Tourist Guide

# The Reserve

Experience nature in the city

Hummingbird (Chlorostilbon lucidus)





Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve

# Welcome to the reserve

#### So close

The reserve is located just metres from the neighbourhood of Puerto Madero, only a few blocks from the centre of Buenos Aires. Few cities boast a nature reserve of this kind so close to their urban centre. Page 7

#### The city's greatest biodiversity

More than 2,000 species of animals, plants, fungi and other organisms live in the reserve. Typical species include turtles, tegu lizards, and coypus, and you can also explore forests of willows and alder trees. **Page 18 to 22** 





#### The best natural viewpoint of the river

Some of Buenos Aires' best views of the Río de la Plata can be enjoyed from the observation points in the reserve. Contemplate the landscape from the shade of cockspur coral trees, Argentina's national flower, locally known as the ceibo. Páge 13 In this guide, you'll find everything you need to know to explore the Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve. From tips for planning your visit to suggested circuits and information on different species and activities, it provides everything you need to enjoy nature in this incredibly unique part of the city.

## One of Latin America's most important urban nature reserves

Covering 350 hectares, the reserve comprises woods, wetlands, lagoons and marshes. This unique space was declared a Ramsar site in the year 2005 owing to its international importance as a wetland. **Pages 10 and 11** 





#### A paradise for birds in the city

The reserve is internationally recognised as an excellent location for birdwatching, providing the chance to spot many native species. In just two hours, it's possible to spot more than 50 different species.

Pages 20 and 21

#### Walking in nature

Immerse yourself in nature by exploring the reserve's six paths and four circuits designed for different experiences. There are more than 10km of paths to explore, connecting woods, lagoons, wetlands and river views. Pages 18 to 22

#### Regeneration

The reserve not only focuses on the task of species conservation, it also provides for both the natural and assisted regeneration of the area. Pages 20 and 21



# An oasis in the city

Thanks to its size, biodiversity, proximity and preservation efforts, the ecological reserve has become one of Buenos Aires' biggest natural attractions.

# Connect with nature just metres from the city's historic quarter.

As well as being known as one of the region's biggest urban and cultural destinations. Buenos Aires also boasts impressive protected natural areas. Its size, biodiversity and proximity to the city make the Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve a unique attraction and an unmissable opportunity to discover native flora and fauna in the heart of the city. Its 350 hectares of forest, wetlands, lagoons and marshes provide habitat for more than 2,000 species of plants, mammals, birds, reptiles and other organisms. Visitors from all over the world come to spot hundreds of birds. tegu lizards, turtles, cavies and coypus, among other inhabitants of the area.

There are several paths and circuits to explore for an eco-friendly visit into different natural environments, from the shores of the lagoons and the forests of willows and alder trees to observation points of the Río de la Plata surrounded by cockspur coral trees where you can see some of the best views of the river from the city. Enjoy a unique experience surrounded by a regenerated natural environment metres from Puerto Madero. One of the region's most ecologically important protected urban green spaces awaits.

#### **Q** Where is the reserve?

The reserve has two entrances:

South entrance (Acceso Sur) Av. Tristán Achával Rodríguez, 1550

North entrance (Acceso Norte): Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson and Av. Giralt

#### Tip

Enter the reserve at the south entrance. The city sightseeing bus stops just metres from this entrance, and the interpretation centre is located here so you can learn more before you start to explore.

We recommend visiting the

reserve on weekdays when

there are fewer people so

#### () Days and times

The Ecological Reserve is open from Tuesday to Sunday, and public holidays. It closes when it rains (and the following day after rain if the paths remain affected by water).

Entry is free. Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult.

**Opening times (April to October):** 8.00am to 6.00pm

**Opening times (November to March):** 8.00am to 7.00pm you can see more animals and "hear" the tranquility of nature.

**Note:** Gates close 15 minutes before closing time. Public access can be affected by meteorological events or emergencies.

#### Opposite The Nereids fountain

This major work of sculpture serves as a landmark marking the south entrance to the reserve. The work of Lola Mora, the first woman sculptor in Argentina to make monumental pieces, it was inaugurated in 1903 and caused controversy at the time because some considered it to be provocative. There are several sites of interest that can be visited close to the reserve, such as the former Cervecería Munich (now the Humour Museum), Micaela Bastidas Park, the bridge Puente de la Mujer and the Fortabat Art Collection.



# Tips for your visit

The reserve's main aim is to preserve the natural environment and promote its regeneration. Make your own commitment during your visit in order to minimise your impact so that other people can also enjoy this unique protected area in the future.

Some tips for a respectful and responsible experience:

· Watch without frightening.

Paying close attention, you can see animals in the reserve. They are not used to seeing you and may be affected if you scare, injure or touch them, or approach them or their eggs, larvae or young too closely. Do not feed any animals because this can change their behaviour and may make them ill.

Discover without damaging.

The regeneration of the reserve has been taking place over years. If you take flowers or leaves as souvenirs or move the vegetation, this could damage the natural environment and affect processes of growth and reproduction. The same applies if you introduce new plants or animals to the reserve. These could trouble, displace or even extinguish native species.

#### If you have an emergency, contact the reserve's staff and guides. If this is not possible, call 911 and someone from the reserve will be informed.

Enquiries: visitasquiadas\_recs@buenosaires.gob.ar Facebook: Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur Oficial Telephone: +54 (11) 4315-1320/4129 Extension: 114/115

#### Learn to listen in silence. Nature manifests itself at every moment. Do not raise your voice, play music or use speakers. Listen to discover and enjoy all of nature's own expressions.

- Ask. discover and learn. Visit the Interpretation Centre and other attention points in the reserve for information and help in interpreting the natural environment.
- · Share your emotions. Record everything you see and learn and share it using the hashtag #LaReservaBA to invite others to discover their own experiences.

#### 🌣 The climate

In Buenos Aires, winters are cold and windy but temperatures rarely fall below 8°C (46°F). Summers are hot and humid. If you visit the reserve in summer, we recommend wearing light, fresh clothing, a brimmed hat or cap, and carrying water for hydration. Don't forget to apply insect repellent before entering!

#### Enjoy more!

We recommend that all visitors:

- Follow instructions given by the reserve's staff.
- · Wear comfortable shoes and clothing.
- Bring water or other drinks to keep hvdrated.
- Use sunglasses, hat and sunblock.
- Bring insect repellent and apply it before entering the reserve.

- Bring binoculars for better appreciation of flora and fauna.
- Take the guided itineraries accompanied by a guide who can help interpret and appreciate all the area's natural and cultural value.
- Visit the Interpretation Centre and other points of attention where staff can offer information and recommend different self-guided itineraries to enjoy.

#### Prohibitions in the reserve



Smoking: it pollutes the air, while cigarette butts can cause fires and contaminate the soil because they take many years to biodegrade.



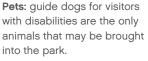
Lighting fires: lighting fires is prohibited in all of the reserve because fire can spread rapidly and cause terrible damage.



Littering: remains of food and other items not only pollute but could also be eaten by animals, damaging their health.



Straying off paths: to avoid accidents, getting lost or damaging the environment, please stick to signposted paths.



drinking.

Bathing: entering the river is forbidden. The water has strong currents and is not safe for bathing nor for



Tourist Guide | Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve

# A blossoming history

In contrast to many protected natural areas which already existed and were later granted protection, this reserve was born on land that was reclaimed from the river by human activity and then conquered by nature. From the splendour of the city's municipal bathing area at the start of the 20th century, the area became the canvas for several urbanisation projects that were never completed. In the meantime, natural biodiversity took over, vegetation expanded, and the area became home to hundreds of species of birds, mammals, reptiles and insects. Since being declared a Natural Park and Ecological Reserve on June 5 1986, the area has received thousands of visitors from all over the world, who come to marvel at the natural force of regeneration just metres from the city.

Inauguration of the Municipal Bathing Area.

1918

1978

#### A promenade in front of the river

This was the favourite spot for thousands of Porteños who would come to bathe in the river. Broad boulevards and luxurious cafes made the area a symbol of Argentina's prosperity. Years later, from around 1960, the area was forgotten because of the pollution of the water.

#### New directions

In the 1970s there was a plan to build an administrative centre for the city on this site. Rubble from the construction of city highways was dropped here, gaining land from the river. The project was abandoned in 1984.

#### The power of nature

The area's natural biodiversity took over and the landscape began to regenerate. Environmental organisations began to highlight the area's importance by carrying out educational activities. The reserve will be able to continue to exist in the future if we commit not only to preserving nature, but also to facilitating its regeneration. Get involved!

**Official declaration** 

1986

1994

#### 4 2005

**Declared of national Interest** 

#### The reserve is born

Hundreds of people, alongside the foundations Vida Silvestre Argentina, Aves Argentinas and Friends of the Earth, proposed the creation of a nature reserve to the municipal authorities. The area was declared a reserve on June 5 - World Environment Day.

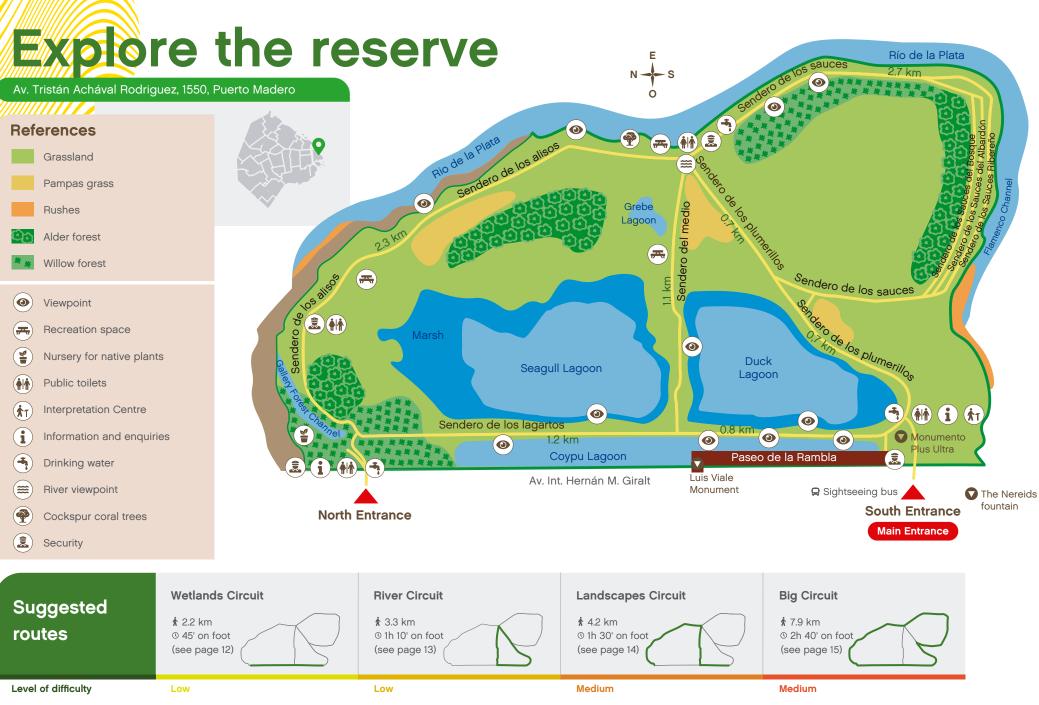
#### Disputes

1992

The land occupied by the reserve was long sought for property development. In the 1990s, there were debates that coincided with several fires. It was never proven, but it was suspected that the fires were intentional and connected to economic interests.

#### Recognition

Today, the reserve's value cannot be disputed. It has been recognised as a Ramsar site by the convention dedicated to the preservation of the world's wetlands. BirdLife International and Aves Argentinas have declared it an Important Bird Area (IBA).



# **Explore the reserve**

The reserve has six trails that are open to be used by all and which together offer more than 10 kilometres to explore. Each path is characterised by its environment, attractions and wildlife. There are four recommended routes devised to offer different experiences to visitors.

#### **Wetlands Circuit**



Level of difficulty

#### low When?

At different times of the year it's possible to spot varying species of birds. This circuit is recommended in the early morning and at dusk.

On entering the reserve, head north along the Sendero de los Lagartos (Lizard Trail). Despite being the path that runs closest to the city and the riverside promenade, it's an excellent place for spotting birds, mammals and reptiles because it's surrounded by the Coypu, Seagull and Duck Lagoons. Among its attractions, highlights include an area representative of the Espinal eco-region which has been generated by the team at the reserve's nursery, as well as other typical specimens such as spiny hackberry and Schinus molle. You can also see examples of anacahuita, wild fig, Argentine senna, river alder and Humboldt's willow, all native to the Parana Delta and islands eco-region. In summer, snakes and tegu lizards lay in the sun to increase their body temperature while the coypus and aquatic birds build their nests in the middle of the lagoons to protect themselves from predators.

The circuit also offers the only path with a view of the reserve's three most important wetlands. Its considerable biodiversity led to the Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve's designation as a Ramsar site and an Important Bird Area (IBA).

Don't forget to visit the Interpretation Centre to learn more about turtles.

#### **River Circuit**



#### When?

In each season, nature can be seen, heard and felt in different ways. When the water level in the lagoons is high, aquatic birds such as ducks, swans and coots, and divers such as grebes and cormorants abound. When the level of

We start this circuit on the Sendero de los Lagartos again, but this time after 800 metres we change direction and enter the Sendero del Medio (Central Trail). This is the route that takes us to the river most quickly and directly. As well as being the widest river in the world, the Río de la Plata carries hundreds of years of history in its waters. Argentina's indigenous people fished on its shores and the river witnessed the port activity that boosted the city's growth. We recommend stopping at the reserve's rest area under the shade of the cockspur coral trees to enjoy impressive views of the Río de la Plata.

We can make the walk back by taking the Sendero de los Plumerillos (Pampas Grass Trail). Pampas grass is the most abundant vegetation in the reserve and is characterised by its plumes that begin to flower in September.

Early in the morning at the intersection of Sendero de los Lagartos (Lizard Trail) and Sendero del Medio (Central Trail) is the perfect time to spot migratory birds from one of the viewpoints.

#### Four seasons, four reserves

The landscapes, colours and aromas of the reserve vary according to the time of year in which you visit.

**In summer:** you can see plants bearing their fruit and lots of foliage, young animals and species that have migrated to these latitudes.

**In autumn:** the trees lose their leaves and the animals are more exposed among the branches. Some species will already have left for warmer climes.

**In winter:** views are wider because there is less foliage. Winter visitors can be spotted. **In spring:** colourful flowers can be seen as well as animals searching for a mate and the arrival of species that migrate to feed or reproduce. Many different songs can be heard.

#### Landscapes Circuit



 ★ 4.2 km
③ 1h 30' on foot (see page 14)

#### When?

The landscapes on this path vary depending on the season. The viewpoints all offer expansive views of the river and at times when the water is high allow visitors to witness the arrival of water hyacinths.

#### **Big Circuit**

#### Level of difficulty medium



#### When?

This circuit is recommended for weekdays when there are fewer visitors and you can see more animals. In summer the foliage is so deep that some paths form galleries through which sunlight barely passes.

The first part of this route is similar to the River Circuit, but longer. We start walking along the Sendero de los Lagartos and then the Sendero de las Lagunas (Lagoon Trail), but when we arrive at the Río de la Plata viewpoint, we head north along the Sendero de los Alisos (Alder Trail).

This path has the unique attraction of a view towards the Viamonte Channel and the Río de la Plata. The viewpoints all offer expansive views of the river and allow us to see water hyacinths carpet the water when its level is high. The water hyacinths often carry "passengers" such as crickets, locusts, water bugs, caterpillars, spiders and often also snakes. Before finishing the circuit, we can take a guided tour of the nursery close to the reserve's North Entrance to learn more about the work undertaken on the regeneration of native plants and riverside environments (see page 16). Although it is no more difficult, this is the longest circuit in the reserve. Entering via the south entrance, we take the Sendero de Plumerillos (Pampas Grass Trail) to its intersection with Sendero de los Sauces (Willow Trail). This path divides into three sections which then come back together. Each offers quite different experiences: **Sendero de los Sauces Ribereño** (Riverside Willow Trail): being the closet path to the river, this trail offers views of the channel that separates the reserve from the former Boca Juniors Sports City. You can see reed beds, great egrets and Cocci herons, roseate spoonbills and flamingos. Sendero de los Sauces del Albardón (Albardón Sauces Trail): this offers a more immersive experience surrounded by forests of native trees, pampas grass and shrub. Sendero de los Sauces del Bosque (Willow Forest Trail): the furthest from the river of the three trails, and the highest, this offers more panoramic views of the river from a greater height.

At the river viewpoint you can rest at picnic tables in the shade of cockspur coral trees. The route continues along the Sendero de los Alisos (see Landscapes Circuit) and the Sendero de los Lagartos (see Wetlands Circuit).

On this route, you can discover all of the reserve's typical landscapes in one day: the four types of wetlands, the pampas grass pastures, the mixed forests and the mule fat scrubland.

#### **Exclusive trails**

There are also paths that can be taken only with authorised guides from the reserve. Visits require inscription in advance at visitasguiadas\_recs@buenosaires.gob.ar.

- Over 8 km, this route offers a real trek through nature, with sections in which you may forget that you're in a city.
- Sendero de Antonia: the reserve's shortest circuit (just 131 metres long) allows us to completely immerse ourselves in nature. The pampas grass and vachellia caven transmit sensations with their aromas, colours and sounds. The vegetation forms part of an "anti-noise" wall that isolates the reserve from the din of the big city. If you're quiet, then here you can hear the sound of the wind, birdsong and the footsteps of curious animals.
- Sendero Canal Viamonte: this trail crosses an area of gallery forest typical of the Delta and Parana Islands eco-region. It offers a view of the waters of the Viamonte Channel, where turtles, birds and coypus can be seen up close.



# **Discover more**

As well as the different circuits, viewpoints and recreation spaces, the reserve has spaces where you can learn more about this unique area.

## The reserve's nursery

The reserve has a nursery for native plants, which can be visited with guides. It grows around 8,000 examples of 100 species. The reserve's specialists work to reproduce the native flora of the area with the objective of preserving and regenerating the natural spaces. Notable highlights include spiny hackberry, vachellia caven, quebracho, sombra de toro, ombú, carob and duck orchid (Oncidium bifolium). As well as supplying the reserve itself, the nursery also distributes native plants to other green spaces in the city. Another mission of the nursery is to control foreign plants. Some non-native species appear spontaneously in the reserve because their seeds are carried by the wind or by birds. Non-native species commonly seen in the streets of Buenos Aires include plane trees and chinaberry trees.

#### Interpretation Centre

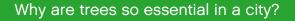
Another of the reserve's principal missions is the interpretation of its natural heritage. Here visitors can understand the ecosystem's essential processes, raising awareness and creating more commitment among all to take care of the environment. The interpretation Centre was recently redesigned and recreates the typical habitats of the area through replicas of the reserve's flora and fauna.

#### **Guided tours**

To explore and discover the reserve in more depth, you can opt to take a guided tour. There are also night tours held once a month at full moon. For more information on tours and educational actvities for schools contact visitasguiadas\_recs@buenosaires.gob.ar

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The reserve also houses a rescue centre for wild animals. Native wild animals found on the public highway with physical or behavioural difficulties are rehabilitated here by a team of specialists and vets. Common ailments include broken bones and poisoning as well as problems caused by living in captivity. It is important to remember that only domesticated animals should be kept as pets.



Trees offer numerous services to the ecosystem:

- They provide a habitat to thousands of species that feed, sleep, shelter and nest in them.
- They produce oxygen (o<sub>2</sub>) and reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the air. Through photosynthesis, green spaces release 10 to 20 tn of o<sub>2</sub> per hectare/year.
- They regulate temperatures, improving climatic conditions in cities.
- The help prevent erosion and loss by protecting the ground from rain and wind.
- They dampen sound with their foliage, reducing noise pollution.
- They improve air quality because they filter pollutants. A surface covered in grass can retain between 3 and 6 times more atmospheric dust than pavement, and 10 times more than a glass surface.

#### Learn in the reserve

The reserve receives hundreds of students and teachers from schools all over Argentina who come to learn about the typical flora and fauna. School groups work on the environmental challenges that we face as a society. The responsible use of natural resources and waste treatment are also themes that form part of an agenda that seeks to raise environmental awareness.



A white-eared opossum (Didelphis albiventris) is released after its recuperation.



Tourist Guide | Costanera Sur Ecological Reserve

# The reserve's inhabitants

Swans, herons, tegu lizards, coypus, southern mountain cavies, and yacará snakes. Cockspur coral trees, alders and pampas grass inhabit this privileged space on the shore of the Río de la Plata. Discover the reserve's great biodiversity.

### Buenos Aires' green treasure

There are more than 600 species of plants in the reserve, almost half of which are typical of the Paraná Delta and Río de la Plata riverside. The pampas grass is perhaps the most characteristic with its plumes that move in the wind. There are also forests of river alders and creole willows. The shallow lagoons favour the development of vegetation such as microscopic algae and other typical waterside plants like sagittaria and floating plants such as Amazon sword plant and duckweeds, which can easily be seen. If you explore the reserve in summer, be sure to stop at one of the lagoons to see the bulrushes, which produce huge quantities of small reddish brown flowers. Their leaves are often used to weave chairs and baskets.

# 600

Hierba de San Simón (Vernonia scorpioides)

species of <u>plants</u>

#### The national flower

In the reserve, you can find various examples of the cockspur coral tree (*Erythrina crista-galli*), which is known here as the ceibo and is Argentina's national flower. This eye-catching medium-sized tree has black fruit and striking red flowers which are reminiscent of a cockerel's crest. It grows in humid places, often at the edge of lagoons and marshes. The ceibo appears in the legend of Anahí, a young indigenous girl who, defending her people, is taken prisoner by the conquistadores. Although she manages to escape, she is recaptured and condemned to die by being tied to a tree and consumed by fire. In the morning to everyone's surprise, in her ashes had sprouted a beautiful tree with flowers as red as the blood of the girl who had fought to protect her land. The ceibo then became a symbol of strength and bravery.

#### A paradise for birds

The reserve is a privileged location for bird lovers. Visitors from all over the world travel exclusively to the reserve for the chance to spot species such as the grassland yellow finch (*Sicalis luteola*), spectacled tyrant (*Hymenops perspicillatus*), masked gnatcatcher (*Polioptila dumicola*), European goldfinch (*Sicalis flaveola*), chalk-browed mockingbird (*Mimus saturninus*), green-barred woodpecker (*Colaptes melanochloros*), rufescent tiger heron (*Tigrisoma linetaum*), gilded sapphire (*Hylocharis chrysura*), red-crested cardinal (*Paroaria coronata*) and fork-tailed flycatcher (*Tyrannus* savana), to name but a few. In the lagoons, it's also possible to observe aquatic species such as the southern screamer (*Chauna torquata*), wattled jacana (*Jacana jacana*) and white-tufted grebe (*Rollandia rolland*), while the white-faced whistling duck (which features in the reserve's logo) and black-necked swan are also stars of the reserve's landscape.

#### Tips for birdwatching

Owing to the phenomenon of migration, the reserve, along with other areas on the Río de la Plata Eco-route (see pages 24 and 25), offers great opportunities to watch birds.

- **Planning:** learn about the habits of different species in order to know where, and at what time of year, you can find them.
- Binoculars: don't forget this essential tool.

Birdpoints: A watch point closet to the

- reserve's north entrance is one of the best places for birdwatching. Another key birdpoint is located on the Sendero de los Lagartos, near Seagull Lagoon.
- Start early: the best times to spot birds are at dawn and dusk.
- **Patience and silence:** don't lose patience if the birds don't show. The atmosphere should be as calm as possible.

Gold-billed saltator (Saltator aurantiirostris)

343

species of birds

You can also observe Harris's hawks, white-browed meadow larks, Cocoi herons, and the hornero, the national bird very popular because of its mud nests.

Cocoi heron (Ardea cocoi)

### Reptiles, mammals, insects and more

The reserve has dozens of other types of inhabitants as well as birds. Highlights include coypus (Myocastor coypus), southern mountain cavies (Cavia aperea) and various species of turtles. Black and white tegus (Tupinambis merianae), which many people confuse with iguanas, often appear sunning themselves on the trails around the reserve and at the edges of the lagoons. These lizards are active during the day and have a varied diet of insects, eggs, molluscs, fish, rodents, amphibians and fruits. As a defence mechanism, they often detach their tail, which then grows back.

The reserve also provides a hábitat for the sapito cavador toad (*Rhinellaf fernandezae*), yarará snake (*Bothrops alternatus*) and Hilaire's toadhead turtle (*Phrynops hilarii*). These turtles reproduce in the reserve and are often seen laying eggs at the edge of trails in summer. Another resident of the reserve that is not spotted so easily is the white-eared opossum. This is a marsupial so the female carries her young in a pouch like the kangaroos of Australia.

Tegu lizard (Tupinambis merianae)

23

species of

reptiles

850 species of arthropods species of amphibians

14

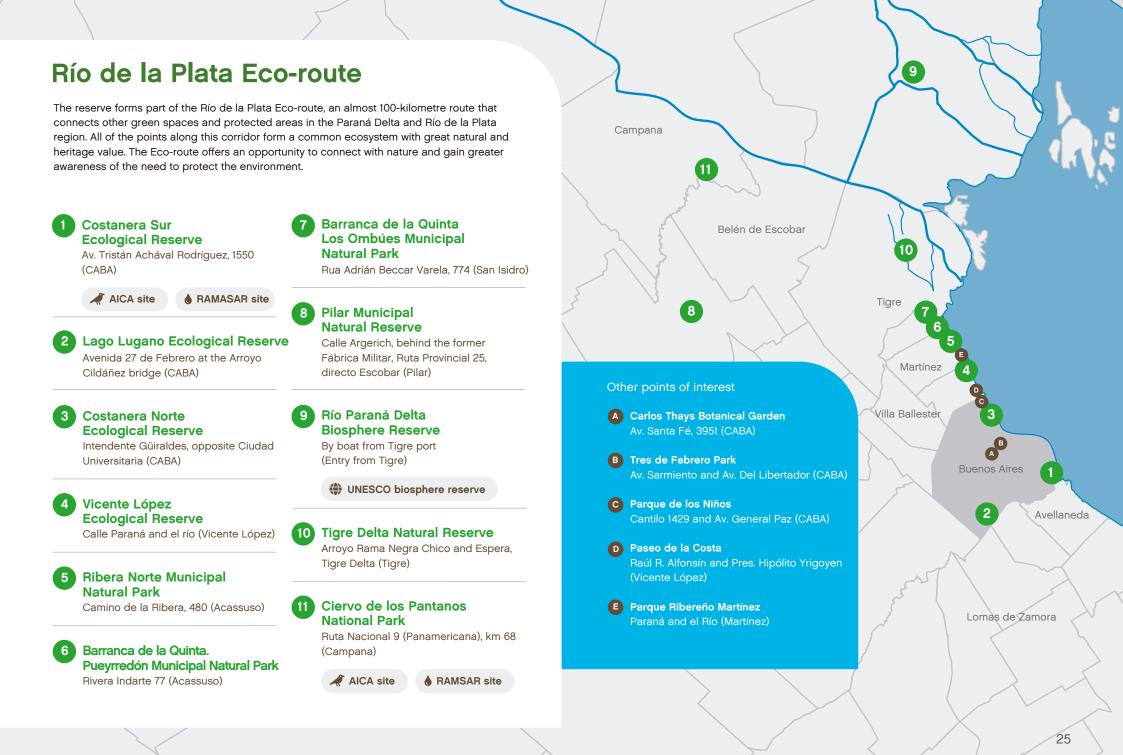
44

species of fungus

**19** species of

mammals

Southern mountain cavy (Cavia aperea)



### **Useful information on Buenos Aires**

#### Tourist Assistance Centers

Florida Pedestrian Area Florida and Marcel T. de Alvear

Historic Quarter Florida and Av. Roque Sáenz Peña

Puerto Madero Juana M. Gorriti 200, Dock 4

#### Retiro Retiro Coach Station, unit 83

Recoleta Av. Quintana 596

#### Palermo Lakes Av. Sarmiento and

Av. Figueroa Alcorta

#### Caminito Av. Pedro de Mendoza

1900

Jorge Newbery Airport Jorge Newbery Airport Airport, domestic arrivals

#### travel.buenosaires.gob.ar

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#### Travel Buenos Aires app

Download the Travel Buenos Aires app and discover more things to do in the city on your phone.

#### Argentina Natural app

Download the app Argentina Natural and explore Argentina's protected natural areas.

#### Green city

Buenos Aires recommends enjoying the city's green spaces, using sustainable transport, taking advantage of healthy food and responsible shopping.

**Tourist Assistance** Tourist police (+54 11) 5789-8913 / 4309-9700 ext. 236422

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**Dear visitor,** if you witness or fall victim to any sexual or commercial crime that violates the rights of children or adolescents, please report it through the toll-free number 102, which belongs to the city government's Council for Children and Adolescents. Law 2443.

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