

Aires, that they immediately sought out the artists. On discovering the stories behind the artwork, including how one street artist laid claim to a spot by getting his mother to ask for permission, they began doing tours to promote the urban art scene and have since developed the project to include art fairs, workshops and a documentary about the scene (www.whitewallssaynothing.com). Although anyone wandering BA's streets will come across graffiti, GraffitiMundo's bilingual guides are experts at putting enormous tortoises seemingly coming out of walls and *gauchos* holding spray cans into a social, political and historical context. The highly organised tours can be done on foot or by bike and all explore at least three different areas of the city, taking tourists to spots they would unlikely discover alone (a minibus provides transport between them). Groups also get a chance to meet local artists and check out the latest exhibition at hip stencil art bar Post Bar in Palermo. Hot-spots for street art include bus-depot in Chacarita (Fitz Roy and Castillo), Plaza Matienzo in Colegiales (Matienzo and Cramer), and around the Mercado de Pulgas in Palermo (Alvarez Thomas and Dorrego).

THE HOLY GRAIL

So you've travelled the streets and ticked off the basics: wine, tango and meat. What else are the Argentines proud of? Ah yes. The Pope. Seeing as you've not got much chance of actually meeting the guy in his homeland, the next best thing is to learn all about him on one of the free **Papal tours** (4114 5791, Tues, 3pm, walking tours from Plaza de Mayo, Thurs, 3pm, walking tours around Flores: booking not necessary. Weekends and holidays: bus tours from Flores, 9am, booking essential) run by the city government. You can either take a short walking tour in Bergoglio's *barrio* Flores or around the Plaza de Mayo or go the whole hog and get on the Pope bus for a three-hour trip. The tour bus may be traditional, but visiting the stand where Bergoglio used to buy his newspaper? That's one to write home about. Tours are currently Spanish language only.

TILL YOU DROP

If at the end of all that culture you feel in the need of retail therapy, Yorkshire lass Sophie Lloyd of **ShopHop BA** (www.shop-buenosaires.com, mobile: 15 3921 0460, shopping by the hour US\$40 per person, half day US\$150, full day US\$250. Discounts for groups) will happily take the stress out of shopping for you. Her custom-made tours take shoppers exactly where they want to go and help them find unique workshops, shops and pieces. A fashion writer and professional shopper, Lloyd knows all the best boutiques – including the appointment-only showrooms – can diffuse the rudest of shop assistants and speaks English, Spanish and French. A questionnaire before you go will help her suss out your style and steer you and your pesos in the right direction.

