

# Córdoba & the Central Sierras



Argentina's second city is bursting with life. Home to not one but seven major universities, Córdoba has a young population that ensures an excellent nightlife and a healthy cultural scene in general. Art is one of the city's strong points, and the four major galleries here are truly world-class. The business center of the country's most populous province, Córdoba also boasts a fascinating history, owing its architectural and cultural heritage to the Jesuits, who set up shop here when they first arrived in Argentina.

Outside of the city, the rolling hill country of the Central Sierras is dotted with towns that could grab your attention for a day or a month. The region boasts five Jesuit missions which have been declared Unesco World Heritage sites, each of them located in quaint little satellite towns that are an easy day trip from the capital.

Adventure buffs won't be left twiddling their thumbs, either – the paragliding is excellent at La Cumbre and Merlo and there's fantastic trekking to be done in two national parks – the fossil-strewn Sierra de las Quijadas and the condor haven of Quebrada del Condorito.

Further to the southwest, the Valle de Conlara and Sierras Puntanas offer a real chance to get away from the crowds and into the heart of the countryside. Highlights include the caves and rock art at Inti Huasi, the palm-filled valley of Papagayos and the picturesque ex-mining village of Carolina. Public transport in this part of the world is often rare and sometimes nonexistent, but the wealth of experiences that awaits far outweighs any inconvenience.

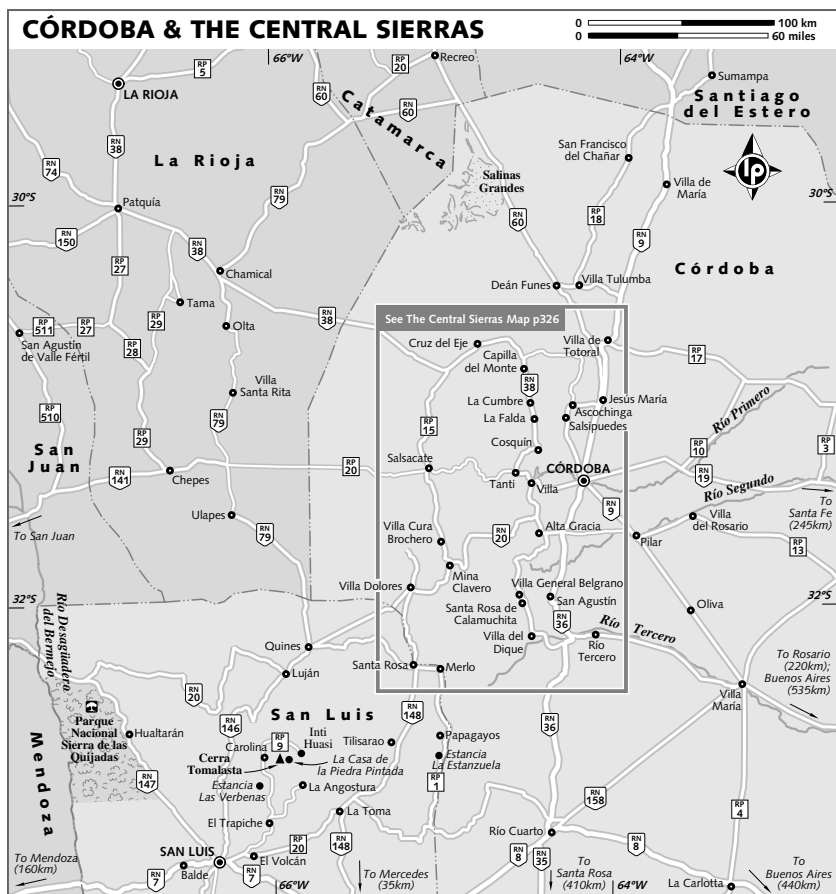
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Soak in the culture and wander the gorgeous streets of the stately city of **Córdoba** (p316)
- Check out ancient caves, rock art and stunning highland scenery around **Carolina** (p340)
- Get high with the paragliding fanatics at **La Cumbre** (p329)
- Take a breather at the atmospheric 17th-century Jesuit *estancia* (ranch) of **Santa Catalina** (p331)
- Break in your hiking boots among the surreal rock formations of **Parque Nacional Sierra de las Quijadas** (p339)



■ POPULATION: 3,434,734

■ AREA: 242,069 SQ KM



## Climate

Generally, November to February are the hottest months in the Central Sierras, when 29°C days are common, and nights are pleasantly warm. This is also the rainy season, but days are sunny enough for the hordes of sunbathers that descend on the sierras all summer. Winters are cool but get little precipitation and are often nice for outdoor pursuits. At higher altitudes (such as in La Cumbre), light snowfall is not uncommon. Fall and spring get more rain than winter, but temperatures are often ideal for hiking and biking.

## National Parks

In San Luis province, the rarely visited Parque Nacional Sierra de las Quijadas (p339) is an

excellent alternative to the better-known Parque Nacional Ischigualasto: getting there is far easier, and you'll often have the desert canyons and rock formations all to yourself. Parque Nacional Quebrada del Condorito (p335) is well worth a day trip from Córdoba to see the impressive Andean condors the park protects.

## Getting There & Around

Córdoba makes an excellent stop if you're heading south or southwest toward Mendoza. The city has bus connections throughout the country.

The towns throughout the sierras are all easily accessible by public transport, but many tiny, remote towns and Jesuit *estancias*