

BUENOS AIRES' BRILLIANT BOOKSTORES

Finding BA's Best English-Language Book Selections



Letter from the Editor

Often referred to as '*ciudad de libros*,' or 'city of books,' Buenos Aires has a rich literary history and culture that inspires its inhabitants and visitors alike to seek a good read and explore shelves of beloved and unknown volumes.

Whether this inspiration rings true for you, or you are simply looking for a novel to help you endure the upcoming 17-hour *omnibus* ride to the Iguázu Falls, you may have realized that locating a quality English language book in Buenos Aires requires equal parts patience and effort. In a city that harbors countless *librerías*, it is hard to know where to begin.

To narrow down the hunt, **Argentina's Travel Guide** has compiled a select directory of the best bookstores in Buenos Aires in which to seek your next read (especially if you want a book in English!)

Brought to you by:



Argentina's Travel Guide

Your Online Guidebook to Argentina

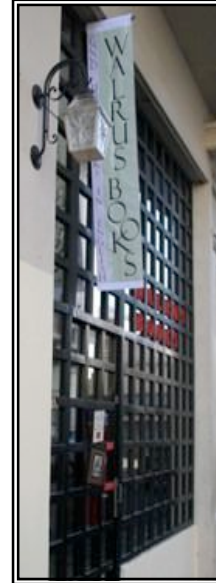
Introduction

For the time being, Buenos Aires is unscathed by ‘super-book-stores’. None of its chains like *Cuspid* or *Distal* come close to matching the magnitude of *Borders* or *Barnes & Noble*, and small boutique bookshops remain characteristic of this city.

Consequently, unless a shop specializes in English books, its selection of such will most likely span a very limited area, from about a shelf to a case, in proportion to the size of the shop. Nevertheless, the quaintness and charm typically possessed by these boutique bookshops more than make up for their diminutive selections of English books and make book-shopping in Buenos Aires an incredibly enjoyable pastime.

Walrus Books

☛ San Telmo



The charismatic **Walrus Books** in San Telmo is a good place to start as it offers one of the largest and most affordable selections of English books in the city. Stock is frequently updated as Walrus buys as well as sells books. You can part with your used books for one-third of their selling price or take advantage of Walrus’s two-for-one exchange on bestsellers.

As a consequence of purchasing books from tourists passing through the city, Walrus offers a good selection of geographically relevant travel guides (as well as an equally geographically relevant section of books related to Argentina and Latin America). You also are likely to find typical travelers fare here, such as multiple copies of Kerouac’s *On the Road* and epic reads like *War and Peace*. With its colorfully painted ceilings from which dangle plastic apples as décor, Walrus Books is pleasingly reminiscent of the fictional ‘Shop Around the Corner’ from the film *You’ve Got Mail*.

Estados Unidos 617
San Telmo
☎ +54 11 4300-7135

KEL Ediciones

☛ Recoleta

The other bookshop that sells “English books for everyone,” as its sign reads, is **KEL Ediciones** in Barrio Norte. I had a peek through the window, and it seems great: large selection, pleasant atmosphere—all the makings of a good bookshop.

Unfortunately, however, at the time of this writing, the shop was closed for vacation during the month of January. This is not unusual for Buenos Aires, where most *porteños* decamp to nearby beaches or the countryside for the duration of this month.

However, the look of the place gave the feeling that it will live up to expectations once it reopens.

Marcelo T. de Alvear 1369 – Recoleta

☎ (+54 11) 4814-3788

Conde 1990 – Belgrano

☎ (+54 11) 4555-4005

Av. La Plata 63 – Caballito

☎ (+54 11) 4901-5647/4903-5306

Other locations

📍 www.kelediciones.com

Librería Rodriguez

☛ Downtown

If you are searching for a specific classic title, head over to **Librería Rodriguez** in *el Microcentro*. This shop specializes in English teaching or learning material and would probably best serve a teacher or student at the local British or American schools.

Accordingly, the literature section here reflects the titles you would stereotypically find on the reading list of a high school ‘English Lit’ course—rather canonical on the whole with a bit of Toni Morrison mixed in. As a consequence of its academic nature, Rodriguez offers arguably the most complete and well-stocked selection of classic texts in the city, making it equally attractive to those who are not reading for a school assignment.

Additionally, if you are looking for children’s books, this shop offers a wide selection of classics, such as L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*, to more modern favorites by Judy Blume and Roald Dahl.



Sarmiento 835 – Downtown

☎ (+54 11) 5500-0250 / 5500-0251 / 5500-0252

📍 www.libreriarodriguez.com.ar

Prometeo Libros

☛ Palermo

Specialty shops aside, there are several bookstores that offer small, yet substantive selections of English books likely to satisfy even the most avid of readers. Most are located trendy *Palermo Viejo*.

Prometeo Libros offers a deftly chosen selection of books, mostly by Latin American authors such as Borges and Marquez. Part of the cultural *vanguardia* of Palermo, the shop supports local writers and poets by hosting a plethora of events and promotions.



For instance, upon the release of a local author's adaptation of Étienne de la Boétie's pre-Marxist, 16th century manifesto on the 'voluntary servitude' of the laborer, Prometeo sponsored a public reading, which was blared out onto Honduras street and nearby Plaza Serrano. Not only does it recall New York City's West Village in its liberal, artsy nature, but also the décor also would not be out of place in a shop on Thompson or Perry Streets.

Honduras 4912 – Palermo

☎ +54 11 4833-1771 🌐 www.prometeolibros.com

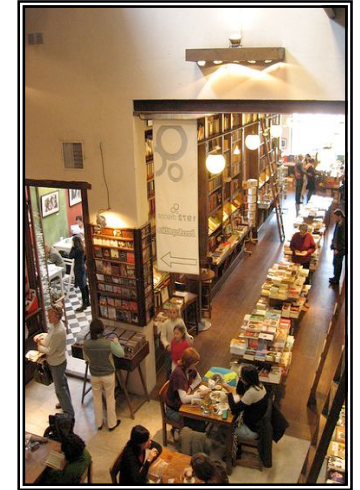
La Boutique Del Libro

☛ Palermo

In the typical *Palermo Soho*-style, the vibe, of **La Boutique del Libro** on Thames is like what you may find in a lofty bookshop in Manhattan's SoHo.

The shop offers one of the more sizable assortments of English books, with a solid collection of classic and modern fare.

In the large café located in the back of the shop, you can sit undisturbed for ages, sipping *café con leche* and snacking on delicious *medialunas* (croissants). If you enjoy working in cafés, this is an ideal place to set up shop.



Thames 1762 – Palermo

☎ (+54 11) 4833 6637

Other locations

🌐 www.boutiquedelibro.com.ar

La Internacional Argentina

☛ Palermo

Over at **La Internacional Argentina**, the trendy secondhand bookshop on Honduras, the selection of English books is miniscule in size. However, the adage celebrating quality over quantity certainly holds true in this bookshop.

Out of all of the shops visited, La Internacional Argentina had the collection of books that got this Pocket Guide's author the most excited. I found myself wanting to read such a high proportion of the available texts that I ended up going home with three books. Rushdie's *A Jaguar Smile* and Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* are only two of the titles for which I felt compelled to reach.

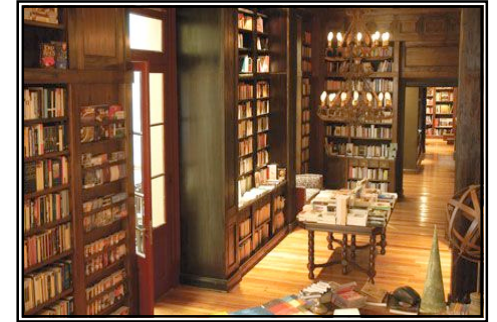
The handpicked selection of books at the shop is reflective of the intimate relationship that La Internacional Argentina seems to have with all of the titles it stocks. The shop has an in-house publisher, Mansalva, which focuses mainly on poetry and champions local writers. Serving as a gathering place for Latin American writers to meet and converse, La Internacional Argentina has a definitively creative *onda* (vibe) that pushes and inspires its visitors towards creative pursuit.

Honduras 5270 – Palermo
☎ +54 11 4833-4881

Eterna Cadencia Libros

☛ Palermo

Across Juan B. Justo in *Palermo Hollywood*, you will find Eterna Cadencia Libros, another great bookshop-cafe combo. Within its expansive display of English books, you will find many



translated Latin American works including those of Neruda and Saér. If you tend to seek environment-appropriate texts while traveling, this shop is definitely worth a visit.

Don't expect a Latin American feel to the store, however. “Bookshops like this don’t exist in Buenos Aires,” claimed a salesman with pride. Indeed the décor feels inconsistent with both Argentina and with itself. The reading room in the back evokes Oxford University’s Bodleian Library, while the rustic chandeliers that hang from the ceiling seem better suited to a ski chalet in Aspen. The shop and its courtyard restaurant are nonetheless attractive, albeit somewhat pricey.

Honduras 5574 – Palermo
☎ +54 11 4774-4100 🌐 www.eternacadencia.com

Clasica Y Moderna

☛ Recoleta

Near the heart of Buenos Aires lies a historic bookstore called **Clasica Y Moderna**. Located at the back of a restaurant that has the atmosphere of a Parisian Bistro, Clasica Y Moderna offers an excellent selection of modern fiction titles by authors like Bill Bryson, Don DeLillo, and Ian McEwan.



But this bookstore does not end on Callao, it continues in El Corte Inglés of Buenos Aires. This continuation has a more modern feel, along with a bar. There, they cater largely to tourists, with a selection of coffee table books, maps, art, and most notably a big section of guidebooks in English and other languages.

Callao 892 – Recoleta
☎ (+54 11) 4812-8707 / 4811-3670
🌐 www.clasicaymoderna.com

El Corte Inglés Viajes
Carlos Pellegrini 971 – Downtown
☎ (+54 11) 4130-0100

Niche Market Bookstores

☛ Palermo & Downtown

There are a few shops worth mentioning in case you are searching for books in a niche market. For books on art and design, the bookshop enclave of the **MALBA** gift shop is an absolute treat. (MALBA is short for the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires). There is a sizeable selection of books on Latin American art and design, and in the corner you will find fellow art-lovers sitting around a coffee table covered with art and design books, flipping through the images.

If it is travel guides that you are after, **Librería Turística** in Recoleta is the place to go. This shop offers a wide range of guides to Argentina and its various regions, as well as guides to most other countries in the world. Finally, if you should happen to be searching for antiquarian books or first editions, Avenida de Mayo plays host to a plethora of shops specializing in this field.

MALBA – Av. Figueroa Alcorta 3415 – Palermo
☎ (+54 11) 4808-6550
🌐 www.malba.org.ar/web/latienda.php

Librería Turística – Paraguay 2457 – Downtown
☎ (+54 11) 4962-5547 / 4963-2866
🌐 www.libreriaturistica.com.ar

El Ateneo Grand Splendid

☛ Downtown



The shops listed above are top recommendations for finding good English books in Buenos Aires. You are also likely to find something to read in one of the many books stores that line Corrientes (nicknamed the "*intellectual avenue*" due to the high concentration of bookstores between the Obelisk and Callao), as well as Avenida Florida and Santa Fe. Many of these shops have selections of English books will do in a pinch.

The famous **El Ateneo Grand Splendid**, ranked the second most important bookshop in the world by the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, had a surprising small and bland selection of English books for a shop that enjoys such a high rate of tourist visitors. Its sister branches on Avenida Florida, had significantly larger collections, specifically that at Florida 340.

While El Ateneo, as is true for chain stores like Cuspide and Distal, is great for finding popular romance/thriller novels with a spattering of Shakespeare thrown in for good measure, it lacks a large selection of classics and quality modern fiction titles. The one caveat is if you happen to be a fan of Milan Kundera, as, randomly enough, El Ateneo stocks nearly all of his works.



Ateneo Gran Splendid
Av. Santa Fe 1860 – Downtown
☎ (+54 11) 4813-6052
🌐 www.elateneo.com

Other locations
Florida 340 – Downtown
☎ +54 11 4325-6801

Florida 629 – Downtown
☎ +54 11 4312-4230

Cabildo 2093 – Belgrano
☎ +54 11 5786-9840

Librería El Ventanal

☛ Downtown

This brings me to the perfect note on which to end this litany of bookshops—my favorite one. **Librería El Ventanal** is the most atmospheric bookshop I have come across in Buenos Aires to date. Upon entering the shop, situated in the historic *Palacio Vera* building, I felt as if I was transported back to turn-of-the century Buenos Aires.

Admittedly, the majority of the English books in this shop are obscure titles from the same era. However, the real reason to visit this shop is its old-world ambiance. The sweet, elderly shopkeeper assists you with the books displayed in mid-19th century furnishings while Vivaldi plays in the background.

All of these endearing details aside, my favorite aspect of the shop is the antique oak climbing ladder, which is used to get books down from the top of the book cases that reach up to the high, ornate ceiling. This majestic bookshop is an absolute gem.

Av. De Mayo 769 – Downtown
☎ +54 11 4345-8800
🌐 www.libreriaelventanal.com.ar

Bonus

Cuspide Libros (multiple locations)
Village Cines Recoleta
Recoleta
☎ +54 11 4807-5715 🌐 www.cuspide.com

Distal Libros (multiple locations)
Florida 426
Downtown
☎ +54 11 5218-4372 🌐 www.distalnet.com

About the Author



Born and raised in the melting pot that is New York City, Natalie Gourvitch grew up fascinated by the diversity of cultures to which she was exposed. Lucky enough to have travelled widely throughout her life, Natalie continues to seek out new adventures and gain distinct perspectives. She graduated from Oxford University in 2007 with a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics and has since moved to Buenos Aires where she has been thoroughly enjoying taking in and writing about the porteño culture. An avid reader and lover of bookshops everywhere, Natalie had great fun researching Buenos Aires' many librerías for this guide.