



PLAYING IT COOL

Staying indoors with your face in the fridge isn't quite how you envisaged your summer in Buenos Aires. When the mercury hits 40, there are only two ways to go: beach or poolside. To avoid looking like a clueless gringo, follow **Rosie Hilder's** tips on how to do it like the porteños.

DON'T

LEAVE ANYTHING TO THE IMAGINATION

Modesty is not a quality synonymous with Argentinian beach babes, so ladies, ditch that swimming costume and opt for an itty-bitsy bikini. The bottoms should be *colaless* (literally, bumless), covering less than half your butt cheeks; the top so padded it's practically bullet-proof. Boys, go for tight swimming shorts or branded boardies but avoid Speedos or you'll look like you took a wrong turn at Copacabana. To get the right gear, head to **Caro Cuore** (various locations, www.carocuore.net) or **Coco Marie** (see p108) for bikinis, or **Bensimon** (see p104) for trunks.



the prize being the most coveted of titles: Argentina's best bottom. If a booty hunter hasn't scouted you, don't lose confidence in your backside just yet. Every summer, Argentinian 'news' cable channel Cronica does a video bum montage – might your bottom have made the cut?

DON'T

BE A BAD SPORT

Apart from extreme flirting and preening, beach sports include Messi-wannabes having a kick-about, pert twentysomethings wrestling for the volleyball to an appreciative crowd, and wizened old men throwing wooden discs at a target in a game of *tejo*. A pastime for kids and pranksters, *hacerse la milanese* consists of grabbing someone when they come out of the sea and rolling them around in the sand till they're covered from head to toe and resemble a popular local dish *milanese* (breaded meat). If you don't like the sound of the ritual, watch your back, or simply do it to yourself first in the name of exfoliation. Meanwhile at the pool, Marco Polo is the name of the game. The rules are similar to 'blind man's bluff' or 'tag' in water, but the real aim is of course more coquetry, and wandering hands often 'accidentally' grope one another during the search.



DO

MAKE BODY HAIR THE ENEMY

Long flowing locks might be the porteño fashion of choice for your head, but stray hairs elsewhere are a definite no-no in this city. Before heading within 500 metres of a pool or beach, a visit to a *depilatorio* is a must. You won't have to venture far – so feared is the *pelito* (stray hair) that there's a waxing centre on practically every corner, especially in the Palermo neighbourhood. Efficient, chatty beauticians slather on wax before drying it with a fan and whipping it off with military precision. You may be subjected to a running commentary on the state of your private parts: '*Hace mucho que no venís?*' ('Has it been a while since you last had a wax?') or '*Tenés mucho! Es impresionante!*' ('You've got loads! It's impressive!'). To avoid this, do as the porteños and go regularly. Try **The Beauty Saloon** (see p113) or **Mónica Brenta** (various locations, www.monocabrenta.com). For essential waxing vocabulary, see right.



DO

CATCH THE ARGENTINIAN CLAP

When on the beach this summer, don't be alarmed – or delighted – if everyone around you suddenly starts applauding. It's (probably) not because you've misplaced your trunks. A more likely explanation is that you're witnessing an age-old Argentinian beach tradition of reuniting lost children with their parents. When an adult finds a kid who has strayed from the family umbrella, they hoist them on their shoulders and parade them down the beach while onlookers clap to avert the attention of the parents. Every family frantically counts its flock until panicked parent and lost child are happily reunited.



DON'T

BE AFRAID TO STARE

In a country where you can't even walk one block without being eyeballed, it's no surprise everyone ogles each other when they're half naked. When at the beach or pool, give as good as you get and stare right back. Bear in mind that porteños try to arrive at the *playa* or *pileta* a golden brown colour. Slapping on the fake tan before you get there probably won't lessen the gawking, but it will at least stop people from shielding their eyes from your bright white skin and gasping, '*Que blanca que sos!*' ('You're so white!')



DON'T

SAY GRACIAS TOO SOON

No gathering of Argentinians is complete without the nation's favourite herbal infusion *maté*, and lazing around a pool or on the beach is a perfect opportunity to try it. If, like most foreigners, you find the taste a bitter mix of grass and ashtray, stick it out for a few rounds until your taste buds adjust. Saying *gracias* signals you've had enough: it's a good get-out clause if you can't stomach the 'acquired taste', but a possible faux pas if said too soon. Get your own traditional *maté* set at **Arandú** (see p100) or one of the city's ferias (see p113).



DO

STRUT YOUR STUFF

Confidence is key, so whatever your shape and size, wiggle your hips, hold your head high and pretend you're on the catwalk. Or, if you're feeling bootilicious, don't hold back – many of Argentina's popular resorts hold beauty pageants, with



DO

PICK YOUR SPOT CAREFULLY

Respect for personal space is not something you'll experience on the Subte, bus or streets of Buenos Aires, and don't expect anything more at the pool. The beach is no less crowded, but it is at least better organised. There are sections for upmarket beach huts, sections for sunbeds and umbrellas to rent, and sections for mere mortals jostling for towel space. Wherever you end up, it's best to avoid gamers, gaggles of teenagers and anyone blasting reggaeton from their phone. Leave your valuables at home and take a cool box bursting with *fernet y coca*.



Waxing glossary

Pierna entera: full leg (beauticians will often try and sneak in on the bikini line here – if that's not what you want, make your wishes clear from the outset).

Cavado: bikini line (indicate clearly how far you wish them to go: Argentinians are fond of going completely bare).

Axilas: armpits.

Bozo: upper lip.

Cera: wax.

Caliente: hot.

Tira de cola: inner bum cheeks.

'Hasta ahí no más': thus far and no further.

'Por favor, sacame de este lugar': please get me out of here.

Beaches – Where to go

When the going gets hot, the hot get going – to Mar del Plata. Throughout summer, this beachside city 400km from the capital is filled with porteños high on its party atmosphere and kitsch charm. But if being packed in like a sardine isn't your thing, avoid the city beach and instead head to nearby exclusive beaches La Reserva and Del Balcón. For peace and quiet, go to the Costa Verde (green coast), a 20km stretch of pretty, upmarket resorts just 340km from BA. Options include the picturesque Mar de las Pampas, pine forests and golden sand dunes in high-end Cariló, or glamorous Pinamar, where solvent Argentinians summer. To get to the coast, take a bus from Retiro bus station (see p117). Nearer to the capital is the popular riverside leisure spot Perú Beach, where sun-worshippers and watersport aficionados flock on weekends.

Pools – Where to go

In the city, the hottest five-star hotels in town the Four Seasons (see p152, day pass US\$190) and Faena Buenos Aires (see p152, day pass US\$150) allow non-guests to cool down in their sophisticated pool facilities. Another option is to head to the Hilton, (Avenida Macacha Güemes 351, 4891 0000) where AR\$450 gets you a day's use of the splendid outdoor pool, gym and sauna. In Palermo, splash about at Home Hotel's lovely garden pool (day pass US\$60) and treat yourself to tempting extras like sensual spa treatments and delightful cocktails. A favourite among local families, Parque Norte's leisure complex (see p130, from AR\$60) has several pools plus tennis, football and basketball courts.