

# Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales “Bernardino Rivadavia”

*Self-guided tour*



*July 2026*





# INTRODUCTION

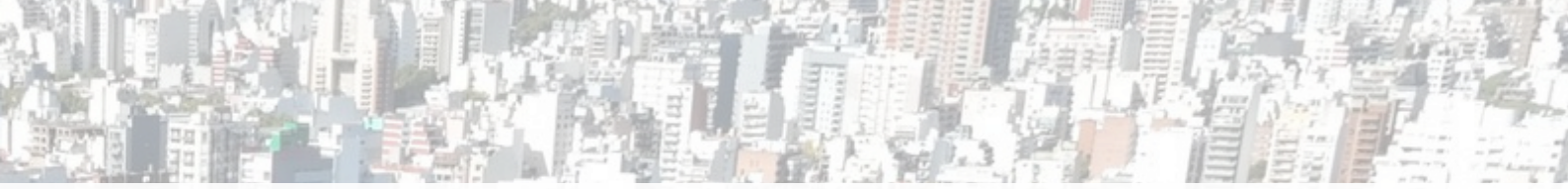
This **digital guide** will help you explore the Museum and discover some of the most significant pieces in each gallery.

Before you begin, here is some useful information for your visit:

- At the **Museum entrance**, you will find a **general floor plan** use it to help you navigate the building..
- While this guide **suggests a recommended route**, you are welcome to design your own itinerary by selecting the galleries you wish to visit. **A map is also available on every floor.**
- **Labels** for living organisms include both their **common and scientific names**.
  - Common names may vary across regions (for example, the world's largest rodent is known as a *carpincho* in Argentina and a *capybara* in Brazil).
  - For scientific accuracy, each species is identified by a unique scientific name, written in Latin and in italics.

**Enjoy your visit!**





# HISTORY

The **Bernardino Rivadavia Argentine Museum of Natural Sciences** is one of the oldest in South America, with its founding charter dating back to **1812**. Throughout its history, it has been housed in various locations; today, it is situated in its current building in **Parque Centenario**. This structure was specifically designed to house a natural sciences museum, making it one of the few museums in Argentina with a building conceived specifically for that purpose.

Although the current building represents only one-sixth of the original project, its distinctive features make it a landmark of **architectural heritage**: owls—symbols of wisdom—flank the first-floor windows, while bronze spiders in wrought-iron webs adorn the entrance doors, offering just a few examples of the many decorative details inspired by **native flora and fauna**. All the reliefs were created by renowned Argentine sculptors of the period, such as **Alfredo Bigatti** and **Donato Proietto**.





# GROUND FLOOR



## Entrance Hall

### Bust of Rivadavia

Bernardino Rivadavia founded the Museum in 1812, calling upon the provinces to collect and send "rare productions unique to the national territory, worthy of being displayed" in a museum. His aim was to promote knowledge of the nation's natural wealth through research and public exhibition.

### Architectural Details

Throughout both the interior and exterior of the building, visitors can observe details of native flora and fauna in bas-reliefs, murals, and wrought-iron ornaments. These works reflect an architectural project conceived so that the museum would be a space dedicated exclusively to the natural sciences.

## Burmeister's Mausoleum

Hermann Burmeister, a German naturalist and paleontologist, was one of the museum's first directors, serving from 1862 until his death in 1892. During his tenure, he increased the number of specimens, organized the exhibition with strict scientific criteria, and ensured free public access to the museum. His remains now rest in the mausoleum within our building, located behind the bronze statue dedicated to his memory.



# Geology Gallery

Located in the oldest section of the museum building, this gallery offers insight into the various geological resources that form part of Argentina's natural heritage, as well as the history of their geological origin. Additionally, it displays original meteorites found within the country—witnesses to the extraterrestrial history that has impacted our territory.

## "El Toba" Meteorite

This massive meteorite, weighing approximately 4 tons, is part of the meteoric shower that fell over Campo del Cielo (an area located between the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Chaco) about 4,500 years ago. It belongs to the group of metallic meteorites composed of iron and nickel, minerals that provide vital information about the early solar system.

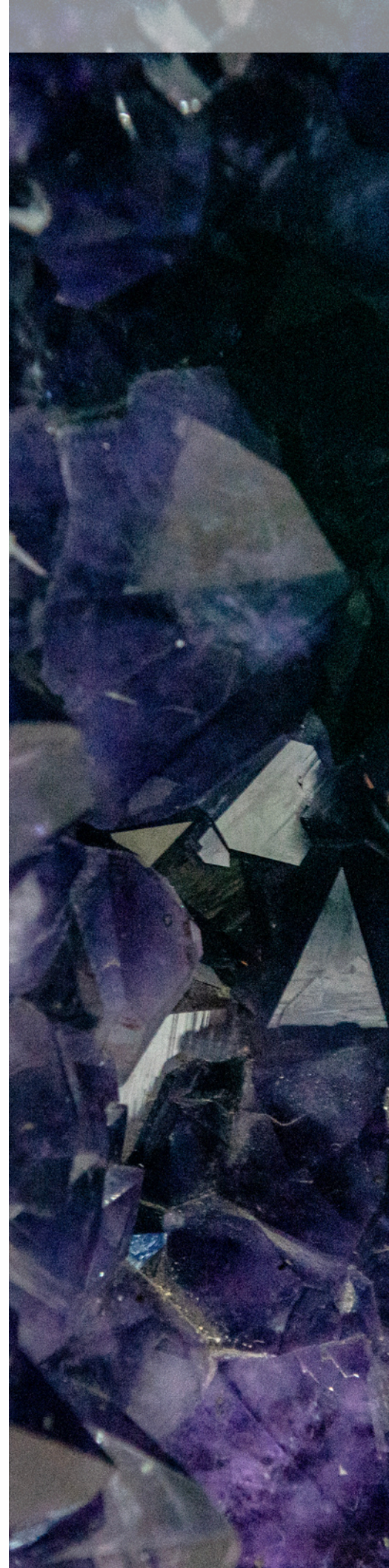
## Amethyst Geode

Geodes are cavities formed by gas bubbles released during the solidification of magma. When water with high levels of dissolved minerals seeps into these hollows, crystals begin to form—in this case, amethyst quartz.

## Globe



Displayed in the center of the gallery is a globe that illustrates the relief of the Earth's crust and its internal structure. Through various diagrams, visitors can interpret the movement and folding of tectonic plates—a fundamental process for understanding Earth's dynamics.





# The Water Gallery

This gallery highlights the importance of water as a unique and finite resource on our planet. It also showcases various aquatic environments, highlighting their characteristics and the adaptations of the organisms that inhabit them.



## Capybara

*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*

This semi-aquatic mammal possesses several adaptations for life in the water, such as webbed feet. Its eyes and ears are positioned high on the head, allowing it to swim while keeping its head above the surface, making it easier to detect potential predators while moving.

## Phytoplankton bubbles

By observing a drop of pond water under a microscope, a variety of phytoplanktonic organisms can be seen. These organisms contain special pigments that allow them to perform photosynthesis, a vital process for oxygen production and the foundation of many aquatic food chains.

## South American Fur Seal – Juvenile

*Arctocephalus australis*

These carnivorous marine mammals display specialized adaptations for aquatic life, such as flipper-like limbs that allow fast swimming. Although they are agile swimmers, their movement on land is more awkward; they only come ashore to rest and reproduce. Here, a juvenile specimen is represented in a coastal marine environment.





## Malacology Gallery

Mollusks are a diverse group of invertebrates that inhabit almost every environment on the planet: oceans, rivers, lagoons, and even dry land. Their soft bodies are usually protected by a shell, although some groups —such as octopuses—lack one. This group includes well-known snails, clams, mussels, and oysters; the enigmatic octopuses, squids, cuttlefish, and nautilus; as well as the lesser-known chitons.

### Bivalves and Pearls

Bivalves, such as oysters, clams, and mussels, possess two hinged valves (shells) that protect their soft bodies. Many species feed by filtering particles from the water, and some —like pearl oysters—can form pearls in response to foreign particles that enter their interior. This display case features specimens of the Caribbean pearl oyster, historically harvested in regions such as Margarita Island (Venezuela) for its valuable pearls.

### Apple Snail

*Pomacea canaliculata*

These snails inhabit shallow freshwater environments. They are easily recognized by their large size and their bright pink eggs, which are deposited on vegetation or structures near bodies of freshwater. These eggs contain toxins and an unpleasant taste, protecting them from many predators. A specialized bird, the Snail Kite, uses its curved beak to extract the snails without damaging the shell.

### Giant Clam

*Tridacna gigas*

This is the largest bivalve in the world, with a weight that can exceed 200 kg (440 lbs). It inhabits Indo-Pacific coral reefs and maintains a symbiotic relationship with microscopic algae in its interior, which help it obtain energy through photosynthesis. Its massive valves have historically been used as baptismal fonts. Although it can produce pearls, they lack commercial value.



# “Mysteries of the Sea” Gallery

The seabed diorama recreates a typical underwater environment off the coast of Mar del Plata. It combines plaster casts, artistic modeling, and preserved specimens to illustrate the rich marine biodiversity of the region. Highlights include large plaster casts of sharks and bony fish, alongside various invertebrates from rocky and sandy seafloors.

## Thresher Shark

*Alopias vulpinus*

This is a pelagic fish that can reach up to 5 meters (16 feet) in length. Its most distinctive feature is the upper lobe of the caudal fin, which is elongated into a whip-like shape. This allows the shark to strike and stun schools of fish before feeding.

## Shark Cage

This metal structure evokes the immersion cages used for observing large sharks, such as the famous Great White Shark. It has become a popular point of interest, reminiscent of underwater expeditions dedicated to studying these impressive predators.

## Tehuelche Octopus

*Octopus tehuelchus*

A recreation of this small animal, native to the South Atlantic coast, can be seen hidden among the rocks of the diorama. It feeds on crabs and is a preferred prey item of the Argentine Sea Bass (mero), both of which are represented in this underwater scene. Like all octopuses, it lacks an external shell, possesses eight arms with suckers, and exhibits sophisticated camouflage abilities.

## Marine Diversity Display

This display case brings together original specimens that reflect the remarkable diversity of life forms inhabiting the Argentine Sea. The specimens represent various major animal groups and illustrate the broad range of taxa that evolved in marine environments.







## "Sharks, Rays, and Chimeras" Gallery

This space showcases chondrichthyans—fish that include sharks, rays, and chimeras. These animals differ from other aquatic vertebrates by having a cartilaginous skeleton instead of a bony one. Do sharks inhabit Argentine marine waters? Are they dangerous to humans? What were prehistoric sharks like? This gallery answers these and many other questions about these fascinating fish.

### Basking Shark

*Cetorhinus maximus*

The piece on display is an original cast of a basking shark, the largest fish in Argentina and the second largest in the world. This specimen was captured in Mar del Plata in 1957 and studied by Dr. Elvira Siccardi, a pioneer of shark research in Argentina. This fish has tiny teeth and feeds by filtering plankton through its gills.

### School Shark

*Galeorhinus galeus*

This specimen, preserved in alcohol, is a "tagged" school shark (locally known as *cazón*) used in scientific research. The plastic identification tag can be seen attached to one of its fins. Although it is the most common shark in Argentine waters, it is currently listed as a vulnerable species. Historically, it was heavily fished for its skin—used to make shoes and sandpaper—and for its liver oil, which is rich in Vitamin A.

### Megalodon

*Otodus megalodon*

Displayed here is a reconstruction of the jaw of what was likely the largest shark ever to exist. It inhabited the oceans millions of years ago and could reach sizes comparable to this entire room. Like modern sharks, it is believed that the Megalodon replaced its teeth throughout its life, which is why it displays multiple rows of teeth. In the adjacent display case, you can find fossilized teeth from various prehistoric sharks, including a real Megalodon tooth located in the upper- right section.



# Paleontology Gallery

The Argentine paleontology allows us to reconstruct the life that inhabited these lands in the past. This gallery brings together fossil remains of marine reptiles, flying reptiles, and dinosaurs that dominated the Mesozoic Era. Many of these were discovered by Argentine paleontologists in various parts of the country, as part of a scientific endeavor that continues to these days.

## Carnotaurus

*Carnotaurus sastrei*

A carnivorous dinosaur that lived about 70 million years ago in what is now the province of Chubut. Its name means "meat-eating bull" due to the two horns protruding from its head, an unusual feature among carnivorous animals. It is also notable for its remarkably small arms, the function of which remains a subject of debate among specialists.

## Mosasaur

*Taniwhasaurus antarcticus*

Hanging from the ceiling, you can see the skeleton of a large marine reptile, similar to an aquatic lizard. There is another specimen on a wall-mounted slab and a reconstruction of what its full body might have looked like. It lived during the Cretaceous Period alongside the dinosaurs and could have reached a length of up to 12 meters (39 feet). This specimen was found on the James Ross Island, Antarctica, during a scientific expedition in 2002.



## Femur of a Sauropod Dinosaur

Displayed horizontally on the floor, you can touch a real fossil femur. It belonged to a sauropod, a group of large herbivorous dinosaurs that walked on four legs and had long necks. Since there is no record of its specific discovery site, it cannot be studied in depth and is displayed here for educational purposes.



# "Buenos Aires: One Million Years Ago" Gallery

This gallery invites us to discover the South American fauna that inhabited these lands approximately one million years ago. During this period, the formation of the Isthmus of Panama allowed species from North America to arrive here, creating a significant impact on the local ecosystems.

## Giant Armadillo

*Doedicurus sp.*

This relative of modern-day armadillos reached nearly a ton and a half in weight and up to 3 meters (10 feet) in length. This is an herbivore that possessed a thick shell made of pentagonal or hexagonal plates. Its tail was covered by mobile rings and ended in a spiky club, likely used for defense.

## Saber-toothed Cat

*Smilodon populator*

Here you can see a complete cast of this predator, which was part of the fauna that arrived from North America toward the end of the last Ice Age. Famous for inspiring the character "Diego" in the film Ice Age, it featured canine teeth up to 30 cm (12 inches) long, sharp claws, and weighed over 300 kg (660 lbs).



## Megatherium

*Megatherium americanum*

Located in the center of the Library Hall is the original fossil skeleton of an iconic animal of the Quaternary megafauna: a massive giant ground sloth. It could measure up to 5 meters (16 feet) in length and weigh nearly 6 tons. It was a herbivore and possessed a giant claw on its index finger, useful for feeding and defense. While it moved on all fours, it is estimated that it could stand on its hind legs due to the width of its hips.



# "Antarctica" Gallery

One of the most extreme and fascinating places on the planet is the setting for this gallery. On display are animals that inhabit this inhospitable region, many of which were collected during the scientific expeditions the museum conducts on the Antarctic Peninsula. These expeditions not only contribute to global knowledge but also reaffirm the Argentine presence in the territory, which dates back more than 120 years.

## Sperm Whale – Skull

*Physeter macrocephalus*

One of the ocean's greatest predators, this specimen was captured by the Compañía de Pesca Argentina (Argentine Fishing Company) near the South Georgia Islands. At that time, whale bodies were used by various industries; however, some specimens, like this one, were donated for scientific study.

## Adélie Penguin – Leucistic

*Pygoscelis adeliae*

Among the three Adélie penguins on display, one has a different appearance: it is entirely white. It has a genetic condition called leucism, which is similar to albinism but, unlike albinism, does not affect eye color. This phenomenon has also been observed in other birds and marine mammals in the Antarctic region.

## Sun Star

*Labidiaster annulatus*

Among the many creatures that inhabit the cold seafloors, this starfish stands out due to its numerous arms. It belongs to the echinoderm group, which also includes sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and sea lilies. It is preserved in resin, a technique that maintains its original shape so we can observe it in great detail.





# FIRST FLOOR



## "Arthropods" Gallery

Arthropods constitute one of the most abundant and diverse animal groups on the planet. This gallery showcases representatives from various environments and lifestyles. Here, you will find specimens from the spider, insect, and crustacean groups, as well as centipedes and millipedes.

### Horseshoe crab

*Limulus polyphemus*

Despite its name, this animal belongs to the Xiphosura group, which is more closely related to spiders than to crabs. It inhabits the coastal areas of the North Atlantic. It features a rigid carapace and a long extension called a telson, similar to a scorpion's tail but without a stinger. It has five pairs of legs used for both movement and feeding.

### Argentine flag butterfly

*Morpho epistrophus argentinus*

Large in size with a vibrant light-blue color, this butterfly can be found in coronillo forests in Buenos Aires, where its larvae find food. Its presence is an indicator of healthy and well-preserved ecosystems.





# "Birds" Gallery

This gallery showcases a variety of bird shapes and sizes, their distribution across different environments—primarily in Argentina—and their origins, which date back to the Mesozoic Era. Key highlights include various nest types and building materials, beak varieties, the characteristics and functions of feathers, and the opportunity to hear the sounds they make in their natural habitats.

## Southern Cassowary

*Casuarius casuarius*

Featured in the "Birds of the World" display, this omnivorous bird belongs to the group that includes emus and ostriches and is native to Australia and New Guinea. It is considered one of the world's most dangerous birds due to its defensive behavior, which includes simultaneous kicks with both legs. It possesses dagger-like claws and can run at speeds of up to 50 km/h (31 mph).

## Indian Peafowl

*Pavo cristatus*

Native to Southern Asia, the males of this species are famous for the fan of feathers they display to court females. They are polygamous animals, meaning a single male may mate with several females.

## Andean Condor

*Vultur gryphus*

These scavengers inhabit high-altitude environments such as the Andes Mountains. It is the heaviest flying bird in the world, with a wingspan that can reach up to 3.3 meters (10.8 feet). During flight, it flaps its wings to take off but then typically glides without flapping.



## Wandering Albatross

*Diomedea exulans*

This bird, found in Argentina, is the largest seabird in the world. The species is distributed across the Antarctic, Pacific, and South Atlantic oceans. It has tubular nostrils that help it detect food thanks to a highly developed sense of smell. With a wingspan of up to 3.5 meters (11.5 feet), it has the largest wingspan of any living bird. They are monogamous and mate for life; males tend to the single egg while females forage for food.



# "Amphibians and Reptiles" Gallery

This gallery showcases the striking diversity of amphibians and reptiles that inhabit Argentina, from imposing snakes to tiny frogs. Many specimens are preserved in alcohol, while others are taxidermied. In the central display case, you can observe artistic reconstructions of several species.



## Argentine Boa or Lampalagua

*Boa constrictor occidentalis*

This native species can reach up to 3 meters (10 feet) in length. Its muscular body and scale pattern are perfectly adapted to the dry environments of northern Argentina, where it feeds on small mammals.

## Green Sea Turtle

*Chelonia mydas*

A marine species that occasionally visits the Argentine coast. This anatomical view allows you to observe its internal bone structure, showing how its shell is fused with the ribs and the spinal column. Its "little house" is actually its skeleton; it can take shelter within it but cannot leave, as the shell is a part of its body.

## Cururu Toad or Cane Toad

*Rhinella schneideri*

The cururu toad is a giant of the amphibian world. Warty and a hunter of insects, it lives near water and can release venom from its glands if it feels threatened. A specimen preserved in alcohol can be observed in the Amphibian Diversity display.





## "Comparative Mammal Osteology" Gallery

Numerous mounted skeletons of various modern mammals reveal how anatomy supports, protects, and shapes their bodies. Each skeletal structure is the result of thousands or millions of years of evolution and adaptation to different lifestyles.

### Asian Elephant

*Elephas maximus*

Dahlia was the name of an Asian elephant that arrived from India in 1922, along with a female, to join the Buenos Aires City Zoo. For over two decades, she sparked the curiosity and wonder of the public until she was put down due to uncontrollable aggressive behavior. After her death, the bones and hide were transferred to the museum, where the skeleton was prepared and mounted, preserving the record of an animal that defined an era.



## Hominid "Lucy"

### *Australopithecus afarensis*

This ancestor inhabited Africa between 3 and 4 million years ago. Her remains were discovered in Ethiopia in 1974 and were nicknamed "Lucy," inspired by the Beatles' song. In this module, you can compare a replica of her skeleton with replicas of a human skeleton and a chimpanzee skeleton, both of which are evolutionarily related to her.

## Black Rhinoceros

### *Diceros bicornis*

Rhinoceroses live in Africa. Their horns, made of keratin (similar to our fingernails), are structures resembling a compact mass of fibers that grow throughout their lives and serve multiple functions: digging for food, defending against predators, and competing with other individuals. Poaching, driven by the illegal horn trade, has endangered the survival of many of its populations.

## Greater Spot-nosed Monkey

### *Cercopithecus nictitans*

This African monkey, nicknamed "Felipe" by the creators of this gallery, serves as a reference skeleton to compare the bones and adaptations of other mammals on display. Its anatomy shows adaptations for arboreal (tree-dwelling) life: a flexible spine, a long prehensile tail (meaning it is capable of grasping), and a skull with large frontal eye sockets that provide precise binocular vision.





# "Africa: Continent of Mammals" Gallery

The animals displayed in this collection come from specimens illegally hunted by the Italian Prince Rodrigo D'Arenberg. Following his death, these taxidermy mounts were confiscated. Today, the Museum preserves and exhibits them to provide an opportunity to reflect on conservation and illegal wildlife trafficking.

## African Elephant Tusks

*Loxodonta africana*

The ivory that forms the tusks of African elephants has been historically used to manufacture various objects, from dice and chess pieces to piano keys, spoons, and shotgun grips. Due to the rapid decline of elephant populations, the import and sale of ivory is now banned or severely restricted in many countries to protect the species.

## Lion – Juvenile Specimen

*Pomacea canaliculata*

The underdeveloped mane and emerging coloration indicate that this lion was a juvenile at the time it was hunted. The removal of young individuals affects not only the specific animal but also the pride dynamics, hindering population renewal and growth.

## African Leopard / Spotted Hyena

*Panthera pardus / Crocuta crocuta*

Unlike other felines, the African leopard often climbs trees to consume its prey, such as wild boars. In this way, it keeps its food away from other terrestrial predators, including the spotted hyena, as well as lions or African wild dogs.





# "Modern Mammals" Gallery

This gallery presents an extensive collection of mammals native to South America alongside several exotic species. Through taxidermy, skeletons, and dioramas, the exhibition showcases their adaptations, diversity, and the habitats they call home.

## Fin Whale

*Balaenoptera physalus*

The fin whale is the second-largest animal on the planet, surpassed only by the blue whale. It feeds primarily on krill, which it filters using its baleen plates. Females reach larger sizes than males. This species undertakes extensive migrations and can be observed in temperate and subpolar waters.

## Yaguareté

*Panthera onca*

The *yaguareté* is the largest feline in the Americas, capable of weighing over 100 kg (220 lbs). Its name in Guaraní means "true beast," and it is considered a sacred animal. In Argentina, it is critically endangered, with an estimated population of only 250 individuals. Its main threats are habitat loss and fragmentation, poaching, and roadkill.

## Maned Wolf

*Chrysocyon brachyurus*

Known locally as *Aguará Guazú*, this is the largest South American canid. Its diet consists of armadillos, rodents, birds, small vertebrates, insects, and wild fruits. Among the conservation challenges it faces are habitat destruction, roadkill, illegal pet trade, and persecution due to the mistaken belief that it attacks livestock. It is also associated with the "lobizón" (werewolf) legend.

## Giant Armadillo

*Priodontes maximus*

Known in Argentina as *Tatú Carreta*, this is the largest armadillo in the world, reaching up to 1.5 meters (5 feet) in length and weighing up to 60 kg (132 lbs). A natural digger, it is primarily insectivorous, though it occasionally consumes fruit and carrion. Its shell has been historically used to craft musical instruments, such as the *charango*.







**Thank You for Visiting!**

If you enjoyed your visit, we invite you to leave us a review on Google or share your experience on social media and tag us.  
Thank you for coming!

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 Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales

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