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The manner in which porteños, people native to Buenos Aires, drink café con leche and mate (dried leaves of the yerba mate plant, steeped in hot water and highly caffeinated) is revealing. First, they drink a lot of both, especially mate, which many consume all day long. Second, they drink the café and mate in pairs or groups, often passing the mate cup around a large circle of friends, sharing the same straw, re-filling the hot water for one another, and, most importantly, telling and listening to each other's stories. Besides revealing their gregarious nature, these rituals bespeak another truth about Buenos Aires: people are awake all hours, living a very full life.

When I stay awake all night at Swarthmore, it is in order to finish a paper. Buenos Aires offers a more communal, heart-pumping way to pass the hours until daybreak: dancing. But the amazing thing about life in this city is the next day, when one is back to work, drinking mate or coffee, studying with the renewed engagement that comes from a good night out.

Swarthmore in Buenos Aires is an academically rigorous program, as students design their own courses, and are taught in small groups or individually. It is an opportunity to study exactly what you would like, in an intense manner, with fully personal attention from your professor. This is the first aspect that sets Swarthmore in Buenos Aires aside from other study abroad programs. But the program is also unique in that one is not folded into a big group of other American students to hang out and speak English with. Socially one must carve one's way through the city, fully utilizing and constantly improving one's Spanish.

Though the city is filled with millions, the job of befriending others and becoming socially immersed is well within reach. Porteños' inviting, aggressively

friendly nature is a good starting point. Then, a foreign accent will pique interest. From there, the channels to meeting people are endless.

There are formal ways I pursued social immersion in the city, like taking Tango classes, which are populated more and more by lots of young people. But most fun, confusing, and immersive are the informal channels. My host brother, Fede, also in his 20s, invited me to the outings and parties of his friends. Neighbors, in our apartment building and down the block, welcomed me to their get-togethers and lives. Strangers on the street, the bus, and the subway offered me help with directions, and then explained with pride the history and character of their city and neighborhood, eagerly curious about my opinion of Buenos Aires. Through persistence and the willingness to take risks, over café con leche and mate, many of these strangers became friends, who told me their stories and listened to mine.