

The Argentina Republic's National Day, May 25

Argentina is the eighth largest country in the world and the second largest in South America after Brazil. A country of great beauty and diversity, Argentina's varied geography can be attributed to its incredible length - 2,300 miles (3,700 kilometers) in all! The climate is equally wide-ranging, from very hot in the north, near the Equator, to very cold in the south. The name Argentina means "silver," and early Spanish explorers came to the country to make a fortune



from this precious ore. Although silver was never found in great quantities in Argentina, the name stayed. Argentina's capital is Buenos Aires, a cosmopolitan city that gives the country much of its pulse.

Most Argentines are Roman Catholics. Ninety percent of the population declares Catholicism as its religion, although only 20 percent of this figure practices it regularly. Spanish colonial influence is responsible for the role of Catholicism in Argentine society today. For a long time, Argentine presidential candidates had to be Catholic. In 1994, when the constitution was revised, this law was dropped, and the president can now be of any faith.

The Virgin Mary Every year, people journey to Luján, a small city just west of Buenos Aires, to worship the patron saint of Argentina, La Virgen de Luján (lah VEER-hen day loo-HAAN). According to one story, a statue of the Virgin Mary, which was being transported by wagon between churches, became stuck in the town of Luján, despite people's efforts to move it. Roman Catholics took this as a sign that the Virgin did not want her statue to leave the spot, so it remained in Luján. The statue now resides in its own chapel.



Above: The Church of San Francisco in Salta is believed to have the tallest tower in South America



Above: A Sunday congregation makes its way to a local church.

Each year, large groups make pilgrimages to Luján to pray to the Virgin. People come from all over the country to be part of this celebration. Many walk from Buenos Aires, 40 miles (64 km) away; others take the bus or travel by car. There is an open-air mass at the end of the journey, at which people pray and give thanks to the Virgin. Every year, an estimated 4 million people travel to see La Virgen de Luján.



Sources:

Frank, N. (2001). *Argentina*. Singapore.

Palmerlee, D. (2008). *Argentina* (6th ed.). Lonely Planet.

Relationship between Assumption University of Thailand and Argentina



Above: H.E. Mrs. Marie Rami-Rez, Ambassador of the Argentine Republic to the Kingdom of Thailand, visited Assumption University on September 27, 2011 and was warmly welcomed by Rev. Bro. Dr. Bancha Saenghiran, AU President-Rector Magnificus, at the King's Room, Suvarnabhumi Campus.



Above: Mr. Juan Martin Sabatina, diplomatic officer from the Embassy of Argentine Republic, visited Assumption University's Hua Mak Campus on May 17, 2006 and was greeted by Mr. Glen Vivian Chatelier, Director, Office of International Affairs.

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