

LEVELED Book • X

Argentina



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Focus Question

How do Argentina's European roots affect its culture today?

Words to Know

decisive
dictators
diverse
ecotourism
gaucho
habitats

middle classes
multicultural
provinces
reforms
turmoil
volcanic

Front cover: Mountain peaks soar in a national park in Argentina.

Title page: Farmers harvest Argentine wheat.

Page 3: A gaucho rides his horse.

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Where Is It?

Argentina is the second-largest country on the continent of South America and the eighth-largest country in the world. Its land covers 2,736,690 square kilometers (1,056,642 sq. mi.) and lies between the Andes Mountains, the longest mountain chain on Earth, and the Atlantic Ocean. The countries of Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile border Argentina.

Twenty-three **provinces** make up Argentina. Each one has an independent government with its own laws and constitution. However, every province must follow and answer to the laws of Argentina's national government.

The capital and largest city in Argentina is Buenos Aires, whose name means “fair or good winds.” Its population is more than fifteen million people. The city boasts the widest street in the world. People named Avenida 9 de Julio (July 9th Avenue) for the date of Argentina’s independence from the country of Spain.

Buenos Aires is one of the largest ports in South America. The city is the center of many economic activities, including the nation’s banking, food processing, and automobile industries.

Known for the friendliness of its residents, Buenos Aires is a **multicultural** city and home to **diverse** groups of people. It has one of the largest **middle classes** in Latin America.

Many of the people who live and work there enjoy city life and all it has to offer. Buenos Aires looks quite a bit like a European city due to the traditions brought there by many of its residents.

The obelisk on Avenida 9 de Julio was built in 1936. It honors the four hundredth birthday of Buenos Aires.





Argentina has a strong agricultural history. Farmers harvest wheat (left) and grapes (below).



People

More than forty-three million people live in Argentina, with more than 90 percent of the population living in its four largest cities. Argentina has the third-largest economy in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico.

Argentina is strong in agriculture and rich with natural resources such as silver, gold, oil, and natural gas. Its exports include wine and beef as well as lemons, grapes, peanuts, tea, and wheat.

Most Argentines work in service jobs, but work is also available in the country's automobile, textile, energy, communications, and appliance industries. Argentina also offers employment in the film industry, with dozens of motion pictures produced there every year.

The Roman Catholic faith is Argentina's official religion. However, the country guarantees freedom of religion, and people also practice the Muslim, Jewish, Protestant, and Mormon religions.

Like many countries, Argentina can be considered a "melting pot" because diverse peoples came together from all over the world to form a new nation. Argentina has always welcomed new immigrants. Today, the majority of Argentines have European roots.

Argentina's official language is Spanish. However, since most Argentines trace their roots back to Europe, some people also speak other languages, including Italian, German, French, and English.



Visitors will notice European architecture in Villa General Belgrano, a district in the province of Córdoba.

Argentina's Five Regions



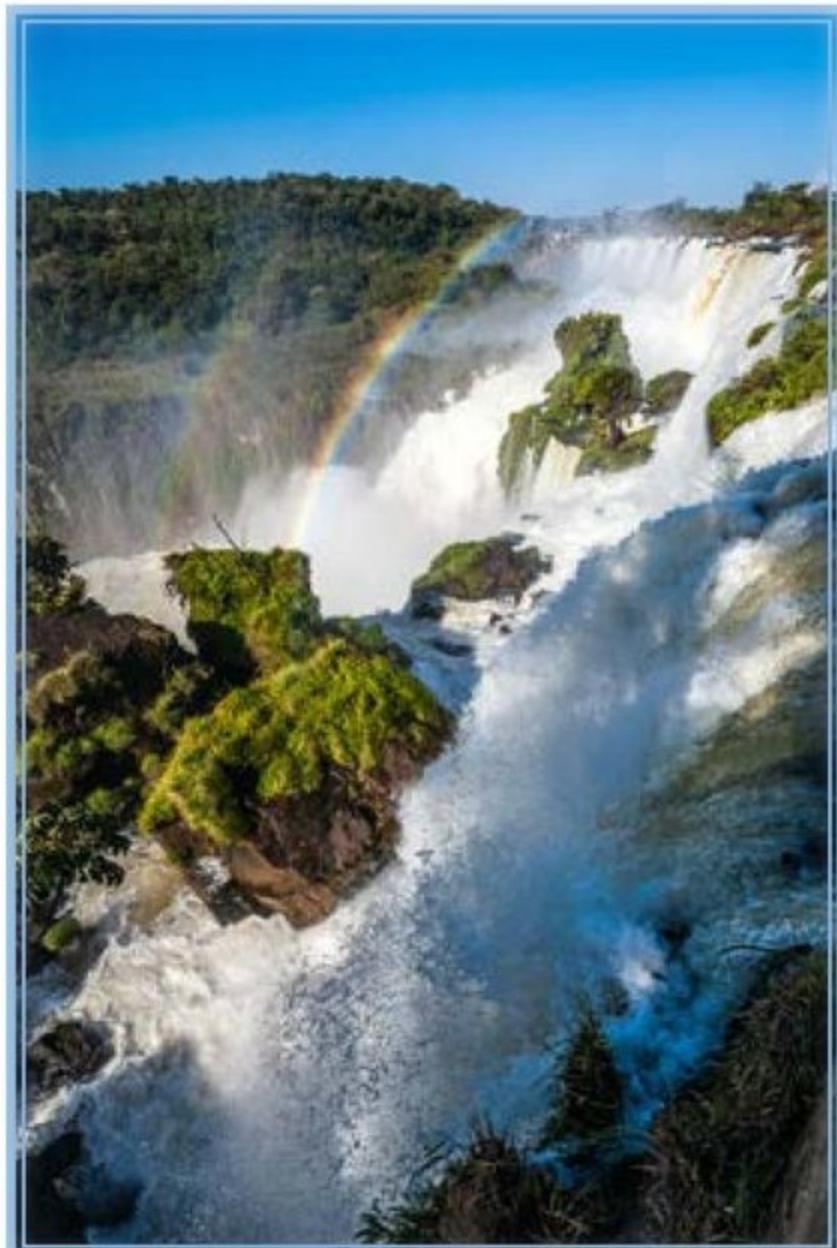
Land

Shaped like a long triangle, Argentina has mountains, deserts, plains, glaciers, vast lakes, and seashores. Five major regions make up Argentina's varied land. The Andes Mountains form a great wall between Chile and Argentina. The Pampas region is a large area of flat, fertile land where

people grow many crops. Patagonia—the largest region and home to the oil and gas industries—is known for its **ecotourism**. The Littoral region, in the north, has jungles and swamps, while the Gran Chaco region is a lowland in the northwest.

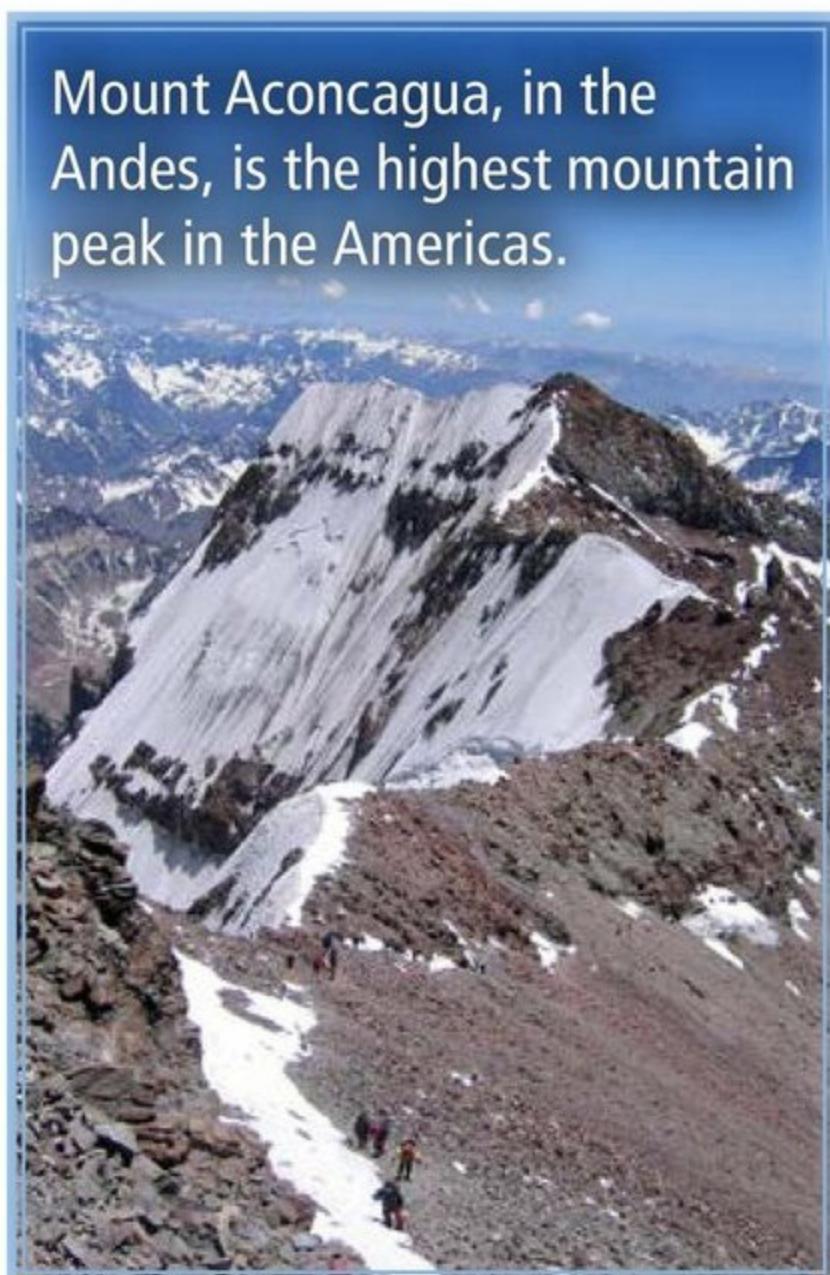
The countries of Brazil and Paraguay meet Argentina in an area called the Triple Frontier, which is formed by the Iguazú and Paraná Rivers. Here, the Iguazú River tumbles over horseshoe-shaped falls that extend 2.7 kilometers (1.7 mi.).

Iguazú Falls are taller and wider than most of the waterfalls in the world. They formed millions of years ago when a **volcanic** eruption left a huge crack in the earth. The name of the falls comes from a language of native people in the region and means “big water.”



Iguazú Falls are one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

With its many **habitats**, Argentina is alive with different kinds of birds and mammals. Toucans, Andean condors, penguins, pumas, tapirs, howler monkeys, and jaguars are all residents.



Mount Aconcagua, in the Andes, is the highest mountain peak in the Americas.

The towering Andes Mountains, stretching the full length of western South America, are one of Earth’s great natural features. The Andes range is about 7,242 kilometers (4,500 mi.) long and runs through seven countries. Its highest peak—Mount Aconcagua—is 6,962 meters (22,841 ft.) tall.

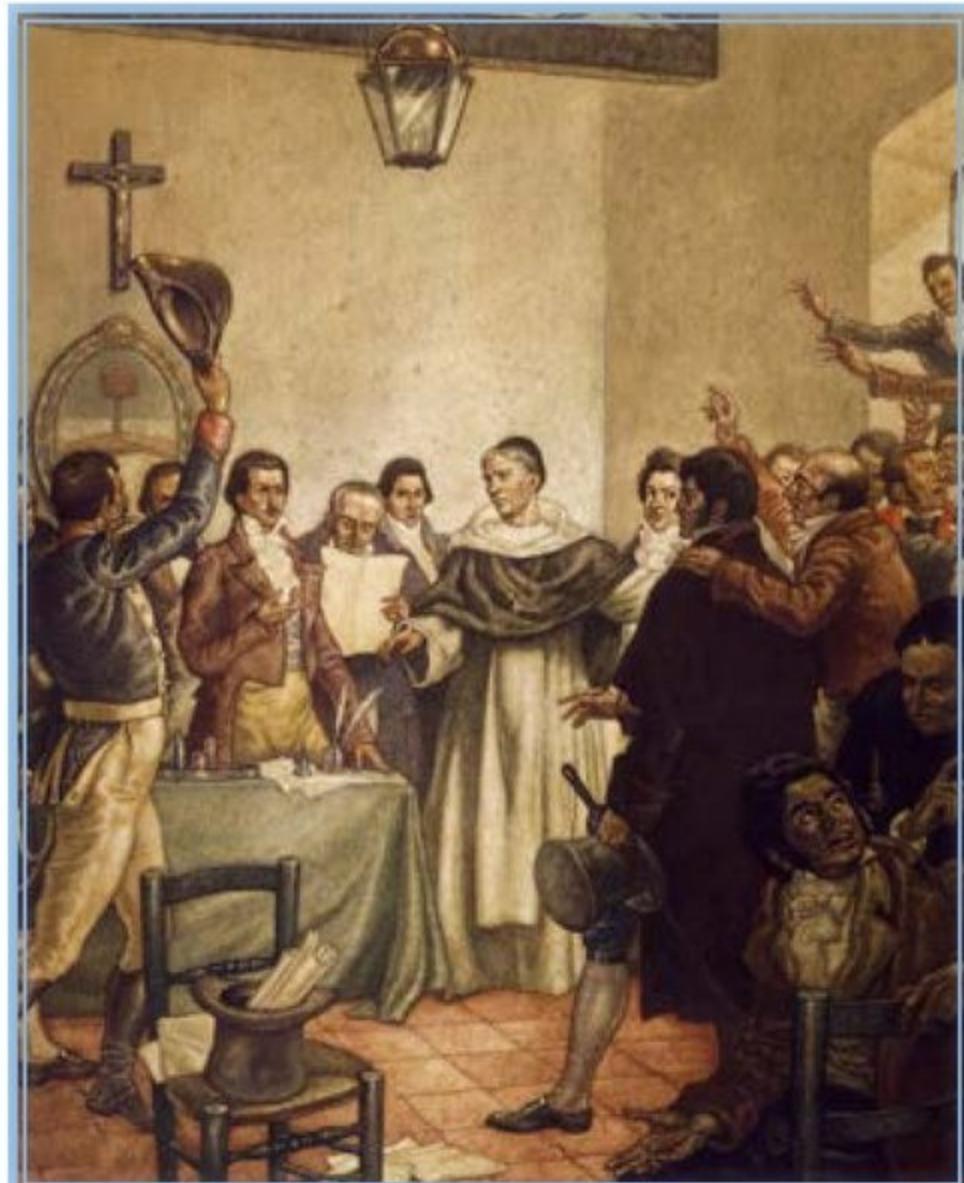
History

Argentina has had a long and troubled history. Native peoples have lived here for thousands of years, but many died from disease and warfare following the Spanish invasion in the 1500s.

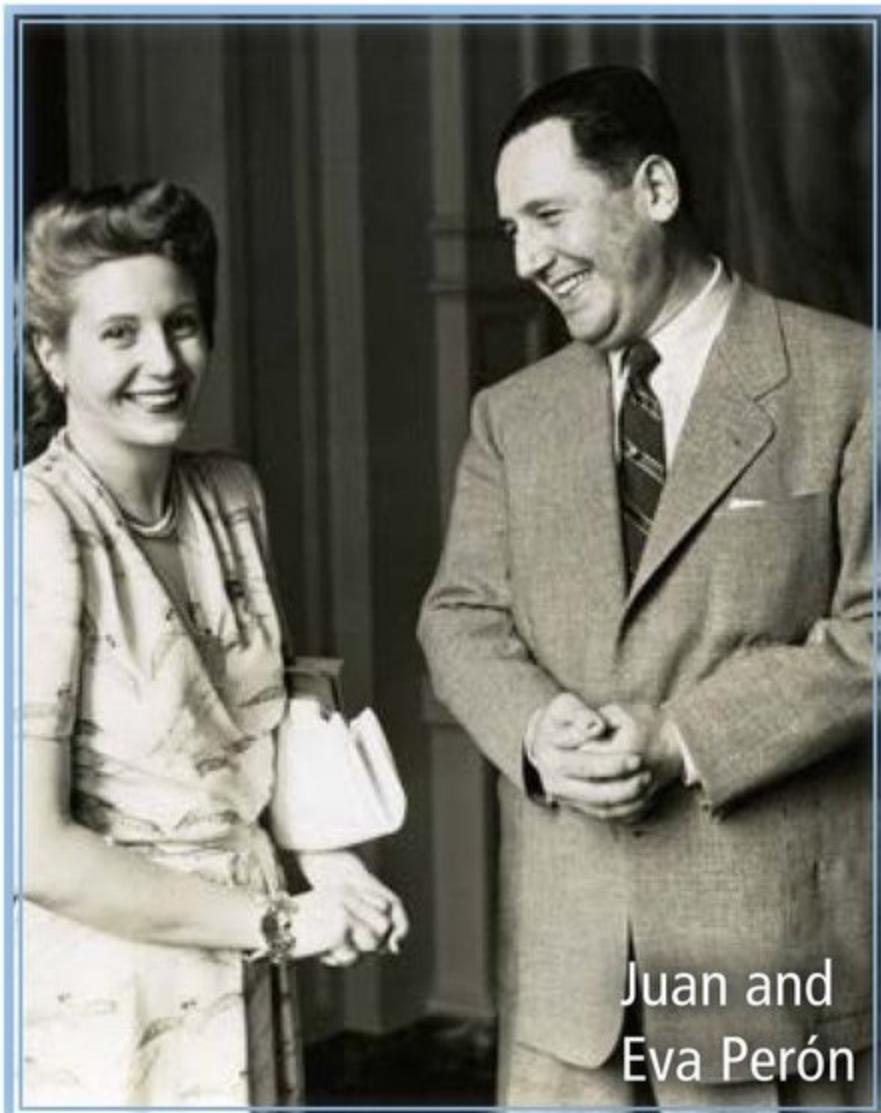
After Argentina declared its independence from Spain in 1816, Spanish rule was finally banished in the country. The Argentine Republic was founded in 1853, and Buenos Aires became its official capital in 1880.

Some people call the years from 1880 to 1914 the “Golden Age” of Argentina. Railroads expanded, sheep farming and cattle ranching became very important, and roads, buildings,

and parks were built. However, with the Great Depression in 1929, Argentina’s economy struggled and military **dictators** rose to power. Dictatorships ruled from 1929 until 1943, when another military leader, Juan Perón, helped overthrow the government.



A painting shows the congress that declared Argentina free from Spain in 1816.



Juan and
Eva Perón

In 1946, Juan Perón was elected president. Perón's popularity increased as he introduced **reforms** such as health services and retirement money for the majority of Argentines. Although he and his wife, Eva, introduced these good things to the working

classes, Perón also ignored human rights and acted like a dictator. His popularity weakened during his second term as president, and he fled Argentina for Spain in 1955.

However, Perón returned to Argentina in 1973. He ran for president once again and won a **decisive** victory. He died the following year. While the Peróns have critics, today many Argentines remember them as good leaders who helped the working classes and modernized Argentina.

During the decades following Perón's rule, Argentina experienced more military takeovers and economic **turmoil**. However, since 1983, democracy has taken hold, the economy has grown, and millions of new jobs have been created. Even with its rocky past, Argentina seems to have a promising future.

Celebrations

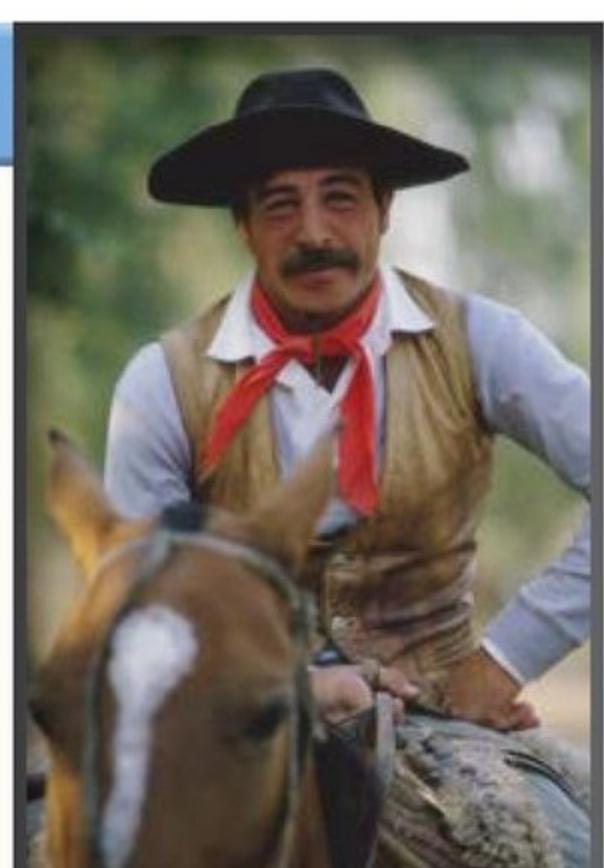
Modern Argentina comes alive with its yearly festivals. Carnival, which is often celebrated in February or March, gives people a chance to dress up as clowns, animals, and cartoon characters. During Carnival, Argentines build huge, colorful floats that parade down the street, with musicians, dancers, and onlookers enjoying the event. People also enjoy wheat, tango, and **gaucho** festivals.

The Gaucho Festival of San Antonio de Areco is a popular event that takes place every November. Gauchos show their horseback-riding skills during a ten-day celebration that includes bronco riding, parades, and dancing.

Another important celebration in Argentina is the national day of independence on July 9. Families and friends spend time together to honor the events of 1816. They celebrate with traditional food and parades.

Gauchos: South American Cowboys

Long ago, gauchos roamed the Pampas herding cattle. Today, gauchos symbolize the spirit of the Argentine people. Gauchos are proud of their horses. It has been said that "a gaucho without a horse is a man without feet."



Food

As in other areas of Argentine culture, Spanish, French, and Italian immigrants to Argentina have brought their own tastes to what citizens eat. Today, foods from all these cultures are popular in Argentina.

Since meat is widely plentiful, it is not unusual for people to eat beef twice a day. Steak and other cuts of meat are always available and are often grilled on an open pit or barbecue. Served nearly everywhere, empanadas are tasty pastries that can be filled with meat, vegetables, cheese, or fruit. Italian foods such as ravioli, pasta, and pizza are also popular.

Besides food, another product consumed by Argentines is a tea called *yerba maté*. This drink is made from the dried leaves of the *yerba maté* plant. Argentines say it gives them energy and helps their minds stay alert.

Argentine Tango

The complicated movements of a dance called the *tango* tell the story of everything from love to political unrest. Every year in August, people come to Argentina from all over the world to take part in a tango festival.



Fountains decorate the area in front of the national government buildings of Argentina in Buenos Aires.



Conclusion

Solidly shaped by its European roots, Argentina has much to offer, including its beautiful land as well as its population, which has expanded to include people from China, South Korea, and other Asian nations.

Argentines are committed to democracy and feel that their country will continue to prosper. A forward-thinking country, Argentina sets strict standards to protect the environment, encourages women to take part in government, and believes in equal rights for all people. Although political unrest has been a big part of the country's past, its citizens—along with the rest of the world—hold great hope for its future.



Population: 43,646,358

Land: 2,736,690 sq km (1,056,642 sq. mi.)

Capital City: Buenos Aires

Primary Language: Spanish

Primary Religion: Roman Catholic

Primary Exports: beef, wine, soybean meal, cars, corn

Name of Currency: Argentine peso



Source: Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (2016)

Glossary

decisive (<i>adj.</i>)	able to make a quick and definite choice; ending in a clear or obvious way (p. 11)
dictators (<i>n.</i>)	leaders who rule with total power, usually by force (p. 10)
diverse (<i>adj.</i>)	different or distinct from one another; made up of different or distinct people or things (p. 5)
ecotourism (<i>n.</i>)	a type of travel that involves visiting natural places to observe wildlife and explore the environment without causing any damage (p. 8)
gaucho (<i>n.</i>)	a cowboy of the South American grassy plains (p. 12)
habitats (<i>n.</i>)	the natural environments of plants or animals (p. 9)
middle classes (<i>n.</i>)	groups of people who are considered neither rich nor poor, but who have an average income (p. 5)
multicultural (<i>adj.</i>)	including or relating to a variety of different groups of people, each having their own ideas and customs (p. 5)
provinces (<i>n.</i>)	the largest areas that some countries are divided into (p. 4)
reforms (<i>n.</i>)	acts or processes of changing things to improve them (p. 11)
turmoil (<i>n.</i>)	a state or condition of disarray, confusion, or agitation (p. 11)
volcanic (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a place in Earth's crust where gases, ash, and lava spew out (p. 9)

Argentina

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,332

Connections

Writing

Research to learn more about Argentina's former president Juan Perón. Write a biography of his life and analyze his impact on Argentina.

Social Studies

Create a commercial encouraging people to travel to Argentina. Advertise the aspects of the country that will appeal most to visitors. Present your commercial to the class.

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