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Roque Pérez marks 113 years by turning its anniversary into a showcase for slow tourism

Officials are using civic festivities, local food and historic country stores to draw visitors seeking quieter rural escapes near Buenos Aires

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Roque Pérez, a rural town about 87 miles southwest of Buenos Aires on National Route 205, is marking 113 years of municipal autonomy with a weekend of public celebrations built around local food, artisan products and the slower pace that officials say has become one of its main draws for visitors.

The anniversary centers on June 24, the date tied to the town’s autonomy law in 1913 and also the feast day of its patron saint, San Juan Bautista. Municipal authorities have scheduled an ecumenical ceremony and official event at 10 a.m. at City Hall on Avenida Mitre, followed at noon by a traditional tripe stew, artistic performances near the church and Plaza Mitre, and a 3:30 p.m. procession and Mass in honor of the patron saint. Music, stage performances and the Mercado Bien Auténtico, a fair for artisans and local producers, are expected to run throughout the day in the main square.

A second major event is planned for Sunday, June 28, with a town anniversary race organized by the local sports department. Free registration opens at 8 a.m., and the official start is set for 10 a.m. in front of the municipal palace. The race will include competitive and noncompetitive 5K and 10K formats for women and men. Organizers said the first 100 participants to collect their race number will receive an official T-shirt.

The celebration comes as Roque Pérez seeks to strengthen its place within Argentina’s growing rural tourism market. Local promoters describe the town as a destination for “slow tourism,” offering quiet streets, open landscapes, traditional cooking and historic country stores rather than high-volume attractions. The concept reflects a broader travel trend that favors shorter distances, local identity and lower-intensity experiences over tightly scheduled itineraries.

Roque Pérez has long leaned on that identity. The municipality says the area has one of the country’s largest concentrations of historic rural general stores, roadside eateries and field posts, many of them tied to old trade routes across the Buenos Aires province countryside. Those businesses now serve as both food stops and heritage sites, preserving recipes, customs and social spaces that were once central to life on the pampas.

Among the best-known places is La Paz, a historic store whose origins date to the mid-19th century. Local historical accounts trace commercial activity in that area to 1848, when a pulpería operated there under authorization granted during the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas. In 1859, after the Battle of Cepeda, another business known as La Paz was established on land belonging to Andrea Madrid de Berro. According to those accounts, the building was once surrounded by defensive ditches connected to groundwater so residents could protect themselves from raids; wooden planks served as bridges during the day and were removed at night.

The town’s deeper history predates its formal autonomy by nearly a century. Historical records cited by local authorities say Pedro Gutiérrez bought a tract of land at public auction in Lobos on May 8, 1818, paying 110 pesos fuertes for an area of three square leagues plus part of another. That land later became part of what is now Roque Pérez. Over time, the territory shifted administratively from Luján to Lobos and later to Saladillo before becoming its own municipality.

Officials date the formation of the settlement itself to 1889. Municipal autonomy arrived in 1913 through Law No. 3488, approved on June 21 and enacted on June 24 of that year. To create the municipality, roughly 90,000 hectares were taken from Saladillo and another 10,000 from 25 de Mayo, according to local historical data. A later expansion law in 1914 added Saladillo’s fifth district. Roque Pérez was elevated to city status in 1961.

Today, tourism officials present that history as part of a broader visitor experience that combines heritage with gastronomy. Travelers can visit the urban center during anniversary week, tour natural areas around town and stop at sites such as the Museo Rancho de Perón. Excursions are also offered from downtown to La Paz Chica, including a visit to Cine Club Colón. The Mercado Bien Auténtico adds another layer by bringing together regional foods and handmade goods in one place.

The appeal is also practical. Roque Pérez is close enough to Buenos Aires for a day trip or overnight stay, making it accessible for families looking for short breaks without air travel or long drives. Restaurants and country stores typically begin opening their doors on Fridays with weekend menus and events aimed at visitors from the capital region

and nearby towns.

For local businesses, anniversary week is both a civic milestone and an economic opportunity. Rural dining rooms, lodging operators and craft vendors stand to benefit from increased traffic tied to official festivities. The municipality has framed the program as a way to showcase not only history but also contemporary local production.

That mix of memory, food and low-key recreation has become central to how Roque Pérez presents itself. In place of large-scale entertainment or resort infrastructure, it is betting on old stores, traditional dishes, walkable streets and community rituals that still shape daily life in small towns across Buenos Aires province.