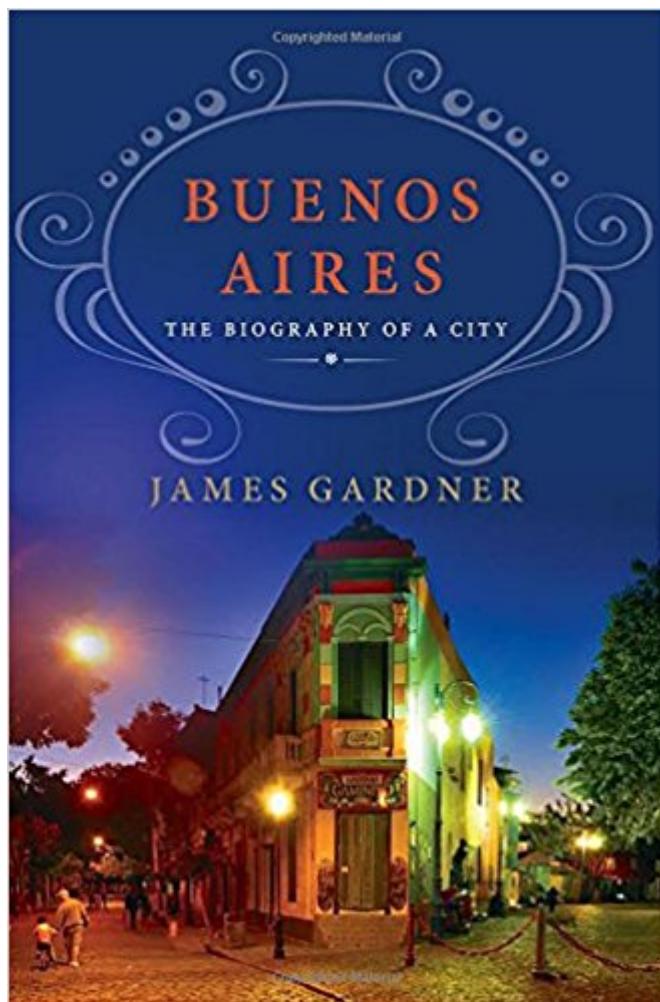


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Buenos Aires: The Biography Of A City



Synopsis

Buenos Aires, Argentina, recognized for its European-style architecture and lively theater scene, is a truly special place. The second-largest city in South America, it has been the home of such renowned cultural and historical figures as Jorge Luis Borges and Astor Piazzola, Che Guevara and Eva Peron. Like every truly great city, New York, London and Prague; Buenos Aires is its own universe, with its own center of gravity, its own scents and flavors, its own architectural signature-in short, its own way of being. From San Telmo's oak-paneled restaurants and brightly tiled apothecaries from 1900, and the phantasmagoric Beaux Arts palaces along Avenida Alvear and Plaza San Martin, to the parks of Palermo and the bustling bars and cafes along Corrientes and LaValle, Buenos Aires is steeped in exotic culture and history. In Buenos Aires, Art and culture critic James Gardner offers a colorful biography of the "Paris of the South," from its origins and time as a colonial city, through its Golden age, the rise of Peron, and the Falklands War, to the present day. With entertaining asides about art, architecture, literature, food and dance, as well as local customs and colorful personalities, this is a rich and unique historical narrative of Buenos Aires.

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Customer Reviews

"Excellent....a treasure for those who have visited the city or plan to soon." *The New Criterion*"You come away from Buenos Aires with a strong desire to visit Buenos Aires or if you already have, to return and see all the things that escaped your notice." *The Weekly Standard*"Gardner has written a love story for the second largest city in South America, and his account should be required reading for city planners, architecture students, or those who are

interested in how a city goes from humble beginnings to the “Paris of the South”
Library Journal “A genial historical tour conducted by an affectionate docent with a keen eye and an admiring though sometimes-admonitory message.”
Kirkus Reviews

JAMES GARDNER is an American art and culture critic based in NYC and Buenos Aires. His writings have appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The New Republic and The British Spectator. He was the art critic at the New York Post and wrote architecture criticism for the New York Observer, before serving as the architecture critic at the now defunct New York Sun. He now writes for The Real Deal Magazine, the Weekly Standard, and Antiques.

I bought this fascinating book because I have always been interested in Buenos Aires and for a long time have wanted to visit it. After reading the book, I am more eager than ever to get on a plane and go down there. The reader should be warned that, although it is written beautifully and in an almost 19th Century style, it concentrates more on the built environment, the architecture and urbanism of the city, than the title might suggest. It requires, but it also rewards, the reader’s attention. It could also have benefited from a few color illustrations to go with the many images in black and white. But overall a great read! Has inspired me to take my wife for a long weekend and visit the book’s sites. It’s like Buenos Aires is the new cool, sort of like the writer I think. Latin reader

Interesting view of the city architecture and history. Entertaining. I am from Buenos Aires and learnt a thing or two.

The author, an American living in Buenos Aires, says early on that he has not discovered an English-language history of Buenos Aires, so he sets out to fill the gap. However, he is, according to the book jacket, an “art and cultural critic”, so this book is only partially a traditional historical narrative, although it is presented in chronological form and there are well-written passages of that sort. It is more a history of the urban planning (and non-planning) and development / sprawl of the city. Further it is disproportionately devoted to reciting and commenting on the architecture of various periods, which not only surprised me but made for a static read; it might have worked better had it been accompanied by lots of large color pictures but this book has only a few grainy black and white ones, the size of small index cards. Also, no maps? I guess publishers’ budgets are limited but they would have been very useful. Finally, although professing to love living in the city,

he mostly damns it with faint praise. The reader will be hard pressed to find passages that make him or her yearn to visit the city. Most often, except for the period 1880 - 1920, when advances in shipping enabled exports to thrive, and wealthy residents displayed their new riches via a more ornate and exultant style in their buildings, the tone of the book is "well, that could have been done a lot better" or "not much to see there". Still, if you have otherwise determined to visit the city and are wondering if this would make good background reading or serve as a more in-depth touring companion than a typical guidebook, I think it could suit your purposes very well.

I have not been to Buenos Aires for many years now, but reading this book makes me want to get on the next flight and revisit the places I knew brought back to life by Gardner, and new ones which seem well worth discovering. Gardner describes the development of the city from a historical and architectural point of view, set against the backdrop of Argentina and its ups and downs. This makes for a fascinating story of one of the world's most beautiful cities. It will also serve a visitor of Buenos Aires with an interest in architecture as a guide alongside a more conventional one. Anyone with a general interest in urban planning and development will also find this an invaluable book, filling an important gap in the English language. It is clear that Gardner knows Buenos Aires really well and loves the city, making this *Biography of a City* a pleasure to read.

A quick and entertaining history of Argentina and how the city of Buenos Aires came to be the city it is. Very careful on any political comments, the book focuses on the builders and artists who built the neighborhoods and imposing buildings of the city. I found the book fascinating.

I saw a review of this book as I was on my way to visit Buenos Aires as part of a travel adventure. I wished I had the opportunity to read the entire book before I went, but I found the information very informative for explaining both the history of the city and the architecture. I do agree more pictures and maps would have been helpful. I highly recommend this book to anyone planning on visiting the city

Boring...

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