Portfolio of published articles and book chapters
Sarah Gilbert

---

1. Buenos Aires, online feature and audio tour script, BBC's The Real… 2010
2. River City Roller, feature, Time Out Buenos Aires, 2009
3. Superslums and the Megacity, feature, Time Out Mexico City, 2008
4. The Truth About Double Falsehood, feature, Bell Shakespeare's Fanfare magazine, 2010
5. Sisterly Love, program notes for Bell Shakespeare's 2010 production of Twelfth Night.
6. The Pampa & the Atlantic Coast, chapter from the Lonely Planet guide to Argentina, 6th edition, 2008.
7. Larrikins Still Lurking in this Sissy-ridden City, op-ed piece, Sydney Morning Herald, 2006.
8. Friendly Fire, section cover feature, New York Post, March 4, 2003.

BBC Mobile

THE REAL...

THE REAL BUENOS AIRES

Walking tour and online feature

By Sarah Gilbert

INTRODUCTION

Arriving in Buenos Aires is, in many ways, to find oneself in a place that's at once deeply familiar and entirely new. With its mix of old world charm and the edginess of a new-world city that's desperate to join the ranks of the "emerging economies" of the south, Buenos Aires has an electricity about it that's hard to describe, but impossible not to notice. The creativity of its citizens (they call themselves porteños, or people of the port) is everywhere to behold, and its almost frantic mythmaking about itself has propelled many of Buenos Aires' most famous children – Eva Perón, Jorge Luis Borges, Diego Maradona, Ché Guevara – into the international pantheon.

What began as a backwater of Spain's South American colonies had risen, by the early 20th century, to become one of the richest nations in the world. The expression "rich as an Argentine" was bandied about in Europe, as boatloads of porteños landed on the continent – with an entire retinue of servants and occasionally even their own milking cow – to do the grand tour.

The city still lays claim to the title "Paris of the South," and more than any other Latin American capital, Buenos Aires has traditionally looked to Europe – not just Spain, but France, England, Belgium and beyond. When the money from its rich farmlands poured into the coffers of the city's wealthiest families, they built Hausmannesque boulevards and French-style slate-roofed mansions, while the English built railroads and docks to carry the country's agricultural products to hungry, depression-wracked Europe. Many Argentines have their roots in Europe, thanks to a push for immigration in the late 19th century, and in fact you'll hear as many Italian surnames here (Maradona being undoubtedly the most famous) as you will Spanish, with plenty of Swiss, German and Russian names mixed in.

It's this potent mix of cultures that lends Buenos Aires its distinctly cosmopolitan feel, and anyone arriving here after an extended trip through South America notices at once the feeling of being in a truly international city. It's also this mongrel blend – one of which porteños are intensely proud – that gave birth to the city's startlingly original cultural output: the music of the tango, the works of writers like Borges, Julio Cortázar and Manuel Puig, the genius of athletes like Maradona and Lionel Messi. It's an exuberant city where it's easy to feel at home – all it takes to blend in is to choose one's favourite cafe or bar, and pull up a stool. Before long one of the gregarious locals will have struck up a conversation about politics, football, music or any one of the innumerable topics that provoke passion among these passionate, irrepressible locals.

But Buenos Aires is also a sad city. The rule of Juan Perón in the 1940s and '50s brought industrialisation and the education of the working classes to Argentina, along with a particular political style that mixed populism

and authoritarianism with the welfare state. The periods of political violence and military dictatorship that followed created untold suffering – most famously the disappearance of as many as 30,000 Argentines in extra-judicial kidnappings and killings.

You can almost read the suffering in the worn out faces of the elegant buildings lining the city's gracious but weary avenues: the graffiti that tells a tale of almost endless political upheaval, and the decay brought on by economic hardship and official neglect are reminders of the blows that history has dealt the city and its people. Though many of Argentina's founders were great statesmen, who dreamed of a truly modern democracy founded on the ideals of the French and American Revolutions, like so many of its neighbours, Argentina has struggled to achieve political and economic stability. Despite having been so rich at one time, Argentina has become a poor country, whose middle class is still shrinking and whose institutions struggle to put down strong roots.

But despite its sometimes desperate need for a facelift, the city never fails to delight and surprise with its solemn beauty, its melancholy romance and its lively, noisy, warm and unruly inhabitants. In the past decade, Buenos Aires has become a city that attracts an eclectic mix of expats and travellers, who come here for the sophistication of Europe at south-of-the-equator prices, and the stimulation of a city bursting with cultural life, from its theatres and art galleries to its live music scene and bustling bars and restaurants.

AUDIO TOUR SCRIPT

Intro

Buenos Aires is a city made for walking. Borges, the city's most beloved son - second only, perhaps, to Diego Maradona - said that much of his writing was invented during and inspired by his habitual strolls through the city's streets and squares. "The streets of Buenos Aires are already the core of my soul," he wrote.

It can be a hectic city. Downtown, the traffic snarl makes a journey on foot the best way to travel - despite the screeching buses spewing exhaust and the frighteningly narrow footpaths. But across town, in relatively tranquil Palermo, elegant plazas are linked by tree-lined streets full of cafes and interesting shops.

Unlike many cities in South America, Buenos Aires is still fairly safe to wander in, though the wise traveller is advised to keep a low profile, avoid displaying expensive watches or jewels and guard belongings from thieves and pickpockets.

We will start our journey in the oldest part of the city. This is El Sur, the South, immortalised in the work of Borges and countless other writers. It's the home of tango, and it epitomises that mix of romance and melancholy so particular to Buenos Aires. Borges thought of it as almost a separate city – he called it an "older, more solid world" that begins on the south side of the seemingly endless Avenida Rivadavia. Here, confusingly, many of the streets change their names, adding to the feeling that you have indeed crossed some mysterious border between one place and another.

We begin our walk in Parque Lezama, celebrated as the place the city was first founded. You can easily get there by any bus that runs along Paseo Colón from Palermo or the centre, or you can take a 15-block walk from the subway station at Plaza de Mayo.

(PAUSE)

Our first stop on this walk is also where Argentina's post-colonial story begins – at Parque Lezama.
This park is supposedly where conquistador Pedro de Mendoza landed in 1536. If you enter at the corner of Calle Defensa and Avenida Brasil, you'll see a path that leads directly to Mendoza's monument. He is memorialised in bronze, the point of his sword resting on the ground, while behind him a native man raises his arms in seeming despair.
He gave the city its name, which means "Good Airs." This was not in praise of the place's unusual winds or sweet-smelling breezes, but was instead a tribute to the patron saint of sailors – Santa Maria del Buen Ayre, whom Mendoza praised for delivering him here, on the banks of the River Plate, along with his 1000-strong army of men.

The early colony was not a great success. Mendoza was always suffering from bouts of syphilis, which hampered his ability to lead his troops. In 1537 he beat a retreat back to Spain, dying on the voyage.

By 1541 the local Querandí Indians had driven off the remaining Spanish soldiers, who were starving enough to have begun eating their horses and even their dead comrades.
The city was abandoned, but the Spaniards' cattle and horses thrived on the rich pampa grassland until a Basque named Juan de Garay re-established the city in 1580, on his way down the Rio de la Plata, or River Plate, from Paraguay. This second founding was much more auspicious, and established today's Plaza de Mayo – where we will end our journey – as the city's heart. The local Querandí were still fighting to rid themselves of their unwanted neighbours and in 1583, when Garay and 40 of his wcians perform nearly every night.

As you leave the park, you'll notice the pretty blue onion domes of the Russian Orthodox Church, built in 1901. At the corner of Calle Defensa and Avenida Brasil, you'll see two historic cafes – El Hipopótamo and Cafe Británico, where Argentine journalist and novelist Tomás Eloy Martínez sets scenes from his book The Tango Singer. Either cafe is a good place to stop for a coffee and a typical snack like an empanada (a sort of Argentine meat pie) before heading along Defensa towards Plaza Dorrego.

(PAUSE)

Plaza Dorrego
This is the heart of San Telmo. It's where you'll see local and foreign tango aficionados dancing in outdoor milongas each Sunday afternoon, and where on a sunny day groups gather at outside tables, fighting off the pigeons to enjoy a beer and a snack.

This part of Buenos Aires was once the Paris end of town, and you'll notice that many of the once-grand mansions are now antique stores selling the treasures of Argentina's once hugely wealthy upper classes.

The city's wealthiest families abandoned San Telmo in 1870 and 1871 when yellow fever struck. The disease was blamed on the filthy waters of the nearby Riachuelo (now one of the world's most polluted rivers) and the rich decamped for the other side of town, where they built their opulent French belle époque-style mansions in Recoleta and Palermo Chico.

Just around the corner is another interesting literary landmark. The old Buen Pastor Women's Prison, built in 1735, is on the corner of Defensa and Humberto Primo to the east of the square. This is where writer and intellectual Victoria Ocampo was once jailed by Juan Perón. She was one of the founders and editors of the ground-breaking literary magazine Sur, or south, which championed writers like Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares, as well as introducing cutting edge writers to Argentine readers with Spanish translations of works

by Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce and many other 20th century authors. Victoria Ocampo spoke out against Perón's anti-intellectual populism, and in 1953 he locked her away here for 23 days. It's said she entertained herself and her fellow jailbirds by performing solo renditions of scenes from her favourite films and novels. The building is now a museum that canvasses the history of prisons in Argentina.

(PAUSE)

San Telmo

Walking along the cobbled streets of Calle Defensa, you'll come to the neighbourhood's famous covered market. You can enter the market on Calle Defensa, and you'll come upon its main entrance just a few paces away from Plaza Dorrego. The market's Italianate structure, with its detailed iron girding and high glass roof, was built in 1897 and takes up a whole block between Calles Carlos Calvo, Defensa, Estados Unidos and Bolivar. These streets are filled with typical Argentine stores and eateries that almost seem lost in time. Try La Coruña on the corner of Carlos Calvo and Bolivar for typical and frugal local meals like crumbed veal milanesas or lentil stew, while at the market's edge on Carlos Calvo there is a hole-in-the-wall parrilla, or barbecue, selling succulent grilled beef and sausages on fresh bread rolls. Inside the market, weekday stalls are filled with fresh vegetables while on Saturdays and Sundays the market is taken over by bric-a-brac stands selling everything from old books and posters to costume jewellery, tea sets and even antique telephones.

Nonna Bianca, on Calle Estados Unidos near the corner of Defensa, has some of the city's best-made icecream, which is saying something, as Buenos Aires is famous for its delicious helados. Dulce de leche – or caramelised milk – is the firm national favourite when it comes to flavours.

A couple of blocks up the street, at Estados Unidos 617 (between Peru and Chacabuco), you'll find Walrus Books, the city's best English Language bookstore, which stocks second hand novels and guidebooks as well as many translations of Argentine writers.

Take your time to wander these streets. The old-style shops selling handmade raviolis jostle with brand new boutiques that stock clothing by emerging local designers. San Telmo is gentrifying fast, partly thanks to the tourists who flock here for the charming atmosphere, especially on Sundays, when Calle Defensa is filled with young tango musicians, some of whom even roll old pianos onto the cobbled streets to busk for the crowds.

(PAUSE)

Tango bars

Head downhill on Calle Estados Unidos towards Calle Balcarce. Here you'll find a charming leafy set of streets, with the famous Bar Sur on the corner where there are nightly tango shows. Wandering up towards the tiny Paisaje Giuffra, you'll see Pride Cafe on the corner. The neighbourhood's first gay cafe, it's a perfect place to stop for a slice of cake or a sandwich. In another sign of its rapid gentrification, San Telmo has become a remarkably gay-friendly place, with gay milongas frequently held in its tango halls, and a gay hotel, the Axel, nearby on Calle Venezuela. It may seem a bit of a contradiction - after all, with its Catholic traditions and Latin machismo, Argentine society can be deeply conservative. But in 2010 its government passed a law allowing gay couples to marry and enjoy the exact same legal rights as straight couples.

Crossing the busy Avenida Independencia, you'll see another tango joint, El Viejo Almacén. The tango was born in this port city, probably in the brothels of the nearby neighbourhood of La Boca, which filled with immigrants from Europe – especially Italy, Germany and France - in the late 19th century. This mix of cultures threw together the Spanish guitar with other European sounds like the German accordion or bandoneón, to create a unique music that seems to sing of all the romance, melancholy and longing of these

streets. The tango was at first a song, then a dance of the lower classes. Argentine nobility didn't accept it until it became the latest dance craze in 1920s Paris. Soon after, Carlos Gardel, the famous tango singer and film star, completely popularised it both at home and as far afield as Hollywood. The tango suffered a decline after military dictatorships took control in Argentina in both 1955 and 1976. The Generals repressed much popular culture, and outlawed large public gatherings in tango halls. But since the return of democracy, tango has enjoyed a massive revival – thanks in part to the influx of foreign tango fans who come to Buenos Aires to hear the music and learn the dance in places like those we've passed on our walk.

Continue along Balcarce and turn left at Paisaje San Lorenzo. Along here you'll see a curiously narrow building squeezed between two typical Spanish-style Buenos Aires facades. Dubbed Casa Mínima – or Tiny House – it's the city's narrowest building, and popular legend has it that it was built by a freed slave in the mid-19th century after his ex-owner gave him a tiny plot of land on the crowded street. We've now left San Telmo and we're in the neighbourhood of Monserrat.

(PAUSE)

Monserrat and the British Invasions

Back on Calle Defensa, you'll turn into Calle Venezuela to the left where you'll find an old adobe house at number 469. This was the home of Santiago de Liniers, Viceroy of the Spanish colonies of the River Plate from 1807 to 1809. He was a hero of the so-called British Invasions, from which Calle Defensa takes its name.

In 1806, a detachment from the British Army occupied Buenos Aires for 46 days in the hope of capturing its port for the exclusive benefit of British sea merchants. By now Buenos Aires had become an important centre of trade in silver, brought down by river from Bolivia, as well as local products like leather. A local militia repelled both invasions, with residents of the houses along Defensa famously flocking to their balconies to throw boiling water onto the heads of the British soldiers marching beneath. The British made a second attempt in 1807, but they were once more defeated by Liniers' militia and the city's furious locals.

The local population's success at defeating one of the world's strongest armies – and without the assistance of Mother Spain – helped fuel the May Revolution in 1810 that ousted Spanish rule and established Argentina's first home-grown government.
The Viceroy's modest little house is one of the city's few remaining colonial buildings. Inside, a museum hosts a display depicting the battles of the British Invasions.

(PAUSE)

The Old National Library and Literary Society

Continue up Calle Venezuela until the corner of Bolivar, and then cut back to Calle Mexico. You'll walk past crumbling old buildings that were once the spacious homes of the wealthy before their rooms were divided into small apartments to become the crowded dwellings of Argentina's new immigrants. Now some of them are squats occupied by the latest newcomers from the interior of Argentina and immigrants from neighbouring countries.

On Calle Mexico at number 564 we see another literary landmark – the old Biblioteca Nacional or National Library. The books it held have now moved from this elegant Palladian building to the almost space-age-looking library on Avendida Libertador in Palermo, but the old library still stands, and if you're lucky you can slip inside and admire the beautiful lit dome ceiling and the lovely wood panels on the walls.

This was another favourite spot of Borges'. He was named director of the national library after the fall of Perón in 1955. The famously anti-intellectual President Perón had humiliated the writer by sacking him from a nearby municipal library in 1946 and instead making him inspector of chickens, eggs and rabbits at the city's market. Just near the library, at Mexico 524, is the headquarters of the Argentine Society of Writers. The building was once the family home of Victoria Ocampo, and now there's a restful cafe inside, with tables arranged in the cool flagstoned patio.

Continue up Calle Mexico to Calle Peru, and turn left. At the next corner, on Calle Chile, you'll find an interesting little plaza with a curious monument overlooking the square. A bespectacled man is looking down at us from his balcony. He is Rodolfo Walsh, a writer and investigative journalist who was "disappeared" in March 1977, murdered by the military regime for attempting to expose its crimes. The square is named in his honour.
If it's time for lunch, the Gran Parilla del Plata, opposite the square, has one of the best typical Argentine barbecues in the neighbourhood.

Backtrack along Peru, now, until you hit Avenida Belgrano. Head right, towards the river, until you reach the corner of Belgrano and Defensa. Here we are back at the site of the battles with the English, and if you look up at the bell towers of the church of Santo Domingo, you'll see they're pock-marked with bullets from the British guns. Inside the church are some framed regimental flags captured from the English soldiers. In the church's forecourt is an elaborate tomb that holds the remains of Manuel Belgrano, a hero of Argentina's war of independence and creator of the national flag.

Crossing Avenida Belgrano, continue along Defensa towards Plaza de Mayo. Just to your right, along Calle Moreno, you'll find the Museo Etnografico, or Ethnographic Museum, which is part of the University of Buenos Aires. It's a wonderful little museum filled with fascinating pre-columban artefacts and well-presented information on the wars that various tribes of Argentine Indians fought against the Spanish.

Head back to Defensa, where you'll pass the quirky Museo de la Ciudad, which contains an eclectic collection of objects and exhibits on the city's history. On the next corner you'll find a perfectly preserved old chemist shop, complete with its original wooden shelves, mirrors and even rows of old-fashioned glass chemists' bottles.

Our next stop is the **Manzana de las Luces**.

Turn the corner, heading up Calle Alsina for one block until you reach the corner of Calle Bolivar.

(PAUSE)

Here you'll see Buenos Aires' oldest surviving church, the baroque San Ignacio de Loyola. This whole block is called La Manzana de las Luces, or the Block of Enlightenment, thanks to the schools the Jesuits ran here for the local indigenous people they were attempting to civilize. Now, next to the church, you'll see the Colegio Nacional, where Argentina's best and brightest students attend high school.

Beneath your feet is a fascinating history. The Jesuits built an extensive network of tunnels, originally to ensure food supply to the city from the river in the event of an enemy siege. The tunnels were said to have been used by smugglers in peacetime, and they can be explored via a guided tour that you take from an office on Calle Peru, on the other side of this block.

Head up to Calle Peru now, and continue towards Plaza de Mayo. Here at the corner of Hipólito Irigoyen, named for the Argentine president who introduced full male suffrage, you'll see the elegant buildings of the city legislature, where the Mayor of Buenos Aires and its local councilors have their offices. Head down Hipólito Irogoyen to your right until you come upon the Plaza de Mayo.

(PAUSE)

You are now at Plaza de Mayo, the political heart of Buenos Aires, indeed of Argentina. You'll see an open square with worn out patches of lawn surrounding its central obelisk, its fountains and an equestrian statue of Manuel Belgrano, whose tomb we passed a little while ago. The ever-present traffic buzzes around the plaza's perimeter, while its open spaces are generally filled with a mix of protesters, tourists and pigeons.

It's difficult to overstate the role this plaza has played in Argentina's history, and the iconic place it holds.

Named for the May Revolution that helped spark Argentina's War of Independence, you'll see at one end the white adobe Cabildo, where the colonial government sat until after the 1810 revolution, when the first independent administration was installed. It's now an interesting if modest little museum.

You'll see to the north of the plaza the city's Cathedral, which holds the remains of José de San Martín. Revered as the liberator of Argentina, he fought heroically in the war of independence before famously crossing the Andes on horseback to liberate the colonies of Peru and Chile. Statues of him are found throughout South America.

Across the square, facing the Cabildo, is the Casa Rosada, or Pink House, from whose balconies Eva Perón delivered her strident political speeches to the masses of Peronist loyalists who flocked from the suburbs to see her. Around the corner is another sign of Perón's turbulent times. The facade and colonnades of the Hacienda Palace bear the scars of the bullets and explosions that went off when the military attempted to overthrow Perón in 1953.

This square is also famous for the courageous silent protests of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. They mounted the only public protest against Argentina's last military dictators, whose murderous regime saw the disappearance of as many as 30,000 Argentines between 1977 and 1983. Some of the mothers and grandmothers still parade around the central obelisk to this day, holding pictures of their children who disappeared during the dictatorship.

The square is still an important site of political protest. The current government has held important Peronist-style rallies here from time to time, and chances are that on any day there is one noisy demonstration or another taking place.

Our walking tour has come to an end, but if you are hungry for more, head up the elegant Avenida de Mayo towards the imposing, Washington-style Houses of Congress. Along the way you'll pass many examples of the belle époque architecture that marks Argentina's late 19th-century heyday, and you can stop in for coffee at the famous Café Tortoni.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/real_cities/9038530.stm

River city roller

Munching a choripán sausage sandwich with the taxi drivers, dining in style on a pier, biking along the Costanera or windsurfing off a riverbank beach; there are more ways to enjoy the river than you know. **Sarah Gilbert** dives in.

Sydney has its famous harbour, Capetown its cape, Rome the Tiber and Paris the Seine; but Buenos Aires's waterways barely figure in the cityscape, to the extent that a visitor could spend days if not weeks here without realising that Buenos Aires is cheek by jowl with the widest river in the world. But despite its uninviting brownish hue – a product of silt from the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, of which the Río de la Plata is a huge estuary – the river provides a fascinating glimpse into BA's history and culture, and serves as a fresh vantage point from which to experience this magnificent city. And of the many possible ways to enjoy the river and its bank, most have the added advantage of being slightly off the beaten tourist track, giving you all the more opportunity to catch the city unawares and to see it in a different light.

Argentina's literary *eminence gris*, Jorge Luis Borges, criticised his beloved Buenos Aires for turning its back on the river, and there's no denying it: he had a point. The haughty backs of some of Paseo Colón's buildings, from the pompous government ministry behemoths to the newer, slim skyscrapers ❶, are testament to the city's ambivalent relationship with the water. But it wasn't ever thus. The river was once the city's lifeline: it was the source of its fresh water and of its growing wealth, thanks to a roaring contraband trade. For the first two centuries of its existence, from 1580, Buenos Aires – a backwater, as far as the Spanish Empire was concerned – was a smuggler's paradise. Traders the world over dodged the Crown's onerous trade restrictions to supply the new colony with goods from Europe in exchange for silver, and later, cow hides. On *calle* Balcarce in San Telmo, there are still a few scanty examples of the city's little remaining colonial architecture, while beneath your feet lies a network of tunnels that smugglers used to store and shift their contraband. You can step inside one by visiting the **Manzana de las Luces** (*see p28*) or **El Zanjón de Granados** (*see p29*).

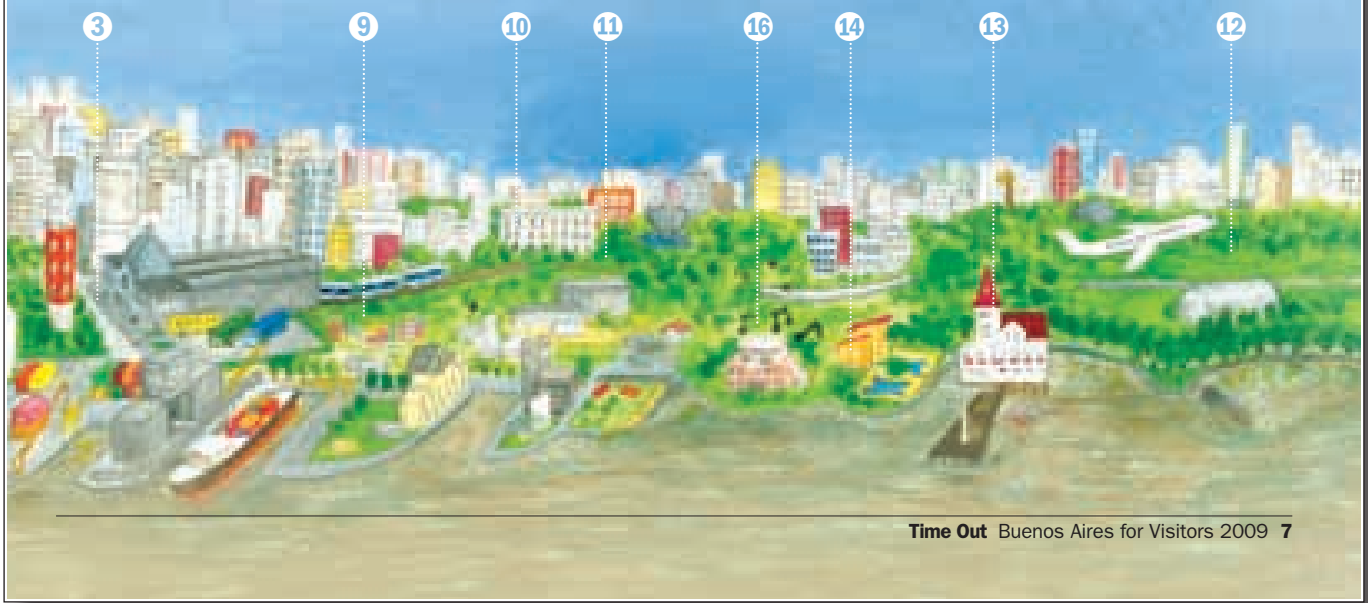
Also lying beneath the city's feet for the past almost three hundred years was the wreck of a sunken Spanish galleon that was recently uncovered, buried in the mud under reclaimed land at Puerto Madero ❷. As builders excavated for the foundations of a new apartment block in December 2008, the ship was uncovered complete with five cannons and all manner of crockery, ropes and 18th-century seafarers' kit. It's an excellent reminder of the original shape of the city, which has edged out into the river over the years thanks to a parade of land reclamation projects.

The silos that stored grain for a hungry Europe are now swanky shops and bars

Heading north along Paseo Colón today, as you pass through the area of Retiro ❸ and cross over into the northern part of the city, the long sweep of the road ahead describes exactly the curve the river once took, where the water once lapped at the banks of the fledgling city, and where washing was once spread to dry on the rushes by slaves. Before you lies Barrio Norte – the area of the city to which the wealthy fled when the lower-lying south side fell victim to a pair of 1870s epidemics, yellow fever and cholera. Behind you, to the south, lies crumbling and lovely San Telmo, and beyond that, La Boca ❹.

La Boca, which is a rough and ready area once you get beyond Caminito (*see p29*), takes its name 'the mouth' from the point at which the Riachuelo ❺, or rivulet, meets the Río de la Plata. Before the industrial port was built here in the mid-19th century, people and cargo arriving at Buenos Aires were loaded off the boats and straight onto the muddy shore, which offered a less than appetising sight to arrivals – the river was the city's rubbish dump, and its marshy banks were sometimes strewn with discarded fish and even the odd dead horse. Today, the Riachuelo is one of the world's most polluted waterways, and some of the city's poorest citizens, living in shanty towns that lean precariously close to the river's edge, face serious health risks due to the tonnes of industrial waste and untreated sewage that pour straight into the filthy river. On the other side of the Riachuelo, the capital gives way to Avellaneda and Gran Buenos Aires, which stretches away endlessly to the south.

At La Boca's tourist magnet, Caminito, you can see the multi-hued houses that Genovese immigrants decorated with cheerfully mismatched colours left over from painting the ships that docked at the port. The newly reopened **Fundación Proa** art gallery (*see p29*) looks out over the murky, soupy old harbour, where the rusting ships that had been docked here for years have recently been removed as part of a half-hearted, superficial clean-up. From here, you can also admire the striking, Meccano-like silhouette of the Nicolás Avellaneda transporter bridge ❻ – a grand old iron contraption, in disuse since 1939, that was built in England at the turn of the 20th century and assembled here.



Messing about on the water

Pick your way out onto the river

If all this talk of water leaves you itching to get out on it, and to see the city from that choppy vantage point, then there are plenty of activities available. 'Not-the-hair!' types of water baby can don their glad rags for a boogie on board one of the river's rolling party boats – try **Inti Ray Events** (mobile 15 6986 0536, www.intirayeventos.com.ar), where for around AR$150 you'll be whisked onto the river aboard a top-notch party boat for dinner and dancing, arriving back on tierra firma in time for sunrise and breakfast.

Rainbow on Board (www.rainbowonboard.com) provides a similar twice-monthly, gay-friendly service aboard the *Regina Australe*. It's a push-the-boat-out excursion, at a healthy AR$450; but you'll be waited on hand and foot for your money, whether you prefer to gaze quietly at the twinkling lights of Buenos Aires or at the flashier lights of the drag show and disco. Or for something a little more intimate, gather some friends, club together and look up **Smile on Sea** (mobile 15 5018 8662, www.smileonsea.com). Starting at US$200 for a two-hour sail, you can take tailor-made private day trips along the river, romantic night-time cruises, or longer seven- to ten-day cruises for up to five people that take in the stunning Uruguayan coastline. And if you don't know your anchor hitch from your reef knot, panic not – the package comes complete with a qualified crew, which allows you to sit back, relax and do exactly what it says on the tin.

If actually getting wet is more your thing, then head up to fun-packed **Perú Beach** (opposite the Tren de la Costa's Barrancas station, 4793 5986/8762, www.peru-beach.com.ar) for some watersports action in the form of windsurfing, kayaking, kitesurfing and more, all at reasonable prices. And if your visit coincides with a full moon, nearby there's an opportunity to enjoy a truly unforgettable Río de la Plata experience on one of **Puro Remo**'s (*see p118*) occasional moonlit kayaking and rowing trips. Departing from Martínez, you'll have the sunset on your left as you paddle towards San Isidro, getting the hang of it as you spy the fine cathedral nestled under pink clouds before turning back. That's when your concentration on rowing will slip right out of the window at the magnificent sight – *¡dios mío!* – emerging to your right.

Huge, red, low-slung and spectacular, moonrise appears as if by magic, illuminating the entire sky and the water. Back on dry land, the evening is crowned to perfection with a hearty *asado* by moonlight at a romantic, beachbar setting. *Totalmente imperdible* – unmissable.

Sophie McLean

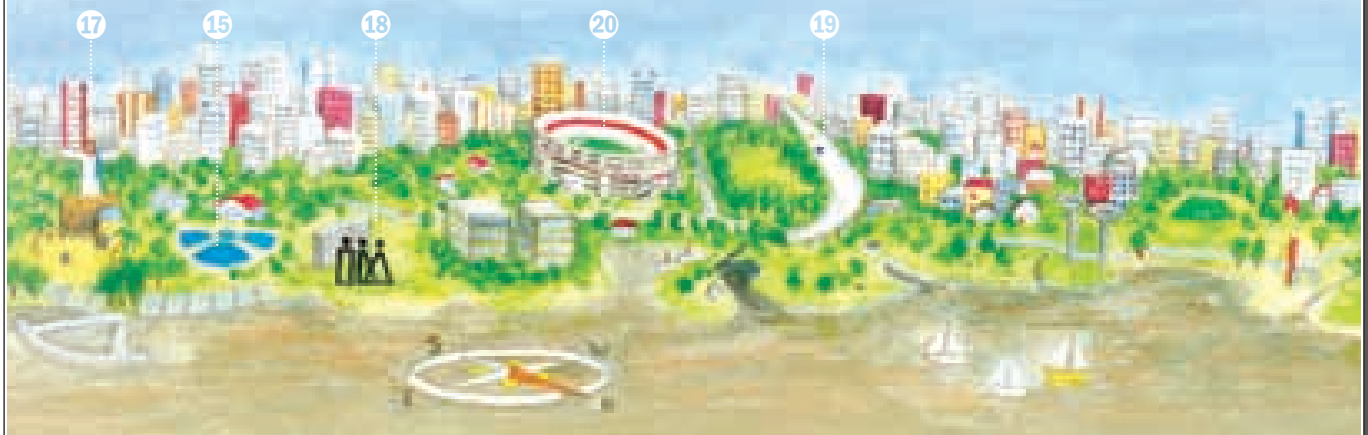
A little further north, at Puerto Madero, port life has a rather different look. Puerto Madero was originally built to replace La Boca in the early 20th century, but by the time its construction was finished, the booming shipping industry had already outgrown it. Puerto Madero was abandoned soon after it was completed, and the shipping traffic shifted north yet again to dock at Puerto Nuevo, the present-day port at Retiro. Having gone to rack and ruin for a spell, Puerto Madero is now one of the city's swankiest spots as a result of a 1990s docklands renewal project. The brick storage houses that once held grains from Argentina's fertile *pampas* before they were shipped out to a hungry Europe now house chic offices, apartments and the spectacular Faena Hotel (*see p130*), while the docks are lined with upmarket bars and restaurants where you can while away a very pleasant afternoon, if you're good for the robust prices. Further construction on the south side of the dock, as part of a deluxe property boom, is giving rise to a new cluster of high-rise buildings that threatens to once again cut the city off from the river, reserving the view for the wealthy few. To the north-east, though, the shiny, orderly apartment blocks give way to the ebullient **Costanera Sur** and **Reserva Ecológica** 7 (*see p35*), where *porteños* of modest means mingle with Puerto Madero's fitness freaks, and *choripán* (sausage sandwich) stands jostle for space with artisans selling their wares. That the Reserva exists at all is due to a distinctly Argentinian sort of accident. The river once lapped right up against the elegant promenade of Costanera Sur, where you'll find the fanciful, art nouveau Fuente de las Nereidas (Nymph's Fountain) by sculptress Lola Mora. But by the 1950s, the river had became increasingly polluted and smelly, and Sunday strollers abandoned the promenade. A chunk of the river was once again reclaimed by the voracious city, cutting the promenade off from the water – but the planned development never got off the ground, leaving nature to take its course. The area went wild, becoming overgrown with native plants that have since created the kind of wooded area that perhaps greeted the city's founding father Pedro de Mendoza and his companions when they first arrived on the river's shores.

CAPITAL RESERVES

The Reserva is home to 340 animal species, 50 varieties of butterfly and innumerable plant species. On its southern flank, it's also home to a well-concealed *villa* or shanty town, Villa Rodrigo Bueno 8, whose tenacious residents have carved out precarious, miserable homes close to the water's edge, without running water, gas, electricity or any of the infrastructure most of us take for granted. Since Puerto Madero's wildly lucrative rebirth, developers have been predictably keen to get their hands on the Reserva's prime real estate, including that of the *villa*; but at least as far as the greenery is concerned, the public has grown to love this patch of wilderness. Weekends are a delight, when leathery-skinned old ladies in bikinis and fit old gentlemen playing games share the park with binocular-bearing bird-watchers and ten-speed cyclists. Though the recent drought has dried out the reserve's four lagoons, it's still a delightful place for a bicycle ride (*see p117 for bicycle rentals*).

HIT THE NORTH

We now step northwards, beyond the busy port at Retiro where shipping containers are stacked like giant Lego bricks, and taxis dodge long-distance buses and thundering cargo lorries; and where the old Hotel de los Inmigrantes , which once received new arrivals à la Ellis Island and housed them free for five days, now functions as a simple museum (Museo Nacional de la Inmigracion, Avenida Antártida Argentina 1355, 4317 0285/www.mininterior.gov.ar/migraciones/museo). Close by, Villa 31 9 is another down-



town, artfully concealed, massive shanty town that continues to receive immigrants – these days, from the provinces and from neighbouring countries. Hop onto the no. 33 bus heading north on Paseo Colón for a glimpse of this part of the riverbank, past the port and along to the Costanera Norte, the city's playground on the fringes of exclusive Retiro, Recoleta 10 and Palermo Chico 11. At Jorge Newbery Airport 12, parts of the river are yet again being reclaimed for airport expansion, which threatens to leave the glorious **Club de Pescadores** 13 (fishing club) (*see right*), perched demurely on its jetty, left high and dry.

The families never learned the truth about their sons and sisters, husbands and mothers

At Costanera Norte's southern end, **Punta Carrasco** 14 and **Club de Amigos** (*see p117*), offer pay-per-entry swimming pools, with another a little further north at Parque Norte 15 (*see p100*). Or if your preferred form of exercise is to dance until dawn, riverbank clubs **Rouge** and **Pachá** 16 (*see p106*) attract international DJs and a crowd of club freaks who flood the streets at dawn in search of taxis and breakfast at the Costanera's *choripán* stands.

For the more sober-minded, there's **Tierra Santa** 17, the city's religious theme park (*see p35*). Also nearby is Parque de la Memoria 18, where sculptures and a stark wall bear the names of some 30,000 people who were 'disappeared' during the last dictatorship, from 1976 to 1983. It's no accident that the park was built facing the river. In one of the country's darkest moments, many of the disappeared were thrown from military planes and helicopters, drugged but alive, into a watery grave. Their bodies sometimes washed up on the shore, on the Uruguayan side. Thousands of families never learned the truth about what happened to their sons and sisters, husbands and mothers, but this is where they can come to honour their memories.

Give a man a fish

Dine in style on the riverbank

Restaurants, chic or otherwise, are few and far between right beside the river, but there are dozens of options for dining in sight of the water; and despite its brown choppiness, what could be nicer?

The all-time classic riverside repast is the cheap-as-chips *choripán*, a sausage sandwich loaded both with *chimichurri* – a spicy condiment – and political implications. The latter are mostly associated with the free *choripánes* consumed by rent-a-mob protestors on the marches that paralyse downtown BA; but at the Costanera Sur, the best place for them, *choris* are blessedly free of such baggage. As you stroll along the promenade north of the entrance to the Reserva, look out for the telltale groups of taxi drivers and you'll have found yourself a good sausage cart. If in doubt, seek out the red-and-yellow *carrito* **Mi Sueño**, and once there consider branching out into a delicious hot sandwich of *bondiola* – pork tenderloin.

Further south, on the other side of the Reserva, a clutch of open-air, sit-down *parillas* are another decent option, though they're not in sight of the water. Neither is **Jangada** (*see p59*), the city's premier freshwater fish restaurant, where you can try *pacú*, *dorado* and other exquisite river fish. For a waterfront view on three sides, the heavenly **Club de Pescadores** on the Costanera Norte (Avenida Rafael Obligado y Avenida Sarmiento, 4773 1354) is a 1930s, faux-Tudor blast from the past perched on a long wooden jetty. Skip lunch and go straight for a bottle of cold Trumpeter Chardonnay and a *picada* – a selection of cheeses and cold meats. Or pick up a picnic at **San Telmo market**'s rustic deli counter: some piquant *sardo* cheese, a bottle of wine or water and a nice firm salami or some ham should do the trick; then leave via the exit onto *calle* Estados Unidos and snap up a crispy, deep brown loaf as you pass the Spanish *panadería*, riverward bound. A couple of sweet red Gaucho apples, and you're in business.

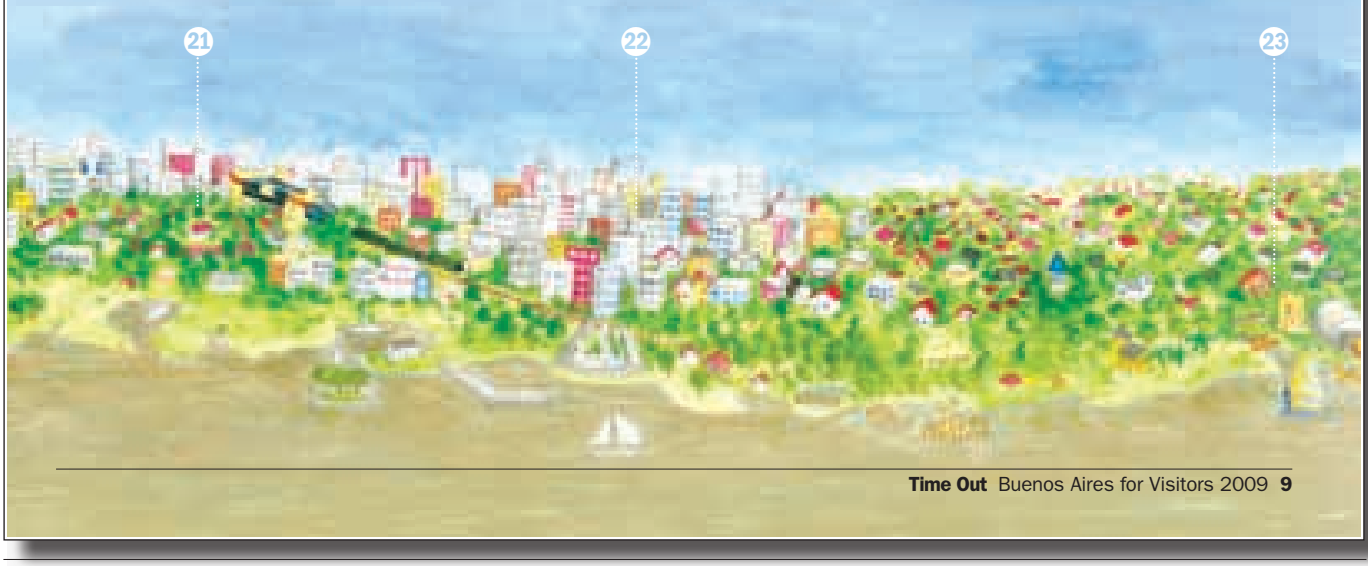
At the stripped-down but wonderful **Club Danés** in Retiro (12th floor, Avenida Leandro N Alem 1074, 4312 9266), the 12th-floor location brings the river into view over simple, economical Danish food. Though it was built in 1962 in sight of the river, today a cluster of buildings muddle the view from this retro-for-real restaurant; but at a window table, you can still spot container lorries rumbling to and fro below, and the Uruguay ferry coming in to port – or is that starboard?

Claire Rigby

COVETED WARM MUD

Beyond the city's northern limits at Avenida General Paz 19 and past the River Plate stadium at Nuñez 20 lies Olivos, with the presidential residence 21, and leafy San Isidro 22, a neighbourhood that was once a small rural town. *Porteños* used to drive out here in carriages for the fresh air, but it's now an extension of the suburbs – a mainly bourgeois *barrio* that boasts riverside bars and restaurants as well as yacht clubs and even a beach. San Isidro's most famous former resident, Argentina's grand lady of letters, Victoria Ocampo, held court in her mansion here, which had sweeping views of the river. She called it 'a coveted strip of warm mud … when you touched it with your hand, the colour of watery *dulce de leche*'. Ocampo's home, **Villa Ocampo** (*see p35*), is now an interesting museum with an excellent café, though the garden no longer enjoys river views.

You can get your hands on that coveted mud and dip your toes in the *dulce de leche* by heading to **Perú Beach** 23 (*see p118*), a pleasant riverbank beach where kayaks and kite-boards are available for hire. The river is a mucky sort of place to go swimming, but the festive atmosphere at the beach makes it a worthwhile destination away from the city, which seen from here is nothing more than a set of greyish building blocks shrunken by the distance, a blanket of smog hanging overhead. The river and the city rarely seem so far apart than here, far from the downtown hubbub. But as the Bicentenary approaches in 2010, a new set of projects is set to turn the city – a little, at least – to face the river again. A competition to design a new icon for the city will create a brand new monument by the river if all goes according to plan; and as the high-rises rise on, views of the river proliferate, bringing it – at least for some – centre stage once more.



In Context

Superslums and the megacity

The shoeshiner on the corner; the woman selling home-made sweets outside the subway; the man walking the median strip, hawking anything from tortillas to pirate DVDs as he inhales fresh CO2: visitors to Mexico City brush shoulders with countless of its slum-dwellers without a second thought for where they live. According to the United Nations' landmark 2003 habitat survey, *Challenge of the Slums*, as much as 85 per cent of Mexico City's population lives in what can be broadly defined as a slum – whether that's a shack in one of the *ciudades perdidas* (inner-city shanty towns); a hastily-constructed house in one of the sprawling *colonias populares* that can be glimpsed through the smog as they creep up the mountainsides encircling the city; *vecindades,*

thousands of deaths and injuries forced citizens to act on their own behalf. It was a traumatic wake-up call, and it marked the seismic beginnings of popular democracy in the city.

CITIES WITHIN THE CITY

Nevertheless, the social and economic fragmentation found throughout Latin America still disfigures DF. The cycle is vicious: poor *chilangos* live in certain neighbourhoods; *chilangos* who live in certain neighbourhoods tend to be poor. PAN's strongholds are located in the richer, 'whiter' areas to the west and south of the city, while the north and the east are poorer, 'darker', with worse public services.

Bad traffic, on the other hand, is like death: it comes to everyone. And if a visitor can fall all too easily into a rut, seeing the sights without straying from the well-worn trail, so too can *chilangos*. Many spend a lifetime in a particular area without getting to know the others, and it's partly because transport is so bad. The Metro network is one of the largest in the world, complemented since 2005 by the Metrobús, a low-emission rapid-transit bus system running from north to south.Yet some commuters still spend up to eight hours a day simply crossing DF in a series of anarchic *micros* (minibuses) and *combis* (vans): a desperately slow way for the city's lifeblood – its people – to circulate.

This has resulted in a kind of urban Balkanisation. Many *chilangos*, for example, would be astonished by the cosmopolitan, gentrified neighbourhood Condesa has become, where hippy artists mix with publicists, soap opera stars and actors, and enriched wannabes

where poor families live in crumbling buildings long abandoned by the wealthy; or the many dilapidated housing projects that dot the city.

Seen alongside the first world's sleek metropolises, Mexico City seems a savage and crazy place; but statistically speaking, it represents the norm. In 2005, the human race hit a landmark: for the first time in history, more of us live in the cities than outside them. As author Mike Davis writes in his 2006 book, *Planet of Slums*, 'in 1950 there were 86 cities in the world with a population of more than one million ... by 2015 there will be at least 550'.

According to Davis, the growth of slums like Mexico City's constitutes an approaching urban apocalypse that will see our cities overburdened with waste, crime and social decay. With the state in retreat, either unwilling or unable to act, those who can will escape to gated communities, eventually leaving the city to the poor masses that derive scant economic nourishment from it.

Economists scratch their heads as to why urban population growth and urban economic growth don't line up. Davis blames neoliberal development models under which poor countries borrow funds on the condition that they cut spending, privatise public services and drop the subsidies and trade barriers that protected their farmers. Mass migration towards capital cities when the governments are saddled with debt means infrastructure can't keep up, forcing newcomers to build their shanties and scrape about for work where there is none. In this way, millions have exchanged tough but decent lives in the countryside for unemployment, squalor and social exclusion in ever-growing cities.

Whatever the causes, Davis's grim vision is playing out all over the world, from Lagos, the world's fastest-growing megacity, whose 10 million citizens welcome 6000 new neighbours each day, to Buenos Aires, where middle-class residents regard with horror the ever-expanding, *favela*-style *villas miserias* growing around the city's outer ring.

So what does the future hold for Mexico City? While successive city and national governments have displayed a fairly laissez-faire approach to the spread of *colonias populares*, both the state and NGO sectors are offering limited but innovative programmes to support some of the poorest neighbourhoods, from organic vegetable farming to community-run schools and childcare centres.

For now, Mexico City's population has stabilised, with many choosing a risky border crossing to the USA over DF's slums. Strengthening political institutions in Mexico make it easier to imagine a sound long-term policy that might transform the *colonias populares* – perhaps offering residents official title over their homes and land, allowing them to borrow against their property and create micro-enterprises. But in the meantime, the millions living each day without basic services like running water, sewers and electricity – let alone decent schools and hospitals – demand an urgent solution that seems beyond any government's capacity to deliver.

and impoverished magnates, plus a generous sprinkling of expats, dine out in style.

Condesa couldn't be more different from Tepito, a pre-Columbian neighbourhood of criminals, boxing champions, poets, traders, smugglers and painters, with a distinct culture that includes *tepiteño*, a playful slang with a unique accent, rich with word play, and a sense of identity that has led its inhabitants to repeatedly challenge the authority of the city government. Executing an arrest warrant here requires hundreds of policemen to confront the uprising they will likely face.

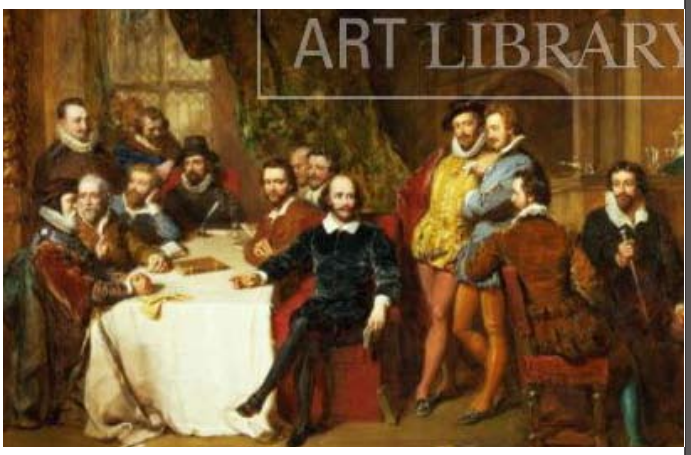
CRIME AND PUNSHMENT

Mexico City's reputation as a crime capital was forged in the 1970s, when Arturo 'El Negro' Durazo was the all-powerful police chief. Enemies of Durazo were liable to turn up dead in the sewers; and a *chilango* in a dark street with a police car at one end of the road and a mean-looking gang on the other would instinctively run to the latter for protection. By the mid- to late-1990s, the situation was at its worst, and in 1998, annual reported crimes for DF hit a figure of almost 238,000.

No sooner had crime peaked, however, than it began to fall. Many believe the turning point was the election of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the city's first democratically elected mayor, in December 1997; but whatever the reason, since 1998, the crime rate has fallen year on year to a figure of around 149,000 in 2006. Supporters of democratic institutions in the city claim that this is one of the dividends of accountability.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DOUBLE FALSEHOOD

It's a rare thing that a 17th Century writer manages to grab headlines for a new work, but Shakespeare, once again, proves the exception. A lost work, *Double Falsehood*, has been "discovered" by a dogged professor and, unlike the countless hoaxes and threadbare theories of authorship that precede it, this one has – somewhat controversially – made it into the canon, being published by the Arden Shakespeare in March.



Professor Brean Hammond is only the latest in a long line of hopefuls who have laid claim to one of literature's Holy Grails – the long lost manuscript of *Cardenio*, a play by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, collaborator on the last three of Shakespeare's plays. Based on a subplot from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the play certainly existed, as Shakespeare's company, The King's Men, is known to have performed it twice in 1613. But the manuscript was left out of the First Folio, and nobody really knows what became of it.

The first literary brouhaha to arise from *Cardenio*'s supposed unearthing took place in 1727, when a theatre hack called Lewis Theobald claimed he had found three Restoration-era manuscripts of an unnamed play by Shakespeare – a mildly comic pastoral, complete with shepherds, sexual intrigue and confused identity. Theobald edited and reworked the three scripts, releasing the play as *Double Falsehood, or The Distressed Lovers,* with authorship attributed to Shakespeare and himself. The trouble was, Theobald was very cagey about those three original manuscripts, and nobody else could get a look at them. He then claimed, in what critic Ron Rosenbaum calls "the greatest Dog Ate My Homework story in literature," that a fire in a theatre that burned some of the manuscripts, and a cook accidentally picked the remaining pages up off her owner's kitchen table and used them to line pie tins. Whatever happened to the originals, they were never found, and Theobald's contemporaries rubbished his claims of Shakespearean authenticity.

Centuries passed and no shortage of Shakespeare hoaxes appeared and disappeared, until in 1990 a handwriting expert named Charles Hamilton argued that a manuscript in the British Museum called *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* was really the long lost *Cardenio*. He based his argument largely on comparisons between the handwriting in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* and that found in Shakespeare's will. But the plot of that play bears little resemblance to the one outlined in *Don Quixote*, and most scholars have rejected Hamilton's arguments. Whatever the case, theatre critics

were not impressed when the play was performed in 1996 as *Cardenio by William Shakespeare* in New York's East Village. "If Shakespeare did write any of it, he should be ashamed of himself," said the New York Times.

Meanwhile, Brean Hammond had cottoned on to *Double Falsehood* via its chief critic, Alexander Pope. Hammond, a scholar of 18th Century literature, had studied Pope's satirical play *The Dunciad*, in which Theobald is depicted as Tibbald, the idiotic hero. Theobald had raised the great wit's ire by criticising – indeed, correcting – Pope's edition of *Hamlet*. Pope in turn denounced Theobald as a fool and a forger, saying *Double Falsehood* was nothing but a fake – an attack that went unchallenged. Intrigued, Hammond dug out Theobald's manuscript. He noticed that the language in *Double Falsehood* wasn't always in keeping with the 18th Century idiom of Theobald's era. He then used stylometric testing to pick up stylistic quirks too subtle to be copied by a forger. Finally, he pointed out an historical link connecting Shakespeare to the original *Cardenio*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register, an Elizabethan copyright register. This link was not established until long after Theobald's death, so he couldn't have known of it.

After obsessing over the mystery for 20-odd years, Brean Hammond finally managed to convince many scholars of his conclusions: that *Double Falsehood* is based on a Restoration-era theatrical adaptation of a play written by Shakespeare and Fletcher, the original manuscript of which has long been lost, called *The History of Cardenio*.

"So many people have written fake Shakespeare plays and have gotten away with it for a while before being caught out... many of them raked in healthy box-office takings until someone exposed them as fakes."

While sceptics say *Double Falsehood*'s turgid echoes of Shakespeare's famous lines – like "tell me the way to the next nunnery" – undermine Hammond's claims, others say they hear Shakespeare's verse sing out in lines like this:

What you can say is most unseasonable; what sing, Most absonant and harsh. Nay, your perfume, Which I smell hither, cheers not my sense Like our field-violet's breath.

And the editors at Arden Shakespeare are confident that while this isn't pure Shakespeare, it's as close as we're going to get to *Cardenio*.

John Bell, for one, thinks it's plausible. "I think it's a bit of Shakespeare but not entirely," he says. "I think John Fletcher's hand is fairly obvious. Some passages seem very much Shakespeare to me and other parts seem to be in a different voice altogether."

Collaborations were very common in Shakespeare's day, and the idea of works of art flowing from the mind of a single great writer is a distinctly 18th Century notion of authorship.

"Someone would write the fight scenes, someone else would write the jokes," explains Bell. "It's like a team working on a TV sitcom today – they were churning out plays so fast it was quite common to have four or five people working on a script."

The solo work Shakespeare completed during the middle part of his career was the exception to the norm, with his later plays the product of collaborations – mostly with John Fletcher – where it's not always easy to pinpoint what's what.

"It's clear I think in *Pericles* that the first two acts are written by someone else and Shakespeare wrote the last three," says John Bell. "It's harder with *Double Falsehood* because Fletcher and Shakespeare collaborated more closely."

To further complicate the paper trail, it was perfectly normal for theatre troupes in the Restoration period (which King Charles II kicked off in 1660 by reopening London's theatres, closed under the puritanical reign of Oliver Cromwell) to toy with the original manuscript. A 1681 version of *King Lear*, performed repeatedly over 150 years, had the Fool entirely edited out of the drama, which ends happily with Cordelia and Edgar tying the knot.

If we try to imagine that the original manuscript for *King Lear* was lost and this is all we had left of Shakespeare's great tragedy, then that may be about as close as *Double Falsehood* gets to Shakespeare's original *Cardenio*.

And, of course, after so many hoaxes have come and gone, any new discovery must face the incredulity of the experts.

"So many people have written fake Shakespeare plays and have gotten away with it for a while before being caught out," says Bell. "It's not difficult to mimic Shakespeare's style – it's easy to get hold of his metre and the language he uses. Throughout the 18th Century there were lots of fraudulent plays that were dug up." Many of them raked in healthy box-office takings until someone exposed them as fakes.

Having finally made it into the Shakespearean canon, *Double Falsehood* is soon to receive the imprimatur of the Royal Shakespeare Company, whose director is reportedly working on a version of *Cardenio* to be performed when Avon's Swan Theatre reopens next year.

Closer to home, John Bell says Bell Shakespeare may put on a rehearsed reading of *Double Falsehood*. "It would be worth doing – it has some stunning scenes in it, some great moments," he says. "It's not up there with *King Lear* or *Macbeth* or the great comedies – it's more of a curiosity – but I think a good director and a good cast could make something good out of it."

Stay tuned…

Sisterly Love.

From Romulus and Remus to the Olsen sisters, the idea of twins has always had a powerful hold on our imaginations. Twins somehow separated and reunited hold particular fascination, especially in their capacity to make mischief with confused identity. Shakespeare had already used the device to great effect in the *The Comedy of Errors*, some years before he wrote *Twelfth Night*, and the theme has by no means lost its appeal or used up its comic possibilities. The hilarious 1988 film *Big Business* starred two Lily Tomlins and two Bette Midlers; we've had two versions of *The Parent Trap*, with Hayley Mills in 1961 and Lindsay Lohan in 1998; while in 1988 Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito made fun of psychology's habit of experimenting on twins in *Twins*. It's not only comedy that is preoccupied with siblings, either – George Eliot's devastating novel *The Mill on the Floss* and 2000's poignant screen drama *You Can Count on Me* both examine the complexity of the bond shared by brother and sister – its dearly held hopes and sometimes heartbreaking disappointments.

Shakespeare had seven brothers and sisters – his two older sisters died before he was born, and his sister Anne died when he was about 15. Many of his plays examine the nature of sibling relationships, whether it's the terrible rivalry between King Lear's daughters or the bitter misunderstandings between Isabella and Claudio in *Measure for Measure*. Shakespeare himself had one daughter and a set of twins – a boy and a girl. The boy, Hamnet, died at age eleven, so perhaps we can imagine what his sister Judith's grief might have taught her father about sisterly love and the powerful bond between twins.

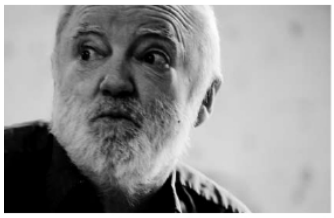
Twelfth Night may look like a romantic comedy, but the emotional heart of the play is the love Viola bears for her twin brother. Our characters pour out their passions on inappropriate or unwilling love objects, only to rapidly settle their affections on others by the play's end. Sisterly love, on the other hand, is deep and unwavering, anchoring both Viola and Olivia to their inner selves in a seriously crazy world where few people are what they seem. Desire drives much of the action, and the lovers in the play are driven almost insane by it. Falling in love is a pitiable state, akin to falling ill: Olivia wonders at how quickly one may "catch the plague," while Viola/Cesario simply sighs, "poor woman," when she realises Olivia has fallen for her, which really is a bit mad, since Olivia has failed to detect that the man of her dreams is in fact a cross-dressing woman.

Shakespeare begins his tale with Viola shipwrecked on a foreign shore, mourning the probable loss of her brother. The sea captain assures Viola he saw Sebastian clinging to a mast in the sea – a metaphor for how Viola will cling to the hope of Sebastian's survival, a hope that will accompany her throughout her adventures in Illyria. It's her feelings for Sebastian that help fill her with sisterly compassion towards Olivia, who is also mourning a dead brother, and in Viola's veiled declaration of love for Orsino, we hear echoes of her loss:

VIOLA
My father had a daughter lov'd a man,
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman.
I should love your lordship.

DUKE
And what's her history?

VIOLA
A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment,
like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek:
she pin'd in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was this not love indeed?



Viola is alone in the world and can tell nobody of her sadness, since she is pretending to be someone she is not, but here she is obliquely expressing all that she must conceal – her grief over her dead father, her deep anxiety for Sebastian and her waiting in silent hope that he might appear.

Shakespeare offers us another interesting reflection on the sibling bond in Viola's imitation of Sebastian. In dressing as a man, Viola finds the protection she has lost in the absence of her nearest male relative. It is her intimacy with Sebastian that makes this scheme a successful one, furnishing her with special insights into male psychology and making her adept at male pastimes. She can easily blend in at Orsino's court, sharing in the blokey talks, the hunting and games, because she has shared her childhood with a boy. She makes a perfect confidante for Orsino, understanding his feelings easily, precisely because she has been Sebastian's confidante all her life.

Like Viola, Olivia is unprotected and alone after the loss of her brother, close on the heels of her father's death. Her world and her place in it have become mightily confused and she is suddenly the head of a truly shambolic household. Without the guidance of brother or father, Olivia manages to fall desperately in love with someone she knows nothing at all about (she even gets his sex wrong!), instead of with the eligible Duke.

"A sister! You are she!"

This mess reaches fever pitch by the end of the play, when Olivia mistakenly marries Sebastian, who can't believe his luck at finding himself suddenly beloved by a beautiful and wealthy young lady, overcoming any compunction he might have about marrying a madwoman. Orsino, wild with jealousy, threatens to kill Viola/Cesario, who he sees has stolen Olivia's affections. Only Sebastian's appearance brings Orsino to his senses, while Olivia, thrilled with the two-for-one offer of Sebastian plus Cesario, takes the news of her unwitting marriage to a perfect stranger in her stride. The twins are reunited, finally restoring order to Illyria and to the play, and allowing Cesario to at last reveal herself as Viola, to whom the Duke promptly transfers his love, exposing the fickleness of desire and celebrating the constancy – even when all hope seems lost – of sisterly love.

"A sister! You are she!" rejoices Olivia, who seems at least as delighted by this turn of events as she is by her new husband. As with so many of Shakespeare's comedies, marriage to the right person mends the chaos unleashed by misdirected desire, but it's the reunited twins that warm the audience's hearts. We get the sense that it's gaining a sister that will at last put Olivia's world aright, mending her sorrow at her brother's death and winning her a loving, lifelong companion.

The Pampas & the Atlantic Coast

Chapter intro and boxed text sections from the Lonely Planet guide to Argentina, 6th edition, 2008.

Evita's shirtless masses, the lawless and romantic gaucho, the wealthy landowner with his palatial country estate and the defiant Indian – all these classic Argentine characters have their origins in the pampas. In fact, in its early days, Argentina was the pampas - the fight for independence was born on the Rio de la Plata, and Argentina's immigrant identity was forged by the Europeans who filled the pampean towns.

The seemingly endless fertile grasslands that make up this region financed Argentina's golden years, its natural grasses and easily cleared land yielding huge returns. The Buenos Aires province is still the nation's economic and political powerhouse – this is where all that juicy beef comes from, and it's also home to around 40% of Argentina's voters.

While travelers often overlook the pampas, it does hold some hidden delights, many of which make worthwhile side trips from Buenos Aires. A visit to lovely San Antonio de Areco offers a taste of living gaucho culture, while the hills around Tandil and Sierra de la Ventana are a picturesque mix of the wild and the pastoral, with plenty of opportunities for hiking and climbing. And although the beaches can't compare with Brazil's, they make a good escape from the city's summer heat.

One of the best ways to get to know the pampas is to spend a day or so at one of the region's many historic estancias, where the huge sky and luscious green plains, the gauchos' horsemanship and the faded elegance of Argentina's belle époque can all be experienced first hand.

OUR LADY OF LUJÁN

Argentina's patron saint is a ubiquitous presence – you can spot her poster on butcher shop walls, her statue in churches throughout the country and her image on the dashboards of many a Buenos Aires taxi, not to mention the countless shops and stands selling mini 'virgincitas' in her hometown. She can be recognized by her stiff, triangular dress, the half-moon at her feet and the streams of glory radiating from her crowned head.

Her legend begins in 1630, when a Portuguese settler in Tucumán asked a friend in Brazil to send him an image of the virgin for his new chapel. Unsure which kind of virgin was required, the friend sent two – one of the mother and child, and one of the Immaculate Conception, her hands clasped before her in prayer. After setting out from the port of Buenos Aires, the cart bearing the statues got bogged near the river of Luján and only moved when the Immaculate Conception was taken off. Its owner took it as a sign, and left the statue in Luján so that a shrine could be built there. The statue of the mother and child continued its journey to the northwest.

Since then Our Lady and her humble terracotta statue have been credited with a number of miracles – from curing tumors to sending a fog to hide early settlers from warring Indians, to protecting the province from a cholera epidemic. She was rewarded for her trouble in 1886, when Pope Leo XIII crowned her with a golden coronet set with almost 500 pearls and gems.

The massive pilgrimage to her basilica, where the original statue is still venerated, happens on the first Sunday in October. Throngs of the faithful walk the 64 kilometers from the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Liniers to Luján – a journey of up to 18 hours. The cardinal says an early morning mass in Plaza Belgrano and from then on you can spot families of exhausted pilgrims snoozing in the square, enjoying barbecues by the river and filling plastic bottles with holy water from the fountain.

CIVILIZATION OR BARBARISM?

In the early days of the Argentine Republic, one of its founding fathers, the journalist and statesman Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888), looked out onto the pampean plains and saw a problem. Mile upon countless mile of flat, fertile land, barely punctuated by any mark of civilization, filled instead with barbarians - from the illiterate gaucho to the remnants of Indian tribes clinging to their land, to the landowner who clung to feudal power, scorning the city-dweller and his enlightened plans for the nation. For Sarmiento, if Argentina were to become a modern democracy, the landscape itself would have to be overcome. 'Its own extent is the evil from which the Argentine republic suffers,' he wrote in Civilizaton and Barbarism, his 1845 treatise on the Argentine condition.

Throughout the pampa, each landowning family lived great distances from the next, without the civilizing influence of society or the benefits of education and religious ceremony. Their vast landholdings made them lazy: cattle simply ate the plentiful natural pasture, bred and were slaughtered. The people had no real occupation - young boys played at gaucho games and tormented the livestock, eschewing books and growing into savage men impervious to the rule of law.

Sarmiento was determined to stamp out feudal barbarism in Argentina and replace it with civilized village life. His answer was to populate the pampas, calling for the millions of immigrants who poured in from Europe to found the small towns that now dot the plains. Meanwhile, President Sarmiento doubled student enrollment and built dozens of public libraries.

According to some, though, his project was in vain. Almost a century later Ezequiel Marti\'nez Estrada answered Sarmiento with X-Ray of the Pampa, an essay condemning the rich 'lords of the nothingness' who continued to graze their cattle on the plains, never turning their energies to nation-building, and pitying the newly arrived immigrants who found an emptiness as wide and indifferent to their plight as the sea they had just crossed.

These days, while Sarmiento is credited with having founded modern Argentina, it's up for debate as to whether his vision of a civilized democracy ever really bore fruit. The country still struggles to industrialize and its democratic institutions remain fragile. Meanwhile, repeated financial crises have seen scores of villages disappear, their inhabitants leaving the interior to seek work in the capital, many building precarious homes in Buenos Aires' slums.

THE GLORIOUS GAUCHO

If the melancholy tanguero is the essence of the porteño, then the gaucho represents the pampa: a lone cowboy-like figure, pitted against the elements, with only his horse for a friend.

Perhaps the gaucho's chief claim to fame is as founder of Argentina's most beloved tradition. Gauchos enjoyed an all-beef diet, rigging the beast on the asado a la cruz (cross-shaped barbecue) and cooking it over hot embers. His only vegetable matter was mate, the caffeine-rich herbal tea that is sucked through a bombilla (metal straw) and shared among friends.

The word gaucho is thought to come from huachu, a Quechua term for vagabond. In the early years of the colony, the fringe-dwelling gauchos lived entirely beyond the laws and customs of Buenos Aires, eking out an independent and often violent existence in the countryside, slaughtering the cattle that roamed and bred unsupervised on the fertile pampas.

As the colony grew, cattle became too valuable to leave to the gauchos. Foreign demand for hides increased and investors moved into the pampas to take control of the market, establishing the estancia system where large landholdings were handed out to a privileged few. Many a free-wheeling gaucho became a peo\'n, or exploited farmhand, while those who resisted domestication were dealt with by vagrancy laws threatening prison or the draft for gauchos without steady employment.

By the late 19th century, many felt the gaucho had no place in modern Argentina. President Sarmiento (who governed from 1868-1874) declared that 'fertilizing the soil with their blood is the only thing gauchos are good for' and already much gaucho blood had been spilled, their horsemanship making them excellent

infantrymen for Argentina's civil war and the brutal campaigns against the Indians.
Like so many heroes, the gaucho only won love and admiration after his demise. The archetypal macho, his physical bravery, honor and lust for freedom are celebrated in José Hernández's 1872 epic poem Martin Fierro (now an animated film) and Ricardo Güiraldes' novel Don Segundo Sombra. His rustic traditions form part of Argentina's sophisticated folk art, with skilled craftspeople producing intricate silver gaucho knives and woven ponchos, while his image is endlessly reproduced - most amusingly in Florencio Molina Campos' caricatures that decorate many a bar and can be picked up in San Telmo's market. His sanitization reached its zenith when a cute soccer-playing gauchito became the mascot for the 1978 World Cup.
Alas, these days, the gaucho-for-export is much easier to spot than the real deal. But if the folkloric shows put on at many estancias are cheesily entertaining, the gaucho's true inheritors can be found among the men who work on cattle farms throughout the pampas – you can see them riding confidently over the plains in their dusty boinas and bombachas (caps and riding pants), while on special occasions like the Día de la Tradición they sport their best horse gear and show off their extraordinary riding skills.

LITERARY LADY OF LA PLATA

She was 'the most beautiful cow in the pampas' according to French novelist Pierre Driue, and Jorge Luis Borges called her 'the most Argentine of women.' In the 1920s and 1930s, Victoria Ocampo gathered writers and intellectuals from around the globe to her home in Mar del Plata each summer, creating a formidable literary and artistic salon.
Victoria (1890-1979) was born to one of those upper-class Argentine families whose habit it was to escape the oppressive heat of Buenos Aires during summer and head for the coast. In keeping with the Europhilia of the time, the Ocampos' veraneo, or summer home, Villa Victoria, was imported piece by piece from Scandinavia. Over the years, the house hosted such luminaries as Borges, Gabriela Mistral, Igor Stravinsky, Le Corbusier and Rabindranath Tagore.
She never went to university (women's education was regarded as superfluous by parents' social class), but Victoria's voracious appetite for knowledge and love of literature led her to become Argentina's leading lady of letters. She founded the literary magazine Sur, which introduced writers like Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot to Argentine readers. She also helped introduce Latin American writers to Europe. She was an inexhaustible traveler and a pioneering feminist among incurable machistas.
With no regard for convention, Ocampo was loathed as much as she was loved, scandalizing society by driving herself around in her automobile when such a thing was unheard of among society women. A ferocious opponent of Peronism, chiefly for Peron's interference with intellectual freedom, Victoria was arrested at Villa Victoria, and at the age of 63 locked up in a jailhouse in San Telmo, where she entertained herself and her fellow inmates by reading aloud and acting out scenes from novels and cinema.
If Victoria is remembered as a lively essayist and great patroness of writers, her younger sister, Silvina, was the literary talent, writing both short stories and poetry. As an aside, Mar del Plata was the scene of a separate key event in Argentina's literary life when poet Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938), suffering from cancer, threw herself off the rocks. You can see her monument at the southern tip of Playa La Perla.
As for the tradition of the veraneo, it's still going strong. Many wealthy families still have mansions in leafy Los Troncos, where Villa Victoria stands, but Argentines of all social classes save vacation time and cash to squeeze themselves onto a patch of sand, whether in humble San Clemente del Tuyú or upper-crust Cariló, and spend the summer running into everyone they know.

smh.com.au
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
The Sydney Morning Herald

Larrikins still lurking in this sissy-ridden city

Sarah Gilbert
September 28, 2006

DO FEMINISTS abhor rhyming slang and C.J.
Dennis? Or is it only sexist language that bothers them? Veterans of the women's movements must be wondering what they've done to deserve the latest jibe directed at their efforts, this time by Mark Latham.

It's not clear which particular elements of the national vernacular the feminists were busy stamping out as they went about the business of demanding equal pay and reproductive freedom for Australian women, because Latham hasn't given us any examples.

It's hard to imagine the cause for Latham's complaint when there could hardly be a woman in Australia who hasn't been greeted by a perfectly amiable if slightly intoxicated countryman shouting that most enchanting directive, "show us your tits!".

Far from being replaced by the well-mannered metrosexual, the yobbo - or larrikin, if you like - is in perfect health and high spirits all over Australia, although the flavour of his native tongue has undeniably changed.

Many of the more charming if slightly unreconstructed flourishes once adopted by Aussie blokes - harmless enough epithets such as "sheila" or, my late grandfather's favourite, "hen-birds" - have all but disappeared from the lexicon, but they have unfortunately been succeeded by far more vulgar and offensive phrases imported from the US.

"Bitch", a word that some hip-hop artists use instead of "woman", has been taken up with alacrity to refer to females in general, while "chicks" has long replaced home-grown synonyms for girls. One of Latham's own favourites, "skanky ho", is straight out of America's pop culture, not ours.

You can still find the genuine Aussie article in most parts of the country, though. Just a few months ago, the alpha male among a mob of lively larrikins in a country pub was heard to mutter to a somewhat bemused traveller: "Bloody nice missus you've got there, mate", to the uproarious laughter of his companions.

While the remark may not have been intended to lift the lady's spirits, it was taken in good humour. An urban larrikin was heard yelling the same remark not long after, just near Central station. So take heart, Mark, the old-fashioned Aussie male can still be found in the sissy-ridden inner city, unmolested by feminists of either the old guard or the new.

Australian men are watching as much sport, drinking as much beer, and reading as many - if not more - blokey magazines full of bikini-clad beauties as they ever were. If feminism ever devoted itself to the cause of the Aussie Bloke's extinction, it surely failed. But it also failed to convince the more feral members of the boys' club that women's feelings and women's rights

ought to be taken seriously. Someone tell the footballers that are frequently dragged before disciplinary bodies, if not before the constabulary, that feminism successfully cowed the hot-blooded Aussie bloke. Tell it to the men who were on that cruise ship with Dianne Brimble. Tell it to the thousands of Australian women who have experienced domestic violence (23 per cent) and sexual assault (one in five). While nobody likes a ponce, I'll take a nervous wreck, a metrosexual knob or even a toss-bag over a wife-beater.

It is indeed a great pity that so many beloved Australian idioms died with my grandfather's generation, but the blame lies perhaps more with the globalisation of the media than with social engineering. Maybe re-runs of *The Aunty Jack Show* or a revival of Australian classics such as *On Our Selection* are what's called for.

But despite the blandification of the language, the Aussie male certainly lives on. The bravest among them refuse to give up sexist language without a struggle, and continue to bore us with diatribes against "political correctness" - or what others might call up-to-date etiquette in a world where female chief executives and government ministers insist on being taken seriously.

Along with a US-dominated media that purges the language of so many local idiosyncrasies - here and in other parts of the English-speaking world - it's persistent sexism, not feminism, that has seen "sheila" thrown out in favour of "bitch", while a loveable "floozy" is now a "skanky ho".

Sarah Gilbert is a freelance journalist.

http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/larrikins-still-lurking-in-this-sissyridden-city/2006/09/27/1159337220010.html

New York PULSE
THE POST'S GUIDE TO LIVING AND ENTERTAINMENT
TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2003

Friendly fire

War talk tearing even the best of pals apart

By SARAH GILBERT

DON'T mention the war! New Yorkers are finding solid friendships suddenly on shaky ground when the thorny subject of Iraq comes up.

Lisa Rosman, 32, a Brooklyn writer, said half her friends are fed up with her anti-war stance.

A recent friendly get-together was canceled when a pro-war pal declared, "If you or any of your friends try to talk to me about this war, I've got a water gun!"

"All right then, don't come!" said Rosman.

And she's equally mad at her lefty friends who won't put their money where their mouths are.

"I asked another friend if she was going to the protest, and she said, 'I'd like to, but I think I'm going to the Hamptons this weekend.' "

Cross that friend off the list, too.

"I honestly could not bring myself to waste an evening on her," said Rosman.

"I don't want to talk about clothes, I don't want to talk about what color lip gloss she's wearing and I really, really don't want to talk about the Hamptons!"

She's not alone. Somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 New Yorkers rallied against the war at a demonstration Feb. 14, and the latest polls show New Yorkers are deeply divided over whether the United States should invade Iraq.

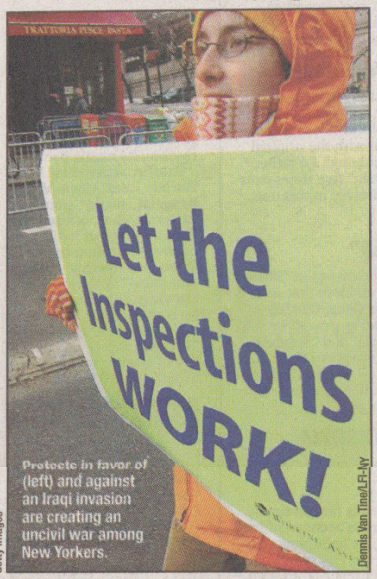
A recent poll by the Siena Research Institute found that 46 percent of metropolitan New York residents favor military intervention, while 42 percent oppose it.

So is it any wonder we can't get along?

Spencer Chandler, 30, a Manhattan actor, director and writer who favors fast and decisive military action, regularly e-mails his old college buddy in San Francisco.

"He wrote me casually, saying, 'What do you think about this war?' expecting the old chummy, 'Bush is crazy, huh?' " said Chandler.

Getty Images



Protests in favor of (left) and against an Iraqi invasion are creating an uncivil war among New Yorkers.

Dennis Van Tine/LFI-NY

Chandler wrote back, saying he thought the war was regrettable but necessary — and has yet to hear from his friend.

The San Francisco pal even failed to call Chandler on his birthday.

"I turned 30 — it was sort of a big deal," griped Chandler.

The war is the hottest political topic many Gen X-ers have ever encountered.

"We were barely coming of age when the Cold War dissolved," said Beau Ruland, 33, a Jersey City paralegal.

"I feel like this is becoming one of those things that we've never had to deal with before."

Like Chandler, the dovish Ruland hasn't heard from a close friend of hers since her last e-mail to him in an on-line shootout over the war.

T-Shirt design by Rally-Wear.com; Photo: Helayne Seidman

"I was shocked to find he is in full support of the war. I now think he's a complete meathead. He, of course, thinks I'm a left-wing daisy lover."

— Manhattan comic Paul Wagner (right) on his friend Mark Jabo

"We've always argued politics, but he's always respected my point of view," Ruland said.

"He's not using his rational thought processes anymore. He's just using rhetoric!"

And when her friend called her a "defender of Saddam," things really heated up.

"It seems a waste to throw away the friendship," said Ruland, "but I can't communicate with him at all."

The war is seeping into social life throughout the city — these days, you can't go to a live rock 'n' roll gig without the band throwing in a freshly minted anti-war song.

The downtown scene has embraced the anti-war crusade. A group called "My Daily Constitution," for instance, meets in bars, including Pete's Candy Store in Williamsburg, to discuss how the race to war is affecting first-amendment rights.

Last night at BAM, Kevin Bacon, Bill Irwin, Kyra Sedgwick and others took read from the ancient Greek anti-war play "Lysistrata," about women who go on a sex strike to stop their husbands from going to war with the Peloponnesians.

Paul Wagner, 34, and Mark Jabo, 42, are Manhattan comedians who perform their routines in workshops at the Comics Round Table, but it was no laughing matter when the war came up.

"I was shocked to find he is in full support of the war," said Wagner of his colleague. "I now think he's a complete meathead. He, of course, thinks I'm a left-wing daisy lover!"

The pair became close after two years of critiquing each other's jokes and helping each other hone their routines, so they were shocked when they went out for beers one night and discovered whole new sides to each other.

"Here's somebody that I respect as a thoughtful, caring person and it was very difficult for me to get my head around the fact that he was taking what I thought was not a thoughtful, caring view of the matter," said the hawkish Jabo.

Wagner feels the same.

"I suddenly saw this side to him that wasn't as compassionate as I thought."

Wagner's trying to bring his friend around to his point of view, and is e-mailing Jabo plenty of anti-war reading material.

"It's great," Jabo laughed. "I get a chance to really see if my spam filter works!"

Lil' Kim's 'Bella' new disc ★★★: Page 51 ● The backlash against Botox: Page 55

Further Examples of Sarah Gilbert's work

Television work
Street Kid Book Factory
http://current.com/items/89633872_street-kid-book-factory.htm

Buenos Aires Slums, Current TV, USA and UK, May 2008
http://current.com/items/89022414_slum_or_progress

Small Change Argentina, Current TV, USA and UK, October 2007
http://current.com/items/86355131_small_change_argentina

Dateline, SBS Television, Australia: "Time to Tango" (
reported by Aaron Lewis, produced by Sarah Gilbert) - May 16 2007
http://www.sbs.com.au/dateline/story/watch/id/130780/n/Time-to-Tango

Media Watch, ABC Television, Australia: "Fashioning the Facts"
(reported this story from Argentina) 26 February 2007
http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s1857682.htm

Print work
Op-ed piece in the Sydney Morning Herald, 28 Sept 2006
http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/larrikins-still-lurking-in-this-sissyridden-city/2006/09/27/1159337220010.html

Food and Travel features, Sydney Morning Herald, March 2009
http://www.smh.com.au/news/entertainment/good-living/dont-cry-for-me-8230/2009/03/02/1235842314262.html
http://www.smh.com.au/travel/new-york-on-the-cheap-20090311-8up4.html

Online arts feature
"Brooklyn artists face new audience post-September 11" Arts feature published on freewilliamsburg.com
http://www.freewilliamsburg.com/may_2002/9-11.html