous terraced gardens. *Doubles from \$780, including an upgrade (if available) at time of booking, breakfast daily, and a wine-and-cheese tasting for two or a \$100 dining credit.*

From the lobby's Louis XV-style chandeliers to the Hermès toiletries in guests' marble bathrooms, French elegance reigns at Recoleta's 207-room **Alvear Palace Hotel**. There's Argentinean fare at the Alvear Grill, afternoon tea at L'Orangerie, and views of Buenos Aires' wide avenues from the 11th-floor Roof Bar. *Doubles from \$700, including an upgrade (if available) at time of booking, breakfast daily, and a \$100 dining credit.* ♡



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