

Gay & Lesbian



The scene

The *porteño* gay scene works hard and it plays hard. On the play side, there's a plethora of fabulous, queer-friendly club nights that run into the wee hours of the morning. On the work side are local organizations dedicated to advancing LGBTQ rights, with groups like **Comunidad Homosexual Argentina** (see p135) and **Casa Brandon** (see p135) creating anti-bullying campaigns, providing health resources and harbouring safe spaces for community members and their allies. All that community spirit culminates in the **Marcha del Orgullo LGBTIQ**, which brings thousands to the streets to support diversity in early November. Later that same month, same-sex partner dancing is all the rage at the **Festival Internacional de Tango Queer**. And then for work and play all in one, there are plenty of gyms that double as cruising spots.

Perhaps that activism is working, as despite 'macho' tango stereotypes and a Catholic heritage, about 75 % of Buenos Aires residents say they believe gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry, with this number higher for the younger generation. In 2010 outcries and protests from former BA Archbishop, Jorge Bergoglio (now the supposedly 'progressive' Pope Francis) couldn't stop Argentina from becoming the first Latin American country to legalise same-sex marriage.

While you may not see many gay and lesbian couples hand in hand in public, parties, hook-ups and dates are all easy to find. Indeed, when it comes to its forward and flirtatious gay scene, Buenos Aires is easily Rio's rival in Latin America.

If you're looking for an introduction to the sizzling hot locals, join the bar-hopping revelry with the boisterous crew from the **Out & About Gay Pub Crawl** (see right); or summon all your stamina for the dance-till-you-drop **Fiesta Plop** (see p134) or eye-candy central **Rheo** (see p134). Girls who like girls flock to **Fiesta Jolie** (see p134) and **Brandon Gay Day** (see right).

The queer tango scene is very much alive and twirling, getting back to its roots of two men dancing together. Press yourself up against the chest of a handsome *tanguero* or saucy *tanguera* on Tuesdays at **Tango Queer** in the **Buenos Ayres Club** (see p144) or on Fridays at **La Marshall** in **El Beso** (see p143).

INFORMATION AND SAFETY

Visitors can choose from several travel agencies devoted to serving gay tourists, such as **Hadrianus Gay Travel** (www.hadrianus.com.ar) and **Tije Travel** (www.tije.com). **BA4U** (www.ba4uapartments.com.ar) provides apartment rental services and helpful city information. Look out for the excellent free listings guides **GMAPS** (www.gaymaps.org) and **Circuitos Cortos BsAs Gay** (www.circuitoscortos.com.ar) in shops,

My big, gay BA wedding

George Kafka gets the low-down on Laetitia Orsetti, BA's most fabulous wedding planner.

Forget Paris, Rome, Vienna... when it comes to romantic cities, Buenos Aires is a shoe-in for the number one spot. Need evidence? Just take a glance at the passion of tango, the never-ending nights or the romantic neighbourhood restaurants that perch on every corner.

For gay and lesbian couples, the city's amorous *avenidas* hold an extra special something. The BA gay scene is massive and has been flourishing since the return to democracy in 1983, but the legalisation of same-sex marriage in July 2010 – which made Argentina the first country in Latin America, and the tenth globally, to do so – has taken things to the next level. Over 7,000 same-sex couples have stepped up to the altar in the years following the bill's passing. Among that figure are multitudes of foreign couples looking to bypass prohibitions in their own countries or simply to enjoy the unique atmosphere of a BA wedding.

Capitalising on all the love that's in the air is American Laetitia Orsetti of wedding-planning company **Fabulous Weddings** (4776 6906/www.fabulousweddings.com.ar), also known simply as FAB. Having moved

to BA from Texas in 1999, Laetitia immediately fell in love with the energy of the capital's streets. 'I felt as though I was arriving at home the moment I landed at the Ezeiza airport,' Laetitia recalls of her arrival. After establishing herself in the city with a job in marketing for a major corporation, Laetitia decided to start FAB on the day that same-sex marriage was legalised. 'I knew at that very moment, as we celebrated in the streets outside the congress building, that I needed to be a part of this historic moment and of everything that was to come afterward.'

Building on her marketing experience, Laetitia used her skills and connections to set up FAB, organising the big day for couples with wedding dreams as varied as their nationalities. From day one business took off: 'Everyone we spoke with was instantly planning their weddings, whether they had a partner or not!'

Since then FAB has put together weddings for Brits, Dominicans, Texans and a whole host more, focusing on the details to make their

special days truly memorable. For some, this is just a simple ceremony, especially suited for couples on a short trip, taking advantage of the Argentinian law that allows anyone to get married after only five days in the country, and even prioritises foreigners seeking marriage licenses. For others, FAB has created truly

extravagant occasions, planning the whole process, from the bachelor parties to the honeymoon trips around Argentina. 'We take pride in creating the environment and the atmosphere for each wedding and party. Our team dotes over every tiny detail giving that magical touch and the one-of-a-kind feel designed especially to the couple's wishes.' Whether that be a sunset ceremony at the Tigre delta ('truly one of the most romantic weddings we've ever done') or a show-stopping, Broadway-inspired, fully choreographed first dance, FAB is ready and willing to make wedding dreams come true. 'The city is alive and filled with love and makes for the perfect spot to start your life together.'

TOP TIP!

If seeking marriage in Argentina as a foreigner, Laetitia can help with all your legal paperwork.