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1. Consul General’s Corner

Greetings from the Consular section!

I want take this opportunity to again thank our Wardens for all the hard work they have done for American tourists and residents here in Argentina. In my three years here, I have seen wonderfully generous assistance provided to Americans in need, which has made me very proud and honored to work with you all. We currently have nearly 80 wardens for an estimated 30,000 U.S. citizens living in Argentina and almost 400,000 American tourists annually. Please note we still need wardens in Bahia Blanca, Catamarca, La Pampa, Mar del Plata, San Juan, and Santa Fe City. If any of you know of possible candidates to serve as Wardens in any of those places, please let me know.

On March 4, 2011, the embassy hosted its first Warden Webchat to touch base with our Wardens, share ideas, and answer questions. The event was a successful exchange between ACS Officer A.J.Rei-Perrine and ACS assistant Susana Glucksmann and 23 Wardens. Your questions and concerns were very insightful and enlightening for us, and we hope you learned as much as we did through this new medium. Thank you very much for participating. We will try to hold other webchats in the future and are interested in your input on topics and the best times for chats.

Japan’s strong earthquake and the damage generated by the tsunami reinforced the need for us to be prepared for unexpected disasters. A tsunami warning was in effect after this earthquake for Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Antarctica, Panama, Honduras, Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru, demonstrating that a natural disaster in one country may quickly lead to an emergency in another. This tragic incident demonstrated to the embassy that we needed to make contingency plans should there be any after-effects in Argentina. Towards this end, we contacted Wardens resident in provinces bordering the “cordillera,” and asked them to assist us with providing up-to-date contact information for ambulance services, public hospitals, police, “defensa civil” and “gendarmería” stations in their areas. Most Wardens replied within hours and we commend you for your information and responsiveness.

This will likely be my last newsletter because I depart post in May for a year assignment in Afghanistan. I will be replaced by Daniel Perrone who is an extremely experienced officer coming from Mexico. Again thank you all for your assistance during these past three years and good luck to all of you in the future.

Jennifer Noronha
Consul General
U.S. Embassy Buenos Aires

2. Embassy News

U.S. Congressman Chris Smith Meets with National Legislators to Discuss Human Trafficking

February 3, 2011

During his February 2-4 visit to Buenos Aires, U.S. Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) met with Argentine national legislators to discuss human trafficking issues. Representative Smith is a co-author of the United States' three landmark anti-human trafficking laws, including the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, a comprehensive law designed to prevent modern-day slavery, protect victims, and enhance civil and criminal penalties against traffickers. Representative Smith also met with judicial and civil society representatives responsible for combating human trafficking and the Chief of the Public Defender's Office for Minors to discuss children's issues. Also, as part of his long-standing interest in fighting anti-Semitism, Representative Smith met with Jewish community leaders at the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association's (AMIA) headquarters to show his support for Argentina in bringing the perpetrators of the 1994 AMIA bombing to justice.

Argentine Students Travel to the United States as "Youth Ambassadors"

February 22, 2011

The Charge d' Affaires Jefferson Brown bid farewell to five Argentine students who will be visiting the United States from February 23 to March 16 as participants of the Youth Ambassador 2011 Program. Daniel Portugal Nahum from La Rioja; Barbara Liechti from Formosa; Lola Boffo from Ushuaia; Catrinel Greppi Caillava from Tucumán; and Julián Fontanazza from Junín de los Andes, Neuquén, are the selected participants amongst hundreds of public high school students from around the country.

"These students have been selected because of their academic achievements and their commitment to their communities. For three weeks they will be Argentine youth ambassadors in my country; they will be able to share their culture with American families and other youths," Charge d' Affaires Brown commented.

The Youth Ambassadors will visit the city of Washington, DC, to be received by various US representatives, visit important landmarks and attend some cultural functions. They will then live for 10 days the life of an ordinary American teenager: they will be welcomed by a host family from Montana or Tennessee states, attend school and give presentations on Argentina.

This is the fifth edition of the Youth Ambassador program, an initiative of the United States Embassy together with the Fulbright Commission, Partners of the Americas and other public and private

institutions from both countries. The students were selected from over 200 applicants between the ages of 14 and 18 years old: they all come from public schools, have good level of English and have never travelled abroad, besides being chosen for their important social commitment in their communities. The program allows them to form strong, lifelong friendship ties, improve their English skills and discover new ways to do social and community work. More than 39 students from 19 Argentine provinces have participated to date in the program.

3. Driving in Argentina:

While in Argentina, American citizens have to abide by local laws and penalties. If you are involved in a car accident in Argentina, both drivers may be arrested and held at the police station while circumstances and responsibility are established. There may also be heavy fines charged if you are convicted of a traffic infraction.

To help avoid problems while driving, check that your driver's license has not expired and ensure that you know Argentine traffic laws. U.S. driver's licenses are valid in the city and province of Buenos Aires, but Argentine or international licenses are required to drive in the rest of the country. To rent a car in Argentina it is generally necessary to ensure the following:

- Have your state driver's license on hand, as well as an international driver's license if applicable
- Have an ID card or passport
- Be over 21 years old
- Have an international credit card (or debit card in some cases, although this is not always required)

To apply for an international driving permit before you depart for your trip, go to a local office of one of the two automobile associations authorized by the U.S. Department of State:

- AAA (American Automobile Association)
- National Auto Club

To apply for an International Driving Permit (IDP), you must:

- be at least age 18
- present two passport-size photographs and
- present your valid U.S. license

The cost of an IDP from these U.S. Department of State-authorized organizations is less than \$20.00.

For more information about traffic laws in Argentina, please visit the ley de tránsito (traffic law) of Argentina link:

<http://www.gob.gba.gov.ar/portal/documentos/ley%2026363%20Transito%20Nacional.pdf>

For more information about the rules of driving in Argentina, please visit the following Argentine government website:

<http://www.argentina.gov.ar/argentina/portal/paginas.dhtml?pagina=2135>

Or the State Department Travel Link:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1130.html#traffic_safety

For more information about the drug laws of Argentina, please visit the Argentine Ministerio de Seguridad's Ley 23 "Tenencia y Tráfico de Estupefacientes" :

<http://www.mseg.gba.gov.ar/Investigaciones/DrogasIllicitas/ley%2023737.htm>

4. Avoid Becoming a Victim of Crime

An Argentine daily newspaper recently published an article about some precautions you can take to avoid becoming a victim of crime. Here are some suggestions:

- **Private Transportation:**
If you drive a car, try to arrive home before dusk while there are still plenty of people in the street. If you notice any strange people or unusual activities taking place near your home, don't enter your house and call 911, 101, the number of your neighborhood safety patrol, or a person that you know well.
- **Public Transportation:**
If you choose to take public transportation instead of driving, use stops that are well-lit. Take note of your surroundings, and observe the people around you. Guard anything of value you might be carrying, including your wallet, backpack, or purse. Make sure to hold these items tightly to your chest so that they cannot be easily taken from you. If you feel uncomfortable, never hesitate to leave and take another bus, subte line, or taxi.

Something else you can do to lower your chances of becoming a target for crime is to vary your daily walking routine; criminals observe daily walking routines in order to identify potential victims.

- **Finances:**

Avoid going to the bank routinely on certain days or always at the same time of day. When you use ATMs, be aware of people in the doorways or hallways. Try to avoid letting anyone glance over your shoulder in case they are trying to take note of your credit or debit card pin number when you withdraw money. Try to count your money in a discreet corner. If possible, use an ATM that has a guard nearby. When you are carrying money in public places, separate the money you are carrying into small quantities and put it in different places on your person and in your bag or purse.

- Phone Calls:

Be cautious with phone calls that you receive. Do not respond to calls from strange numbers. If you suddenly realize that a caller poses a threat, hang up immediately. You should never reveal any type of personal information under any circumstances while talking on the phone. If a caller indicates that someone you are close to has been in an accident or has been hurt, immediately call that person to verify that they are okay. Alert the police about any phone calls like these that you receive.

- Internet:

In addition to taking precautions with your phone calls, you should also exercise caution when publishing information about yourself on the internet. Many websites, especially social networking sites, have a great deal of personal information available that criminals can use to commit a crime. For example, avoid publishing information or photographs that indicate when you are going on vacation or information that indicates that you will be absent from your home.

Even if you do your best to follow these suggestions, it is possible that you may still become a victim of crime. If you find yourself in a dangerous situation with a criminal, stay calm and avoid any sudden reactions and movements. Speak as slowly as possible to calm the criminal. You should inform the criminal of each movement you are going to make, such as carrying a purse or a wallet to the criminal, and you should keep your hands visible and avoid gesticulating. Most importantly, remain calm until the situation ends.

Although there is no entirely fool-proof way to protect yourself from crime, these suggestions can increase your safety and security.

If you would like additional suggestions on preventing crime and ensuring your safety, please visit this article on the *La Nación* website:

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1344111

5. Student Advice

As the world becomes more open and connected, greater numbers of students study abroad. According to the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, released on November 15, 2010,

approximately 260,327 students studied abroad for credit during the 2008-2009 academic year. Because students represent a large population of international travelers, it is essential that they take certain safety precautions.

- **Money**
Keep track of the credit limits on your credit cards. This will not only be helpful for you financially, but also legally. Americans have been arrested for innocently exceeding their credit limit abroad. Ask your credit card company how to report the loss of your card from abroad. Keep in mind, 1-800 numbers do not work from abroad, but your company should have a number that you can call while you are overseas.
- **Drinking and Drugs**
Although this may seem like obvious advice, take care not to transport drugs. Being arrested in a foreign country for carrying drugs is an experience you do not want to have. It is also one of the most common crimes that Americans are put in prison for while they are abroad. For example, 90% of Americans in prison in Argentina are there on drug charges. Drug charges may carry the consequences of imprisonment without bail for up to a year before a case is tried, and sentences range from two to four years for most foreigners. Contraband or paraphernalia associated with illegal drug use can also get you in trouble.

Also, watch your alcohol consumption while you are traveling. Many arrests, accidents, rape, and other violent crimes have occurred in conjunction with alcohol use. In Argentina, it is illegal to drink alcohol in public, including places where large gatherings are held for cultural, educational, artistic, or sporting events, unless clearly authorized. Strict legal limits on blood alcohol levels while driving mean that even one drink can put you on the wrong side of the law. And you cannot have **any** alcohol in your system if you are driving minors or transporting cargo. For more information concerning Argentine law on alcohol sales and consumption, please visit the following government website for the Ley Nacional de Lucha Contra El Alcoholismo:

<http://www.infoleg.gov.ar/infolegInternet/verNorma.do?id=42480>

- **What the Embassy Can Do to Help**
Consular duty personnel are available for emergency assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas and in Washington, D.C. In Argentina, you can call American Citizen Services at (54-11) 5777-4354 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or (54-11) 5777-4873 after hours. In an emergency, consular personnel can help you to:
 1. Replace a stolen passport
 2. Contact family, friends, or employers
 3. Obtain medical care
 4. Address emergency needs that arise as a result of a crime
 5. Obtain general information about the local criminal justice process and information about your case

6. Obtain information about local resources to assist victims, including crime victim assistance and victim compensation programs
7. Obtain a list of local English-speaking attorneys

In emergencies we can come to your aid with these services.

- Register with the Embassy!
You never know when an emergency situation could occur in a country. Natural disasters, civil unrest, and acts of terrorism are just a few things that could happen while you are abroad. Although most Americans travel abroad without incident, it never hurts to be prepared. We suggest that you enroll your trip to help the embassy or consulate locate you in an emergency. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) makes it possible to contact you if necessary, whether there's a family emergency in the United States or a crisis in the country you are visiting. U.S. embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 Americans each year who are victims of crime, accident, or illness, or whose family and friends need to contact them in an emergency. We have you covered!

Enroll at the following link: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

6. Student Outreach

The U.S. Embassy is reaching out to U.S. students in Argentina! So far in 2011, American Citizen Services staff have given presentations about security in Buenos Aires and the U.S. Department of State student internships to more than 600 students. Vice Consul AJ Rei-Perrine, accompanied by interns Emily Kolm and Holly Skorich, educated the students about safety concerns in Argentina. Vice Consul Rei-Perrine warned students about the many security issues students need to be aware of, such as common theft techniques and how to avoid becoming a victim, while the interns were able to share their experiences in Argentina and to explain how to apply for internships with the U.S. Department of State.

7. Student Internships

If you or a student you know is looking to find out more about the work of the U.S. Department of State, gain important work experience, and contribute to implementing U.S. foreign policy, consider an internship with the State Department! Throughout the year, the U.S. Department of State accepts interns both domestically in Washington, D.C. and at U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world. Students are usually juniors, seniors, or Masters students who intern for 10 weeks in the spring, summer, or fall. Students represent diverse academic disciplines and intern in different bureaus. The internship application begins eight months in advance of the internship and involves an application, an interview, and a security clearance. For additional information and to view the internship application, please visit <http://careers.state.gov/students>.

