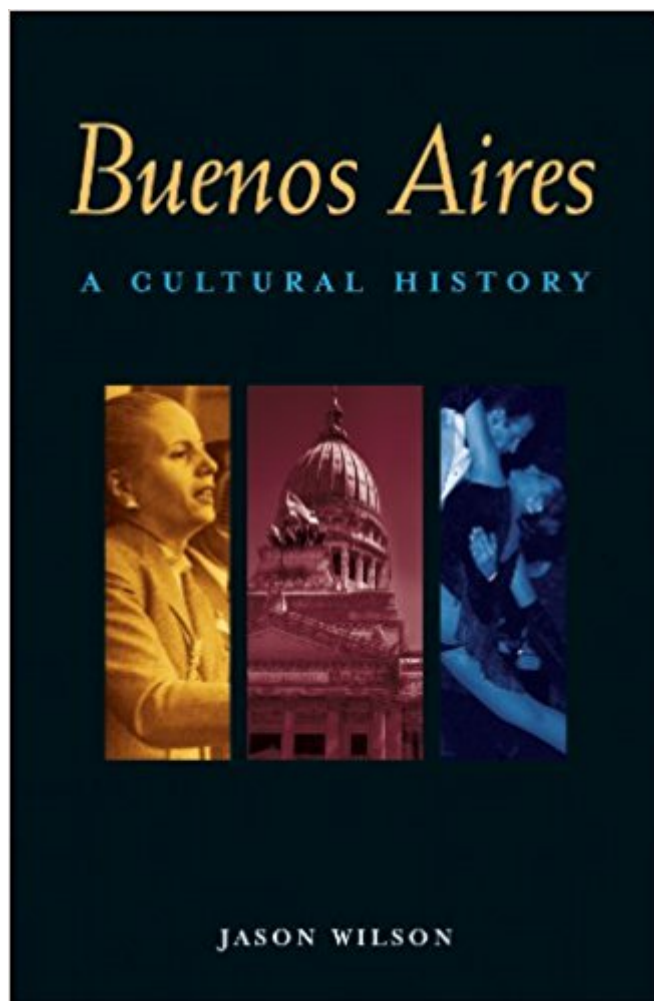


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Buenos Aires: A Cultural History (Cultural Histories Series)



Synopsis

The most European of South American cities, Buenos Aires evokes exile and nostalgia. A nineteenth-century replica of Paris or Madrid set adrift in an alien continent, its identity is neither of the Old World nor the New. The Argentine capital's rootlessness has famously found expression in the melancholy of tango and, more recently, in a vogue for psychoanalysis even more widespread than New York's. Jason Wilson explores this contradictory and culturally rich city by tracing its development from remote ranching settlement to modern metropolis. Taking landmarks, both well-known and hidden, as starting points for a journey of discovery, he looks at the events, people and writing that have shaped modern Buenos Aires and its cultural life. The city of Borges and Cortazar: the European literary tradition, magical realism and fantasy, the construction of an Argentine voice, writers local and foreign. The city of tango: the music of longing and despair, a meeting-point of machismo and sensuality, lowlife culture of the port. The city of passions: the cult of Evita Peron, the life-and-death matter of soccer, the totalitarian political legacy.

Book Information

Paperback: 264 pages

Publisher: Interlink Pub Group (March 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 156656347X

ISBN-13: 978-1566563475

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars 14 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #281,208 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in [Books > History > Americas > South America > Argentina](#) #109 in [Books > Travel > South America > General](#) #665 in [Books > Travel > Reference > General](#)

Customer Reviews

Buenos Aires is more difficult to capture, yet Wilson (Latin American and Spanish literature, University Coll., London) succeeds admirably. Unlike Oxford, Buenos Aires is organized geographically, but the underlying cultural themes are evident: Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, and the European literary tradition; tango, the music of longing and despair, machismo, and sensuality; the cult of Evita Peron; the life-and-death importance of soccer; totalitarian politics; and the Disappeared. The geographic references in the text help convey a sense of place as well as

history and culture. Well referenced and indexed, both titles are highly recommended for academic and large public libraries.-Thomas K. Fry, Univ. of Denver Lib. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Jason Wilson is Professor in Latin American poetry at University College, London, and the author of books on Octavio Paz, Alexandre von Humboldt and Latin American literature.

I've given this book one star as a warning to others who may consider purchasing it for the same reason. My understanding was that this book would be a good primer to learn a great deal of the history of Buenos Aires through its literature, enhancing our trip to the city later in February. It never occurred to me that it would be a dense, scholarly history of various sections of the city, as discussed and revealed in many different literary sources. As such, it is a great guide IF you have an extensive knowledge of Argentine literature -- a knowledge I lack. Frankly, the book is just too advanced for me and I could not justify reading many books on Argentina -- pleasurable as that might be -- in preparation for a few days in what looks to be a fascinating city. Instead, I will take the liberty of quoting an excellent comment to another negative review posted on these pages by JT, which explains what the book is really about: The book jacket, the review on this page, and even the title do such a poor job of explaining what this book is about, which is a pity because it seems like a couple people have ordered it under false impressions and been very disappointed in it. It's really meant to be used as a fairly dense/academic book describing the different neighborhoods of Buenos Aires through many, many quotes from Argentine literature (for the benefit of foreign lit geeks such as myself). I have no idea why it's apparently so different from the other books in this series... Very weird. I'm sorry you were so disappointed in it: (For anyone who's considering buying this, here's a better description than provides: "An exhilarating, erudite guide to Buenos Aires as it has been portrayed by writers, poets and thinkers. Divided geographically, it is a cultural history of the city, its people and character. Wilson quotes writers, internationally famous and locally known, who conjure the geography and mood of the city from its buses and historic rattletrap subway to the cafes, tango, food and smells, and architecture. There's hardly a street corner, building or park that doesn't have literary associations brought forth in this guide." (From Longitude Books, an online travel book website). Robert C. Ross January 2017

Since I lambasted another book about Argentina I thought I should take a moment to write something about a book I continue to enjoy. I'm never impressed by guides and this book isn't that

kind of book. It's a great book though if you want to get a better context for neighborhoods you'll be in. I read all the parts of this book pertaining to the neighborhoods I thought I would be spending time in as well as some of the general history before coming to Buenos Aires. I thought it greatly improved my appreciation for each neighborhood. Yes, it does this from a historical and literary point of view (as well as a little history behind various statues), and if that's not your thing you might hate this book. I loved it. After reading about the barrio Boedo for example, I felt I had a decent sense of what the neighborhood was like and how it's past made it what it is. So far, my experience supports the image of Boedo depicted in the book. You'll be lucky to get even a paragraph in a tour guide, not that there was a great amount in this book either (as Boedo isn't a big destination spot), but there was enough to get the flavor of the place. I live in Buenos Aires now and I still go back to it to look a couple things up. Right now una porteña is browsing through it and she thinks it's great. I think it has a lot to offer, even if you already know about Buenos Aires.

I brought this book down to Bs As with me for a 2 wk visit. I planned to read it completely but, due to the writing style and contents, I ended up only reading here-and-there as I visited neighborhoods. While helpful at times when walking through the city, the constant quoting of literature with which I was not familiar left the writing feeling fragmented and difficult to move through. It seemed as though the author avoided doing any processing of the sources by just assembling a long string of direct quotes with little context on the literary work, its author or historical background provided. If you were a literature major you might have gotten more out of this but I'm fairly well read and I recognized few to none of the references in any given passage. After reading about the neighborhood I was walking through I felt only marginally more educated on the cultural context of what I was seeing. You can probably find something more useful elsewhere.

Very exciting book about Buenos Aires through a literary perspective of each section of town. A walk through many of the streets and boulevards with description of all the leaders, writers, and events. Parks, monuments and battles. Backed up by the many novels that were written about Buenos Aires, this book will make someone want to go visit this historic city. The book really brought to life each section. I was quite impressed.

Unlike books that tell you the statistics of a city and analyze what it all means, this book surveys literary explanations. I think the book lives up to its title. It is a cultural survey, with a unique way of ordering the history. Going neighborhood by neighborhood, historical literary references are listed.

The key to enjoying this book is to read each neighborhood separately and think of the book as an anthology. Don't look for chronological order cover to cover. It goes by neighborhood and starts all over when the next one is covered. Wilson makes it clear that this is a fantastic city by cultural measure. There is none like it anywhere.

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