



Mendoza Guide:

Traveling to Argentina used to mean strapping on a backpack; today, from sidewalk cafes to picnics in the park, it's a destination that will enchant both parents and kids alike.

By Rebecca T. Caro

Mendoza might be in the heart of Argentina's wine country, but there's no place that children aren't welcome. Family is a source of pride for Argentines, so after the locals finish cooing over your brood, enjoy the city's world-class wineries and restaurants or spend the afternoon playing in the park—there's no place kids aren't welcome. Located in the foothills of the Andes mountains, Mendoza has become more tourist-friendly in recent years, making it more accessible than ever. (Plus, the exchange rate makes the trip of a lifetime possible.) Here's everything you need to know about the city's best offerings—from downtown to the wine country—to make your trip to Mendoza unforgettable.

Downtown Mendoza

The heart of Mendoza is made up of five plazas. The largest, Plaza Independencia, is at the city's center, with the others (San Martín, Italia, España, and Chile) just two blocks from each of its corners. The space below the fountain in the center of Plaza Independencia is home to the Museo Municipal de Arte Moderno, located underground. This picturesque square is always bustling with people on their lunch breaks, kids moshing around the playground, and artisans selling crafts. From there, walk to the Peatonal Sarmiento, Mendoza's pedestrian mall. This tree-lined street is the perfect place to stroll—kids can run around and bum off some steam while you sip coffee at one of the many sidewalk cafes.

Restaurants Bonafide

Though this cafe has several locations around Mendoza, the one on the Peatonal has an upstairs seating area that overlooks the mall, making it the ideal spot to people watch. While you sip a *cortito con leche*, the kids can have a *submarino-hot* milk with a submarine-shaped chocolate bar submerged in it—an Argentinean classic.

Peatonal Sarmiento 102, (261) 423-7915

Diin Ken

One look at the jewel-colored pastries in this shop and you'll know why it's crowded from morning till night. Stay for a sandwich or take pastries to go.

Peatonal Sarmiento 250, (261) 423-6668

Comer of San Martín and San Lorenzo, (261) 425-4313

Activities

Teatro Independencia

This historic theater, located on the Plaza Independencia, hosts regular cultural events: Check out tangoshows, jazz concerts, or classical guitar performances.

Corner of Chile and Espejo, (261) 438-0644

The Vines of Mendoza Tasting Room

Housed in a converted Beaux-Artes mansion, Vines carries an unrivaled selection of wines from Mendoza's finest boutique wineries. Relax in the indoor terrace with your kids while you enjoy a glass of wine or a guided wine flight.

Espejo 567, (261) 438-1031

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Around Mendoza

Outside of Mendoza's center, the city is full of things to do and see. These destinations are just a short walk or cab ride away from the city center.

Safety Tip

Beware of pickpockets at Avenue Las Heras and the Mercado Central. With increased tourism, there has been increased crime—primarily tourist muggings. Like traveling anywhere, keep your wits about you: carry wallets in your front pocket, stash passports in your hotel safe, don't wear flashy jewelry, and don't wave your camera around.

Restaurants

Don Mario

Now in his 30s, Mario Ferrari started his restaurant more than 30 years ago. This family-friendly locale has an extensive menu full of classic Argentinean cuisine, from *milanesa* to *parilla* (a small barbecue right at your table). Try the pasta, too; it's made in-house.

25 de Mayo 1324, Don Ego-Guaymalleen, (261) 431-1810

Palmares Open Mall: Ruta Panamericana 2650, Godoy Cruz, (261) 439-4838

Chacras de Coria

A mere 15 minutes from the heart of downtown Mendoza, Chacras de Coria is a neighborhood with several

winery estates that is surrounded by Mendoza's *bodegas* (vineyards). It offers a bounty of family-owned cafes, chic restaurants, shops, and of course, access to the wineries.

Activities

Parque General San Martín

This stunning park covers 865 acres of Mendoza, so take a picnic lunch and let little legs run along wooded paths. Don't miss the panoramic view of the city from the peak of Cerro de la Gloria. The park's information kiosk gives detailed info on park offerings, like the annual Fiesta de la Vendimia, or grape harvest festival, which reaches the peak of its celebration in March.

Av. Emilio Civit and Bologne sur Mer, (261) 420-5052

Espacio Contemporáneo de Arte

Free to the public and hosts varying exhibits in contemporary art. Open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

9 de Julio at Gutierrez, (261) 429-0117

Plazas

Mendoza's smaller plazas are worth a look: The statue at Plaza San Martín, fountain sculpture at Plaza Italia, and the tile-covered benches at Plaza España are perfect for a photo op.

Cons11It a street map far exact locations.

Winery Tours

Your best bet with a winery tour is to choose a few wineries you'd most like to see, make reservations for a tour at the winery, and hire a tour guide to take you there. Bus tours tend to hit too many wineries in a short time, while your own guide can customize the tour for you, and if the kids get too tired, you can head back to the hotel. Families are welcome on roost tours. Most hotels have someone they work with, so ask for their recommendation-it's likely someone licensed (tour guides must be licensed by the government) and trustworthy.

Shops

Winery

The gubernatorial palace of a prominent 19th century Mendoza politician has been transformed to house the city's chicest wine shop. A knowledgeable staff advises which vintages to add to your collection and even packages them for international transport.

Chile 898, (261) 420-2840

Mendoza Plaza Shopping

Mendoza's answer to an American mall, this sleek, modern shopping center has all the same labels as street-side shops but is safer. Go to Giro Didactico for their selection of kid's' music and hit Libreria Yenny for children's books en español. After a wood-fired pizza lunch in the food court (Big Time) get a *dulce de leche* (or vanilla with Malbec) ice cream at Ferruccio Soppelssa and take the kids to play at the funky arcade. Shoppers will recognize classics Lacoste, Yves Saint Laurent, and Dior, but don't miss local favorites Prune for handbags, Ricky Sarkany for shoes, and Cloter for jeans.

Plazoleta Pellegrini

The relics of old Argentina make a comeback (and a great souvenir!) at this flea market, held every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Corner of Alem and Primitivo de la Reta.