

Angelina Khoo

# Argentine Eyes

Ojos Argentino



BookRix-Edition

Biography & Autobiography

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Dedicated to Marisa, the woman whose eyes changed my life forever and turned my world upside down.... Dedico este libro a mi querida Marisa

BookRix GmbH & Co. KG  
80331 Munich

# Argentine Eyes

## *Author's Notes:*

My Argentine adventure began on September 10, 2009. After a 10 hr. flight, I planted my feet on Argentine soil for the very first time. The series of events that happen in the book are completely true and began happening within just a few weeks of my arrival in Buenos Aires. My first trip was from Sept 09 - March 2010. After a transitional time in Canada, I returned to Buenos Aires in Oct 2010 for a 9 month stay in the barrio of Boedo.

During my first trip, I was witness to the awe and wonder of what was going on within the Argentine church. Centro Cristiano Nueva Vida (CCNV) is a church with more than 30 000 members all across Argentina and is led by pastor Gulliermo Prein. In the city of Buenos Aires there are two main branches, Centro (which is located on 683 Florida as described in the book) and another one on the outskirts at 280 Agaces.

Before leaving in March, I promised the church members two things: firstly that I would return to finish what had been started in the 6 months that I had been here. And secondly that I would find a way to tell the story of the Argentine church to the rest of the world. As promised, I returned in October to finish what has been started. In writing this book, I am also fulfilling my second promise to the church to tell their story alongside mine and Marisa's.

This isn't just my story or the church's story or Marisa's

story. This is also the story of the Argentine culture and people, a story that deserves to be told again many times over. One story flows into another story and becomes part of that story and like the Argentine tango, we all become connected together and make up one story.....the story of "Argentine Eyes".

besos y bendiciones,

Angelina

[www.rockandvida.com.ar](http://www.rockandvida.com.ar)

[www.ccnv.org](http://www.ccnv.org)

[www.cenv.org](http://www.cenv.org)

(websites are in spanish)

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### ***Maté***

“Cuál es tus apellido?” inquired the airport employee

The moment of dead silence and look on my face must have spelt out my entire lack of comprehension to the question.

“Cuál es tus apellido? *What is your last name?*” She stated again, this time a little more slowly and making sure to speak english.

After giving her my last name, she directed me to where my suitcases were waiting. Judging from my level of spanish comprehension, it was obvious that the Argentine air had not quite worked into my brains or blood as the sounds of spanish were still quite new to my ears. This is something that my ears had better get used to very quickly seeing as this is the only language they would be hearing for the next 6 months.

Within a matter of minutes, the car and driver that had been arranged to take me to the student residence located in the heart of bustling downtown Buenos Aires had been found. But it would be on my way out the door of the airport that for the first time ever, my eyes would witness the famed Argentine “kiss” between two men.

Just a brief commentary on the beso (kiss) is that it is not an actual kiss but rather a “cheek to cheek” embrace that is a form of salutations here in Argentina. Two men engaging in a cheek to cheek kiss was no commentary on their sexual preferences. But rather, it was the everyday custom that formed a daily part of Argentine life. Before my 6 months would be up, the "beso" would form a regular part of my daily routine from both friends and strangers alike.

But in that moment, having just landed and fresh from North America, seeing two men in a cheek to cheek embrace without it being a commentary on their sexuality was definitely a new sight. It would be the first of many new sights that awaited me as my adventure deep into the heart of the Argentine culture began.

Many of those new sights are ones that whizzed past me outside the window of the car on the way to the city centre. Funny how in many Latin American countries like Mexico, it is so easy for them to hide their poverty as tourists are herded into shuttles that take them straight to their hotels the moment that they land. They never need to see anything that they don't want to. Their only impression of Mexico will be a secluded beach with english speaking employees.

However, Argentina was different. The country's economic woes become obvious the moment that one lands in Ezeiza international airport. The unstable economical and political climate has resulted in there being at least one non-violent protest a week where Argentines take to the streets chanting with banners and flags. This was a nation that was still reeling from the 2001 economic crisis that had nearly left the country in ruin.

There is no shuttle bus that will take you straight to some beach resort full of english speaking staff that are ready to greet you and offer you all the comforts of home with a dash of culture thrown into the mix. No, Argentine culture is like a pill that you must either swallow whole or not take it at all. But rest assured that if you do choose to dive in headfirst and swallow the culture whole-heartedly, the friendly open spirit of the people in the country will help you wash down every experience you may have good or bad, like water to a pill.

Gazing out the window of the car watching buildings go past, reality struck me that this wasn't Kansas anymore. From the 6 lane highway where vehicles scrambled for space, to the broken buildings and raw vegetation sprawled intermittently and sporadically, it all began to sink in that