

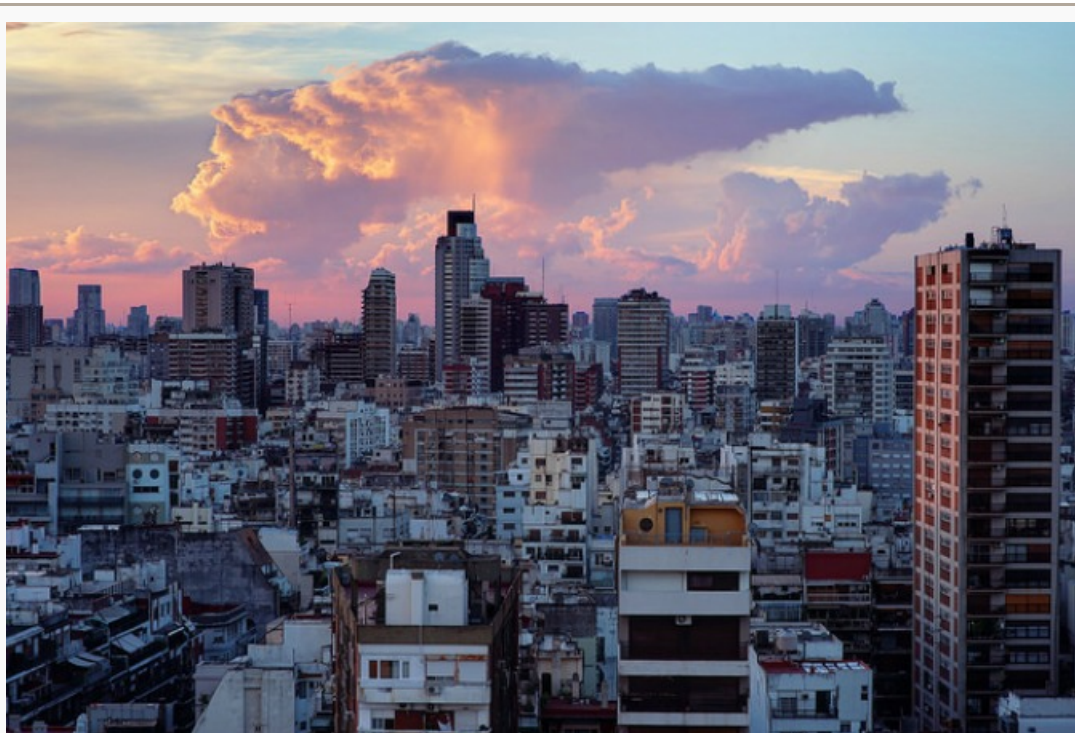
The best bookshops in Buenos Aires

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Laura Gómez-Mera is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Miami. In this post she gives us a tour of the best bookshops in **Buenos Aires**. If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, find more information about contributing below.

With an unusually high number of psychoanalysts per capita, Buenos Aires has been referred to as “the most psychoanalyzed city in the world”. A lesser known fact about the Argentine capital is that it also tops the charts in terms of number of bookstores. Recent statistics show that there is one bookshop every 8,000 “porteños” – as the inhabitants of the port city of Buenos Aires are known. Indeed, Buenos Aires alone has more bookshops than the whole of Mexico. The city's strong literary leanings earned it the title of UNESCO World Capital in 2011.



Buenos Aires skyline. Credit: [Sebastian Leal](#) CC BY-NC 2.0

Fittingly, Buenos Aires is home to one of the most beautiful bookshops in the world: **El Ateneo Grand Splendid**. This magnificent former theatre was built in 1919 by Austrian émigré Max Glücksmann, a leading figure in the Argentine radio and film industry. While offering live music and theatre performances in its early days, the Grand Splendid functioned primarily as a film house. After closing its doors in 1991, its future seemed uncertain until it was acquired and converted into a bookshop by *Librerías El Ateneo*.



El Ateneo. Credit: [Mac Aque](#) CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Despite extensive restorations, most of the original structures- the stage, theatre boxes, central dome, and ornamented walls – were kept intact. The restored dome still features beautiful frescos by Italian artist Nazareno Orlandi. The private boxes have been transformed into small reading rooms, where visitors can sit and browse their selected titles. The stage, with its heavy, dark red curtain, now works as a café, offering live music in the evenings.

Apart from its beauty, El Ateneo has an impressive selection of more than 100,000 titles, including a sizable proportion of non-Spanish books and magazines. Honoring its illustrious musical past, the bookshop also offers an extensive collection of classical, jazz, and popular music CDs.



Credit: [Mark A Paulda](#) CC BY-ND 2.0

Although it is hard to compete with El Ateneo, there are other bookshops in Buenos Aires that are well worth a visit. **Eterna Cadencia**, in the trendy Palermo neighbourhood, is extremely charming, with its tall wooden bookshelves and splendid chandeliers. The shop has its own publishing house, which prints a wide variety of works by national

and international authors. Not far, in a leafy Palermo alley, stands Libros del Pasaje. This medium-sized store has a very good selection of English-language titles. Its courtyard café offers a cozy and relaxing environment where to read, write, or simply enjoy a coffee with a friend.



Finally, if you are into second-hand books, you cannot miss **El Rufián Melancólico**, in the historical San Telmo neighborhood. This is an incredible, almost magic, little store with enormous character. Named after a short story by Argentine writer Roberto Arlt, it specializes in old and difficult-to-get books. Upon entering the shop, one is immediately surrounded by piles and piles of books, comics, and vinyl records. Half hidden among them sits El Rufián's co-owner – bibliophile, artist, and always happy to assist your literary search.

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Do you have a favourite bookshop? If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, then now's your chance to tell us all about it.

As part of a new weekly feature on LSE Review of Books, we're asking academics and students to recommend their favourite two or three bookshops in a particular city, with the aim of building an exciting online series for our book-loving community of readers the world over.

Bookshops could be academic, alternative, foreign language, hobby-based, secret or underground institutions, second hand outlets, or connected to a university. We'd like to cover all world regions too.

If something comes to mind, we're looking for around 200 words per bookshop, detailing why this place is a must-

see. Our editorial team can then find suitable photos and links to accompany the piece, though you're welcome to supply these too. We only ask that you focus on just one city or region, and two or three bookshops within it.

Email us now if you'd like to contribute: lsereviewofbooks@lse.ac.uk

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