

# Argentina national day

## Independence movement marks 200 years



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Argentina turns 200 years old May 25. We regard the commemoration of the bicentenary as a process in which celebration goes hand in hand with reflection. That is what we have been doing recently. The purpose of these lines is to include all peoples of the world in our celebration, presenting some highlights of our reality in order to look at Argentina today on the domestic and global front and to convey our priorities and objectives.

We would like to take readers back in time to May 25, 1810, to relive the events that are the center of our attention today. In Buenos Aires, the then capital of the Viceroyalty of the River Plate, the patriots decided to disregard the Spanish colonial authorities and establish the first autonomous government council. This challenge to the colonial order was the first step to set in motion the process that would lead to the declaration of independence and its final victory came when the Spanish troops suffered a military defeat, after 10 years of combat, in battlefields around half the American continent. Today we pay tribute to those patriots and heroes who founded our nation.

Where does Argentina stand in the year of its bicentenary and what are the priorities defining its medium-term prospects? The democratic political system that has prevailed for nearly three decades is a reality and has given proof of maturity. The commitment to human rights has received new impetus after the repeal of the amnesty laws and the reopening of trials of civilians and members of the military responsible for crimes against humanity.

Argentina's economic growth since 2003 has been higher than in the whole preceding period that began in 1810. Its exceptional growth rate and positive balance of trade made it possible to service external debt commitments using genuine resources. In the last seven years, public education and health again received the attention they deserved, regaining their priority status as basic institutions for social integration,

through budgetary allocations that will treble their share in public expenditure.

The state has resumed its leading role in the promotion of research in science and technology, earmarking substantial amounts to pay teachers and researchers in the public university system, which over the course of the 20th century trained the five Argentine citizens who went on to become Nobel Prize winners.

Reversing poverty is also a priority of the administration of President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner. To this end, policies are being implemented to support companies that hire workers, thus promoting decent work, as well as universal benefits within the framework of a social policy aimed at protecting children.

We, the Argentine people, are the result of a meeting of



**Historical: Built in 1610 by the colonial government, the Buenos Aires Cabildo was the stage of the May Revolution in 1810 that led to independence.**

highly diverse cultures. The coexistence and integration of immigrants from all over the world has been a particular feature of our history, which we continue to embrace. In spite of the serious global eco-

nomics crisis, we have implemented the Greater Homeland program, based on state-of-the-art legislation for the regularization of foreign workers.

We advocate full respect for international law. Multilateralism is the most effective instrument to promote peace and security, and to win the fight against poverty and exclusion, disease, the crime of drug trafficking and environmental degradation.

The promotion and defense of human rights is a state policy that strengthens our national identity and our leadership in the international community.

We are actively integrated into trade within MERCOSUR and believe in the need to advance toward greater institutionalization of this bloc. We politically support UNASUR as a key forum that gathers

the region's countries with a view to maintaining peace and democracy. We also take active part in the G-20.

Our appeal to the British government, formally supported by the United Nations, to discuss sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, reflects the spirit of the Argentine people and is one of the pillars of our foreign policy.

Our country still has unpaid debts. They go back a long time and we are intent on achieving recognition of the rights of vast sectors of our population that have been relegated. Foreign commitments are also a priority for the Argentine government.

It is our country's 200th birthday today and we invite the peoples of the world to join the celebration, to get together with us as we share the best of our own people, our culture and our history.



**Aboriginal: Natural and cultural history remain in the village of Purmamarca at the foot of the Mountain of the Seven Colors in Jujuy Province, northwest Argentina.** EMBASSY OF ARGENTINA

## Spellbinding colors of sun, stone

As if cast under a spell, the pre-Columbian traces in the region stay unchanged. Remains of fortresses, Indian villages and settler constructions truly attest to the encounter of two cultures.

The puna high plateau is brimming with geological contrasts. Crisscrossed by whimsical elevations, narrow passes and gorges, the area hides quaint villages dyed by the soil and the sun. Peaks, vast plains, immaculate salt flats and lush rain forests make up the fertile region where ancestral cultures became deeply rooted.

The Humahuaca Gorge, a UNESCO Cultural Heritage site, is one of the major attractions. A richly variegated palette of colors extends over tiny aborigine villages, ancient chapels and remains of pre-Columbian constructions. Purmamarca is an aborigine village in the gorge, lying at the foot of the Mountain of the Seven Colors, so named after the colorful layers of its slopes corresponding to various geologi-

cal eras. Colors, songs, dances and prayers mesh with the surroundings to honor the joint display of man and nature.

The Calchaqui Valleys, covering the provinces of Catamarca, Tucuman and Salta, extend along twisting roads with colorful tints. The tiny populations ooze history in every stone, as in the Santa Maria, one of the major Yokavil Indian settlements.

In other villages like Cafayate, Angastaco and Cachi, the Spanish traditions left their mark on the architecture and customs, which have born fruit in the beautiful statues fashioned by the skillful hands of locals. Cafayate is renowned for its vineyards, where the famous torrontes fruity white wine is made.

To the north, El Rey National Park is an ideal spot for getting acquainted with wildlife in the

area. The park, located in the center of Salta Province, has five levels of vegetation cover where pumas, foxes, red brocket deer and tapirs live together.

A typical must-go trip is a ride on the so-called Train to the Clouds. Departing from Salta, the most colonial-style city in Argentina, it reaches 4,270 meters, commanding superb vistas. A succession of yellows, greens and reds follow the train itinerary. Once back in Salta the town boasts a unity of simple low-rising houses and sumptuous religious buildings, such as the richly ornamented cathedral, the Gothic-style De la Merced church, and the unmistakable red and golden tints of the San Francisco Basilica.

The region's diverse geography suits every taste and different trips may be arranged, based on travelers' preferences.

## Extraordinary wines meet global market needs

Argentina is one of the world's ecological reserves. High mountains and plains, lush vegetation and extreme deserts, forests and steppes, glaciers and waterfalls: Argentina has it all.

Today Argentina is among the top wine-producing countries in the world, together with France, Italy, Spain and the United States. It has eight grape growing regions spreading from north to south, with different latitudes, altitudes and soils, which produce the most prestigious malbec and torrontes to be found in the international market.

In this context Argentina has developed a unique wine-making industry. The altitude, the wide range of temperatures, the local knowhow, the new technologies and a deeply rooted popular wine culture lend our wines a unique identity and quality. Few winemaking industries in

the world can enjoy the exceptional water quality found in our mountain valleys, where there is no contaminating activity that could detract from the quality of this vital resource.

Also, Argentina has a rich wine culture that has its roots in the traditions of the European immigrants that settled the country. The combination of our Spanish, Italian, French and native heritages has nurtured several generations of exceptionally intelligent, sensitive and creative vine growers and winemakers. Argentina combines terroir, expertise and freedom to innovate and is rapidly unleashing all its potential to meet global market needs.

Wine production growth has also fueled the development of wine tourism. Currently, 163 wineries make up Argentina's Wine Roads, the wine touring circuit. Every year, thou-



**Vineyard in Mendoza: Favorable conditions have made Argentina one of the world's top wine-producing countries.**

sands of tourists visit these wineries in the provinces of Mendoza, San Juan, La Rioja, Salta, Catamarca, Rio Negro, Neuquen and Cordoba. Attracted by the increasingly well-regarded wines, visitors also enjoy views of the snow-capped Andes, as well as a

growing number of luxury hotels, boutique guesthouses and gourmet restaurants.

### Congratulations

to the People of the Argentine Republic

### on the 200th Anniversary of Their National Day

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