



Tierra del Fuego

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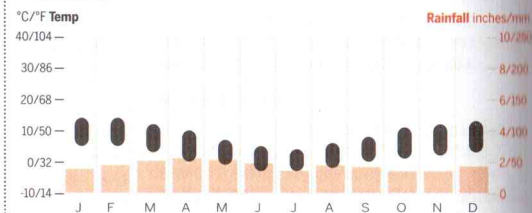
Why Go?

The southernmost extreme of the Americas, this windswept archipelago is alluring as it is moody—at turns beautiful, ancient and strange. Travelers who first came for the end-of-the-earth novelty discover a destination that's far more complex than these bragging rights. Intrigue still remains in a past storied with shipwrecks, native peoples and failed missions. In Tierra del Fuego, nature is writ bold and reckless, from the scoured plains, rusted peat bogs and mossy lenga forests to the snowy ranges above the Beagle Channel.

While distant and isolated, Tierra del Fuego is by no means cut off from the mainland, though the Argentine half is far more developed than its Chilean counterpart. Ports buzz with commerce and oil refineries prosper while adventure seekers descend in droves to fly-fish, hike and start Antarctic cruises. Shared with Chile, this archipelago features one large island, Isla Grande, Chile's Isla Navarino and many smaller uninhabited ones.

When to Go

Ushuaia



Nov-Mar Warmest months, best for hiking, penguin watching and estancia visits.

mid-Nov–mid-Apr Fly-fishing season.

Jul-Sep Optimal for skiing, snowboarding or dog sledding.

National Parks

Isla Grande is home to Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego (p482), Argentina's first shoreline national park.

Getting There & Around

The most common overland route from Patagonia is via the ferry crossing at Punta Delgada (p455). Unlike the rest of Argentina, Tierra del Fuego has no designated provincial highways, but has secondary roads known as *rutas complementarias*, modified by a lowercase letter. References to such roads in this chapter are given as 'C-a,' for example.

Renting a car in mainland Argentina, be aware that you must cross in and out of Chile a couple of times to reach Tierra del Fuego, and that this requires special documents and additional international insurance coverage. Most rental agencies can arrange this paperwork if given advance notice.

At the time of writing, Chile was building an alternate road to the southern end of the island. It currently links with Lago Fagnano, but a 4WD vehicle is required.

Visitors can fly into Río Grande or Ushuaia. Buses take the ferry from Chile's Punta Delgada; all pass through Río Grande before arriving in Ushuaia.

Ushuaia

202901 / POP 57,000

A busy port and adventure hub, Ushuaia is a sliver of steep streets and jumbled buildings below the snowcapped Martial Range. Here the Andes meet the southern ocean in a sharp skid, making way for the city before reaching a sea of lapping currents.

It's a location matched by few, and chest-beating Ushuaia takes full advantage of its end-of-the-world status as an increasing number of Antarctica-bound vessels call in to port. Its endless mercantile hustle knows no irony: the souvenir shop named for Jimmy Button (a native kidnapped for show in England), the ski center named for a destructive invasive species...you get the idea. That said, with a pint of the world's southernmost microbrew in hand, you can happily plot the dazzling outdoor options: hiking, sailing, skiing, kayaking and even scuba diving are just minutes from town.

Tierra del Fuego's comparatively high wages draw Argentines from all over to re-settle here, and some locals lament the loss of small-town culture. Meanwhile, expansion means haphazard development advancing in the few directions the mad geography allows.

History

In 1870 the British-based South American Missionary Society set its sights on the Yahgan (or Yámana), a nomadic tribe whose members faced brutal weather conditions almost entirely naked – they didn't have any permanent shelter to keep clothing dry, and believed that the natural oil of their skin was better protection than soaking wet animal fur. Charles Darwin branded them 'the lowest form of humanity on earth.' Missionary Thomas Bridges didn't agree. After years among them, he created a Yahgan-English dictionary in the late 19th century, deeming their language complex and subtle.

The mission made Ushuaia its first permanent Fuegian outpost, but the Yahgan, who had survived 6000 years without contact, were vulnerable to foreign-brought illnesses and faced increasing infringement by sealers, settlers and gold prospectors. Four Yámana, including a teenager dubbed 'Jimmy Button,' were kidnapped by the naval captain Robert Fitz Roy and shipped back to England to be educated and paraded around as examples of gentrified savages. One died of disease, after months of public criticism, Fitz Roy agreed to return the rest to their homeland.

The tribe's legacy is now reduced to shell mounds, Thomas Bridges' famous dictionary and Jimmy Button souvenirs. At the time of writing, one elderly Yámana woman was still alive on Isla Navarino, the only native speaker of the language.

Between 1884 and 1947 the city became a penal colony, incarcerating many notorious criminals and political prisoners, both here and on remote Isla de los Estados. Since 1950 the town has been an important naval base.

Sights

Paralleling the Beagle Channel, Maipú becomes Malvinas Argentinas west of the cemetery, then turns into RN 3, continuing 12km to Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego. To the east, public access ends at Yaganes, which heads north to meet RN 3 going north toward Lago Fagnano. Most visitor services are on or near San Martín, a block from the waterfront.

The tourist office distributes a free city-tour map with information on the historic houses around town. The 1894 **Legislatura Provincial** (Provincial Legislature; Maipú 465) was the governor's official residence. The century-old **Iglesia de la Merced** (cnr San Martín & Don Bosco) was built with convict

Ushuaia



TIERRA DEL FUEGO USHUAIA

labor. **Casa Beban** (cnr Maipú & Plúschow; ☎11am-6pm) was built in 1911 using parts ordered from Sweden, and sometimes hosts local art exhibits.

Museo Marítimo & Museo del Presidio MUSEUM (☎437481; www.museomaritimo.com; cnr Yaganes & Gobernador Paz; admission AR\$70; ☎10am-8pm) Convicts were transferred from Isla de los Estados (Staten Island) to Ushuaia in 1906 to build this national prison, finished in 1920. The spokelike halls of single cells, designed to house 380, actually held up to 800 before closing in 1947. Held here were illustrious author Ricardo Rojas and Russian anarchist Simón Radowitzky. The depiction of penal life here is intriguing, but information is in Spanish.

Another worthwhile exhibit features incredibly detailed scale models of famous ships, spanning 500 years and providing a unique glimpse into the region's history. Re-

mains of the world's narrowest-gauge freight train, which transported prisoners between town and work stations, sit in the courtyard. Guided tours are at 11:30am and 6:30pm.

Museo Yámana MUSEUM (☎422874; Rivadavia 56; admission AR\$25; ☎10am-8pm) Small but carefully tended, with an excellent overview of the Yámana (Yahgan) way of life, including how they survived harsh weather without clothing, why only women knew how to swim and how campfires were kept in moving canoes. Expertly detailed dioramas (in English and Spanish) are based on bays and inlets of the national park; coming here before a park visit offers new bearings.

Museo del Fin del Mundo MUSEUM (☎421863; www.tierradelfuego.org.ar/museo; cnr Maipú & Rivadavia; admission AR\$30; ☎9am-8pm) Built in 1903, this former bank contains exhibits on Fuegian natural history, stuffed

Summer Activities

Cerro Martial & Glacier Martial MOUNTAIN (optional chairlift AR\$55; ☎10am-4pm) A hearty all-day hike from the city center leads up to Glacier Martial, with fantastic panoramas of Ushuaia and the Beagle Channel. The views are more impressive than the actual glacier. Follow San Martín west and keep ascending as it zigzags. When you arrive at the ski run 7km northwest of town, either take the *aerosilla* (chairlift) or walk another two hours to make a full day of it. For the best views, hike an hour above the chairlift terminus. A cozy refuge offers coffee, desserts and beer at the *aerosilla* base. Weather is changeable so take warm, dry clothing and sturdy footwear.

Evening **canopy tours** (escuela@tierradel fuego.org.ar; Refugio de Montaña; AR\$130; ☎10am-5:15pm Oct-Jun) are run from the base of the *aerosilla* and offer an hour's worth of Tarzan time, zipping through the forest with 11 zip-line cables and two hanging bridges. The highest cable is 8m. It's by reservation only.

Catch a taxi up the hill or jump aboard one of the minivans (AR\$35) that leave from the corner of Maipú and Juana Fadul every half-hour from 8:30am to 6:30pm to Cerro Martial.

Beagle Channel BOATING Navigating the Beagle Channel's gunmetal-gray waters, with glaciers and rocky isles in the distance, offers a fresh perspective and decent wildlife watching. Operators are found on the tourist wharf Maipú between Lasserre and Roca. Harbor cruises are usually four-hour morning or afternoon excursions (AR\$180 to AR\$230) to sea lion and cormorant colonies. The number of passengers, extent of snacks and hiking options may vary between operators. A highlight is an island stop to hike and look at *conchaes*, middens or shell mounds left by the native Yahgan.

Mago Del Sur SAILING (☎2901-15-5148-6463; www.magodelsur.com.ar; charter per person per day channel/Antarctica AR\$1266/1477) A recommended option for extended sailing trips, captained by Alejandro Da Milano, whose lifetime of experience ensures skill and safety at the helm.

Cruceros Australes CRUISE (☎in Santiago 02-442-3110; www.australis.com; ☎Sep-May) Luxurious four-day and five-day sightseeing cruises to Punta Arenas and back (starting from US\$1498/1894 per person in low/high season), catering mostly to mature travelers. The Saturday



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birdlife, life of natives and early penal colonies, and replicas of moderate interest.

FREE Parque Yatana PARK (Fundación Cultiva; ☎425212; cnr Magallanes & 25 de Mayo; ☎3-6pm Wed-Fri) Part art project, part urban refuge, a city block of lenga forest preserved from encroaching development by one determined family.

Activities

Boating can be undertaken year-round. Hiking possibilities should not be limited to Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego; the entire mountain range behind Ushuaia, with its lakes and rivers, is a hiker's high. However, many trails are poorly marked or not marked at all, and some hikers who have easily scurried uphill have gotten lost trying to find the trail back down. Club Andino Ushuaia (p481) has maps and good information. In an emergency, contact the **Civil Guard** (☎103, 22108).

Ushuaia

Top Sights

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Museo Marítimo & Museo del Presidio.....	F2

Sights

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2 Iglesia de la Merced.....	B3
3 Legislatura Provincial.....	D3
4 Museo del Fin del Mundo.....	E3
5 Museo Yámana.....	E3
6 Parque Yatana.....	D1

Activities, Courses & Tours

7 All Patagonia.....	C3
8 Canal Fun.....	C3
9 Compañía de Guías de Patagonia.....	D3
10 Rumbo Sur.....	E3
11 Tolkar.....	E3
12 Turismo Comapa.....	E3
13 Ushuaia Turismo.....	C2

Sleeping

14 Antartica Hostel.....	E2
15 Freestyle.....	C2
16 Galeazzi-Basily B&B.....	E1
17 Hostel Cruz del Sur.....	E3
18 La Casa de Tere B&B.....	E1
19 La Maison de Ushuaia.....	E1
20 Martín Fierro B&B.....	C3

departures from Ushuaia include the possibility of disembarking at Cape Horn. Low season is the first and last two months of the season. The cruise visits many otherwise inaccessible glaciers, but time alone and hiking opportunities are limited; the focus is more on nature talks and group excursions. Turismo Comapa (p477) handles local bookings.

Aeroclub Ushuaia

SCENIC FLIGHTS

(☎421717, 421892; www.aeroclubushuaia.org.ar; flight 30min AR\$443) Offers scenic rides over the channel.

Winter Activities

With the surrounding peaks loaded with powder, winter visitors should jump at the chance to explore the local ski resorts. Accessed from RN 3, resorts offer both downhill and cross-country options. The ski season runs from June to September, with July (winter vacation) the busiest month.

21 Mil 810.....	D2
22 Posada Fin del Mundo.....	E1
23 Yakush.....	B3

Eating

24 Almacen Ramos Generales.....	C3
25 Bodegón Fueguino.....	B3
26 Café Bar Tante Sara.....	E3
27 Café-Bar Tante Sara.....	C3
28 Chiko.....	E3
29 El Turco.....	A3
30 Kalma.....	F3
31 Kaupé.....	D2
32 La Anónima.....	E2
33 La Estancia.....	E3
34 Lomitos Martinica.....	F3
35 María Lola Restó.....	B3
36 Placeres Patagónicos.....	E3

Drinking

37 Dublin Irish Pub.....	C3
38 Macario 1910.....	A3

Entertainment

39 Cine Pakawaia.....	F2
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Shopping

40 Boutique del Libro.....	B3
41 Boutique del Libro.....	D3

TOP CHOICE Cerro Castor

SNOW SPORTS

(☎02901-15-605604/6; www.cerrocator.com; full-day lift ticket adult/child AR\$240/165; ☼mid-Jun–mid-Oct) Fun and incredibly scenic, the largest resort is 26km from Ushuaia, with 15 runs spanning 400 hectares and a number of lodges with cafes and even a hip sushi bar. Rentals are available for skis, boards and cross-country skis. Multiday and shoulder-season tickets are discounted. Clear wind breaks are added to lifts on cold days. It's 26km from Ushuaia via RN3.

Nunatak Adventure

SNOW SPORTS

(☎430329; www.nunatakadventure.com; RN 3, Km 3018; guided dog sledding AR\$140) Snowshoe a beautiful alpine valley or dogsled with Siberian and Alaskan huskies bumping across Tierra Mayor. For a memorable night, combine either with an evening bonfire (AR\$400). It also does guided snowcat rides. It's 19km from Ushuaia via RN3.

Altos del Valle

SNOW SPORTS

(☎422234; www.gatocuruchet.com.ar) Gato Curuchet, the first South American in Alaska's Iditarod, teaches dog sledding at this winter resort, which is also the sponsor of popular annual dog-sled races at the end of August, where kids also compete. There's also good cross-country and snowshoeing areas, equipment rentals and full-moon trips. Extreme skiers can check out the snowcat skiing. It's 10km from Ushuaia via RN3.

Centro de Deportes Invernales

Glaciar Martial

SNOW SPORTS

(☎421423, 423340) About 7km northwest of town, this family-oriented area has downhill runs well suited for beginners; it also rents equipment.

Cerro Martial & Glaciar Martial

SNOW SPORTS

(optional chairlift AR\$55; ☼10am–4pm) Ideal for families or a few hours of fun, this town winter sports center also rents ski equipment; ask about snowshoes to take a winter walk. For directions, see p475.

Tours

Many travel agencies sell tours around the region. You can go horseback riding, hiking, canoeing, visit Lagos Escondido and Fagnano, stay at an *estancia* (ranch) or spy on birds and beavers.

All Patagonia

GUIDED TOUR

(☎433622; www.allpatagonia.com; Juana Fadul 60) Amex rep offering more conventional and luxurious trips.

Canal Fun

ADVENTURE TOUR

(☎437395; www.canalfun.com; 9 de Julio 118) Run by hip young guys, these popular all-day outings include hiking and kayaking in Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego (AR\$425), the famous off-roading adventure around Lago Fagnano (AR\$535), and a multisport outing around Estancia Harberton that includes kayaking around Estancia Harberton and a visit to the penguin colony (AR\$785).

Compañía de Guías de Patagonia

WALKING TOUR

(☎437753; www.companiadeguias.com.ar; San Martín 654) A reputable outfitter organizing excursions in the national park, full-day treks and ice-hiking on Glaciar Vinciguerra (AR\$329), and recommended three-day treks to Valle Andorra and Paso la Oveja (AR\$2026).

Nunatak Adventure

ADVENTURE TOUR

(☎430329; www.nunatakadventure.com) Offers competitively priced adventure tours and has its own mountain base. Many travelers have enjoyed the off-roading day trip to Lago Fagnano with canoeing and a full barbecue (AR\$460).

Patagonia Adventure Explorer

HARBOR CRUISE

(☎02901-15-465842; www.patagoniaadvent.com.ar; tourist wharf) Comfortable boats with snacks and a short hike on Isla Bridges. For extra adventure, set sail in the 18ft sailboat. Full-day sail trips with wine and gourmet snacks or multiday trips are also available.

Piratour

HARBOR CRUISE

(☎424834; www.piratour.com.ar; tourist wharf) Runs 20-person tours to Isla Martillo for trekking around Magellanic and Papúa penguins.

Rumbo Sur

GUIDED TOUR

(☎422275; www.rumbosur.com.ar; San Martín 350) Ushuaia's longest-running agency specializes in more-conventional activities, plus a catamaran harbor cruise. It also handles bookings to Antarctica.

Tango y Che

HARBOR CRUISE

(☎02901-15-517967; www.navegandoelbeagle.com; tourist wharf) With two 12-passenger boats, this owner-run tour includes a trek on Bridges Island and Beagle (what else?) beer on tap served for the cruise back to the harbor—very popular with the hostel crowd.

Tres Marias Excursiones

HARBOR CRUISE

(☎436416; www.tresmariasweb.com; tourist wharf) The only outfitter with permission to land on Isla 'H' in the Isla Bridges natural reserve, which has shell mounds and a colony of rock cormorants. It takes only eight passengers.

Tolkar

GUIDED TOUR

(☎431408/12; www.tolkarturismo.com.ar; Roca 157) Another helpful, popular, all-round agency, affiliated with Tecni-Austral buses.

Turismo Comapa

BOATING

(☎430727; www.comapa.com; San Martín 245) Confirm Navimag and Cruceros Australes passages here.

Turismo de Campo

GUIDED TOUR

(☎437351; www.turismodecampo.com, in Spanish; Fuegia Basquet 414) Organizes light trekking, Beagle Channel sailing trips and visits to Estancia Rolito near Río Grande. Also sells nine- to 12-night Antarctic passages.

Ushuaia Turismo

GUIDED TOUR

(☎436003; www.ushuaiaiturismoevt.com.ar; Gobernador Paz 865) Offers last-minute Antarctica cruise bookings.

Festivals & Events**Fin del Mundo Marathon**

RUNNING

(☺ early Mar) A hugely popular international marathon on the southernmost course on the continent.

Longest Night

FESTIVAL

(☺ mid-Jun) The Festival Nacional de Noche Más Larga (the Longest Night) features two weeks of shows and music recitals (ranging from tango to jazz and popular music), with free events at locations throughout the city. For more information, contact the tourism office.

Marcha Blanca

SNOW SPORTS

(www.marchablanca.com; ☺ mid-Aug) Running for a quarter of a century, Ushuaia's biggest ski event is the annual cross-country event which re-creates San Martín's historic August 17, 1817 crossing of the Andes. There's also a master class for ski enthusiasts, snow sculptures and a Nordic ski marathon.

Sleeping

Reserve ahead from January to early March. Check when booking for free arrival transfers. Winter rates drop a bit, some places close altogether. Most offer laundry service.

The municipal tourist office (p481) has lists of B&Bs and *cabañas* (cabins), and also posts a list of available lodgings outside after closing time.

Hostels abound, all with kitchens and most with internet access. Rates typically drop 25% in low season (April to October).

Antarctica Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(☎435774; www.antarcticahostel.com; Antártida Argentina 270; dm/d AR\$70/125; @☎) This friendly backpacker hub delivers with a warm atmosphere and helpful staff. It turns out that an open floor plan and beer on tap are conducive to making friends. Guests lounge and play cards in the common room and cook in a cool balcony kitchen. Cement rooms are ample, with radiant floor heating.

Galeazzi-Basily B&B

B&B \$\$

(☎423213; www.avesdelsur.com.ar; Valdéz 323; s/d with shared bath AR\$190/280, d/tr/q cabin AR\$390/450/520; @☎) The best feature of this elegant wooded residence is its warm and hospitable family who will make you

feel right at home. Rooms are small but offer a personal touch. Since beds are twin-sized, couples may prefer a modern cabin out back. It's a peaceful spot, and where else can you practice your English, French, Italian and Portuguese?

Cabañas del Beagle

CABIN \$\$\$

(☎432785; www.cabanasdelbeagle.com; Las Albas 375; 2-person cabin AR\$1055, 2-night minimum) Couples in search of a romantic hideaway delight in these rustic chic cabins with heated stone floors, crackling fireplaces and full kitchens stocked daily with fresh bread, coffee and other treats. The personable owner, Alejandro, wins high praise for his attentive service. It's 13 blocks uphill from the center and accessed via Av Leandro Alem.

Freestyle

HOSTEL \$

(☎432874; www.ushuaiafreestyle.com; Gobernador Paz 866/868; dm without/with bath AR\$80/90; @☎) With an MTV vibe you'll love or not, this tricked-out hostel boasts modern dorms with cozy fleece blankets, a marble-countertop cooking area, and a sprawling living room with pool table, leatherette sofas and panoramic views. Brothers Emilio and Gabriel offer friendly tips and good tour connections.

La Posta

HOSTEL \$

(☎444650; www.laposta-ush.com.ar; Perón Sur 864; dm/d AR\$85/135; @☎) This cozy hostel and guesthouse on the outskirts of town is hugely popular with young travelers thanks to warm service, homey decor and spotless open kitchens. The downside is that the place is far from the town center, but public buses and taxis are plentiful.

Los Cormoranes

HOSTEL \$

(☎423459; www.loscormoranes.com; Kamshen 788; dm/d/tr AR\$70/280/330; @☎) More melow than the competition, this friendly III hostel is a 10-minute (uphill) walk north of the center. Good, warm, six-bed dorms face outdoor plank hallways – making that mid-night bathroom dash bearable. Modern doubles have polished cement floors and bright down duvets – the best is room 10, with bay views. The abundant breakfast includes toast, coffee, do-it-yourself eggs and freshly squeezed orange juice.

La Casa de Tere B&B

B&B \$\$\$

(☎422312; www.lacasadetere.com.ar; Rivadavia 620; s/d AR\$211/253, d with bathroom AR\$337) Tere showers guests with attention, but also gives them the run of the place in this beautiful

modern home with great views. Its three tiny rooms fill up fast. Guests can cook, and there's cable TV and a fireplace in the living room. It's a short but steep walk uphill from the center.

Posada Fin del Mundo

B&B \$\$\$

(☎437345; www.posadafindelmundo.com.ar; cnr Rivadavia & Valdéz; d without/with bath AR\$422/577) A rambling family home which exudes character, starting with a snug living room with folk art and expansive water views. Bright fresh, tiled rooms tend toward the small side but beds are long. Pricey for its category, at least breakfast is abundant and there's also afternoon tea and cakes. Sometimes booked by entire ski teams in winter.

Cabañas Aldea Nevada

CABIN \$\$\$

(☎422851; www.aldeanevada.com.ar; Martial 1430; d AR\$520, 2-night minimum; @) You expect the elves to arrive here any minute. This beautiful patch of lenga forest is discreetly dotted with 13 log cabins with outdoor grills and rough-hewn benches contemplatively placed by the ponds. Interiors are rustic but modern, with functional kitchens, wood stoves and hardwood details.

Cumbres del Martial

INN \$\$\$

(☎424779; www.cumbresdelmartial.com.ar; Martial 3560; d/cabin AR\$1160/1667; @☎) This stylish place sits at the base of the Glaciar Martial. Standard rooms have a touch of the English cottage, while the two-story wooden cabins are simply stunners, with stone fireplaces, Jacuzzis and dazzling vaulted windows. Lush robes, optional massages (extra) and your country's newspaper delivered to your mailbox are some of the delicious details.

Los Cauquenes Resort & Spa

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎441300; www.loscauquenes.com; d incl breakfast AR\$1223-1546, d/ste AR\$1316/2772; @☎) A newer addition to Ushuaia, this sprawling wooden lodge sits directly on the Beagle Channel, in a private neighborhood with gravel-road access. Rooms are tasteful and well-appointed, special features include a play room stocked with kids' games and outdoor terraces with glass windbreaks and stunning views of the channel. Proof that Argentines will market anything, the spa features yerba maté scrubs and Andean peat masks. There's also a sauna and indoor-outdoor pool. Free shuttles to downtown leave every few hours. It's 4km west of the airport.

Familia Piatti B&B

B&B \$\$\$

(☎437104; www.interpatagonia.com/familiapiatti; in Spanish; Bahía Paraíso 812, Bosque del Faldeo; s/d/tr AR\$240/335/395; @☎) If idling in the forest sounds good, head for this friendly B&B with warm down duvets and native lenga-wood furniture. Hiking trails nearby lead up into the mountains. The friendly owners are multilingual (English, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese) and can arrange transport and guided excursions.

Martin Fierro B&B

B&B \$\$\$

(☎430525; www.martinfierroyb.com.ar; 9 de Julio 175; s/d with shared bath AR\$250/350, s/d AR\$350/500; ☺ Oct-Apr; @☎) Spending a night at this charming inn feels like staying at the cool mountain cabin of a worldly friend who makes strong coffee and has a great book collection. The owner, Javier, personally built the interiors with local wood and stone; these days he cultivates a friendly, laid-back atmosphere where travelers get into deep conversations at the breakfast table.

Yakush

HOSTEL \$

(☎435807; www.hostelyakush.com.ar; Piedrabuena 118; dm AR\$85, d without/with bath AR\$240/300; ☺ mid-Oct–mid-Apr; @) Exuding warmth and skillfully adorned with whimsical drawings, this colorful hostel is well-kept and exceedingly friendly. Dorms have fresh sheets and good beds, and social spaces include an ample upstairs lounge with futons and slanted ceilings.

La Maison de Ushuaia

B&B \$\$\$

(☎437414; www.lamaisondeushuaia.com; Bouchard 316; s/d AR\$211/253, d/tr without bath AR\$260/300; d AR\$340; @☎) A matriarchal family, who spent years sailing the world, dug roots on this quiet side street. It's effervescent and welcoming, if a bit disorderly. The multilevel home features creative slatted woodwork, a loft bed (great for kids) and a prized master bedroom. Guests have kitchen use and French and English are spoken. It's uphill from the center.

Mil 810

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎437710; www.hotel1810.com; 25 de Mayo 245; d/tr incl breakfast AR\$470/530; @) Billed as boutique, this is more like a small upscale hotel. The design is modern, with elements of nature, like a retention wall of river stones and a rock face trickling with water. Its 38 rooms feature brocade walls, rich tones, luxuriant textures and touches of abstract art. Rooms have flat-screen TVs and safes, and halls are monitored.

Hostel Cruz del Sur

HOSTEL \$

(☎434099; www.xdelsur.com.ar; Deloquí 242; dm AR\$70-80, d AR\$220; @☎) This easygoing hostel comprises two renovated houses (1920 and 1926), painted tangerine and joined by a passageway. Dorm prices are based on room capacity, the only disadvantage is your bathroom might be on another flight. There's a fine backyard patio, though indoor shared spaces are scant. Hosts do a fine job of rounding up groups to explore nearby areas.

Camping La Pista del Andino

CAMPGROUND \$

(☎435890; www.lapistadelandino.com.ar, in Spanish; Alem 2873; camp sites per person AR\$22) A steep, uphill, 3km trek leads to this pleasant campground offering grassy or forested sites with views. While it's short on showers and toilets, perks include decent cooking facilities, a bar-restaurant, good common areas and bikes for rent (AR\$25). It's at Club Andino Ushuaia's ski area. Call for free pickup from the airport or town center.

Camping Municipal

CAMPGROUND \$

(RN 3) About 10km west of town, en route to Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego, this free campground boasts a lovely setting but minimal facilities.

 **Eating** **Kalma Resto**

GOURMET \$\$\$

(☎425786; www.kalmaresto.com.ar; Av Antartida 57; mains AR\$55-105; ☎8pm-midnight) Creating quite a stir, this tiny chef-owned gem presents Fuegian staples – like crab and octopus – in a giddy new context. Black sea bass, a rich deep-sea dweller, is combined with a tart tomato sauce for contrast, roast lamb stew with earthy pine mushrooms and the summer greens and edible flowers come fresh from the garden. Service is stellar, with young chef Jorge making the rounds of the few black linen tables. For dessert, splurge with a not-too-sweet deconstructed chocolate cake.

Kaupe

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$

(☎422704; www.kaupe.com.ar; Roca 470; mains AR\$80-120) For an out-of-body seafood experience, head to this candlelit house overlooking the bay. Chef Ernesto Vivian employs the freshest of everything and service is impeccable. The tasting menu (AR\$360 with wine and champagne) features two starters, a main dish and dessert, with standouts such as king crab and spinach chowder or black sea bass in blackened butter.

Bodegón Fuego

PATAGONIAN \$\$\$

(☎431972; www.tierradehumos.com/bodegon; San Martín 859; mains AR\$32-82; ☎Tue-Sun) The spot to sample hearty home-style Patagonian fare or gather for wine and appetizers. This century-old Fuegian home is cozied up with sheepskin-clad benches, cedar barrels and ferns. A *picada* (shared appetizer plate) for two includes eggplant, lamb brochettes, crab and bacon-wrapped plums.

María Lola Restó

ARGENTINE \$\$\$

(☎421185; Deloquí 1048; mains AR\$45-70; ☎noon-midnight Mon-Sat) "Satisfying" defines the experience at this creative cafe-style restaurant overlooking the channel. Locals pack this silver house for homemade pasta with sea food or strip steak in rich mushroom sauce. Service is good and portions tend toward humongous: desserts can easily be split.

Chez Manu

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$

(☎432253; www.chezmanu.com; Martial 2135; mains AR\$55-90) If you are headed to Glacier Martial, don't miss this gem on the way. Chef Emmanuel puts a French touch on fresh local ingredients, such as Fuegian lamb or mixed plates of cold *fruits de mer*. The three-course set lunch is the best deal. Views are a welcome bonus. It's 2km from town.

Chiko

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(☎432036; Av Antartida Argentina 182; mains AR\$38-65; ☎noon-3pm & 7:30-11:30pm Mon-Sat) Popular 2nd-floor restaurant with an odd assemblage of Chilean memorabilia that spells homesickness for the owners from Chiloe, but it's a clear boon to seafood lovers. King crab, *paila marina* (shellfish stew) and fish dishes are done so right that you might not mind the slow and sometimes clumsy service.

Almacen Ramos Generales

CAFE \$

(☎427317; www.ramosgeneralesushuaia.com; Maipú 749; mains AR\$30-70; ☎9am-midnight) The real draw of this ambient-rich general store are the croissants and crusty baguettes baked by the French pastry chef. But there's also local beer on tap, a wine list and light, if pricey, fare such as sandwiches, soups and quiche.

La Estancia

STEAKHOUSE \$\$\$

(☎431241; Godoy & San Martín; mains AR\$40-90) For authentic Argentine *asado*, it is hard to beat this reliable, well-priced grill. At night it's packed with locals and travelers alike, feasting on whole roast lamb, juicy steaks, sizzling ribs and heaping salads.

El Turco

CAFE \$

(☎424711; San Martín 1410; mains AR\$22-55; ☎noon-3pm & 8pm-midnight) Nothing fancy, this classic Argentine cafe nonetheless charms with reasonable prices and swift bow-tied waiters game to try out their French on tourists. Standards include *milanesa* (breaded meat), pizzas, crispy fries and roast chicken.

Placeres Patagónicos

CAFE \$\$\$

(☎433798; www.patagonicosweb.com.ar; 289 Deloquí; mains AR\$29-60) This stylish cafe-deli serves wooden cutting boards piled with homemade bread and mouth-watering local specialties: smoked trout and wild boar. Coffee arrives steaming in a bowl-sized mug.

Café-Bar Tante Sara

CAFE \$\$\$

(☎433710; www.cafebartantesara.com.ar; cnr San Martín & Juana Fadul; mains AR\$40-80) Popular for its ambiance, this corner bistro serves the usual suspects in a bubbly atmosphere. The sister branch near the intersection of San Martín and Rivadavia is often packed with locals having coffee and pastries.

Lomitos Martinica

FAST FOOD \$

(San Martín 68; mains AR\$22-32; ☎11:30am-3pm & 8:30pm-midnight) Cheap and cheerful, this greasy spoon with grillside seating serves enormous *milanesa* sandwiches and offers a cheap lunch special.

La Anónima

SUPERMARKET \$

(cnr Gobernador Paz & Rivadavia) A grocery store with cheap take-out.

**Drinking**

Geographically competitive drinkers should note that the southernmost bar in the world is not here but on a Ukrainian research station in Antarctica.

Dublin Irish Pub

BAR

(☎430744; www.dublinushuaia.com; cnr 9 de Julio & Deloquí) Dublin doesn't feel so far away with the lively banter and free-flowing drinks at this dimly lit foreigners' favorite. Look for occasional live music and be sure to try at least one of its three local Beagle beers.

Macario 1910

PUB

(☎422757; www.macario1910.com; San Martín 1485; sandwiches AR\$22; ☎6pm-late) A welcoming pub with trans-Atlantic style of polished wood and leather booths. The tasty locally-made Beagle Beer flows on tap and the above-average pub fare includes fresh tuna sandwiches on homemade bread and plates stacked with shoestring fries made from scratch.

Küar Resto Bar

PUB

(☎437396; www.kuar.com.ar; Av Perito Moreno 2232; ☎6pm-late) This chic log-cabin-style bar welcomes the "after-ski" crowd for cocktails, local beer and tapas. The interior is stylish but the highlight, especially at sunset, is the jaw-dropping views over the water. You'll have to catch a cab.

**Entertainment****Cine Pakawaia**

CINEMA

(☎436500; cnr Yaganes & Gobernador Paz; tickets AR\$12) First-run movies are shown at the Presidio's fully restored hangar-style theater.

Casa de la Cultura

PERFORMING ARTS

(☎422417; cnr Malvinas Argentinas & 12 de Octubre) Hidden behind a gym, this center hosts occasional live-music shows.

**Shopping****Boutique del Libro**

BOOKS

(☎432117, 424750; 25 de Mayo 62; ☎10am-9pm) Outstanding selection of Patagonia and Antarctica-themed material, with literature, guidebooks and pictorials (also in English); there's a branch at San Martín 1120.

 **Information**

ACA (Automóvil Club Argentino; ☎421121; cnr Malvinas Argentinas & Onachaga) Argentina's auto club; good source for provincial road maps.

Administración de Parques Nacionales (National Parks office; ☎421315; San Martín 1395; ☎9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Cambio Thaler (San Martín 209; ☎10am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat, 5-8pm Sun) Convenience equals slightly poorer exchange rates. Several banks on Maipú and San Martín have ATMs.

Club Andino Ushuaia (☎422335; www.clubandinoushuaia.com.ar, in Spanish; Juana Fadul 50; ☎9am-1pm & 3-8pm Mon-Fri) Sells a map and bilingual trekking, mountaineering and mountain-biking guidebook. The club occasionally organizes hikes and can recommend guides. Unguided trekkers are strongly encouraged to register here or with the tourist office before hiking and after a safe return.

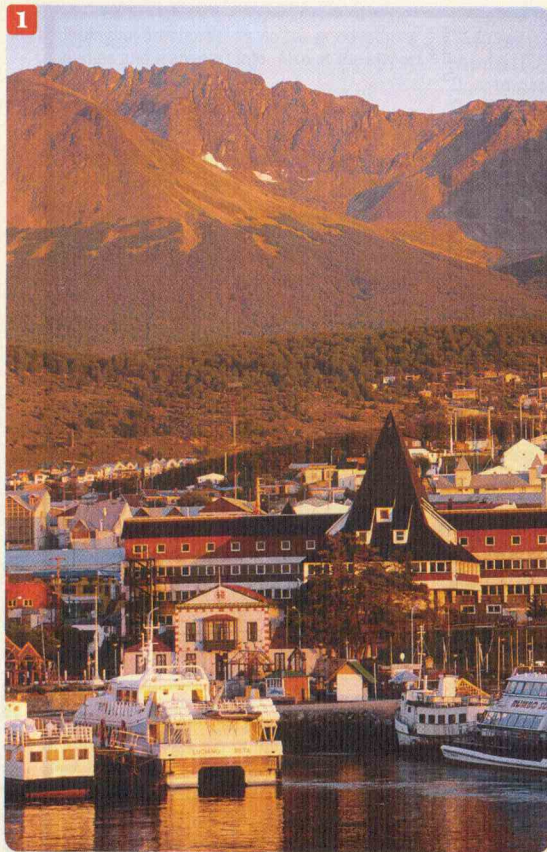
Hospital Regional (☎107, 423200; cnr Fitz Roy & 12 de Octubre)

Immigration office (☎422334; Beauvoir 1536; ☎9am-noon Mon-Fri)

Instituto Fuego de Turismo (Infuetur; ☎421423; www.tierradefuego.org.ar; Maipú 505) On the ground floor of Hotel Albatros.

Municipal tourist office (☎432000, at airport 423970, outside of Tierra del Fuego 0800-333-1476; www.turismoushuaia.com, in Spanish; San Martín 674) Very helpful, with English- and

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RALPH HOPKINS/LORELY PLANET IMAGES ©

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Ushuaia (p471)

The Andes meets the Southern Ocean in this bustling end-of-the-world port town.

Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego (p482)

The hillsides of this national park take on a spectacular glow of red during autumn.

Paso de la Oveja (p477)

A three-day trek to this area is grueling, but rewarding.

Estancia Harberton (p488)

Founded in 1886, this estancia is a bird-watcher's paradise.

3



CAROLYN MCCARTHY ©

zone). Despite this, a few scenic hikes along the bays and rivers, or through dense native forests of evergreen coihue, canelo and deciduous lenga, are worthwhile. For spectacular color, come in autumn when hillsides of fire glow red.

Birdlife is prolific, especially along the coastal zone. Keep an eye out for condors, albatross, cormorants, gulls, terns, oystercatchers, grebes, kelp geese and the comical, flightless, orange-billed steamer ducks. Common invasive species include the European rabbit and the North American beaver, both wreaking ecological havoc despite their cuteness. Gray and red foxes, enjoying the abundance of rabbits, may also be seen.

Hiking

After running 3242km from Buenos Aires, RN 3 reaches its terminus at the shores of Bahía Lapataia. From here, trails **Mirador Lapataia** (500m), with excellent views, and **Senda Del Turbal** (400m) lead through winding lenga forest further into the bay. Other short walks include the self-guided nature trail **Senda Laguna Negra** (950m), through peat bogs, and the **Senda Castorera** (400m), showcasing massive abandoned beaver dams on a few ponds.

SENDA HITO XXIV

From Camping Lago Roca, a flat 10km (four-hour) roundtrip trek leads around Lago Roca's forested northeast shore to Hito XXIV – that number is *veinticuatro* in Spanish – the boundary post that marks the Argentina–Chile frontier. It is illegal to cross the frontier, which is patrolled regularly.

From the same trailhead you can reach **Cerro Guanaco** (973m) via the steep and difficult 8km trail of the same name; it's a long uphill haul but the views are excellent.

SENDA COSTERA

This 8km (four-hour) trek leads west from Bahía Ensenada along the coastline. Keep an eye out for old *conchales* (archaeologically important mounds of shells left by Yahgan inhabitants), now covered in grass. The trail meets RN 3 a short way east of the park administration (*guardería*) center at Lapataia. From here it is 1.2km further to Senda Hito XXIV.

It might be tempting to roll up the cuffs and go clamming, but be aware that occasional red tides (*marea roja*) contaminate

mollusks (such as clams and mussels) along the shore of the Beagle Channel.

SENDA PALESTRA

This 4km (three-hour) roundtrip trek from Bahía Ensenada follows a path eastward past an old copper mine to the popular rock-climbing wall of Palestra, near a *refugio* (rustic shelter) that is no longer in use.

SENDA PAMPA ALTA

The low heights of Pampa Alta (around 315m) grant long views across the Beagle Channel to Isla Navarino and Isla Hoste. RN 3 meets the trailhead 1.5km west of the Río Pipo and Bahía Ensenada road turnoffs (3km from the entrance gate). The 5km roundtrip trail first climbs a hill, passing a beaver dam along the way. Enjoy the impressive views at the lookout. A quick 300m further leads to a trail paralleling the Río Pipo and some waterfalls.

ISLA EL SALMÓN & LAGUNA NEGRA

From the road 2km southwest of Lapataia, a trail leads north along the western side of Río Lapataia to a fishing spot opposite Isla El Salmón. Laguna Negra, a lovely lake in the forest, is easily accessible via a 1km circuit loop signposted 200m past the trail to Isla El Salmón.

Sleeping & Eating

There is one *refugio* and various, mostly free, campgrounds. Most get crowded, which means sites can get unreasonably messy. Do your part to take your trash out of the park and follow a leave-no-trace ethic. Camping Ensenada is 16km from the park entrance and nearest the Costera trail; Camping Río Pipo is 6km from the entrance and easily accessed by either the road to Cañadon del Toro or the Pampa Alta trail. Camping Las Bandurrias, Camping Laguna Verde and Camping Los Cauquenes are on the islands in Río Lapataia.

The only fee-based campground and *refugio* is **Lago Roca** (camp sites per person/dm AR\$9/40), 9km from the park entrance. The *refugio* dorm is available year-round except when weather prohibits transport to the park. Both offer hot showers, a good *confitería* (cafe offering light meals) and a tiny (expensive) grocery store. There is plenty of availability for camping at wild sites. Note that water at Lago Roca is not potable; boil it before using.

ANTARCTICA: THE ICE

For many travelers, a journey to Antarctica represents a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. Despite its high price tag, it is much more than just a continent to tick off your list. You will witness both land and ice shelves piled with hundreds of meters of undulating, untouched snow. Glaciers drop from mountainsides and icebergs form sculptures as tall as buildings. The wildlife is thrilling, with thousands of curious penguins and an extraordinary variety of flying birds, seals and whales.

More than 90% of Antarctic-bound boats pass through Ushuaia. In the 2010–11 season, that meant more than 36,000 tourists – a stunning contrast to the continent's population of 5000 (summer) or 1200 (winter) scientists and staff. But travel here is not without its costs. On November 23, 2007, the hull of the MV *Explorer* was gashed by ice but evacuated successfully before sinking. The circumstances were highly unusual, although the incident provoked further safety measures.

So long as you've got two or three weeks to spare, hopping on board a cruise ship is not out of the question. Some voyages take in the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) and South Georgia (human population 10 to 20, estimated penguin population two to three million); some go just to the Antarctic Peninsula; others focus on retracing historic expeditions. A small but growing handful of visitors reach Antarctica aboard private vessels. All are sailboats (equipped with auxiliary engines).

The season runs from mid-October to mid-March, depending on ice conditions. It used to be that peak-season voyages sold out; now most trips do. When shopping around, ask how many days you will actually spend in Antarctica, as crossing the Southern Ocean takes up to two days each way. And how many landings will there be? The smaller the ship, the more landings there are per passenger (always depending on the weather, of course). Tour companies charge anywhere from US\$7000 to US\$70,000, although some ships allow walk-ons, which can cost as little as US\$5000.

Due to Ushuaia's proximity to the Antarctic Peninsula, most cruises leave from here. Last-minute bookings can be made through **Ushuaia Turismo** (☎02901-436003; www.ushuaiaturismo.com.ar; ushuaiaturismo@speedy.com.ar; Gobernador Paz 865). Other travel agencies offering packages include **Rumbo Sur** (☎02901-422275; www.rumbosur.com.ar; San Martín 350), **All Patagonia** (☎02901-433622; www.allpatagonia.com; Juana Fadul 60) and **Canal Fun** (☎02901-437395; www.canalfun.com; 9 de Julio 118), though there are many more.

Check that your company is a member of **IAATO** (www.iaato.org), which mandates strict guidelines for responsible travel to Antarctica. The following are just a few companies that go:

Adventure Associates

(www.adventureassociates.com) Australia's first tour company to Antarctica, with many ships and destinations. CRUISE

National Geographic Expeditions

(www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com) Highly recommended, with quality naturalists and experts, aboard the 148-passenger *National Geographic Explorer*. CRUISE

Peregrine Adventures

(www.peregrineadventures.com) Offers unique trips that include visiting the Antarctic Circle, with kayaking and camping options. CRUISE

Quark Expeditions

(www.quarkexpeditions.com) Three kinds of ships, from an icebreaker to a 48-passenger ship for close-knit groups. CRUISE

WildWings Travel

(www.wildwings.co.uk) UK-based company that focuses on bird-watching and wildlife in Antarctica. CRUISE

For more information see Lonely Planet's *Antarctica* guidebook. Online, check out www.70south.com for up-to-date information and articles. In Ushuaia consult the very helpful **Oficina Antártica** (Antarctica tourist office; ☎02901-430015; antartida@tierradel.fuego.org.ar) at the pier.

i Getting There & Away

Buses leave from the corner of Maipú and Juana Fadul in Ushuaia every 40 minutes in high season from 9am to 6pm, returning between 8am and 8pm. Depending on your destination, a roundtrip fare is around AR\$70, and you need not return the same day. Private tour buses cost AR\$100 for a roundtrip. Taxi fares shared between groups can be the same price as bus tickets.

The most touristy and, beyond jogging, the slowest way to the park, **El Tren del Fin de Mundo** (☎02901-431600; www.trendelfin-demundo.com.ar; adult/child plus park entrance fee AR\$155/50) originally carted prisoners to work camps. It departs (without the convicts) from the Estación del Fin de Mundo, 8km west of Ushuaia (taxis one way AR\$30), three or four times daily in summer and once or twice daily in winter.

The one-hour, scenic narrow-gauge train ride comes with historical explanations in English and Spanish. Reserve in January and February, when cruise-ship tours take over. You can take it one way and return via minibus.

Hitchhiking is feasible, but many cars are already be full.

DON'T MISS

ESTANCIA HARBERTON

Tierra del Fuego's first estancia, **Harberton** (Skype: estanciaharberton.turismo; www.estanciaharberton.com; tour & museum adult/child AR\$45/free, half-board s/d/tr AR\$802/1266/1772; ☎10am-7pm Oct 15–Apr 15) was founded in 1886 by missionary Thomas Bridges and his family. The location earned fame from a stirring memoir written by Bridges' son Lucas, titled *Uttermost Part of the Earth*, about his coming of age among the now-extinct Selk'nam and Yahgan people. Available in English, the book is an excellent introduction to the history of the region and the ways of native peoples.

In a splendid location, the *estancia* is owned and run by Tomas Bridges' descendants. There's lodging and day visitors can attend guided tours (featuring the island's oldest house and a replica Yahgan dwelling), dine at the restaurant and visit the Reserva Yecapasela penguin colony. It's also a popular destination for bird watchers.

Onsite, the impressive **Museo Acatushún** (www.acatushun.com) houses a vast collection of mammal and bird specimens compiled by biologist Natalie Prosser Goodall. Emphasizing the region's marine mammals, the museum has inventoried thousands of mammal and bird specimens; among the rarest is a Hector's beaked whale. Much of this vast collection was found at Bahía San Sebastián, north of Río Grande, where a difference of up to 11km between high and low tide leaves animals stranded. Confirm the museum's opening hours with the *estancia*.

Reserve well in advance as there are no phones at the *estancia*, though Skyping may be possible. With advance permission, free primitive camping is allowed at Río Lasifashaj, Río Varela and Río Cambaceres. Harberton is 85km east of Ushuaia via RN 3 and rough RC-j, a 1½- to two-hour drive. In Ushuaia, shuttles leave from the base of 25 de Mayo at Av Maipú at 9am, returning around 3pm. Day-long catamaran tours are organized by local agencies.

Puerto Williams (Chile)

☎61 / POP 2500

Forget Ushuaia: the end of the world starts where colts roam Main St and yachts rounding Cape Horn take refuge. Naval settlement Puerto Williams is the only town on Isla Navarino, the official port of entry for vessels en route to Cape Horn and Antarctica, and home to the last living Yahgan speaker.

Just outside Puerto Williams is some of the Southern Cone's most breathtaking scenery. With more than 150km of trails, Isla Navarino is a rugged, backpackers' paradise, with slate-colored lakes, mossy lenga forests and the ragged spires of the Dientes de Navarino. Trails lead past beaver dams, bunkers and army trenches as they climb steeply into the mountains and deeper into forests. Thousands of beavers, introduced from Canada in the 1940s, plague the island, though their numbers are diminishing due to an active eradication campaign (which means they're even on the menu, if you can find an open restaurant).

Mid-19th-century missionaries, followed by fortune-seekers during the 1890s gold rush, established a permanent European

presence here. The remaining mixed-race descendants of the Yahgan (Yámana) people are established in the small seaside village of Villa Ukika, a 15-minute walk east of town along the waterfront.

i Sights & Activities

TOP CHOICE Dientes de Navarino

HIKING

Gaining in popularity, this four- to five-day trekking circuit offers impossibly raw and windswept vistas under Navarino's toothy spires. Plans are underway to add a *refugio* and shelters in late 2012. For detailed trekking routes, refer to Lonely Planet's *Trekking in the Patagonian Andes*.

Museo Martín Gusinde

MUSEUM

(☎621043; cnr Araguay & Gusinde; donation requested; ☎9am-1pm & 2:30-7pm Mon-Fri) An attractive museum honoring the German priest and ethnographer who worked among the Yahgans from 1918 to 1923. Focuses on ethnography and natural history.

Lago Windhond

HIKING

This remote lake is a lesser known, but worthy, alternative to hiking the Dientes circuit, with sheltered hiking through forest and peat bogs. The four-day roundtrip is a better bet if there's high winds. For route details, ask at Turismo Shila or go with a guide.

Parque Etnobotánico Omora

PARK

(www.omora.org) Latin America's southernmost ethnobotanical park has trails with plant names marked in Yahgan, Latin and Spanish. Take the road to the right of the Virgin altar, 4km (an hour's walk) toward Puerto Navarino. Donations accepted.

Kipa-Akar

CULTURAL BUILDING

(Villa Ukika) A modest crafts shop that sells Yahgan language books, jewelry and knives made of scavenged whale bone. Ask a volunteer for help if it's closed.

Cerro Bandera

HIKING

With expansive views of the Beagle Channel, this four-hour roundtrip starts at the Navarino Circuit. The trail ascends steeply through lenga to blustery stone-littered hillside planted with a Chilean flag. Self-supported backpackers can continue on the Dientes circuit.

Yelcho

LANDMARK

Near the entrance to the military quarters is the original bow of the ship that rescued Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition from Elephant Island in 1916.

i Sleeping & Eating

Residencial Pusaki

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎621116; pattyypusaki@yahoo.es; Piloto Pardo 242; s/d CH\$11,500/26,000) Run by a fun matriarch, this small home is well cared for. Patty also organizes group dinners, usually exquisitely prepared seafood caught fresh from the channel, also available to nonguests (mains CH\$6000 to CH\$10,000).

Refugio El Padrino

HOSTEL \$

(☎621136; Costanera 267; dm CH\$10,000) Friendly and conducive to meeting others, this clean, self-service hostel offers small dorm rooms, located right on the channel.

Hotel Lakutaia

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎621733; www.lakutaia.cl; d incl breakfast CH\$65,000) About 3km east of town toward the airport, this modern full-service lodge will arrange transportation from Punta Arenas, and can organize day hikes to the Navarino Circuit and trips to Cape Horn. The library contains interesting history and nature references. Its only disadvantage is its isolation; you might leave without getting much of a feel for the quirky town. Lunch and dinner are also available.

La Picada del Castor

SANDWICHES \$

(Plaza de Ancla; mains CH\$3500-5000; ☎10am-10pm Mon-Sat) The most likely to be open, serving huge sandwiches and platters of fries at low-lit booths.

La Trattoria de Mateo

ITALIAN \$\$

(Plaza de Ancla; mains CH\$4500-7000; ☎noon-3:30pm & 6-10pm Tue-Sat, 12:30-4pm Sun) An Argentine-run cafe featuring homemade pastas with seafood options and pizzas.

i Drinking

Club de Yates Micalvi

BAR

(beer CH\$2500; ☎late Sep-May) As watering holes go, this may be like no other. A grounded German cargo boat, the *Micalvi* was declared a regional naval museum in 1976 but found infinitely better use as a floating bar, frequented by navy men and yachters.

i Information

Near the main roundabout, the Centro Comercial contains the post office, internet access, Aerovías DAP and call centers. ATM, money exchange (US cash only, US\$100 minimum) and Visa cash advances are possible at Banco de Chile.

Sernatur (☎621011; O'Higgins 165; ☎8am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) Tourist information,

including printouts of a hiking map for Dientes de Navarino. It's located in the Municipalidad.

Turismo SIM (☎621150; www.simltd.com) Expert sailors with trekking and expedition possibilities south of the 54th parallel, including Cape Horn, the Cordillera Darwin, Isla Navarino, South Georgia Island and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Turismo Shila (☎78972005; www.turismoshila.cl; cnr O'Higgins & Pratt) Offers local guides, camping rentals and GPS maps. Also sells Fernandez Campbell (p482) boat tickets.

Getting There & Away

Puerto Williams is accessible by plane or boat. **Aerovías DAP** (☎621051; www.dap.cl; Plaza de Ancla s/n) flies to Punta Arenas (CH\$65,000, 1¼ hours) at 11:30am Monday to Saturday from November to March, with fewer flights in winter. DAP flights to Antarctica may make a brief stopover here.

Using the new ferry *Patagonia*, **Transbordador Austral Broom** (www.tabsa.cl) sails from the Tres Puentes sector of Punta Arenas to Puerto Williams three or four times a month on Wednesdays, with departures from Puerto Williams back to Punta Arenas on Saturdays (reclining seat/bunk CH\$88,000/105,000 including meals, 38 hours). Travelers rave about the trip: if the weather holds there are good views on deck and the possibility of spotting dolphins or whales.

For ferry options to Ushuaia, see p482.

Tolhuin & Lago Fagnano

☎02901

Named for the Selk'nam word meaning 'like a heart', Tolhuin (population 2000) is a lake town nestled in the center of Tierra del Fuego, 132km south of Río Grande and 104km northeast of Ushuaia via smooth asphalt. This fast-growing frontier town of small plazas and sheltering evergreens fronts the eastern shore of Lago Fagnano, also known as Lago Kami. Tolhuin, with low-key horse riding, mountain biking, boating and fishing, is worth checking out as a tranquil lake spot.

Shared with Chile, the glacial-formed Lago Fagnano offers 117km of beaches, with most of its shoreline remote and roadless. Plans to create road access from Chile and put a catamaran here are developing.

Tolhuin's **tourist office** (☎492380, 492125; www.tierradelfuego.org.ar/tolhuin; Av de los Shelknam 80), behind the gas station, has information on hiking, horseback riding tours and gear rentals. Those coming from Ushuaia might get more-complete info from Ushuaia's tourist office (p481). **Banco de Tierra del Fuego** (Menkiol s/n) has an ATM.

Sleeping & Eating

Hostería Ruta Al Sur

HOTEL \$\$

(☎492278; www.rutalsur.com.ar; Ruta 3, Km 2954, d/tr incl breakfast AR\$270/295; 🍷🍴) A lovely new roadside lodge surrounded by old beech trees. Rooms are sparkling and there is a sprawling living room and restaurant. There are plans to add a swimming pool.

Camping Hain

CAMPGROUND \$

(☎02901-15-603606; Lago Fagnano; camp sites per person AR\$10, 8-person refugios AR\$130) Located on Lago Fagnano, with hot showers, grassy sites with wooden windbreaks, a huge barbecue pit and a *fogon* (sheltered fire pit and kitchen area).

Hostería Kaikén

INN \$\$\$

(☎492372; www.hosteriakaiken.com.ar; Lago Fagnano, Km 2942; d AR\$470-540, 2-person cabin AR\$350; 🍷🍴) This gorgeous lakeside inn is both refined and rustic, with beautiful colonial furniture, neutral tones and snug, down bedcovers. There's a stylish bar with panoramas of the lake and a dining room serving high-end cuisine.

Panadería La Unión

BAKERY \$

(☎492202; www.panaderialaunion.com.ar; in Spanish; Jeujepe 450, Tolhuin; snacks AR\$3; ☎24hr) First-rate *facturas* (pastries) and second-rate Nescafé cappuccinos keep this roadside attraction hopping. You may or may not recognize the Argentine celebrities gracing the walls (hint: the men are ageing rock stars, the women surgically enhanced). Buses break here to pick up passengers and hot water for *mate*.

Getting There & Away

Throughout the day, buses and minivans passing along RN 3 (often full in high season) stop at Panadería La Unión en route to Ushuaia or Río Grande (AR\$60).

Río Grande

☎02964 / POP 70,042

A monster trout sculpture at the entrance to town announces that you have come to the de facto fly-fishing capital of Tierra del Fuego, with some of the world's best blue-ribbon angling for colossal sea-run trout. But if you didn't come with rod in hand, the longest that you will likely stay in windswept Río Grande is a few hours, before hopping on a bus to Ushuaia, 230km southwest.

As wool baron José Menéndez' sheep stations developed, Río Grande became a growing makeshift service town. In 1893 the Salesian order, under the guidance of Monseñor Fagnano, set up a mission in an unsuccessful attempt to shelter the Selk'nam from the growing infringement.

As a petroleum service center, the town has an industrial feel: even the public art looks like giant, grim tinker toys. Geared at the business traveler, it's also pricey for visitors. Duty-free status, meant to foster local development, has brought in electronics manufacturing plants and wholesale appliance stores.

During the Falklands War the military played an important role here; memorials pay tribute to fallen soldiers.

Sleeping & Eating

Catering to suits and anglers, accommodations tends to be overpriced, not to mention sparse. There are a number of cheap but unsavory lodgings; others fill up fast. High-end places give a 10% discount for cash payments.

Posada de los Sauces

HOTEL \$\$

(☎432895; www.posadadelossauces.com.ar; Elcano 839; s/d/tr AR\$350/400/500; 🍷🍴) Catering mostly to the high-end anglers, this warm and professional hotel fosters a real lodge atmosphere, with fresh scents and woody accents. Deluxe rooms have Jacuzzis. The upstairs bar-restaurant, decked out in dark wood and forest green, is just waiting for stogies and tall tales to fill the air.

Hotel Villa

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎424998; hotelvillarg@hotmail.com; San Martín 281; d/tr incl breakfast AR\$310/380; 🍷🍴📺) Opposite Casino Status, this refurbished place has a popular restaurant, a dozen spacious and stylish rooms outfitted with down duvets, and breakfast with *medialunas* (croissants).

Tante Sara

CAFE \$\$\$

(Belgrano 402; mains AR\$45-88) An upscale chain in Tierra del Fuego, this nonetheless cozy spot hosts both ladies having tea and cake, and boys at the varnished bar downing beer and burgers. Salads (such as romaine, egg, blue cheese and bacon) are surprisingly good, although the service can be quite sluggish.

Information

Most visitor services are along Avs San Martín and Belgrano.

Banco de la Nación (cnr San Martín & 9 de Julio) Has an ATM; there are also several others nearby.

Instituto Fuegoino de Turismo (Infetur; ☎426805; www.tierradelfuego.org.ar; Belgrano 319; ☎9am-9pm) On the south side of the plaza.

Mariani Travel (☎426010; Rosales 281) Books flights and represents nearby *estancias*.

Municipal tourist kiosk (☎431324; turismo@riogrande.gob.ar; ☎9am-8pm) Helpful kiosk on the plaza, with maps, *estancia* brochures and fishing details.

Post office (Rivadavia, btwn Moyano & Alberdi)

Thaler Cambio (☎421154; Rosales 259) Changes traveler's checks.

Getting There & Away

The **airport** (RGA; ☎420699) is off RN 3, a short taxi ride from town. **Aerolíneas Argentinas** (☎424467; San Martín 607) flies daily to Buenos Aires. **LADE** (☎422968; Lasserre 445) flies a couple of times weekly to Río Gallegos, El Calafate and Buenos Aires.

Lider (☎420003, 424-2000; www.lidertdf.com.ar; Moreno 635) Best option for Ushuaia and Tolhuin is this door-to-door minivan service, with several daily departures. Call to reserve.

Montiel (☎420997; 25 de Mayo 712) Ushuaia and Tolhuin.

At **Terminal Fuegina** (Finocchio 1194):

Buses Pacheco (☎421554) To Punta Arenas three times per week at 10am.

Taqsa (☎434316) To Ushuaia via Tolhuin.

Tecni-Austral (☎434316; ticket office Moyano 516) To Ushuaia via Tolhuin three times per week at 8:30am; to Río Gallegos and Punta Arenas three times per week.

Bus Sur (☎420997; www.bus-sur.cl; ticket office 25 de Mayo 712) To Ushuaia, Punta Arenas & Puerto Natales, Chile three times per week at 5:30am, connecting with Montiel.

BUSES FROM RÍO GRANDE

DESTINATION	COST (ARS)	DURATION (HR)
Punta Arenas, Chile	130-160	9
Río Gallegos	265	8
Tolhuin	50-60	2
Ushuaia	75-90	4

Estancias Around Río Grande

Much of Tierra del Fuego was once the sprawling backyard of wool baron José Menéndez. His first *estancia* – La Primera Argentina (1897), now known as **Estancia José Menéndez**, 20km southwest of Río Grande via RN 3 and RC-b – covered 1600 sq km, with more than 140,000 head of sheep. His second and most-treasured venture was La Segunda Argentina, totaling 1500 sq km. Later renamed **Estancia María Behety** (☎in Buenos Aires 011-4331-5061; www.maribety.com.ar, in Spanish) after his wife, it's still a working ranch, 17km west of Río Grande via RC-c. Besides boasting the world's largest shearing shed, it is considered a highly exclusive lodge, catering mainly to tour groups and elite anglers. Fishing lodge La Villa has six bedrooms and overlooks the Río Grande.

Several *estancias* have opened to small-scale tourism, offering a unique chance to learn about the region's history and enjoy its magic. Reserve as far in advance as possible.

The sons of early settler Thomas Bridges (see p488) established **Estancia Viamonte** (☎02964-430861, 02964-15-616813; www.estancia

viamonte.com; per person incl breakfast & dinner AR\$760; ☎Oct-Apr & by arrangement) in 1907 at the request of the Selk'nam, in part to protect the indigenous group. The Goodalls, descendants of the Bridges, now run it as a working ranch, with 22,000 head of sheep on 400 sq km. Guests stay in son Lucas' original dwelling, the Sea View, a comfortable English-style home within earshot of the crashing waves. Guided activity possibilities include horseback riding, hiking and fly-fishing the Río Ewan.

Founded by Tierra del Fuego's first rural doctor, the Basque-Provençal-style **Estancia Tepi** (☎02964-427245, 02964-15-504-2020; www.estanciatepi.com.ar, in Spanish; RC-a, Km 5; day trip/B&B/full board per person AR\$464/760/886; ☎Dec-Mar) is a working, 100-sq-km ranch. Horseback riding is offered for all levels, with traditional Patagonian mounts heaped with sheepskins. The property also boasts thermal baths, treks and tours. It's 80km from Río Grande and 150km from Ushuaia.

The rustic and charismatic **Estancia Rolito** (☎02901-437351, 02901-432419; www.tierradelfuego.org.ar/rolito, in Spanish; RC-a, Km 14; rper person half-/full board AR\$608/920) is very Argentine and very inviting. Guests rave about the horseback-riding trips and hikes

THE TROUT ATLAS

You know a place takes fishing seriously when the tourism board posts a trout map online (www.tierradelfuego.org.ar/funcardio/trutamap.jpg). Hollywood stars, heads of state and former US presidents all flock to desolate stretches around Río Grande with dreams of the big one. Usually they are in luck.

Rivers around Río Grande were stocked in the 1930s with brown, rainbow and brook trout. It's now one of the world's best sea-run trout-fishing areas, with some local specimens weighing in at 15kg. Rainbow trout can reach 9kg.

Fishing excursions are mostly organized through outside agents, many in the USA. 'Public' fishing rivers, on which trips can be organized, include the Fuego, Menéndez, Candelaria, Ewan and MacLennan. Many of the more elite angling trips are lodged in *estancias* (ranches) with exclusive use of some of the best rivers.

There are two types of fishing licenses. License 1 is valid throughout the province, except in the national park. Contact **Asociación Caza y Pesca** (☎02901-423168; cazapescaush@infovia.com.ar; Maipú 822) in Ushuaia, or **Club de Pesca John Goodall** (☎02964-424324; Ricardo Rojas 606) in Río Grande. License 2 is valid for the national park and Patagonia. Contact the **National Parks office** (☎02901-421315; San Martín 1395) in Ushuaia or find more information on sport fishing in Argentina through the online portal **Pesca Argentina** (www.pescaargentina.com.ar, in Spanish). Other useful information:

Flies Rubber legs and woolly buggers.

License fees AR\$100 per day or AR\$420 per season, depending on where you fish.

Limit One fish per person per day, catch and release.

Methods Spinning and fly casting; no night fishing.

Season November 1 to April 15, with catch-and-release restrictions from April 1 to April 15.

FUEGIAN RITES OF PASSAGE

Part of traveling to Tierra del Fuego is searching for clues to its mystical, unknowable past. Souvenir shops sell a postcard of abstract intrigue: there's a naked man painted black. Fine horizontal white stripes cross his body from chest to foot. His face remains covered. So, what's this all about?

For people who lived exposed to the elements, dependent on their wits and courage, initiation ceremonies were a big deal. Those of the seafaring Yahgan (or Yámana) were surprisingly similar to those of the fierce northern neighbors they wanted little to do with, the nomadic hunters called Selk'nam (or Ona to the Yahgan). Both celebrated a male rite of passage that re-enacted a great upheaval when the men stole the women's secrets to gain power over them. In the Kina, Yahgan men interpreted the spirits by painting their bodies with black carbon and striped or dotted patterns that used the region's white and red clays. The Selk'nam undertook their Hain ceremony similarly adorned, taking young men into huts where they were attacked by spirits. In related ceremonies men showed their strength to women by fighting the spirits in theatrical displays, each acting with the characteristics of a specific spirit. These manly displays did not always achieve their desired effect of subjugation: one account tells of spirits dispatched to menace female camps that instead evoked hilarity.

With European encroachment, these ceremonies became more abbreviated and much of their detailed significance was lost. When the last Hain was celebrated in the early 20th century in the presence of missionaries, it had already crossed over from ritual to theater.

Sights

On the plaza, the intriguing **Museo de Tierra del Fuego** (☎581800; www.museoporvenir.cl; Zavattaro 402; admission CH\$500; ☎8am-5pm Mon-Thu, 8am-4pm Fri, 10:30am-1:30pm & 3-5pm Sat & Sun) has an interesting hodgepodge on display, including Selk'nam skulls and mummies, musical instruments used by the mission Selk'nams on Isla Dawson and an exhibit on early Chilean cinematography.

Activities & Tours

Though almost unknown as a wildlife-watching destination, Chilean Tierra del Fuego has abundant marine and bird life, which includes Peale's dolphins around Bahía Chilota and king penguins, found seasonally in Bahía Inútil. The recent discovery of this new king penguin colony has created quite a stir. As of yet, there's little procedure in place to protect the penguins from overvisitation. Please make your visit with a reputable agency, give the penguins ample berth and respect the nesting season.

Far South Expeditions (ecouve@fantastico-sur.com; 4-passenger tours CH\$60,000) offers transport to the king penguin colony or guided naturalist-run tours, with packages from Punta Arenas available. Gold-panning, horseback riding and 4WD tours can be arranged through the tourist office.

through ñire and lenga forest. Day trips from Ushuaia (with Turismo de Campo) stop by for lunch or dinner and guided horseback riding. Rolito is 100km from Río Grande and 150km from Ushuaia.

Porvenir (Chile)

☎61 / POP 5465

If you want a slice of home-baked Fuegian life, this is it. Most visitors come on a quick day trip from Punta Arenas tainted by seasickness. But spending a night in this rustic village of metal-clad Victorian houses affords you an opportunity to explore the nearby bays and countryside and absorb a little of the local life; bird watchers can admire the nearby king penguins, and lively populations of cormorants, geese and seabirds. While known for inaccessibility (there's no bus route here), the government is investing in completing roads through the southern extension of Chilean Tierra del Fuego, which will open up a whole untouched wilderness to visitors.

Porvenir experienced waves of immigration, many from Croatia, when gold was discovered in 1879. Sheep *estancias* provided more reliable work, attracting droves of Chileans from the island of Chiloé, who also came for fishing work. Today's population is a unique combination of the two.

CHILEAN IN ROADS

South of Cameron, access to Chilean Tierra del Fuego once petered out into stark, roadless wilderness and the rugged Cordillera Darwin. But the Ministry of Public Works is working hard to create access to these southern points and develop future tourism destinations. Currently projects are underway to create a link to Ushuaia via Lago Fagnano. In the future, the same road will continue to Estancia Yendegaia.

For now, there's at least one worthy destination on the road. **Lodge Deseado** (☎91652564; www.lodgedeseado.cl; 2-/3-person cabin incl breakfast CH\$135,000/160,000) marks a cozy spot to reel in wild trout, kick back in cool modern cabins and swap stories with the engaging owner Ricardo. It's located on Lago Deseado.

At the time of writing, the road to the western shore of Lago Fagnano was a rough five-plus hour journey in summer. A 4WD is required for this remote region (also see our tips for Ruta 40, p417). An earlier offshoot connects to the Argentine side via mountain pass Río Bellavista, which is only open December through March. Check with local police stations (known as *carabineros* in Chile) about the state of roads before leaving.

Sleeping & Eating

TOP CHOICE **Hostería Yendegaia** B&B \$
(☎581919, 68256521; www.hosteriayendegaia.com; Croacia 702; s/d/tr incl breakfast CH\$18,000/30,000/40,000; 🍷🍷) Everything a B&B should be, with naturalist books (some authored by the owner) to browse, abundant breakfast, views of the strait and spacious rooms with thick down duvets. This historic Magellanic home (the first lodging in Porvenir) has been lovingly restored, and its family of hosts are helpful. Its tour agency, Far South Expeditions, runs naturalist-led trips.

Hotel Rosas GUESTHOUSE \$
(☎580088; hotelrosas@chile.com; Philippi 296; s/d CH\$20,000/28,000) Eleven clean and pleasant rooms offer heating and cable TV; some have wonderful views. Alberto, the owner, knows heaps about the region and arranges tours to Circuito del Loro, a historical mining site. The restaurant (*plato del día* CH\$4600), serving fresh seafood and more, gets crowded for meals.

La Chispa CAFE \$
(☎580054; Señoret 202; plato del día CH\$4000) In an old aquamarine firehouse packed with locals for salmon dinners, lamb and mashed potatoes, and other home-cooked fare. It's a couple of blocks uphill from the water.

Club Croata SEAFOOD \$\$
(☎580053; Señoret 542; mains CH\$4000-8000; ☎11am-4pm & 7-10:30pm Tue-Sun) Formal to the verge of stuffy, this restaurant serves good seafood at reasonable prices, in addition to Croat specialties – pork chops with *chucrut* (sauerkraut). The pub is open to 3am.

Information

Banco de Estado (cnr Philippi & Croacia) Has a 24-hour ATM.

Hospital (☎580034; Wood, btwn Señoret & Guerrero)

Post office (Philippi 176) Faces the plaza.

Telefónica (Philippi 277) Next to the bank.

Tourist office (☎580094/8; www.muni.porvenir.cl; Zavattaro 434; ☎9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) Information is also available at the handicrafts shop on the *costanera* (seaside road) between Philippi and Schythe.

Getting There & Away

Aerovías DAP (☎616100; www.aeroviasdap.cl; O'Higgins 891) flies to Punta Arenas (15 minutes) Monday to Saturday from November to March, with fewer flights in the low season. For the airport, 6km north of town, DAP runs a door-to-door shuttle (CH\$1800) and taxis charge CH\$3500.

Transbordador Austral Broom (☎580089; www.tabsa.cl) operates the car/passenger ferry *Crux Australis* to/from Punta Arenas (per person/vehicle CH\$5500/34,900, 2½ to four hours). It usually leaves at 9am but has some afternoon departures; check the current online schedule. The bus to the ferry terminal (CH\$500), 5km away, departs from the waterfront kiosk an hour before the ferry's departure.

A good gravel road runs east along Bahía Inútil to the Argentine border at San Sebastián; allow about four hours. From San Sebastián (where there's gas and a motel), northbound motorists should avoid the heavily traveled and rutted truck route directly north and instead take the route from Onaisín to the petroleum company town of Cerro Sombrero, en route to the crossing of the Strait of Magellan at Punta Delgada-Puerto Espora.

Uruguay

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Best Places to Eat

- » Picasso (p531)
- » Mercado del Puerto (p507)
- » Lo de Charlie (p538)
- » Bodega y Granja Narbona (p522)
- » La Silenciosa (p510)

Best Places to Stay

- » Estancia La Sirena (p523)
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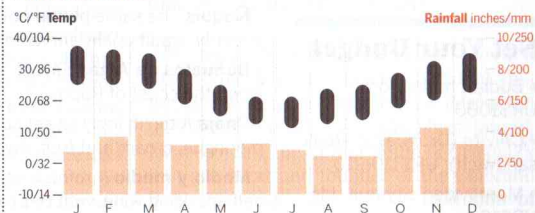
Why Go?

Wedged like a grape between Brazil's gargantuan thumb and Argentina's long forefinger, South America's smallest Spanish-speaking country has always been an underdog. Bypassed by the Spanish for its lack of mineral wealth, batted about like a ping-pong ball at the whim of its more powerful neighbors and neglected by many modern-day travelers, Uruguay remains a delightfully low-key, hospitable place where visitors can melt into the background – whether caught in a cow-and-gaucha traffic jam on a dirt road to nowhere or strolling with *mate*-toting locals along Montevideo's beachfront.

Short-term visitors will find plenty to keep them busy in cosmopolitan Montevideo, picturesque Colonia and party-till-you-drop Punta del Este. But if you've got time, dig a little deeper. Go wildlife-watching along the Atlantic coast, hot-spring-hopping up the Río Uruguay, or horseback riding under the big sky of Uruguay's vast interior, where fields spread out like oceans dotted with little cow and eucalyptus islands.

When to Go

Montevideo



Feb Street theater and drumming consume Montevideo during Carnival celebrations.

Mar Enjoy Tacuarembó's gaucho festival, plus warm water on Uruguay's beaches.

Oct Soak in a hot spring near Salto or channel Carlos Gardel at Montevideo's annual tango festival.

AT A GLANCE

- » Currency: Uruguayan peso (UR\$)
- » Language: Spanish
- » Money: ATMs wide-spread; credit cards widely accepted
- » Visas: Not required for nationals of Western Europe, Australia, USA, Canada or New Zealand

Fast Facts

- » Area: 176,215 sq km
- » Population: 3.3 million
- » Capital: Montevideo
- » Emergency: ☎911
- » Telephone country code: ☎598

Exchange Rates

Argentina	AR\$1	UR\$4.45
Australia	A\$1	UR\$20.14
Canada	C\$1	UR\$19.41
Chile	CH\$100	UR\$4.06
Euro	€1	UR\$25.61
zone		
Japan	¥100	UR\$24.47
New Zealand	NZ\$1	UR\$15.31
UK	UK£1	UR\$30.59
USA	US\$1	UR\$19.80

Set Your Budget

- » Budget hotel room: UR\$1000
- » *Chivito* (Uruguayan steak sandwich): UR\$110-210
- » Montevideo city bus ride: UR\$18
- » 1L bottle of local beer: UR\$80
- » Coffee: UR\$35

Itineraries

Just popping over from Buenos Aires for a couple of days? Don't overdo it! Focus your energy on the easygoing, picturesque historical river port of Colonia or the urban attractions of Montevideo, both an easy ferry ride from the Argentine capital.

If you've got a week up your sleeve, continue north along the Atlantic coast and sample a few of Uruguay's best beaches: the 1930s-vintage resort of Piriápolis, glitzy Punta del Este, isolated Cabo Polonio, surfer-friendly La Paloma and La Pedrera or the relaxed beach-party town of Punta del Diablo. Alternatively, follow the Río Uruguay upstream towards Iguazú Falls via the wineries of Carmelo, the quirky industrial museum at Fray Bentos and the wonderful hot springs of Salto.

With a whole two weeks to spare, get out and explore Uruguay's interior, ride horses on a tourist *estancia* and settle into a slower-paced lifestyle under the wide open skies of Tacuarembó, Quebrada de los Cuervos or Villa Serrana.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most visitors cross by ferry from Buenos Aires, arriving in Colonia, Montevideo or Carmelo. A few airlines, including Pluna, Iberia and American, offer direct international flights to Montevideo; several others connect through Buenos Aires or São Paulo. Land links include three international bridges across the Río Uruguay to Argentina, and six main border crossings into Brazil.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Asado** Uruguay's national gastronomic obsession, a mixed grill cooked over a wood fire, featuring various cuts of beef and pork, chorizo, *morcilla* (blood sausage) and more
- » **Chivito** A cholesterol bomb of a steak sandwich piled high with bacon, ham, fried or boiled egg, cheese, lettuce, tomato, olives, pickles, peppers and mayonnaise
- » **Noquis** The same plump potato dumplings the Italians call *gnocchi*, traditionally served on the 29th of the month
- » **Buñuelos de Algas** Savory seaweed fritters, a specialty along the coast of Rocha
- » **Chajá** A terrifyingly sweet concoction of sponge cake, meringue, cream and fruit, invented in Paysandú
- » **Medio y medio** A refreshing blend of half white wine, half sparkling wine, with ties to Montevideo's historic Café Roldós
- » **Grappamiel** Strong Italian-style *grappa* (grape brandy), sweetened and mellowed with honey

MONTEVIDEO

POP 1.3 MILLION

Nation's capital and home to nearly half of Uruguay's population, Montevideo is a vibrant, eclectic place with a rich cultural life. Stretching 20km from east to west, the city wears many faces, from its industrial port to the exclusive beachside suburb of Carrasco near the airport. In the historic downtown business district, art deco and neoclassical buildings jostle for space alongside grimy, worn-out skyscrapers that appear airlifted from Havana or Ceausescu's Romania, while to the southeast the shopping malls and modern high-rises of beach communities such as Punta Carretas and Pocitos bear more resemblance to Miami or Copacabana. Music, theater and the arts are alive and well here – from elegant older theaters and cozy little tango bars to modern beachfront discos – and there's a strong international flavor, thanks to the many foreign cultural centers and Montevideo's status as administrative headquarters for Mercosur, South America's leading trading bloc.

Montevideo lies almost directly across the Río de la Plata from Buenos Aires. For many visitors, the most intriguing area is the Ciudad Vieja, the formerly walled colonial grid straddling the western tip of a peninsula between the sheltered port and the wide-open river. Just east of the old town gate, the Centro (downtown) begins at Plaza Independencia, surrounded by historic buildings of the republican era. Av 18 de Julio, downtown Montevideo's commercial thoroughfare, runs east past Plaza del Entrevero, Plaza Cagancha and the Intendencia (town hall) towards Tres Cruces bus terminal, where it changes name to Av Italia and continues east towards Carrasco International Airport and the Interbalnearia.

Westward across the harbor, 132m Cerro de Montevideo (Map p500) was a landmark for early navigators and still offers outstanding views of the city. Eastward, the Rambla hugs Montevideo's scenic waterfront, snaking past attractive Parque Rodó (Map p500) and through a series of sprawling beach suburbs – Punta Carretas, Pocitos, Buceo and Carrasco – that are very popular with the capital's residents in summer and on weekends.

Sights

All sights are listed from west to east. Note that many Montevideo museums are known by their acronyms. Most exhibits are in Spanish only.

CIUDAD VIEJA

Museo del Carnaval

MUSEUM

(Map p502; ☎2916-5493; www.museodelcarnaval.org; Rambla 25 de Agosto 218; admission UR\$65; ☉11am-5pm Tue-Sun) This museum houses a wonderful collection of costumes, drums, masks, recordings and photos documenting the 100-plus-year history of Montevideo's Carnaval. Behind the museum is the Carnaval-themed restaurant *Tras Bambalinas* and bleachers where spectators can view performances during the summer months.

Mercado del Puerto

MARKET

(Map p502) No visitor should miss Montevideo's old port market building, at the foot of Pérez Castellano, whose impressive wrought-iron superstructure shelters a gaggle of reasonably priced *parrillas* (steak restaurants; see p507). On weekend afternoons in particular, it's a lively, colorful place where the city's artists, craftspeople and street musicians hang out.

Museo de Arte Precolombino e Indígena

MUSEUM

(MAP1; Map p502; ☎2916-9360; 25 de Mayo 279; admission UR\$60; ☉1-6:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) This museum displays a permanent collection of artifacts and information about Uruguay's earliest inhabitants, along with rotating exhibits focused on native peoples of the Americas.

FREE Museo de Artes Decorativas

MUSEUM

(Map p502; ☎2915-1101; 25 de Mayo 376; ☉12:30-5:30pm Mon-Fri) The Palacio Taranco, a wealthy merchant's residence dating from 1910, is now home to this museum. The palatial building, designed by famous French architects Charles Girault and Jules Chifflot, is filled with ornate period furnishings, many brought over from Europe.

FREE Museo Histórico Nacional

MUSEUM

The centerpiece of Uruguay's National Historical Museum is *Casa Rivera* (Map p502; ☎2915-1051; Rincón 437; ☉11am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat), the former home of Uruguay's first president and founder of the Colorado Party, Fructuoso Rivera. The collection of paintings, documents, furniture and artifacts traces Uruguayan history from indigenous roots through to independence.

Plaza Constitución

PLAZA

Also known as Plaza Matriz (Map p502), this was the heart of colonial Montevideo. On

Montevideo



its east side stands the **Cabildo** (finished in 1812), a neoclassical stone structure that contains the **Museo y Archivo Histórico Municipal** (Municipal Archive & Historical Museum; ☎2915-9685; Juan Carlos Gómez 1362; ☎12:30-5:30pm Tue-Sun). Opposite the Cabildo is the **Iglesia Matriz**, Montevideo's oldest public building. It was begun in 1784 and completed in 1799.

Museo Figari MUSEUM
(☎2915-7065; Juan Carlos Gómez 1427; admission UR\$60; ☎1-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Ciudad Vieja's newest museum is devoted to Uruguayan painter Pedro Figari, whose landscapes and portraits masterfully convey a sense of Uruguayan life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Museo Torres García MUSEUM
(Map p502; ☎2916-2663; Sarandí 683; admission UR\$60; ☎9:30am-7:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) This museum showcases the work of 20th-century Uruguayan painter Torres García,

and has revolving exhibitions featuring other contemporary artists.

Teatro Solís THEATER
(Map p502; ☎2-1950-1856; www.teatrosolis.org.uy, in Spanish; Buenos Aires 678) Just off Plaza Independencia, elegant Teatro Solís is Montevideo's premier performance space (see p512 and p513). First opened in 1856, and completely renovated during the past decade, it has superb acoustics. Regularly scheduled tours (Tuesday through Sunday) provide an opportunity to see the actual performance space without attending a show. Spanish-language tours are free on Wednesdays, UR\$20 other days; English- and Portuguese-language tours cost UR\$40.

CENTRO PLAZA
Plaza Independencia
In the middle of this downtown plaza (Map p502) is the **Mausoleo de Artigas**, whose above-ground portion is a 17m, 30-ton statue



of the country's independence hero. Below street level, an honor guard keeps 24-hour vigil over Artigas' remains.

The 19th-century **Palacio Estévez**, on the south side of the plaza, was the Government House until 1985. On the east side of the plaza, the 26-story structure with the crazy beehive hairdo is **Palacio Salvo**, the continent's tallest building when it opened in 1927. At the plaza's west end is the **Puerta de la Ciudadela**, a stone gateway that is one of the only remnants of the colonial citadel demolished in 1833.

FREE Museo del Gaucho MUSEUM
(Map p502; ☎2900-8764; Av 18 de Julio 998; ☎10am-5pm Mon-Fri) Housed in the ornate Palacio Heber, this museum eloquently conveys the deep attachments between the gauchos, their animals and the land. The superb collection of historical artifacts includes

horse gear, silver work, and *mates* and *bombillas* (metal straws with filters, used for drinking *mate*) in whimsical designs. Downstairs exhibits focus on banknotes, coins, and the Uruguayan economy's volatile history.

FREE Museo de Arte Contemporáneo MUSEUM
(MAC; Map p502; ☎2900-6662; Av 18 de Julio 965, 2nd fl; ☎2-8pm Tue-Sun, 2-6:30pm Mon) This tiny museum displays continually rotating exhibits of modern Uruguayan painting and sculpture.

FREE Museo del Automóvil MUSEUM
(Map p502; ☎2902-4792; Colonia 1251, 6th fl; ☎2-7pm Tue-Sun) The Automóvil Club del Uruguay's museum has a superb collection of vintage cars, including a mint 1910 Hupmobile.

FREE Museo de la Historia del Arte MUSEUM
(MuHAr; Map p502; ☎1950 ext 2191; Ejido 1326; ☎noon-5:30pm Tue-Sun) In the basement of Montevideo's Palacio Municipal (town hall, also known as Intendencia), MuHAr features a wide-ranging collection of art – originals and reproductions of famous pieces – from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, Greece, Rome and numerous Native American cultures.

FREE Centro Municipal de Fotografía MUSEUM
(CMDF; Map p502; ☎1950 ext 1219; San José 1360; ☎10:30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9:30am-2:30pm Sat) Rotating contemporary photo exhibits and a computerized archive of 100,000 historic photos can be seen here.

NORTH OF CENTRO TOWER
Torre Antel
(Map p500; ☎2928-4417; Guatemala 1075; admission free; ☎tours 3:30-5pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 10:30am-noon Tue & Thu) For great views out across the city, take the elevator to the top of Montevideo's most dramatic modern skyscraper.

Palacio Legislativo HISTORIC BUILDING
(Map p500; ☎2924-1783; www.parlamento.gub.uy; Av Libertador General Lavalleja) Dating from 1908, and still playing host to Uruguay's Asamblea General (legislative branch), the 3-story neoclassical is also open for guided tours (UR\$60) at 10:30am and 3pm Monday to Friday.

Microcentro Ciudad Vieja

Top Sights

Casa Rivera.....	C4
Mercado del Puerto.....	A4
Museo del Carnaval.....	A4
Museo del Gaucho y de la Moneda.....	F4
Palacio Salvo.....	C7
Teatro Solís.....	D4

Sights

Cabildo.....	(see 11)
1 Centro Municipal de Fotografía.....	H4
2 Iglesia Matriz.....	C4
3 Mausoleo de Artigas.....	B7
4 Museo de Arte Contemporáneo.....	E4
5 Museo de Arte Precolombino e Indígena.....	B4
6 Museo de Artes Decorativas.....	B4
7 Museo de la Historia del Arte.....	H4
8 Museo del Automóvil.....	G3
9 Museo Figari.....	C4
10 Museo Torres García.....	A7
11 Museo y Archivo Histórico Municipal.....	D4
12 Palacio Estévez.....	B7
13 Puerta de la Ciudadela.....	A7

Activities, Courses & Tours

14 Academia Uruguay.....	C3
15 Bicicletería Sur.....	H5
16 Joventango.....	H4

Sleeping

17 Balmoral Plaza Hotel.....	G4
18 Ciudad Vieja Hostel.....	C4
19 Don Hotel.....	A4
20 El Viajero Hostel & Suites Centro.....	F4
21 Hotel Klee Internacional.....	H4
22 Hotel Palacio.....	A7
23 Montevideo Hostel.....	E5

FREE Museo Blanes

MUSEUM

(Map p500; ☎2336-2248; Av Millán 4015; ☉12:15-5:45pm Tue-Sun) Housed in an old mansion in the suburb of Prado, this museum shows the work of Uruguay's most famous painter, Juan Manuel Blanes.

EAST OF CENTRO

FREE Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo

ART GALLERY

(☎2929-2066; www.eac.gub.uy; Arenal Grande 1929; ☉2-8pm Wed-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) Between down-

24 Plaza Fuerte Hotel.....	A7
25 Radisson Victoria Plaza.....	B6
26 Spléndido Hotel.....	A7

Eating

27 Bar Hispano.....	F4
28 Café Bacacay.....	A7
29 Cervecería Matriz.....	C4
30 Comi.K.....	F4
31 El Esquinazo.....	H4
32 La Silenciosa.....	C4
33 Los Leños Uruguayos.....	E4
Mercado de la Abundancia.....	(see 31)
34 Rincón de Zabala.....	B4
35 Ruffino Pizza y Pasta.....	G4

Drinking

36 Café Brasileiro.....	C4
37 Café Roldós.....	A4
38 El Lobizón.....	G4
39 La Ronda.....	D5
40 Oro del Rhin.....	E3
Shannon Irish Pub.....	(see 42)

Entertainment

41 Cinemateca Uruguaya.....	G4
42 El Pony Pisador.....	A7
43 Fun Fun.....	D5
44 La Bodeguita del Sur.....	E4
45 Sala Zitarrosa.....	F4
46 Teatro Circular.....	G3
47 Teatro Sobre Ruedas.....	A7

Shopping

48 Hecho Acá.....	A3
49 Imaginario Sur.....	B4
50 Librería Linardi y Risso.....	C3
51 Louvre.....	A7
52 Manos del Uruguay.....	F4

town and the Tres Cruces bus terminal, Montevideo's brand-new gallery makes thought-provoking use of the cells of a 19th-century prison, creating an avant-garde exhibit space for revolving exhibitions of contemporary art.

Museo del Fútbol

MUSEUM

(☎2480-1259; Estadio Centenario, Av Ricaldoni s/n, Parque José Batlle y Ordóñez; admission UR\$100; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Fri) A must-see for any soccer fan, this museum displays memorabilia from Uruguay's 1930 and 1950 World Cup wins. Visitors can also tour the stands.

FREE Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales

MUSEUM

(MNAV; ☎2711-6124; www.mnav.gub.uy; cnr Av Herrera y Reissig & T Giribaldi; ☉2-6:45pm Tue-Sun) Uruguay's largest collection of paintings is housed here in Parque Rodó. The large rooms are graced with works by Blanes, Cúneo, Figari and Torres García.

LA RAMBLA & EASTERN BEACHES

La Rambla, Montevideo's multi-kilometer coastal promenade, is one of the city's defining elements, connecting downtown to the eastern beach communities of Punta Carretas, Pocitos, Buceo and Carrasco. This is Montevideo's social hub on Sunday afternoons, when the place is packed with locals cradling thermoses of *mate* and socializing with friends.

Castillo Pittamiglio

HISTORIC BUILDING

(☎2710-1089; www.castillopittamiglio.com; Rambla Gandhi 633) On the Rambla between Punta Carretas and Pocitos, is this eccentric legacy of local alchemist and architect, Humberto Pittamiglio. Its quirky facade alone is worth a look. Spanish-language tours of the interior (UR\$60) take place 5pm Tuesday and Thursday; weekend tours with variable hours are also offered – call for details.

Museo Naval

MUSEUM

(☎2622-1084; cnr Rambla Costanera & LA de Herrera; admission UR\$20; ☉8:30am-noon & 2-6pm Fri-Wed) Along the eastern waterfront in Buceo, this museum traces the role of boats and ships in Uruguayan history, from the indigenous Charrúa's canoe culture to the dramatic sinking of the German *Graf Spee* offshore of Montevideo in 1939.

Activities

Rent a bike at **Bicicletería Sur** (Map p502; ☎2901-0792; Aquiles Lanza 1100; per hr/day UR\$20/180; ☉9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) and go cruising along the walking-jogging-cycling track that follows the riverfront Rambla. After about 2km you'll get to Playa Pocitos, which is best for **swimming** and where you should be able to jump in on a game of **beach volleyball**. A couple of bays further along at Puerto del Buceo you can get **windsurfing** lessons at the yacht club.

Buceo's **Yacht Harbor** is a picturesque spot for a stroll and a popular Sunday afternoon hangout.

Courses

The following Spanish and tango courses don't cater for the casual learner – you'd want to be staying at least a month to get your money's worth.

Academia Uruguay

LANGUAGE COURSE

(Map p502; ☎2915-2496; www.academiauruguay.com; Juan Carlos Gómez 1408; group/individual classes per hr UR\$220/500) One-on-one and group Spanish classes with a strong cultural focus. Also arranges homestays, private apartments and volunteer work.

Joventango

TANGO COURSE

(Map p502; ☎2901-5561; www.joventango.org, in Spanish; Aquiles Lanza 1290) Tango classes for all levels, from beginner to expert.

Festivals & Events

Much livelier than its Buenos Aires counterpart, Montevideo's late-summer **Carnaval** is the cultural highlight of the year – see the boxed text, p506.

At Parque Prado, north of downtown, Semana Criolla festivities during **Semana Santa** (Holy Week) include displays of gaucho skills, *asados* and other such events.

In the last weekend of September or first weekend of October, Montevideo's museums, churches, and historic homes all open their doors free to the public during the **Días del Patrimonio** (National Heritage Days).

For 10 days in October, tango fills Montevideo's streets and performance halls during the **Festival del Tango**, organized by Joventango (p505).

Sleeping

Montevideo offers some appealing boutique hotels (including a noteworthy newcomer at the Mercado del Puerto), a thriving hosting scene, and a host of dependable, if faded, mid-range hotels in the Centro.

CIUDAD VIEJA

TOP CHOICE Don Hotel

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p502; ☎2915-9999; www.donhotel.com.uy; Piedras 234; standard/superior r UR\$3000/5000, ste UR\$8000; 🍷🍷🍷) Montevideo's newest hotel is a study in refined black, white, silver and gray, with Iberian wallpapers, linens and tiles throughout, plus Jacuzzis and remarkable full-on views of Mercado del Puerto's ornate rooftops from the superior rooms up front. A swimming pool, solarium and rooftop bar overlooking Montevideo's port and city skyline make this a classy choice. Meals at the

CARNAVAL IN MONTEVIDEO

If you thought Brazil was South America's only Carnaval capital, think again! *Montevideo*nos cut loose in a big way every February, with music and dance filling the air for a solid month.

Not to be missed is the early February **Desfile de las Llamadas**, a two-night parade of *comparsas* (neighborhood Carnaval societies) through the streets of Palermo and Barrio Sur districts, just southeast of the Centro. *Comparsas* are made up of *negros* (persons of African descent) and *lubolos* (whites who paint their faces black for Carnaval, a long-standing Uruguayan tradition). Neighborhood rivalries play themselves out as wave after wave of dancers whirl to the electrifying rhythms of traditional Afro-Uruguayan *candombe* drumming, beaten on drums of three different pitches: the *chico* (soprano), *repique* (contralto) and *piano* (tenor). The heart of the parade route is Isla de Flores, between Salto and Gaboto. Spectators can pay for a chair on the sidewalk (UR\$150) or try to snag a spot on one of the balconies overlooking the street.

Another key element of Montevideo's Carnaval are the *murgas*, organized groups of 15 to 17 gaudily dressed performers, including three percussionists, who perform original pieces of musical theater, often satirical and based on political themes. During the dictatorship in Uruguay, *murgas* were famous for their subversive commentary. All *murgas* use the same three instruments: the *bombo* (bass drum), *redoblante* (snare drum) and *platillos* (cymbals). *Murgas* play all over the city, and also compete throughout February in Parque Rodó at the **Teatro de Verano** (Map p500; admission from UR\$70). The competition has three rounds, with judges determining who advances and who gets eliminated.

The fascinating history of Montevideo's Carnaval is well documented in the city's **Museo del Carnaval** (p497). Another great way to experience Carnaval out of season is by attending one of the informal *candombe* practice sessions that erupt in neighborhood streets throughout the year. One good place to find these is at the corner of Isla de Flores and Gaboto in Palermo. Drummers usually gather between 7pm and 7:30pm on Sunday nights.

well-regarded El Palenque restaurant, across the street in Mercado del Puerto, can be added directly to your room tab.

Hotel Palacio HOTEL \$
(Map p502; ☎2916-3612; www.hotelpalacio.com.uy; Bartolomé Mitre 1364; r without/with balcony UR\$900/1000; 🍷🍷) This ancient family-run hotel has sagging brass beds, antique furniture and a vintage elevator. Try for one of the two 6th-floor rooms with air-conditioning and superb views of the Ciudad Vieja from the large balconies. Downstairs rooms are fan-cooled and cost a bit less.

Ciudad Vieja Hostel HOSTEL \$
(Map p502; ☎2915-6192; www.elviajeromonteideo.com; Itzaingó 1436; dm UR\$300-340, d UR\$1100; 🍷🍷) Only a few steps away from the old city's abundant nightlife, this hostel has friendly staff, a homey, hip atmosphere, and an appealing layout on two upper floors of an older Ciudad Vieja building. There are separate kitchens and lounging areas on each level, a DVD library, roof deck, bikes for rent, city tours and a helpful bulletin board of cultural events.

Spléndido Hotel HOTEL \$
(Map p502; ☎2916-4900; www.splendidohotel.com.uy; Bartolomé Mitre 1314; s with shared bathroom UR\$440-760, d with shared/private bathroom from UR\$900/1200; 🍷🍷) Faded, funky and friendly, the Spléndido offers excellent value for budget travelers preferring privacy over a hostel-style party vibe. Pricier rooms have 5m-high ceilings and French doors opening to balconies, some overlooking Teatro Solís. Bars on the street below get extremely noisy on weekends, and the Montevideo Philharmonic Orchestra rehearses next door some mornings (free concert anyone?).

Plaza Fuerte Hotel HOTEL \$\$\$
(Map p502; ☎2915-6651; www.plazafuerte.com; Bartolomé Mitre 1361; d UR\$2300, ste from UR\$3300; 🍷🍷🍷) Housed in a stately building dating to 1913, the Plaza Fuerte has red-carpeted marble stairs, decorative tile floors and dramatic views from its 5th-floor bar and terrace. All rooms have 5m-high ceilings; the suites (some split over two levels, some with Jacuzzis) are especially elegant.

CENTRO

El Viajero Hostel & Suites Centro HOSTEL \$
(Map p502; ☎2908-2913; www.elviajerodowntown.com; Soriano 1073; dm UR\$300-360, d UR\$1140-1330; 🍷🍷) Smack in the center of downtown, this newer hostel is attractively laid out in a historic building with a high-ceilinged, tile-walled pub area and a skylight roof that lets fresh air and light pour in on sunny days. Like rentals (UR\$250 per day) and excellent advice from the resident staff will get you out exploring; meals on the back patio five nights a week (from UR\$150 to UR\$300) may just lure you back.

Balmoral Plaza Hotel HOTEL \$\$\$
(Map p502; ☎2902-2393; www.balmoral.com.uy; Plaza Cagancha 1126; s/d/ste from UR\$2500/2700/3600; 🍷🍷🍷) Central downtown location and bird's-eye views of leafy Plaza Cagancha are the big draws here. All rooms have minibars, safes, big TVs and double-glazed, soundproof windows. You'll also discover a garage, gym, sauna and business center.

Hotel Klee Internacional HOTEL \$\$\$
(Map p502; ☎2902-0606; www.klee.com.uy; San José 1303; s/d UR\$1200/1500; 🍷🍷🍷) With solid three-star amenities and a great location directly across from the Mercado de la Abundancia, the Klee is a good midtown option.

Radisson Victoria Plaza HOTEL \$\$\$
(Map p502; ☎2902-0111; www.radisson.com/montevideo.uy; Plaza Independencia 759; r/ste UR\$6000/7000; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) A five-star hotel towering over central Plaza Independencia, with luxurious rooms, a 25m swimming pool, and remarkable city views from the 25th-floor restaurant.

Montevideo Hostel HOSTEL \$
(Map p502; ☎2908-1324; www.montevideohostel.com.uy, in Spanish; Canelones 935; dm per person HI member/nonmember UR\$300/360; 🍷🍷) With musical instruments strewn everywhere, good internet facilities, a cellar bar, a nice fireplace and a spiral staircase connecting all three levels of the spacious central common area, this older hostel, managed by the same family for years, remains one of Montevideo's best budget options.

LA RAMBLA & EASTERN BEACHES
Cala di Volpe BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎2710-2000; www.hotelcaladivolpe.com.uy; cnr Rambla Gandhi & Parva Domus, Punta Carretas;

d/ste from UR\$2400/3600; 🍷🍷🍷) This classy place across from the beach abounds in boutique hotel features: comfy couches, writing desks, gleaming tile-and-marble bathrooms, and floor-to-ceiling picture windows with sweeping river views. There's a small rooftop pool and a nice restaurant.

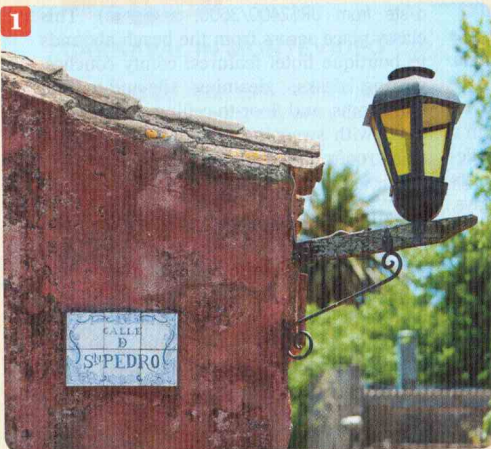
Pocitos Hostel HOSTEL \$
(☎2711-8780; www.pocitos-hostel.com; Sarmiento 2641, Pocitos; dm UR\$380-400, s/d UR\$900/1200; 🍷🍷) A few blocks from the Pocitos waterfront, this appealing hostel squeezes several four- to six-bed dorms and a couple of doubles into a converted old home with fireplace, high ceilings, guest kitchen, backyard barbecue and friendly staff.

Una Noche Más B&B HOMESTAY \$\$
(☎096-227406; www.unanochemas.com.uy; Patria 712, Apt 2, Punta Carretas; d UR\$1120-1360; 🍷🍷) Near the beach in Punta Carretas, this is a great option for anyone seeking a 'homestay' experience in the big city. Friendly hosts Carla and Eduardo go out of their way to make guests feel welcome and also offer half- and full board upon request. There's a two-night minimum stay.

Pocitos Plaza Hotel HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎2712-3939; www.pocitosplazahotel.com.uy; Benito Blanco 640, Pocitos; s/d standard UR\$2200/2500, superior UR\$2600/3000; 🍷🍷🍷) This comfortable four-star is replete with services for the business traveler, although vacationers will also appreciate its sauna, sundeck and proximity to the beach. Superior rooms have sofas, whirlpool tubs and big closets.

Eating

Two of the most atmospheric places to eat are the converted market buildings. **Mercado del Puerto** (Pérez Castellano), on the Ciudad Vieja waterfront, is the classic place to eat in Montevideo. The densely packed *parrillas* here compete like rutting elk to show off their obscenely large racks – of roasted meat and veggies, that is! Weekends are the best time to savor the market's vibrant, crowded energy, but lunching executives and tourists keep the place buzzing on weekdays, too. The more affordable and less touristy **Mercado de la Abundancia** (cnr San José & Aquiles Lanza), in the heart of downtown, features three low-key eateries surrounding an open space where locals come every Saturday night to tango, salsa and more.



CHRISTOPHER GOODHOU/LOVELY PLANET IMAGES ©

1. Colonia del Sacramento (p516)

Only 50km from Buenos Aires by ferry, this picturesque town is a Unesco World Heritage site.

2. Punta del Este (p532)

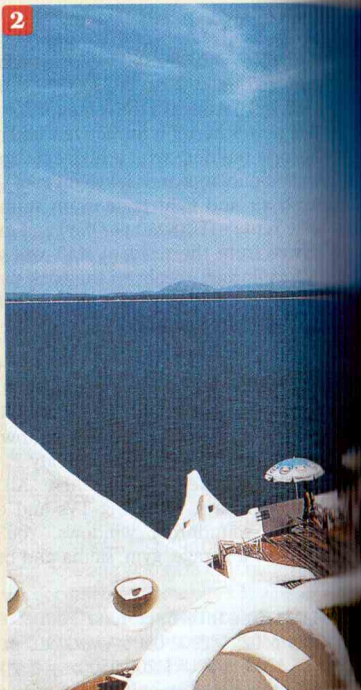
One of South America's most glamorous resorts, this seaside place positively buzzes.

3. Mercado del Puerto (p497)

Montevideo's old port market should not be missed, especially on weekends.

4. Playa El Emir (p532)

This Atlantic Ocean beach is a magnet for surfers.



JAVIER PERINI/COBIS ©



WAYNE WALTON/LOVELY PLANET IMAGES ©



3

ALEXANDRE CAPELLARI/ALAMY ©

CIUDAD VIEJA

TOP CHOICE La Silenciosa

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$

(Map p502; ☎2915-9409; Itzaingó 1426; dishes UR\$280-480; ☉lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Fri) With stone and brick walls, high ceilings and checkerboard marble floors, this restaurant has a fascinating history including stints as an 18th-century Jesuit seminary and as the tailor's shop where Carlos Gardel and other Uruguayan luminaries had their shirts made. The food is divine – from homemade pasta to scrumptious meat and fish dishes to desserts such as moist orange cake with green-tea ice cream. Three-course lunch menus including starter, main dish, dessert and a glass of wine is excellent value at UR\$320.

Café Bacacay

FUSION \$\$\$

(Map p502; Bacacay 1306; dishes UR\$170-360; ☉9am-late Mon-Sat) This chic little cafe across from Teatro Solís serves a variety of mouthwatering goodies: fish of the day with wasabi or *limoncello* (lemon liqueur) sauce, build-your-own salads with tasty ingredients such as grilled eggplant, spinach and smoked salmon, and a wide-ranging drinks menu. Desserts include chocolate cake, pear tart and lemon pie.

Rincón de Zabala

CAFETERIA \$

(Map p502; www.rdz.com.uy, in Spanish; Rincón 387; sandwiches UR\$80-105, full meals incl dessert UR\$160-200; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Fri; ☎) This modern corner place serves up free wi-fi along with affordable breakfasts, sandwiches and cafeteria-style daily specials.

Cervecería Matriz

BEER HALL \$\$\$

(Map p502; Sarandí 582; dishes UR\$108-335; ☉8am-1am Mon-Sat) Join the crowds enjoying beer and *chivitos* (Uruguay's classic steak sandwich) under the trees at this informal eatery on Ciudad Vieja's most picturesque square.

CENTRO

Los Leños Uruguayos

PARRILLA \$\$\$

(Map p502; www.parrilla.com.uy; San José 909; dishes UR\$180-395; ☉11:30am-4pm & 7:30pm-midnight) This favorite haunt of Montevideo's business set has a nice salad bar and a big rack of meat always roasting on the fire up front. The lunchtime *menú ejecutivo* (fixed-price lunch menu; UR\$240) and *sugerencias del chef* (chef's suggestions; UR\$225) are both great deals, including *cubierto*, main dish, dessert and coffee.

Comi.K

BRAZILIAN \$\$\$

(Map p502; Av 18 de Julio 994, 2nd fl; specials incl drink & dessert UR\$220; ☉8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat) Inside the Brazilian cultural center, reasonably priced meals – including *feijoada* (Brazil's classic meat-and-black-bean stew) – are served in an elegant 2nd-floor salon with high ceilings and stained glass. There's live Brazilian music most Friday evenings.

El Esquinazo

PARRILLA \$\$\$

(Map p502; Mercado de la Abundancia; pizza UR\$60-200, mains UR\$200-350; ☉11am-midnight Mon-Sat) With its blazing fire and irresistible aroma of grilled meat, this popular *parrilla* epitomizes the Mercado de la Abundancia's cozy, relaxed ambience. Lunchtime prices are about half what you'd pay at the more touristy Mercado del Puerto – the *menú ejecutivo* includes a mixed grill and a glass of wine for UR\$220. There's live jazz two Thursdays per month, plus tango or salsa on Saturday nights.

Bar Hispano

CONFITERIA \$

(Map p502; San José 1050; meals UR\$115-265; ☉7am-2am) Old-school neighborhood *confiterías* (cafes offering light meals) like this are disappearing fast. The black-clad, gruffly efficient waiters can take pretty much any order you throw at them – a stiff drink to start the day, a full meal at 5pm or a chocolate binge in the early hours. The plethora of ever-changing *platos del día* includes options for almost every taste and budget.

Ruffino Pizza y Pasta

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(Map p502; www.ruffino.com.uy; San José 1166; dishes UR\$190-350; ☉noon-3pm Sun-Fri, 8:30-midnight Mon-Sat) Extremely popular for Sunday lunch, Ruffino's is a good midrange Italian option. Try the Caruso (mushroom and cream) sauce, a uniquely Uruguayan specialty named for Italian tenor Enrico Caruso, who visited Montevideo in 1915.

Bosque Bambú

VEGETARIAN \$\$\$

(www.comidavegetarianabambu.com; San José 1060; all-you-can-eat UR\$240; ☉noon-3pm Mon-Sat; ☎) One of the few truly veggie options in this meat-crazed country, this popular health food store offers food by the kilo or an all-you-can-eat lunch buffet; drinks cost extra.

EAST OF CENTRO

Bistró Sucre Salé

FRENCH \$\$\$

(www.alliancefrancaise.edu.uy/bistrot.html, in Spanish; Blvd Artigas 1229, Parque Rodó; sandwiches

UR\$80-120, dishes from UR\$250; ☉9:30am-8pm Mon-Fri) Wonderful European influences abound at this little cafe behind the Alianza Francesa: French music, brioches, tarts, Illy espresso, Van Gogh posters, plus a courtyard with fountain, iron gazebo and climbing roses.

LA RAMBLA & EASTERN BEACHES

La Pulpería

PARRILLA \$\$\$

(cnr Lagunillas & Nuñez, Punta Carretas; mains UR\$200-300; ☉8am-12:30am Tue-Sat, noon-4pm Sun) The epitome of an intimate neighborhood *parrilla*, La Pulpería doesn't advertise its presence (drop by before 8pm and you won't even find a sign outside!); instead, it focuses its energy on grilling prime cuts of meat to perfection, and relies on word of mouth to do the rest.

Bar Tinkal

CHIVITOS \$

(cnr Frugoni & La Rambla; chivitos UR\$150; ☉8am-2am Mon-Sat) This corner bar has sunset views toward the river, but locals also rave about the *chivitos*, which stand out for their simplicity and quality. Rather than piling on an absurd number of ingredients, Tinkal focuses on basics: tender meat, fresh lettuce and a good roll to hold everything together.

Umaga

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$

(☎2712-3141; cnr Luis de la Torre & Francisco Ros, Punta Carretas; dishes UR\$350-490; ☉8pm-midnight Tue-Sat) Umaga offers a concise menu of beautifully presented gourmet dishes in a comfortable old Punta Carretas home, done up in modern style. The innovative offerings range from grilled salmon with leeks and strawberries to desserts such as an apple-cinnamon-clove roll flambéed with grappa.



Drinking

Ciudad Vieja and Centro offer an intriguing mix of venerable old cafes and up-and-coming recent arrivals. Bars are concentrated on Bartolomé Mitre in Ciudad Vieja, and south of Plaza Independencia in the Centro.



TOP CHOICE Café Brasileiro

CAFE

(Map p502; Itzaingó 1447, Ciudad Vieja; ☉9am-8pm Mon-Fri) Reborn under new ownership in 2010, this old-fashioned 1877 cafe with small wooden tables and chairs, chandeliers, and historic photos gracing the walls, makes a delightful spot for morning coffee or afternoon tea. It's also an excellent lunch stop, with homemade bread, tasty pasta dishes and good-value *menús ejecutivos* (starter, main course, water and dessert for UR\$235).

Café Roldós

BAR-CAFE

(Map p502; Mercado del Puerto; ☉9am-5pm) This historic bar-cafe in Mercado del Puerto is a perennial favorite. Since 1886 staff have been pouring their famous *medio y medio*, a refreshing concoction made from half wine, half sparkling wine (per bottle/glass UR\$160/60). Throw in a few tasty sandwiches (UR\$50 each), and you've got a meal!

Philomène

TEAHOUSE

(Solano García 2455, Punta Carretas; ☉9am-8:30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8:30pm Sat) Big pots of tea, complete with tea cozies, are served alongside cookies and light meals in this pair of super-cozy, happily wallpapered, parlor-sized rooms in Punta Carretas.

La Ronda

BAR

(Map p502; Ciudadela 1182, Centro; ☉noon-late Mon-Sat, 7pm-late Sun) At this ultracool and usually jam-packed bar, patrons straddle the windowsills between the dark interior plastered with vintage album covers and the sidewalk tables cooled by breezes off the Rambla.

Shannon Irish Pub

PUB

(Map p502; www.theshannon.com.uy; Bartolomé Mitre 1318, Ciudad Vieja; ☉7pm-late) A perennial favorite, the Shannon pours a good pint and features live music every night, from rock to traditional Irish bands.

El Lobizón

BAR

(Map p502; Zelmar Michelini 1264, Centro; ☉8pm-3am) Lobizón's cellar-bar atmosphere, free-flowing pitchers of sangría and *clericó* (white wine mixed with fruit), and tasty snacks such as the famous *gramajo* (potatoes, ham and eggs) make it a very popular gathering place for young, artistic types.

Oro del Rhin

CAFE, BAKERY

(Map p502; Convención 1403, Centro; ☉8:30am-8pm Mon-Sat) With more than 75 years in business, you know they're doing something right! It's worth a visit just to ogle the gorgeous collection of cakes and pastries in the window.



Entertainment

Spanish-language websites with entertainment listings: www.lanochedemontevideo.com; www.espectador.com; www.cartelera.com.uy; and www.socioespectacular.com.uy.

Nightclubs

El Pony Pisador

CLUB

(Map p502; www.elponypisador.com.uy); Ciudad Vieja (Bartolomé Mitre 1324; ☉5pm-late Mon-

Fri, 8pm-late Sat & Sun); Pocitos (Iturriaga 3497; ☉8pm-late Thu-Sat) This thriving bar and disco has multiple locations in Montevideo featuring live music nightly; depending on the evening and the location, you may find yourself dancing to blues, Brazilian, flamenco, oldies, soul, Latin or rock covers in English and Spanish. The Pocitos branch occasionally also hosts stand-up comics.

W Lounge

CLUB

(cnr Rambla Wilson & Sarmiento, Parque Rodó; ☉midnight-7am Thu-Sat) With two dance floors accommodating 3000 people, this nightclub in Parque Rodó is *the* place to shake your thang to rock, *cumbia* and techno beats. A taxi from the center should cost about UR\$100.

Cain Dance Club

GAY

(www.caindance.com; Cerro Largo 1833, Córdón; ☉midnight-7am Sat & Sun) Montevideo's premier gay nightclub, Cain is a multilevel club with two dance floors playing everything from techno to Latin beats.

La Bodeguita del Sur

DANCE

(Map p502; www.labodeguitadelsur.com.uy; Soriano 840, Centro; ☉11pm-late Fri-Sun) For live salsa, hit this place on weekend nights.

Live Music & Dance

The legendary Carlos Gardel spent time in Montevideo, where the tango is no less popular than in Buenos Aires. Music and dance venues abound downtown.

TOP CHOICE Fun Fun

LIVE MUSIC

(Map p502; ☎2915-8005; www.barfunfun.com; Ciudadela 1229, Mercado Central, Ciudad Vieja; ☉9pm-late Wed-Sat) Since 1895 this intimate, informal venue in the Mercado Central has

been serving its famous *uvita* (a sweet wine drink) while hosting tango and other live music on a tiny stage. The front deck is very pleasant.

Teatro Solís

PERFORMING ARTS

(Map p502; ☎1950 ext 3323; www.teatrosolis.org.uy, in Spanish; Buenos Aires 678, Ciudad Vieja; admission from UR\$200) The city's top venue is home to the Montevideo Philharmonic Orchestra and hosts formal concerts of classical, jazz, tango and other music, plus music festivals, ballet and opera.

Sala Zitarrosa

PERFORMING ARTS

(Map p502; ☎2901-7303; www.salazitarrosa.com.uy; Av 18 de Julio 1012, Centro) Montevideo's best informal auditorium venue for big-name music and dance performances, including zarzuela, tango, rock, flamenco and reggae.

El Tartamudo Café

LIVE MUSIC

(☎2480-4332; www.eltartamudo.com.uy, in Spanish; cnr 8 de Octubre & Presidente Berro, Tres Cruces; ☉9pm-late Tue-Sun) Performances at this place just east of Tres Cruces bus terminal run the gamut from rock to tango to *candombe* to jazz.

La Trastienda

LIVE MUSIC

(☎2402-6929; www.latrastienda.com.uy, in Spanish; Fernández Crespo 1763, Córdón; ☉9pm-late Wed-Sat) This popular club hosts an eclectic mix of international musicians, playing everything from rock to reggae, jazz to folk, tango to electronica.

Cinema

Cinemateca Uruguaya

CINEMA

(Map p502; ☎2900-9056; www.cinamateca.org.uy; Av 18 de Julio 1280; membership per month UR\$255, plus 1-time sign-up fee UR\$130) For art-

house flicks, this film club charges a modest membership allowing unlimited viewing at its four cinemas. It hosts the two-week Festival Cinematográfico Internacional del Uruguay in March or April.

The rest of Montevideo's cinema scene is concentrated in the shopping malls east of downtown.

Theater

Montevideo's active theater community spans many worlds: from classical to commercial to avant-garde. Regular Spanish-language performances are staged at **Teatro Solís** (Map p502; ☎1950-3323; www.teatrosolis.org.uy, in Spanish; Buenos Aires 678, Ciudad Vieja), **Teatro El Galpón** (☎2408-3366; www.teatroelgalpon.org.uy, in Spanish; Av 18 de Julio 1618, Centro) and **Teatro Circular** (Map p502; ☎2901-5952; tcircular@adinet.com.uy; Rondeau 1388, Centro). Alternatively, **Teatro Sobre Ruedas** (Map p502; ☎2900-8618; www.barronegro.com, in Spanish; Bacacay 1318, Ciudad Vieja) stages interactive theater on a city bus whizzing through Montevideo's streets.

Spectator Sports

Football, a Uruguayan passion, inspires large and regular crowds. The main stadium, the **Estadio Centenario** (Map p500; Av Ricaldoni, Parque José Batlle y Ordóñez), opened in 1930 for the first World Cup, in which Uruguay defeated Argentina 4-2 in the final.

Shopping

Central Montevideo's traditional downtown shopping area is Av 18 de Julio. *Montevideanos* also flock to three major shopping malls east of downtown: Punta Carretas Shopping (Map p500), Tres Cruces Shopping (above the bus terminal; Map p500) and Montevideo Shopping (Map p500) in Pocitos/Buceo.

TOP CHOICE Feria de Tristán Narvaja

MARKET

(Map p500; Tristán Narvaja, Córdón) This colorful Sunday-morning outdoor market is a decades-long tradition begun by Italian immigrants. It sprawls from Av 18 de Julio northwards along Calle Tristán Narvaja, spilling over onto several side streets. You can find used books, music, clothing, jewelry, live animals, antiques and souvenirs in its many makeshift stalls.

Saturday Flea Market

MARKET

(Plaza Constitución, Ciudad Vieja) Every Saturday, vendors take over Ciudad Vieja's central square, selling antique door knockers, saddles, household goods and just about anything else you can imagine.

Manos del Uruguay

WOOLENS

(Map p502; www.manos.com.uy; San José 1111) This national cooperative, a member of the World Fair Trade Organization, is famous for its quality woolen goods.

Imaginario Sur

ARTS & CRAFTS

(Map p502; www.imaginariosur.com.uy; 25 de Mayo 265, Ciudad Vieja) This colorful, trendy shop features art, fashion and design work by dozens of Uruguayan artists.

Hecho Acá

HANDICRAFTS

(Map p502; www.hechoaca.com.uy; cnr Rambla 25 de Agosto & Yacaré, Ciudad Vieja) Woolen goods and other handicrafts from around the country are nicely displayed here.

Ayudiscos

MUSIC

(www.tacuabe.com/ayui-discos; Av 18 de Julio 1618, Centro) This little store is an excellent source for Uruguayan music of all kinds.

Librería Linardi y Risso

BOOKS

(Map p502; www.linardiyrisso.com; Juan Carlos Gómez 1435) Good source for photo essays on Montevideo and Uruguay, plus history, literature and out-of-print books.

Louvre

ANTIQUES

(Map p502; www.louvreantiguedades.com.uy; Sarandí 652, Ciudad Vieja) The Louvre has three floors packed with antiques, including gaucho paraphernalia, paintings, furniture and jewelry.

Mercado de los Artesanos

HANDICRAFTS

(Mercado de la Abundancia; ☉10am-9pm Mon-Sat) A wide variety of artisans display their wares on the ground floor of Mercado de la Abundancia.

Information

Dangers & Annoyances

While Montevideo is pretty sedate by Latin American standards, you should exercise caution as in any large city. The Ciudad Vieja west of Plaza Matriz should be avoided at night, as wallet- and purse-snatchings are not uncommon. Montevideo's *policia turística* (tourist police) patrol the streets throughout Ciudad Vieja and the Centro and can help if you encounter any problems.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎105)

Fire (☎104)

Police (☎911)

Tourist Police (☎0800-8226)

DON'T MISS

MONTEVIDEO WEEKEND HIGHLIGHTS

Weekends are the time to enjoy several of Montevideo's quintessential experiences.

Saturday morning Browse the antiques market on Plaza Matriz.

Saturday afternoon Discover your inner carnivore over lunch at Mercado del Puerto.

Saturday night Attend a performance at Teatro Solís or Sala Zitarrosa, sip *uvitas* and listen to live music at Baar Fun Fun, join locals dancing tango at Mercado de la Abundancia or party all night at clubs like El Pony Pisador.

Sunday morning Explore the labyrinth of market stalls at Mercado de Tristán Narvaja.

Sunday afternoon Join the parade of *mate*-toting locals strolling the 20km-long beachfront Rambla.

Sunday evening Catch a pre-Carnaval drumming rehearsal on the streets of Palermo.

Internet Access

Most accommodations have a guest computer in the lobby, free in-room wi-fi, or both. There are numerous internet cafes along San José and Av 18 de Julio, charging around UR\$20 per hour.

Media

Montevideo's leading dailies are *El País* (www.elpais.com.uy), *El Observador* (www.elobservador.com.uy) and *Últimas Noticias* (www.ultimasnoticias.com.uy). The newsweekly *Búsqueda* (www.busqueda.com.uy) is also widely available at newsstands.

Medical Services

Hospital Británico (☎2487-1020; www.hospitalbritanico.com.uy; Av Italia 2420) Highly recommended private hospital with English-speaking doctors; 2.5km east of downtown.

Hospital Maciel (☎2915-3000; cnr 25 de Mayo & Maciel) The public hospital.

Money

Banks, exchange houses and ATMs are everywhere, including Av 18 de Julio and the bus terminal.

Banco Comercial (cnr Av 18 de Julio & Santiago de Chile) At eastern edge of downtown.

Banco de la Nación Argentina (Juan Carlos Gómez 1378) On Plaza Constitución.

Banco Santander (Av 18 de Julio 999) Opposite Plaza del Entrevero.

Indumex (Terminal Tres Cruces) Bus terminal currency exchange.

Post

Post office Centro (cnr Ejido & San José); Ciudad Vieja (Misiones 1328); Tres Cruces bus terminal (cnr Bulevar Artigas & Av Italia)

DIRECT INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS FROM MONTEVIDEO

DESTINATION	AIRLINE
Asunción	Pluna, TAM
Buenos Aires	Pluna, Aerolíneas Argentinas, Sol, BQB
Lima	Taca
Madrid	Iberia
Miami	American
Panama City	Copa
Porto Alegre, Brazil	Pluna, TAM, Gol
Rio de Janeiro	Pluna
Santiago	Pluna, LAN Chile
São Paulo	Pluna, TAM

Telephone

Antel Centro (cnr San José & Paraguay); Ciudad Vieja (Rincón 501); Tres Cruces bus terminal (cnr Bulevar Artigas & Av Italia)

Tourist Information

Municipal tourist office Centro (☎1950-2263; cnr Av 18 de Julio & Ejido; ☎10am-4pm Mon-Fri); Ciudad Vieja (☎2916-8434; cnr Piedras & Pérez Castellanos; ☎11am-5pm) City maps and general Montevideo information.

National Tourism Ministry Carrasco airport (☎2604-0386; ☎8am-8pm); Port (☎2188-5111; Rambla 25 de Agosto; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Fri); Tres Cruces bus terminal (☎2409-7399; ☎9am-10pm) Info about Montevideo and destinations throughout Uruguay.

i Getting There & Away

Air

Montevideo's stylishly redesigned **Carrasco international airport** (☎2604-0272; www.aeropuertodecarrasco.com.uy) is served by fewer airlines than Ezeiza in Buenos Aires.

One-stop service is available from London to Montevideo via Madrid, and from several other European and North American cities via Buenos Aires or São Paulo.

At the time of research, cut-rate airline BQB was initiating twice-weekly service from Montevideo to Salto, Uruguay's first regularly scheduled domestic flights in several years.

Boat

Buquebus (☎1130; www.buquebus.com.uy) Centro (cnr Colonia & Florida); Ciudad Vieja (Terminal Puerto); Tres Cruces bus terminal (cnr Bulevar Artigas & Av Italia) runs daily high-speed ferries direct from Montevideo to Buenos Aires (three hours). Full *turista* class fares are UR\$2005. Buquebus also offers less expensive bus-boat combinations to Buenos Aires via Colonia (slow boat UR\$1047, 6¼ hours; fast boat UR\$1352, 4¼ hours). Better fares for all services above are available with online advance purchase.

Even more affordable are the bus-boat combinations offered by **Colonia Express** (☎2400-3939; www.coloniaexpress.com; Tres Cruces bus terminal). Standard one-way fares for the 4¼-hour trip are UR\$745 per person, but mid-week rates drop as low as UR\$595.

Cacciola Viajes (☎2401-9350; www.cacciola.viajes.com, in Spanish; Tres Cruces bus terminal) runs a scenic twice- to thrice-daily bus-launch service to Buenos Aires via the riverside town of Carmelo and the Argentine Delta suburb of Tigre. The eight-hour trip costs UR\$899 one way.

Bus

Montevideo's modern **Tres Cruces bus terminal** (Map p500; ☎2401-8998; www.trescruces.com).

BUSES FROM MONTEVIDEO

DESTINATION	COST (UR\$)	DURATION (HR)
INTERNATIONAL		
Asunción (Paraguay)	2640	21
Buenos Aires	880-980	10
Córdoba (Argentina)	1728-2075	15½
Florianópolis (Brazil)	2710	18
Porto Alegre (Brazil)	1779	12
Santiago de Chile	3257	28
São Paulo (Brazil)	3813	28
DOMESTIC		
Carmelo	297	3¼
Colonia	211	2¾
La Paloma	282	3½
La Pedrera	293	4
Mercedes	343	4
Paysandú	446	4½
Piriápolis	117	1½
Punta del Diablo	364	5
Punta del Este	170	2¼
Salto	602	6½
Tacuarembó	457	4½

uy; cnr Bulevar Artigas & Av Italia) is about 3km east of downtown. It has tourist information, clean toilets, a luggage check (UR\$111 per 24 hours), public phones, ATMs and a shopping mall upstairs.

A taxi from the terminal to downtown costs UR\$80 to UR\$100. To save your pesos, take city bus CA1, which leaves Monday to Saturday from directly in front of the terminal (on the eastern side), traveling to Ciudad Vieja via Av Uruguay (UR\$10, 15 minutes). On Sundays, take bus 21, 64, 187 or 330, all of which go to Plaza Independencia via Av 18 de Julio (UR\$18, 15 minutes).

For the beach neighborhoods of Punta Carretas and Pocitos, take city buses 174 and 183, respectively, from in front of the terminal (UR\$18). A taxi to either neighborhood costs around UR\$100.

All destinations following are served daily (except as noted) and most several times a day. A small *tasa de embarque* (departure tax) is added to the ticket prices. Travel times are approximate.

EGA (☎2402-5164; www.ega.com.uy) provides the widest range of service to neighboring countries, running buses once weekly to Santiago,

Chile (Monday) and São Paulo, Brazil (Sunday), twice weekly to Asunción, Paraguay (Wednesday and Saturday), and daily except Saturday to Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Service to Argentina is more frequent, with several competing companies offering multiple daily departures to Buenos Aires. Among other Argentine destinations, there are at least four weekly buses to Córdoba and Rosario, and one Friday departure to Paraná, Santa Fe and Mendoza.

i Getting Around To/From the Airport

From **Terminal Suburbana** (☎1975; cnr Río Branco & Galicia), five blocks north of Plaza del Entrevero, Copsa buses 700, 701, 704, 710 and 711 run to Carrasco airport (UR\$32, 45 minutes). Coming from the airport, buses stop directly in front of the arrivals hall.

The 30- to 45-minute taxi ride to the airport from downtown Montevideo costs between UR\$500 and UR\$750, depending on time of day and place of departure. From the airport back into town, prices are higher (UR\$800 to UR\$1000).

Bus

Montevideo's city buses, operated by **Cutcsa** (☎2204-0000; www.cutcsa.com.uy), go almost everywhere for UR\$18 per ride. For a clickable map showing which buses serve any given destination, visit www.montevideobus.com.uy (in Spanish).

Car

Most major international companies have counters at Carrasco airport. In downtown Montevideo, the following Uruguayan companies (with nationwide branches) offer good deals.

Multicar (☎2902-2555; www.redmulticar.com; Colonia 1227, Centro)

Punta Car (☎2900-2772; www.puntacar.com; Cerro Largo 1383, Centro)

Taxi

Montevideo's black-and-yellow taxis are all metered. It costs UR\$25 to drop the flag (UR\$30 at night and on Sunday) and roughly UR\$1.50 per unit thereafter. Cabbies carry two official price tables, one effective on weekdays, the other (20% higher) used at night (between 10pm and 6am), Sundays and holidays. Even for a long ride, you'll rarely pay more than UR\$150, unless you're headed to Carrasco airport.

WESTERN URUGUAY

From Colonia's tree-shaded cobblestone streets to the hot springs of Salto, the slow-paced river towns of western Uruguay have a universally relaxing appeal, with just enough urban attractions to keep things interesting. Here, the border with Argentina is defined by the Río de la Plata and the Río Uruguay, and the region is commonly referred to as *el litoral* (the shore).

Further inland you'll find the heart of what some consider the 'real' Uruguay – the gaucho country around Tacuarembó, with *estancias* sprinkled throughout the rural landscape and some beautiful, rarely visited nature preserves.

Colonia del Sacramento

POP 26,000

On the east bank of the Río de la Plata, 180km west of Montevideo, but only 50km from Buenos Aires by ferry, Colonia is an irresistibly picturesque town enshrined as a Unesco World Heritage site. Its Barrio Histórico, an irregular colonial-era nucleus of narrow cobbled streets, occupies a small peninsula jutting into the river. Pretty rows

of sycamores offer protection from the summer heat, and the riverfront provides a venue for spectacular sunsets. Colonia's charm and its proximity to Buenos Aires draw thousands of Argentine visitors; on week-ends, especially in summer, prices rise and it can be difficult to find a room.

Colonia was founded in 1680 by Manuel Lobo, the Portuguese governor of Rio de Janeiro, and occupied a strategic position almost exactly opposite Buenos Aires across the Río de la Plata. The town grew in importance as a source of smuggled trade items, undercutting Spain's jealously defended mercantile monopoly and provoking repeated sieges and battles between Spain and Portugal.

Although the two powers agreed over the cession of Colonia to Spain around 1750, it wasn't until 1777 that Spain took final control of the city. From this time, the city's commercial importance declined as foreign goods proceeded directly to Buenos Aires.

Sights & Activities

BARRIO HISTÓRICO

Colonia's Barrio Histórico is filled with visual delights. It's fun to just wander the streets and the waterfront. Historic Colonia's two main squares are the vast **Plaza Mayor 25 de Mayo** and the shady **Plaza de Armas**, also known as Plaza Manuel Lobo.

Portón de Campo

HISTORIC SITE

The most dramatic way to enter Barrio Histórico is via the reconstructed 1745 city gate. From here, a thick fortified wall runs south along the Paseo de San Miguel to the river, its grassy slopes popular with sunbathers. Other famous streets include the narrow, roughly cobbled **Calle de los Suspiros** (Street of Sighs), lined with tile-and-stucco colonial houses, and the **Paseo de San Gabriel**, on the western riverfront.

Iglesia Matriz

CHURCH

Plaza de Armas is the home to Uruguay's oldest church (begun in 1860), though it has been completely rebuilt twice. The plaza also holds the foundations of a house dating from Portuguese times.

Faro

LIGHTHOUSE

(admission UR\$15; ☉1pm-sunset Mon-Fri, 11am-sunset Sat & Sun) One of the town's most prominent landmarks, Colonia's 19th-century lighthouse provides an excellent view of the old town. It stands within the ruins of the 17th-century **Convento de San Fran-**

cisco, just off the southwest corner of Plaza Mayor 25 de Mayo.

Puerto Viejo

HISTORIC SITE

(Old Port) Colonia's yacht harbor makes for a very pleasant stroll. The nearby **Teatro Bastión del Carmen** (Rivadavia 223; admission free; ☉10am-10pm) is a theater and gallery complex incorporating part of the city's ancient fortifications. It hosts rotating art exhibits and periodic concerts.

A single UR\$50 ticket covers admission to Colonia's eight **historical museums** (☎4522-9609; museoscolonia@gmail.com; ☉11:15am-4:45pm). All keep the same hours, but closing day varies by museum as noted following.

Museo Portugués

MUSEUM

(Plaza Mayor 25 de Mayo 180; ☉closed Wed) In this beautiful old house, you'll find Portuguese relics including porcelain, furniture, maps, Manuel Lobo's family tree and the old stone shield that once adorned the Portón de Campo.

Museo Municipal

MUSEUM

(Plaza Mayor 25 de Mayo 77; ☉closed Tue) Houses an eclectic collection of treasures including a whale skeleton, an enormous rudder from a shipwreck, historical timelines and a scale model of Colonia (c 1762).

Archivo Regional

MUSEUM

(Misiones de los Tapes 115; ☉closed Sat & Sun) On the northwest edge of the plaza, Archivo Regional contains historical documents along with pottery and glass excavated from the 18th-century Casa de los Gobernadores nearby.

Casa Nacarello

MUSEUM

(Plaza Mayor 25 de Mayo 67; ☉closed Tue) One of the prettiest colonial homes in town, with period furniture, thick whitewashed walls, wavy glass and original lintels (duck if you're tall!).

Museo Indígena

MUSEUM

(Comercio s/n; ☉closed Thu) Houses Roberto Bancho's personal collection of Charrúa stone tools, exhibits on indigenous history, and an amusing map upstairs showing how many European countries could fit inside Uruguay's borders (it's at least six!).

Museo del Azulejo

MUSEUM

(cnr Misiones de los Tapes & Paseo de San Gabriel; ☉closed Thu) This dinky 17th-century stone house has a sampling of French, Catalan and Neapolitan tilework.

Museo Español

(San José 164; ☉closed Thu) Under repair at the time of writing; has colonial clothing and maps.

REAL DE SAN CARLOS

At the turn of the 20th century, Argentine entrepreneur Nicolás Mihanovich spent US\$1.5 million building an immense tourist complex 5km north of Colonia at Real de San Carlos. The complex included a 10,000-seat bullring, a 3000-seat *frontón* (court) for the Basque sport of jai alai, a hotel-casino and a racecourse.

Only the racecourse functions today, but the ruins of the remaining buildings make an interesting excursion, and the adjacent beach is popular with locals on Sundays.

Museo Paleontológico

MUSEUM

(Real de San Carlos; ☉Thu-Sun) This two-room museum displays glyptodon shells, bones and other locally excavated finds from the private collection of self-taught palaeontologist Armando Calcaterra.

Tours

The tourist office outside the old town gate organizes good **walking tours** led by local guides. Spanish-language tours (per person UR\$100) leave at 11am and 3pm daily, with additional sunset tours at 7pm from November through Easter. For tours in other languages (per person UR\$150), contact the tourist office or Colonia's **Asociación de Guías Profesionales** (☎099-379167; asociacionguiascolonia@gmail.com).

Gabriel Gaidano

CAR TOUR

(☎099-806106; 1929vintage@gmail.com; per 15min/hr UR\$200/600) Spins around town for you to four people in his 1929 Model A convertible. Look for him on Plaza de Armas.

Sleeping

Some hotels charge higher rates Friday through Sunday. Summer weekends are best avoided or booked well in advance.

Posada Plaza Mayor

INN \$\$\$

(☎4522-3193; www.posadaplazamayor.com; Comercio 111; d UR\$2200-3000, ste UR\$3400-3800; ☉@☉) Near the river in the heart of historic Colonia, the Playa Mayor comprises two colonial houses. The stone-walled, high-ceilinged 19th-century Spanish rooms surround a beautiful courtyard with a fountain; the adjoining 18th-century Portuguese structure houses several lovely common areas.



Colonia del Sacramento

Colonia del Sacramento

Top Sights

Faro.....	B4
Museo Municipal.....	B3
Museo Portugués.....	B4
Portón de Campo.....	C4

Sights

1 Archivo Regional.....	B3
2 Casa Nacarello.....	B4
3 Convento de San Francisco.....	B4
4 Iglesia Matriz.....	B3
5 Museo del Azulejo.....	A3
6 Museo Español.....	B2
7 Museo Indígena.....	B3
8 Puerto Viejo (Old Port).....	B2
9 Teatro Bastión del Carmen.....	C2

Sleeping

10 El Viajero Hostel.....	D3
11 Posada de la Flor.....	C2
12 Posada del Ángel.....	D4
13 Posada Plaza Mayor.....	B3
14 Posada San Gabriel.....	B3
15 Radisson Colonia Hotel.....	D1
16 Sur Hostel.....	E2

Eating

17 Buen Suspiro.....	B4
18 Confitería La Pasiva.....	E2
19 El Drugstore.....	B3
20 El Rincón.....	A3
21 La Bodeguita.....	B3
22 Lentas Maravillas.....	A2
23 Patrimonio.....	B2
24 Pulpería de los Faroles.....	B3
25 Viejo Barrio.....	B3

Drinking

26 Matamala Bar.....	C2
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Shopping

27 Feria Artesanal.....	D1
28 Malvón.....	B3

Posada de la Flor

HOTEL \$\$
 (☎)4523-0794; www.posada-delaflor.com; Ituzaingó 268; r with fan/air-con UR\$1500/1900; 🍷🍷) Serenely situated on a sycamore-lined street that ends at a small beach, the Flor's biggest draw is its upstairs terrace with lounge chairs overlooking the river.

El Viajero Hostel

HOSTEL \$
 (☎)4522-2683; www.coloniahostel.com; Washington Barbot 164; dm UR\$340-380, d UR\$1200-1600; 🚲🏇) With bike rental, horseback excursions,

a bar for guests and air-con in all rooms, this hostel is brighter, fancier and somewhat cozier than the competition, and the location two blocks east of Plaza de Armas couldn't be better.

Radisson Colonia Hotel

LUXURY HOTEL \$\$\$
 (☎)4523-0460; www.radissoncolonia.com; Washington Barbot 283; s/d weekends from UR\$4100/5200, weekdays from UR\$2700/3000; 🍷🍷🍷) If you value chain-hotel comforts over colonial charm, the Radisson has what you're looking for. This all-in-one facility features two pools and a spacious deck overlooking the river, plus sauna, gym, solarium, children's play area and garage. Visit during the week for much better rates.

Posada San Gabriel

INN \$\$
 (☎)4522-3283; www.posadasangabriel.com.uy; Comercio 127; r downstairs/upstairs UR\$1430/1540; 🍷🍷🍷) This simple six-room posada (inn) features stone walls, brass beds and a prime old town location. The two upstairs rooms with river views are well worth the extra pesos.

Posada del Ángel

HOTEL \$\$
 (☎)4522-4602; www.posadadelangel.net; Washington Barbot 59; d standard/superior UR\$1600/2400; 🍷🍷🍷) Cheerfully painted in yellow and periwinkle blue, this little hotel has amenities such as down comforters and a sauna for chilly nights and a swimming pool for the summer heat. Standard interior-facing rooms are dark; it's worth splurging on one with a view.

Sur Hostel

HOSTEL \$
 (☎)4522-0553; www.surhostel.com; Rivadavia 448; dm UR\$340-400, s UR\$700-1000, d UR\$1000-1200; 🍷🍷) The newest of Colonia's hostels, this place has a mix of private rooms and four- to eight-bed dorms, all with private bathrooms. There's a spacious guest kitchen and an upstairs sun terrace for clothes-washing and weekly barbecues (UR\$150).

Eating & Drinking

Buen Suspiro

PICADAS \$\$
 (www.buensuspiro.com; San José 111; picadas from UR\$170; ☺11am-midnight Thu-Tue) Duck your head as you pass under the wood beams in this cozy spot specializing in *picadas* (little snacks eaten with a toothpick). Sample local wines by the bottle or the glass, accompanied by spinach and leek tarts, ricotta-and-sesame balls, slices of local cheese and sausage, and more. Reserve ahead for a table by

ESTANCIA LIVING ON A LIMITED BUDGET

What do you get when you cross a tourist *estancia* and a hostel? Find out at the unique **Hostel Estancia El Galope** (☎099-105985; www.elgalope.com.uy; Cno Concordia; dm UR\$500, d with shared/private bathroom UR\$1400/1800) in the countryside 115km from Montevideo and 60km from Colonia. Experienced world travelers Mónica and Miguel offer guests a chance to settle into the relaxing rhythms of rural life, sharing stories by starlight late into the night. Optional activities include horseback rides (UR\$600) and cycling (rental bikes provided). There's a sauna and a teeny-weeny pool to cool off in. Breakfast is included; other meals, from fondue to full-fledged *asados* (barbecues) are available for UR\$180 to UR\$280. Pickup from the bus stop in nearby Colonia Valdense is available upon request.

the fireplace in winter, or while away a summer afternoon on the intimate back patio.

La Bodeguita

PIZZERIA \$\$

(www.labodeguita.net; Comercio 167; mini pizzas UR\$80-95, dishes UR\$270-350; ☎dinner daily year-round, lunch Sat & Sun Apr-Nov) Nab a table out back on the sunny two-level deck and soak up the sweeping river views while drinking sangría (UR\$195 per liter) or munching on La Bodeguita's mini pizzas, served on a cutting board.

El Rincón

PARRILLA \$\$\$

(Misiones de los Tapes 41; dishes UR\$200-320; ☎lunch Thu-Tue, plus dinner Thu-Tue Dec-Easter) *Parrillada* (mixed grill) is king at El Rincón. It's best enjoyed on a sunny weekend afternoon, lounging out back under a big tree between stone and red-stucco walls, listening to Brazilian music or tango, and watching the riverfront scene as the outdoor grill exudes intoxicating smoky smells.

Puerto Tranquilo

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(Rambla de las Américas s/n; dishes UR\$280-400; ☎11am-sunset) Specializing in freshly caught fish with wok-sautéed vegetables, this 'restaurant' 1km north of town makes a great getaway from historic Colonia's touristy madness. Everything is served on the bamboo-shaded outdoor deck, where you can watch the sunset and get a picture-postcard view of locals splashing in the river or playing soccer and sunbathing on the sandy beach below. The restaurant also offers massages and other spa services.

Lentas Maravillas

SANDWICHES, TEAHOUSE \$\$

(Santa Rita 61; sandwiches UR\$200-270; ☎2-7:30pm) Cozy as a friend's home, this is a dreamy spot to kick back with tea and cookies or a glass of wine and a sandwich between meals. Flip through an art book from

owner Maggie Molnar's personal library and enjoy the incomparable river views, either from the upstairs fireplace room or the chairs on the grassy lawn below.

El Drugstore

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$

(Portugal 174; tapas from UR\$110, mains UR\$175-490; ☎noon-midnight) This funky corner place on Plaza de Armas is fun for a meal or a drink, with vividly colored, eclectically decorated walls, an open kitchen, fridges painted with clouds and elephants, and a vintage car on the cobblestones doubling as a romantic dining nook. Half of the 24-page menu is devoted to drinks; the other half to tapas and full meals, including a few vegetarian offerings. There's frequent live guitar music.

Pulpería de los Faroles

SEAFOOD \$\$

(www.pulperielosfarolesrestaurant.com; Misiones de los Tapes 101; dishes UR\$200-350; ☎noon-midnight) Specializing in seafood and pasta, this eatery has a rainbow of colorful tablecloths in the artsy interior dining room, plus a sea of informal outdoor seating on Plaza Mayor 25 de Mayo. Half portions (UR\$190) of several mains are available for light eaters and solo travelers.

Viejo Barrio

ITALIAN \$\$

(Vasconcellos 169; dishes UR\$220-300; ☎lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, lunch Tue) Whether you're amused or annoyed by the eccentric waiter and his funny hats, Viejo Barrio remains a perennial old-town favorite thanks to its excellent homemade pasta and picturesque setting on historic Plaza de Armas.

Confitería La Pasiva

CONFITERÍA \$

(Av General Flores 444; dishes from UR\$125; ☎8am-1am) This bright, bustling chain *confitería* is dependable for breakfast, pizza or sandwiches any time of day.

Patrimonio

BAR \$\$

(San José 111; dishes UR\$190-270; ☎noon-2am Thu-Tue) Colorful boards display the menu at this artsy resto-bar with its cavernous interior and tree- and umbrella-shaded riverfront terrace. Offerings include two-for-one drink specials, salads, burgers, homemade ravioli and reasonably priced *platos del día*.

Matamala Bar

BAR

(Ituzaingó 222; ☎9pm-late Thu-Sun) This little nightclub and bar with a fireplace makes a chic choice for tapas and drinks.

Shopping**Feria Artesanal**

HANDICRAFTS

(cnr Intendente Suárez & Daniel Fosalba; ☎10am-7pm or 8pm) This handicrafts market, open daily, is on the northern waterfront.

Malvón

WOOLENS

(☎4522-1793; Av General Flores 100; ☎11am-7pm) Sells woolens from the national cooperative Manos del Uruguay, along with other Uruguayan handicrafts.

Information

Antel Barrio Histórico (Av General Flores 172); Centro (cnr Lavalleja & Rivadavia) Internet for UR\$45 per hour.

BBVA (Av General Flores 299) One of several ATMs along General Flores.

BIT Welcome Center (☎4522-1072; www.bitcolonia.com; Odriozola 434; ☎10am-7pm) Colonia's sparkling new welcome center, just across from the port, has tourist information, touch-screen information displays, a 'Welcome to Uruguay' video presentation and more.

Cámara Hotelera y Turística (☎4522-7302; cnr Av General Flores & Rivera; ☎11am-6pm) Helps with hotel bookings.

BUSES FROM COLONIA DEL SACRAMENTO

The following destinations are served at least twice daily.

DESTINATION	COST (URS)	DURATION (HR)
Carmelo	94	1¼
Mercedes	211	3½
Montevideo	211	2¾
Paysandú	387	6
Salto	528	8

Hospital Colonia (☎4522-2994; 18 de Julio 462)

Post office (Lavalleja 226)

Tourist offices (☎4522-3700; www.colonia.turismo.com) Barrio Histórico (Manuel Lobo 224; ☎10am-6pm); Bus Terminal (Av Roosevelt; ☎10am-6pm)

Getting There & Away Boat

From the ferry terminal at the foot of Rivera, **Buquebus** (www.buquebus.com.uy; Av Roosevelt) runs two slow boats (UR\$775, three hours) plus three or more fast boats (UR\$1070, one hour) daily to Buenos Aires.

Colonia Express (www.coloniaexpress.com) and **Seacat** (www.seacatcolonia.com) run less frequent but more affordable high-speed ferry services. Each company offers two to three departures daily. Crossings take one hour, with day-of-departure fares ranging from UR\$650 to UR\$860.

All three companies offer child, senior and advance-purchase discounts.

Immigration for both countries is handled at the port before boarding.

Bus

Colonia's modern **bus terminal** (cnr Manuel Lobo & Av Roosevelt) is conveniently located near the port, within easy walking distance of the Barrio Histórico. It has tourist information, luggage storage (per day UR\$100), money-changing and internet facilities.

Getting Around

Walking is enjoyable in compact Colonia, but motor scooters, bicycles and gas-powered buggies are popular alternatives. **Thrifty** (☎4522-2939; Av General Flores 172; bicycle/scooter/golf cart per hr UR\$60/140/240, per 24hr UR\$300/600/1000) rents everything from beater bikes to cars. Several other agencies rent cars (per day from UR\$1000) and motorbikes near the bus and ferry terminals, including **Multicar/Moto Rent** (Manuel Lobo 505) and **Punta Car** (cnr 18 de Julio & Rivera).

Local buses go to the beaches and bullring at Real de San Carlos (UR\$15) from along Av General Flores.

Carmelo

POP 18,000

Carmelo, dating from 1816, is a laid-back town of cobblestone streets and low old houses, a center for yachting, fishing and exploring the Paraná Delta. It straddles the Arroyo de las Vacas, a stream that widens into

a sheltered harbor just below the Río Uruguay's confluence with the Río de la Plata. The town center, north of the arroyo (creek), is Plaza Independencia. South of the arroyo lies a large park with open space, camping, swimming and a huge casino.

Launches connect Carmelo to the Buenos Aires suburb of Tigre.

Sights & Activities

The arroyo, with large, rusty boats moored along it, makes for a great ramble, as does the 30-minute stroll to the beaches across the bridge.

Local wines have an excellent reputation. Just outside town (look for the gigantic wine bottle!), **Bodega Iururtia** (☎4542-2323; www.iururtia.com.uy; Av Paraguay, Km2.3) produces award-winning tannats and pinot noirs. Visitors can take a basic tour of the cellars (UR\$60), a vineyard walk followed by wine, cheese and grappa tasting (UR\$240) or a vintage car tour and top-shelf wine tasting with multilingual guide (UR\$740).

Sleeping & Eating

TOP CHOICE **Bodega y Granja Narbona** ITALIAN \$\$\$ (☎4540-4778; www.narbona.com.uy; Hwy 21, Km 267; dishes UR\$300-460; ☉9am-11pm) A refined rural retreat set amidst vineyards, orchards and verdant farm country 20km from Carmelo, this is a worthwhile detour for anyone with a car. The restored 1908 farmstead houses a simple restaurant with outdoor seating on a tiled terrace; the menu features homemade bread, gourmet pasta, vegetables from the adjoining organic garden and fabulous Tannat and *grappamiel* (grape brandy with honey) from Narbona's award-winning cellars. Inside you can browse shelves stacked floor to ceiling with locally produced olive oil, peach preserves and *dulce de leche* (milk caramel). There's a small posada (inn) out back, if you decide to stick around.

Camping Náutico Carmelo CAMPGROUND \$ (☎4542-2058; dnhcarmelo@adinet.com.uy; Arroyo de las Vacas s/n; per tent UR\$200) South of the arroyo, this pleasant tree-shaded campground with hot showers caters to yachters but accepts walk-ins too.

Hotel Rambla HOTEL \$\$ (☎4542-2390; www.ciudadcarmelo.com/rambla hotel; Uruguay 51; r UR\$1200-1700; 📶) The

BUSES FROM CARMELO

DESTINATION	COST (UR\$)	DURATION (HR)
Colonia	94	1½
Mercedes	117	2
Montevideo	282	3½
Paysandú	282	5
Salto	422	7

blocky Rambla won't win any design awards, but it's conveniently close to the launch docks. The upstairs doubles with balconies facing the arroyo are cheerier than the interior rooms.

Piccolino URUGUAYAN \$ (☎4542-4850; cnr 19 de Abril & Roosevelt; dishes UR\$110-190; ☉9am-midnight) This corner place has decent *chivitos* and views of the square.

Information

Antel (Barrios 329)

Banco Comercial (Uruguay 403) On Plaza Independencia.

Hospital (☎4542-2107; cnr Uruguay & Artigas)

Municipal tourist kiosks Playa Seré (☉10am-10pm Jan-Mar, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Dec) Plaza Independencia (☉9am-6pm) On the main square and in the park near the campground.

New Generation Cyber Games (Uruguay 373; internet per hr UR\$20; ☉8am-midnight)

Post office (Uruguay 360)

Getting There & Away

Cacciola (☎4542-7551; www.cacciolaviajes.com; Wilson Ferreira 263; ☉4:30-5:30am & 9am-7:30pm) runs twice-daily launches (thrice-daily in summer) to the Buenos Aires suburb of Tigre. The one-way 2½-hour trip costs UR\$559, plus a UR\$150 tax collected upon arrival in Tigre.

All bus companies are on or near Plaza Independencia. **Berrutti** (☎4542-2504; Uruguay 337) has the most frequent service to Colonia; **Chadre** (☎4542-2987) is the best bet for all other destinations.

Mercedes

POP 41,000

Capital of the department of Soriano, Mercedes is a livestock center with cobblestoned streets and a small pedestrian zone around the 18th-century cathedral on central Plaza

Independencia. The town's most appealing feature is its leafy waterfront along the south bank of the Río Negro.

Sights & Activities

Activities along the riverfront include boating, fishing and swimming along the sandy beaches, or simply strolling along the Rambla (especially popular on Sunday afternoons). The tourist office sells tickets for the **Catamaran Soriano I**, a cruise boat that began offering excursions on the Río Negro and Río San Salvador in summer 2011.

FREE Museo Paleontológico

Alejandro Berro MUSEUM (☎4532-3290; Parque Castillo Mauá; ☉11am-5pm) In an old, white, castle-like building about 6km west of town, this museum displays a substantial fossil collection and an impressively well-preserved glyptodon shell discovered in a nearby riverbank in early 2010.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping del Hum CAMPGROUND \$ (☎4532-2733; Isla del Puerto; sites per person /tent UR\$20/40) Mercedes' spacious campground, one of the region's best, occupies half the Isla del Puerto in the Río Negro. Connected to the mainland by a bridge, it has swimming, fishing and sanitary facilities.

TOP CHOICE **Estancia La Sirena** ESTANCIA \$\$\$ (☎4530-2271, 9910-2130; www.lasirena.com.uy; in Spanish; R 14, Km4.5; s incl breakfast/half-board/full board UR\$1950/2600/3100, d UR\$1950/4000/5200) Surrounded by rolling open country 15km upriver from Mercedes, this *estancia* is one of Uruguay's oldest and most beautiful. The spacious 1830 ranch house, with its cozy parlor and fireplaces, makes a perfect base for relaxation and excursions to the nearby river on foot or horseback. The isolated setting is perfect for stargazing, and the homemade food, often cooked on a giant outdoor grill, is delicious. Perfect hosts Rodney and Lucía Bruce speak English, French and Spanish.

Martin Fierro INTERNATIONAL \$\$ (☎4532-0877; Rambla Costanera s/n; dishes UR\$90-210; ☉lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) The riverfront setting at the foot of 18 de Julio is complemented by a varied menu featuring homemade pasta, grilled meat and fish, and wild cards such as the warm salad of wok-sautéed vegetables.

BUSES FROM MERCEDES

The following destinations are served at least once daily.

DESTINATION	COST (UR\$)	DURATION (HR)
Buenos Aires	620	7
Carmelo	117	2
Colonia	211	3
Montevideo	338	3½-4½
Paysandú	148	2
Salto	327	4

Shopping

Lanas de Soriano WOOLENS (☎4532-2158; www.lanasdesoriano.com, in Spanish; Colón 60; ☉9am-noon Mon-Sat, 3-7pm Mon-Fri) A rainbow of beautiful handmade woollens is available in this shop, hidden away in a residential neighborhood near the waterfront.

Information

Antel (Roosevelt 681; internet per hr UR\$19) Provides phone and internet service.

Banco Comercial (Giménez 719) ATM on Plaza Independencia.

Hospital Mercedes (☎4532-2177; cnr Sánchez & Rincón)

Municipal tourist office (☎4532-2733; turismo@soriano.gub.uy; Detomasi 415; ☉8am-9pm) In a crumbling white building near the bridge to the campground.

Post office (cnr Rodó & 18 de Julio)

Getting There & Away

Mercedes' modern **bus terminal** (Plaza General Artigas) is about 10 blocks from Plaza Independencia, in a shopping center with ATMs, a post office, free public bathrooms, luggage storage and an emergency medical clinic. A local bus (UR\$13) leaves hourly from just in front of the terminal, making a circuit around downtown.

Paysandú

POP 76,000

On the east bank of the Río Uruguay, connected to Colón, Argentina by the Puente Internacional General Artigas, Uruguay's third-largest city is just a stopover for most travelers en route to or from Argentina. The activity is on Plaza Constitución, six blocks north of the bus terminal.

THE LITTLE BEEF CUBE THAT CIRCLED THE GLOBE

In 1865, the Liebig Extract of Meat Company located its pioneer South American plant southwest of downtown Fray Bentos. It soon became Uruguay's most important industrial complex. British-run El Anglo took over operations in the 1920s and by WWII the factory employed 4000 people, slaughtering cattle at the astronomical rate of 2000 a day.

Looking at the abandoned factory today, you'd never guess that its signature product, the Oxo beef cube, once touched millions of lives on every continent. Oxo cubes sustained WWI soldiers in the trenches, Jules Verne sang their praises in his book *Around the Moon*, Stanley brought them on his search for Livingstone, Scott and Hillary took them to Antarctica and Everest. More than 25,000 people from more than 60 countries worked here, and at its peak the factory was exporting nearly 150 different products, using every part of the cow except its moo.

The former factory is now a museum – the **Museo de la Revolución Industrial** (☎4562-3690; admission UR\$30, guided tour UR\$50; ☀9:30am-5pm Mar-Dec, 8am-8:30pm Jan & Feb). Guided tours (10am Monday to Saturday, 11am Sunday, plus 6pm daily in summer, 3pm daily rest of year) grant access to the intricate maze of passageways, corrals and abandoned slaughterhouses behind the museum.

Inside the factory dozens of colorful displays – ranging from the humorous to the poignant – bring this history vividly to life: a giant cattle scale where school groups are invited to weigh themselves; or the old company office upstairs, left exactly as it was when the factory closed in 1979, with grooves rubbed into the floor by the foot of an accountant who sat at the same desk for decades.

The adjacent town of Fray Bentos, with its pretty riverfront promenade, is the southernmost overland crossing over the Río Uruguay from Argentina. It's four hours by bus from Colonia or Buenos Aires, or 4½ hours from Montevideo.

Founded as a mid-18th-century outpost of cattle herders from the Jesuit mission at Yapeyú (in present-day Argentina), Paysandú gradually rose to prominence as a meat-processing center. Repeated sieges of the city during the 19th century (the last in 1864-65) earned it the local nickname 'the American Troy.'

Despite its turbulent history and its ongoing status as a major industrial center, modern-day Paysandú is surprisingly sedate. To see the city's wilder side, visit during Carnaval or the annual week-long **beer festival** (held during Semana Santa).

Sights & Activities

FREE Museo de la Tradición MUSEUM
(☎4722-3125; Av de Los Iracundos 5; ☀8am-4:45pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun) In parkland near the riverfront, this museum features a small but well-displayed selection of anthropological artifacts and gaucho gear.

FREE Museo Histórico MUSEUM
(☎4722-6220 ext 247; Av Zorrilla 874; ☀8am-4:45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1:45pm Sat) Displays evocative images from the multiple 19th-century sieges of Paysandú, including the bullet-

riddled shell of the cathedral and women in exile watching the city's bombardment from an island offshore.

Teatro Florencio Sánchez THEATER
(☎4722-6220 ext 170; 19 de Abril 926) Uruguay's oldest theater (1876) outside of Montevideo, has many original features (including the curtain) and hosts occasional performances.

The latter two attractions were closed for renovation at the time of research but expected to reopen in 2012.

Sleeping

Hotel Casagrande HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎4722-4994; www.hotelcasagrande.com.uy; Florida 1221; s/tw/d UR\$1353/1974/2090; ☹☹☹) Homey and conveniently located, the Casagrande is Paysandú's nicest downtown hotel. Comfy armchairs, marble tabletops and big brass beds are among the boutique hotel amenities justifying the higher price tag.

Estancia La Paz ESTANCIA \$\$\$
(☎4720-2272; www.estancialapaz.com.uy; Ruta 24, Km 86.5; r UR\$2134; ☹☹☹) The tennis courts, swimming pool and Muzak-filled common areas feel incongruous among the historic buildings and pristine natural set-

ting at this tourist *estancia* 30km southeast of Paysandú. Serious equestrians will appreciate the horseback-riding excursions, lasting from one day to a full week. Access is via a long dirt road: turn off at Km 86.5 on Ruta 24 or Km 336 on Ruta 3.

Hotel Rafaela HOTEL \$
(☎4722-4216; 18 de Julio 1181; s/d with fan & shared bathroom UR\$480/650, with air-con & private bathroom UR\$700/950; ☹) Offering decent value just west of the main square; Rafaela's rooms are dark but large, and some have their own small patios.

Eating & Drinking

Pan Z URUGUAYAN \$\$
(☎4722-9551; cnr 18 de Julio & Setembrino Pereda; dishes UR\$140-350; ☀lunch & dinner) Popular 'Panceta' serves pizza, *chivitos* stacked high with every ingredient imaginable, and tasty desserts such as strawberry cake and tiramisu.

Los Tres Pinos PARRILLA \$\$
(www.lostrespinos.com.uy, in Spanish; Av España 1474; dishes UR\$90-290; ☀lunch & dinner) Carnivores will swoon over the excellent *parrilla* at this place five blocks east of Plaza Constitución, while budget travelers will appreciate the UR\$90 *plato del día*.

Confitería Las Familias SWEETS \$
(www.postrechaja.com, in Spanish; 18 de Julio 1152; chajá UR\$50; ☀9am-8pm) If you've got a sweet tooth (and we mean a *really* sweet tooth) pull up a stool at this ancient confectioner's shop and sample one of Uruguay's classic

desserts: *chajá*, a dentist-friendly concoction of sugary meringue, fruit and cream invented here in 1927.

Entertainment

Along the waterfront, Paysandú's intimate, tree-encircled **Teatro de Verano** is just across the street from the larger **Anfiteatro del Río Uruguay**, which seats up to 20,000 people and hosts major concerts during Paysandú's annual beer festival. Check with the tourist office for details of upcoming events at both venues.

Information

Antel (Montevideo 875)
Banco Santander (18 de Julio 1137) One of several ATMs along Paysandú's main street.
Hospital Escuela del Litoral (☎4722-4836; Montecaseros 520) South of the bus terminal.
Net One (Leandro Gómez 1193; internet per hr UR\$12; ☀24hr) Noisy with adolescent gamers, but open all night.
Post office (cnr 18 de Julio & Montevideo)
Tourist office Centro (☎4722-6220 ext 184; turismo@paysandu.gub.uy; 18 de Julio 1226; ☀7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun); Port (☎4722-9235; plandelacosta@paysandu.gub.uy; Av de Los Iracundos; ☀noon-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-7pm Sat & Sun) First office is on Plaza Constitución; latter is next to Museo de la Tradición.

Getting There & Away

Paysandú's **bus terminal** (cnr Artigas & Av Zorrilla), six blocks due south of Plaza Constitución, is a hub for travel to and from Argentina.

BUSES FROM PAYSANDÚ

DESTINATION	COST (UR\$)	DURATION (HR)	FREQUENCY
Asunción (Paraguay)	2640	17	5:30pm Wed & Sat
Buenos Aires	508-578	5½	12:40am nightly
Carmelo	282	5	twice daily
Colón (Argentina)	69	¾	frequent
Colonia	387	6	twice daily
Córdoba (Argentina)	1168	11	10:30pm Friday
Mercedes	144	2½	twice daily
Montevideo	452	4½	frequent
Paraná (Argentina)	617	4½	10:30pm Friday
Salto	144	2	frequent
Santa Fe (Argentina)	648	5½	10:30pm Friday
Tacuarembó	290	3½	twice daily

Salto

POP 103,000


Built near the falls where the Río Uruguay makes its 'big jump' (Salto Grande), Salto is Uruguay's second-largest city and the most northerly crossing point to Argentina. It's a relaxed place with some 19th-century architecture and a pretty riverfront. People come here for the nearby hot springs and the recreation area above the enormous Salto Grande hydroelectric dam.

Sight & Activities

Salto's **museums** ( 4732-9898) all close during January.


FREE Museo de Bellas Artes y Artes Decorativas

MUSEUM

(Uruguay 1067;  4-9pm Tue-Sat, 5-8pm Sun) Displays a nice collection of Uruguayan painting and sculpture in a historic two-story mansion with a grand staircase, stained glass and back garden.

FREE Museo del Hombre y la Tecnología

MUSEUM

(cnr Av Brasil & Zorrilla;  4-9pm) Housed in a historic market building and features excellent displays on local cultural development

DON'T MISS

SALTO'S HOT SPRINGS

A whole slew of hot springs bubbles up around Salto.

Termas San Nicanor ( 4730-2209; www.sannicanor.com.uy, in Spanish; Ruta 3, Km 475; campsite/dm per person UR\$200/410, d with shared/private bathroom UR\$1350/1640;  ) Surrounded by a vast pastoral landscape, this is the most tranquil option. It has two gigantic outdoor thermal pools, a restaurant, and accommodations for every budget, including a high-ceilinged *estancia* house with large fireplaces and peacocks strolling the grounds. The 12km unpaved access road leaves Ruta 3 10km south of Salto. **Santa Lucia Bus** ( 099-732368) runs twice-daily shuttles (UR\$50, one hour) from Salto.


Termas de Daymán (www.termasdedayman.com, in Spanish) About 8km south of Salto, Daymán is a heavily developed Disneyland of thermal baths complete with kids' water park. It's popular with Uruguayan and Argentine tourists who roam the town's block-long main street in bathrobes. For comfortable accommodations adjacent to the springs, try **La Posta del Daymán** ( 4736-9801; www.lapostadeldayman.com, in Spanish; campsite per person UR\$100, r per person incl breakfast UR\$700-1200;  ) Buses to the baths (UR\$14) leave Salto's port via Av Brasil at 30 minutes past every hour (6:30am to 10:30pm), returning hourly from 7am to 11pm.

Termas de Arapey (www.termasarapey.com, in Spanish) About 90km northeast of Salto, Arapey offers multiple pools surrounded by gardens, fountains and paths to the Río Arapey Grande. Lodging is available at **Hotel Municipal** ( 4768-2441; www.hoteltermasdelarapey.com, in Spanish; s/d UR\$1160/1590;  ). **Argentur** ( 4732-9931) runs one daily bus (two on Monday, Wednesday and Friday) from Salto (UR\$125, 1½ hours).

and history upstairs, and a small archaeological section downstairs.



Teatro Larrañaga

THEATER

(Joaquín Suárez 39;  4-9pm Mon-Sat) A red velvet- and chandelier-bedecked theater dating to 1882, it is open for visits and hosts occasional dance and theater performances.

Represa Salto Grande

DAM




( 4732-6131;  8am-4pm) This massive hydroelectric dam, 14km north of town, provides 65% of Uruguay's electricity and is a symbol of national pride. Free hour-long guided tours visit both the Uruguayan and Argentine sides (no minimum group size, maximum wait 30 minutes). There's no public transport; a taxi from Salto costs about UR\$700 roundtrip. En route, check out the stands selling freshly squeezed orange juice for UR\$20 a liter!

Sleeping

Nearby hot springs also offer accommodations.

Gran Hotel Concordia

HOTEL \$\$\$

( 4733-2735; www.granhotelconcordia.com.uy, in Spanish; Uruguay 749; s/d UR\$650/1200;  ) This 1860s relic is a national historical monument and indisputably Salto's most atmos-

pheric downtown hotel. A life-size wooden cutout of Carlos Gardel, who once stayed in room 32, greets you at the end of a marble corridor opening into a leafy courtyard filled with murals, sculptures and cats. Front rooms, with tall French-shuttered windows, overlook the courtyard. Back rooms flank a wrought-iron terrace, shaded by vines.






Salto Hostel

HOSTEL \$

( 4733-7157; www.saltohostel.com; Uruguay 941; dm/d with shared bathroom UR\$360/880;  early-Mar-late Nov;  ) In Salto's historic center, this comfortable hostel features spacious common areas, convenient computer facilities and helpful staff. Front dorms have tall windows overlooking the busy main street - great for light and air circulation, but it can get noisy at night.

Hotel Horacio Quiroga



HOTEL \$\$\$

( 4733-4411; www.hotelhoracioquiroga.com; Parque del Lago, Salto Grande; s/d incl breakfast from UR\$2200/3000, full board from UR\$3200/5000;    ) On the lake above the dam, the luxurious Quiroga has its own thermal baths and spa facilities. Lakeview rooms are especially nice, with balconies overlooking the swimming pools and verdant grounds.

Eating

Casa de Lamas

URUGUAYAN \$\$\$

( 4732-9376; Chiazzaro 20; dishes UR\$120-345;  dinner Wed, lunch & dinner Thu-Mon) This swank eatery is housed in a 19th-century building with pretty vaulted brickwork in the dining room. There's an excellent *menú de la casa* (set menu) for UR\$315.

La Caldera


PARRILLA \$\$

(Uruguay 221; dishes UR\$100-240;  lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) With fresh breezes blowing in off the river and sunny outdoor seating, this *parril-*

la makes a great lunch stop; at dinnertime, the cozy interior dining room, with its view of the blazing fire, is equally atmospheric.

La Trattoria

URUGUAYAN \$\$

(Uruguay 754; dishes UR\$115-230;  lunch & dinner) Locals flock to this high-ceilinged downtown eatery for fish, meat and pasta. Sit in the wood-paneled dining room or people-watch from a sidewalk table on busy Calle Uruguay.

i Information



Antel (Grito de Asencio 33)

Banco Comercial (cnr Uruguay & Lavalleja) One of several banks at this intersection.

Cibertotal (Uruguay 635; per hr UR\$20;  9am-midnight) Downtown internet access.

Hospital Regional Salto ( 4733-3333; cnr 18 de Julio & Varela)

Post office (cnr Artigas & Treinta y Tres)


Tourist office ( 4733-4096; turismo@salto.gub.uy) bus terminal ( 8am-11pm); Centro; (Uruguay 1052;  8am-8pm Mon-Sat)

i Getting There & Away

Air

From Salto's airport, 6km south of town, **BQB Lineas Aereas** ( 4733-8919; www.flybqb.com) offers thrice-weekly flights (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) to Montevideo's Carrasco airport.

Boat

Transporte Fluvial San Cristóbal ( 4733-2461; cnr Av Brasil & Costanera Norte) runs launches across the river to Concordia, Argentina (UR\$100, 15 minutes) four times daily between 9:30am and 7:30pm, except Sunday.

Bus

Salto's **bus terminal** (Salto Shopping Center, cnr Ruta 3 & Av Batlle), 2km east of downtown,

BUSES FROM SALTO

DESTINATION	COST (URS)	DURATION (HR)	FREQUENCY
Buenos Aires	668-738	7½	11pm nightly
Concordia (Argentina)	81	1	twice daily
Colonia	528	8	twice daily
Montevideo	587	6½	frequent
Paysandú	141	2	frequent
Tacuarembó	340	4	early am Mon, Wed & Fri

Connect in Concordia for additional Argentine destinations.

has ATMs, internet facilities, free public restrooms and a supermarket.

Tacuarembó

POP 54,000

In the rolling hills along the Cuchilla de Haedo, Tacuarembó is gaucho country. Not your 'we pose for pesos' types, but your real-deal 'we tuck our baggy pants into our boots and slap on a beret just to go to the local store' crew. It's also the alleged birthplace of tango legend Carlos Gardel.

Capital of its department, Tacuarembó has sycamore-lined streets and attractive plazas that make it one of Uruguay's most agreeable interior towns. The town center is Plaza 19 de Abril, linked by the main thoroughfares 25 de Mayo and 18 de Julio.

Sights

Museo del Indio y del Gaucho

MUSEUM

(cnr Flores & Artigas; ☎8am-2pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Paying romantic tribute to Uruguay's gauchos and indigenous peoples, this museum's collection includes stools made from leather and cow bones, elegantly worked silver spurs and other accessories of rural life.

Festivals & Events

Fiesta de la Patria Gaucha GAUCHO FESTIVAL

(www.patriagaucha.com.uy, in Spanish) In the first or second week of March, this colorful five-day festival attracts visitors from around the country to exhibitions of traditional gaucho skills, music and other activities. It takes place in Parque 25 de Agosto, north of town.

Sleeping & Eating

Yvytu Itaty

ESTANCIA \$\$\$

(☎4630-8421; www.viviturismorural.com, in Spanish, yvytuitaty@hotmail.com; r per person incl full board, farm activities & horseback riding UR\$1900, 2 or more people UR\$1700) For a first-hand look at real gaucho life, this working *estancia* 50km southwest of Tacuarembó is warmly recommended. Since 2006, hosts Pedro and Nahir Clariget have been receiving overnight guests in their unpretentious ranch-style home and inviting them to participate in daily *estancia* routines. Pedro and his friendly cattle dogs delight in escorting guests around their 636-hectare domain on horseback, pausing en route to point out armadillos, ñandú nests and other local attractions. Back at the ranch,

BUSES FROM TACUAREMBÓ

DESTINATION	COST (UR\$)	DURATION (HR)
Montevideo	457	4½
Paysandú	282	3½
Salto	340	4

sip *mate* on the patio at sunset in anticipation of Nahir's tasty home cooking, which includes savory meat stews and traditional desserts such as *arroz con leche* (rice pudding). Call in advance for driving directions or to arrange pickup at Tacuarembó's bus station (UR\$1200 roundtrip for a group of any size).

Hotel Plaza

HOTEL \$\$

(☎4632-7988; hotelplaza@hotmail.com; 25 de Agosto 247; s/d UR\$640/1050; ☎☎☎) Painted a cheery yellow, with fish on the shower curtains and wireless internet in the rooms, the centrally located Plaza is Tacuarembó's most welcoming downtown hotel.

La Rueda

PARRILLA \$\$

(W Beltrán 251; dishes UR\$95-260; ☎lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) With its thatched roof and walls covered with gaucho paraphernalia, La Rueda is a friendly neighborhood *parrilla*.

Information

Antel (Sarandí 242)

Banco Santander (18 de Julio 258) One of several ATMs near Plaza Colón.

Tourist office (☎4632-7144; www.imtacua.com, in Spanish; ☎8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9-11am Sat) Just outside the bus terminal.

Hospital Regional (☎4632-2955; cnr Treinta y Tres & Catalogne)

Post office (Ituzaingó 262)

Getting There & Around

The **bus terminal** (cnr Ruta 5 & Av Victorino Pereira) is 1km northeast of the center. A taxi into town costs about UR\$50.

Valle Edén

Valle Edén, a lush valley 24km southwest of Tacuarembó, is home to the **Museo Carlos Gardel** (☎4632-3520 ext 30; admission UR\$20; ☎9:30am-5:30pm). Reached via a drive-through creek spanned by a wooden

ESTANCIA TOURISM IN URUGUAY

Estancias, the giant farms of Uruguay's interior, are a national cultural icon. The Uruguayan Ministry of Tourism has designated 'Estancia Turística' as a distinct lodging category, and dozens of such places have opened their doors to tourists, from traditional working farms to opportunistic wannabes. Typically, *estancias* organize daily activities with a heavy emphasis on horseback riding; many also provide overnight accommodations. Most are difficult to reach without a vehicle, although they'll often pick guests up with advance notice.

The granddaddy of Uruguayan tourist *estancias* is **San Pedro de Timote** (☎4310-8086; www.sanpedrodetimote.com; d Sun-Thu UR\$4000-5600, Fri & Sat UR\$5200-7600; ☎). Its remarkable setting, 14km up a dirt road from the town of Cerro Colorado, amid 253 hectares of rolling cattle country, is greatly enhanced by the complex of historic structures, some dating to the mid-19th century: a gracious white chapel, a courtyard with soaring palm trees, a library with gorgeous tilework, and a circular stone corral. Common areas feature parquet wood floors, big fireplaces, comfy leather armchairs, two pools and a sauna. Prices include three meals, afternoon tea and two daily horseback-riding excursions (plus night rides during the full moon). Non-overnight guests can pay UR\$1400 for lunch, afternoon tea and two horseback rides. Cerro Colorado is 160km northeast of Montevideo on Ruta 7.

Other tourist *estancias* covered in this book are listed under the city or town closest to them – our favorites include La Sirena, near Mercedes (see p523), Guardia del Monte (p544) and Yvytu Itaty (p528), near Tacuarembó.

In Montevideo, **Lares** (☎2901-9120; www.lares.com.uy; WF Aldunate 1320) and **Cecilia Regules Viajes** (☎2916-3012; www.ceciliaregulesviajes.com; Bacacay 1334, Local C) are travel agencies specializing in *estancia* tourism.

suspension footbridge, and housed in a former *pulpería* (the general store/bar that used to operate on many *estancias*), the museum documents Tacuarembó's claim as birthplace of the revered tango singer – a claim vigorously contested by Argentina and France!

Accommodations in Valle Edén are available at **Camping El Mago** (☎4632-7144; camp sites per tent/person UR\$50/20). You can eat at the lovely historic mud-and-stone **Posada Valle Edén** (☎4630-2345; www.posadavalleeden.com.uy, in Spanish; dishes UR\$190-260) or stay in one of their modern *cabañas* (UR\$1560) across the street.

Empresa Calebus runs an 11:45am bus from Tacuarembó to Valle Edén, returning at 7:15pm (UR\$38, 20 minutes).

EASTERN URUGUAY

The gorgeous 340km sweep of beaches, dunes, forests and lagoons stretching north-east from Montevideo to the Brazilian border is one of Uruguay's national treasures. Still largely unknown except to Uruguayans and their immediate neighbors, this region lies nearly dormant for 10 months of each

year, then explodes with summer activity from Christmas to Carnival, when it seems like every bus out of Montevideo is headed somewhere up the coast. For sheer fun-in-the-sun energy, there's nothing like the peak season, but if you can make it here slightly off-season, you'll experience all the same beauty for literally half the price.

Near the Brazilian border, amid the wide-open landscapes and untrammelled beaches of Rocha department, abandoned hilltop fortresses and shipwrecks offer mute testimony to the time when Spain and Portugal struggled for control of the new continent. Where lookouts once scanned the wide horizon for invading forces, a new wave of invaders has taken hold, from binocular-wielding whale-watchers in Cabo Polonio to camera-toting celebrity-watchers in Punta del Este.

Piriápolis

POP 8700

With its elegant old hotel and beachfront promenade backed by small mountains, Piriápolis is vaguely reminiscent of a Mediterranean beach town and is arguably Uruguay's most picturesque coastal resort. Less

pretentious and more affordable than Punta del Este, it was developed for tourism in the 1930s by Argentine entrepreneur Francisco Piria, who built the imposing landmark Argentino Hotel and an eccentric hillside residence known as Castillo de Piria (Piria's Castle; p531).

Almost all the action happens in the 10-block stretch of beachfront between Av Artigas (the access road from Ruta 9) and Av Piria (where the coastline makes a broad curve southwards).

Streets back from the beach quickly become residential.

The surrounding countryside holds many interesting features, including two of Uruguay's highest summits.

URUGUAY'S OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK NATURE PRESERVES

Uruguay's interior, with its vast open spaces, is a naturalist's dream. The Uruguayan government has designated several natural areas for protection under its Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (SNAP) program. Funding remains minimal, and tourist infrastructure rudimentary, but intrepid travelers will be richly rewarded for seeking out these little-visited spots. Below are two preserves that best capture the spirit of Uruguay's wild gaucho country. Other SNAP preserves mentioned in this book include Cabo Polonio (p543), Cerro Verde (p546) and Laguna de Rocha (p540).

Valle del Lunarejo

This gorgeous valley, 95km north of Tacuarembó, is a place of marvelous peace and isolation, with birds and rushing water providing the only soundtrack.

Enchanting **Posada Lunarejo** (☎4650-6400; www.posadalunarejo.com, in Spanish; Ruta 30, Km 238; r incl breakfast/full board per person UR\$1100/1800) occupies a restored 1880 building 2km off the main road, 3km from the river and a few steps from a *garza* (crane) colony. Further up the road, local guide **Mario Padern** (☎099-450653; Ruta 30, Km 230; walking tour depending on group size UR\$600-1000) leads hikes from the canyon's edge down to a series of natural pools near the river's headwaters.

CUT (www.cutcorporacion.com.uy) offers the most convenient schedule to Valle del Lunarejo on its daily Montevideo–Tacuarembó–Artigas bus (leaving Montevideo at noon, UR\$551, six hours; leaving Tacuarembó at 4:50pm, UR\$94, 1½ hours). Posada Lunarejo can meet your bus if you call ahead.

Quebrada de los Cuervos

This hidden little canyon cuts through the rolling hill country 40km northwest of Treinta y Tres (325km northeast of Montevideo), providing an unexpectedly moist and cool habitat for a variety of plants and birds. There's a nature trail looping through the park (two hours roundtrip).

A perfect base for exploring this region is **Cañada del Brujo** (☎4452-2837; www.pleka.com/delbrujo; dm UR\$480, meals UR\$200-280), an ultrarustic hostel in an old schoolhouse 12km from the park. Hostel owner Pablo Rado can take you hiking or horseback riding to nearby waterfalls and introduce you to the joys of gaucho life: living by candlelight, drinking *mate*, sleeping under a wool poncho, eating simple meals cooked on the wood stove and watching spectacular sunsets under the big sky. With advance notice, he'll meet you in Treinta y Tres and drive you to the hostel in his old VW bug (per person UR\$300).

Buses travel to Treinta y Tres nine times daily from Montevideo (UR\$340, 4½ hours).

Sights & Activities

Swimming and **sunbathing** are the most popular activities, and there's good **fishing** off the rocks at the end of the beach, where Rambla de los Argentinos becomes Rambla de los Ingleses.

For a great view of Piriápolis, take the **chairlift** (UR\$100; ☎9am-sunset) to the summit of **Cerro San Antonio** at the east end of town.

Sleeping

Prices here are for high season. Low-season rates are up to 50% less.

Hotel Colón

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎4432-2508; www.hotelcolonpiriapolis.com; Rambla 950; r without/with waterfront view UR\$2100/2300)

☎☎☎ Built in 1910 by Francisco Piria for his son, this faux-Tudor mansion by the waterfront boasts fine views, gorgeous art nouveau details and an old-fashioned sitting room with fireplace. Wi-fi is in common areas only.

Argentino Hotel

LUXURY HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎4432-2791; www.argentinohotel.com.uy; Rambla de los Argentinos s/n; s/d incl breakfast from UR\$2600/4000, half board UR\$3100/5000, full board UR\$3600/6000; ☎☎☎) Even if you don't stay here, you should visit this elegant 350-room European-style spa with two heated river-water pools, a casino, ice-skating rink and other luxuries.

Hostel Piriápolis

HOSTEL \$

(☎4432-0394; www.hostelpiriapolis.com; Simón del Pino 1136; dm/tw/d incl breakfast UR\$330/780/850, nonmember surcharge per person UR\$100; ☎☎) This 240-bed hostel, one of South America's largest, has several four-bed dorms, dozens of doubles and a guest kitchen. It's desolate as an airplane hangar when empty, but full of life (and often booked solid) in January and February.

Bungalows Margariteñas

BUNGALOW \$\$

(☎4432-2245; www.margaritenas.com; cnr Zuletegui & Piedras; d/tr/q UR\$1400/1500/1600; ☎☎) Near the bus terminal, this place has well equipped, individually decorated bungalows that sleep two to four. Affable owner Corina speaks English and meets guests at the bus station upon request.

Eating

Most restaurants in Piriápolis are within a block of the Rambla.

TOP CHOICE Café Picasso

SEAFOOD \$\$

(☎4432-2597; cnr Rojas & Caseros; dishes UR\$140-300; ☎lunch & dinner Dec-Mar, lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat Apr-Nov) Hidden down a residential backstreet several blocks from the beach, chef-owner Carlos has converted his carport and front room into an informal, colorfully decorated restaurant with open-air grill. Locals chat astride plastic chairs and listen to tango recordings while Carlos cooks up some of the best fish anywhere on Uruguay's Atlantic coast, along with paella on Sundays. All mains come with mashed potatoes, mashed pumpkin, French fries or salad.

La Corniche

PIZZERIA, SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(Manuel Freire s/n; dishes UR\$160-290; ☎lunch & dinner) This newly opened place specializes in pizza from the wood-fired oven and



HOSTEL-HOPPING UP THE COAST

Summer Bus (summerbus.com) is a new hop-on, hop-off bus service allowing travelers flexibility in traveling between hostels up and down Uruguay's Atlantic coast. With a single UR\$1500 ticket, you can start your journey at the hostel of your choice and visit all 12 destinations, from Montevideo to Punta del Diabolo.

seafood from the blazing grill. Its sister cafe around the corner on La Rambla serves good espresso and pastries as well as lighter fare such as sandwiches on ciabatta bread.

Information

Antel (cnr Barrios & Buenos Aires; internet per hr UR\$19; ☎9am-9pm Mon-Sat)

Banco de la República (Rambla de los Argentinos, btwn Sierra & Sanabria) Convenient ATM.

Centro de Hoteles y Restaurantes (☎4432-2218; www.piriapolis.org.uy, in Spanish; ☎9am-midnight Dec-Mar, 10am-6pm Apr-Nov) Adjacent to the tourist office; provides local hotel information and booking assistance.

Post office (Av Piria s/n)

Tourist office (☎4432-5055; www.turismo.piriapolis.com; Rambla de los Argentinos; ☎9am-midnight Dec-Mar, 10am-6pm Apr-Nov) Helpful staff and public toilets, on the waterfront near Argentino Hotel.

Getting There & Away

The **bus terminal** (cnr Misiones & Niza) is a few blocks back from the beach. COT and COPSA run frequent buses to Montevideo (UR\$124, 1½ hours) and Punta del Este (UR\$77, 50 minutes).

Around Piriápolis

North of town is **Castillo de Piria** (☎4432-3268; Ruta 37, Km 4; admission free; ☎10am-5pm Tue-Sun), Francisco Piria's outlandishly opulent residence. At the time of research the interior was closed for renovations, but grounds remained open to the public. About 1km further inland, hikers can climb Uruguay's fourth-highest 'peak,' **Cerro Pan de Azúcar** (389m). The trail (three hours roundtrip) starts from the parking lot of the **Reserva de Fauna Autóctona** (Ruta 37, Km 5), narrowing from a gradual dirt road into a steep path marked with red arrows.

The privately operated **Sierra de las Ánimas** (☎094-419891; www.sierradelasanimas.com; Ruta 9, Km 86; ☀Sat & Sun, plus Carnaval & Easter weeks) is just off the Interbalnearia (coastal highway), 25km toward Montevideo from Piriápolis. There are two good hiking trails, each three to four hours roundtrip: one leads to the 501m summit (Uruguay's second-highest), the other to the **Cañadón de los Espejos**, a series of waterfalls and natural swimming holes that are especially impressive after good rainfall. Other activities include mountain biking and camping. Coming from Montevideo by bus, get off at Parador Los Cardos restaurant and cross the highway. In cold or rainy weather, call ahead to verify it's open.

SOS Rescate de Fauna Marina (☎094-330795; sosfaunamarina@gmail.com; admission UR\$50; ☀by appointment), 10km south of Piriápolis, is Uruguay's premier marine-animal rescue and rehabilitation center. Run entirely by volunteers, its emphasis is on educating schoolchildren, who can assist with daily feedings and observe penguins, sea lions, turtles and other rescued wildlife. Visitors are asked to reserve ahead and support the center's mission with a small donation.

Punta del Este

POP 8900

OK, here's the plan: tan it, wax it, buff it at the gym, then plunk it on the beach at 'Punta.' Once you're done there, go out and shake it at one of the town's famous clubs.

Punta del Este – with its many beaches, elegant seaside homes, yacht harbor, high-rise apartment buildings, pricey hotels and glitzy restaurants – is one of South America's most glamorous resorts and easily the most expensive place in Uruguay. Extremely popular with Argentines and Brazilians, Punta suffered a period of decline during the Uruguayan and Argentine recessions, but has come back with a vengeance.

Celebrity-watchers have a full-time job here. Punta is teeming with big names, and local gossipmongers keep regular tabs on who's been sighted where. Surrounding towns caught up in the whole Punta mystique include the famed club zone of La Barra to the east and Punta Ballena to the west.

Punta itself is relatively small, confined to a narrow peninsula that officially divides the Río de la Plata from the Atlantic Ocean. The town has two separate grids: north of a con-

stricted isthmus, just east of the yacht harbor, is the high-rise hotel zone; the southern area is largely residential. Street signs bear both names and numbers, though locals refer to most streets only by their number. An exception is Av Juan Gorlero (Calle 22), the main commercial street, universally referred to as just 'Gorlero' (not to be confused with Calle 19, *Comodoro Gorlero*).

Rambla Claudio Williman and Rambla Lorenzo Batlle Pacheco are coastal thoroughfares that converge at the top of the isthmus from northwest and northeast, respectively. Locations along the Ramblas are usually identified by numbered *paradas* (bus stops).

📍 Sights

🏖️ Beaches & Islands

Beaches are the big daytime draw in sunny Punta and there are plenty to choose from. On the west side of town, Rambla Gral Artigas snakes along the calm **Playa Mansa** on the Río de la Plata, then passes the busy **yacht harbor**, overflowing with boats, restaurants, nightclubs and beautiful people, before circling around the peninsula to the open Atlantic Ocean.

On the eastern side of the peninsula the water is rougher, as reflected in the name **Playa Brava** (Fierce Beach); the waves and currents here have claimed several lives. Also on the Atlantic side, you'll find surfer-friendly beaches such as **Playa de los Ingleses** and **Playa El Emir**.

From Playa Mansa, heading west along Rambla Williman, the main beach areas are La Pastora, Marconi, Cantegril, Las Delicias, Pinares, La Gruta at Punta Ballena, and Portezuelo. Eastward, along Rambla Lorenzo Batlle Pacheco, the prime beaches are La Chiverta, San Rafael, La Draga and Punta de la Barra. In summer, all have *paradores* (small restaurants) with beach service.

Punta's most famous landmark is **La Mano en la Arena**, a monster-sized sculpted hand protruding from the sands of Playa Brava (see p538).

Boats leave every half-hour or so (daily in season, weekends in off-season) from Punta del Este's yacht harbor for the 15-minute trip to **Isla Gorriti**, which has excellent sandy beaches, a couple of restaurants and the ruins of **Baterías de Santa Ana**, an 18th-century fortification.

About 10km offshore, **Isla de Lobos** is home to the world's second-largest southern sea-lion colony (200,000 at last count), as

VILLA SERRANA

Those seeking an off-the-beaten-track retreat will love the serenity of this little village nestled in hills above a small lake, 170km northeast of Montevideo. Nearby attractions include **Salto del Penitente**, a 60m waterfall.

Picturesquely perched above the valley, **La Calaguata** (☎4440-2955; www.lacalaguata.com, in Spanish; Ruta 8, Km 145; camp sites per person/tent UR\$150/300, r per person incl breakfast/half-board/full board from UR\$900/1200/1650) is a friendly family-run posada with attached restaurant; horseback riding, cycling and hiking excursions can be arranged. The slightly more expensive room with whirlpool tub and fireplace is extremely cozy on chilly nights.

To get here, take a bus from Montevideo to Minas (UR\$141, two hours), then transfer to a **COSU** (☎4442-2256) bus to Villa Serrana (UR\$50, 30 minutes, 9am and 5:30pm Tuesday and Thursday). Alternatively, any bus traveling northbound from Minas along Ruta 8 can drop you at Km 145, from where it's a stiff 4km uphill walk into town.

well as South America's tallest lighthouse. The island is protected and can only be visited on an organized tour (see p533).

Other Sights

Casapueblo GALLERY
(☎4257-8041; admission UR\$120; ☀10am-sunset) At Punta Ballena, a jutting headland 15km west of Punta del Este, Casapueblo is Uruguayan artist Carlos Páez Vilaró's exuberantly whimsical villa and art gallery. Gleaming white in the sun and cascading nine stories down a cliffside, it's one of Uruguay's most unique attractions. Visitors can tour five rooms, view a film on the artist's life and travels, and eat up the spectacular views at the upstairs cafeteria-bar. There's a hotel and restaurant, too. It's a 2km walk from the junction where Codesa's Línea 8 bus drops you.

FREE Museo Ralli MUSEUM
(☎4248-3476; www.museoralli.org; Los Arrayanes s/n; ☀5-9pm Tue-Sun Jan & Feb, 2-6pm Sat & Sun Mar-May & Oct-Dec) In the suburb called Beverly Hills, it displays a wide-ranging collection of works by contemporary Latin American artists.

🏃 Activities

In summer, **parasailing, waterskiing** and **jet skiing** are possible on Playa Mansa. Operators set up on the beach along Rambla Claudio Williman between Paradas 2 and 20.

Sunvalleysurf SURFING
(☎4248-1388; www.sunvalleysurf.com, in Spanish; Parada 3½, Playa Brava) Wetsuits, surfboards, bodyboards and just about anything else you could want can be rented from its origi-

nal shop on Playa Brava, plus branches on Playa El Emir and in La Barra. It also offers surfing and bodyboard lessons.

👉 Tours

Calypto Charters & Excursiones BOAT TOUR
(☎4244-6152; www.calypto.com.uy, in Spanish; cnr Rambla Artigas & Calle 21; tours adult/child UR\$1400/700) One of several companies offering two-hour tours to Isla de Lobos.

🛏 Sleeping

In summer Punta is jammed with people, and prices are astronomical; even hostels double their prices in January. In winter it's a ghost town, and places that stay open lower their prices considerably. Prices listed here are for high season, when even places classified as midrange tend to charge top-end rates. Off-season visitors will find prices more in keeping with the standard ranges defined on p549.

Las Cumbres BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎4257-8689; www.cumbres.com.uy; Ruta 12, Km 3.9, Laguna del Sauce; d UR\$3900-6800, ste UR\$7200-14,300; 🍷🍷🍷) Near Punta Ballena, this understatedly luxurious hilltop paradise is eclectically decorated with treasures from the owners' world travels. Rooms abound with special features, such as writing desks, fireplaces and outdoor whirlpool tubs. Guests have access to spa treatments, beach chairs and umbrellas, and free mountain bikes, and the tearoom terrace (open to the public) has magnificent sunset views.

La Lomita del Chingolo GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$
(☎4248-6980; www.lalomitadelchingolo.com; Las Acacias btwn Los Eucaliptos & Le Mans; dm

Uruguay's Beaches

Stretching from Montevideo to Brazil, 300km of beaches hug the Río de la Plata and the Atlantic Ocean. Choose the style that suits: from Punta del Este's glitz to Cabo Polonio's rusticity.

Punta del Diablo

1 Punta del Diablo (p545) is the end of the line. A few steps down the beach and you're in Brazil, but most folks stay put, seduced by waves, seafood shacks, beach bonfires and the national park.

Cabo Polonio

2 Its lighthouse beckoning from a lonely point dotted with makeshift houses, Cabo Polonio (p543) is a nature-lover's dream. Getting here, on a pitching truck ride through the dunes, is half the fun.

Punta del Este

3 The dividing line between the wild Atlantic and the Río de la Plata, Punta del Este's (p532) tidy peninsula full of highrises and perfect beaches morphs annually from sleepy beach town to summer playground for South America's 'see-and-be-seen' party set.

Piriápolis

4 A throwback to the 1930s, Piriápolis (p529) is about strolling the beachfront promenade past the grand hotel, or surveying the calm waters from the top of the chairlift.

La Paloma

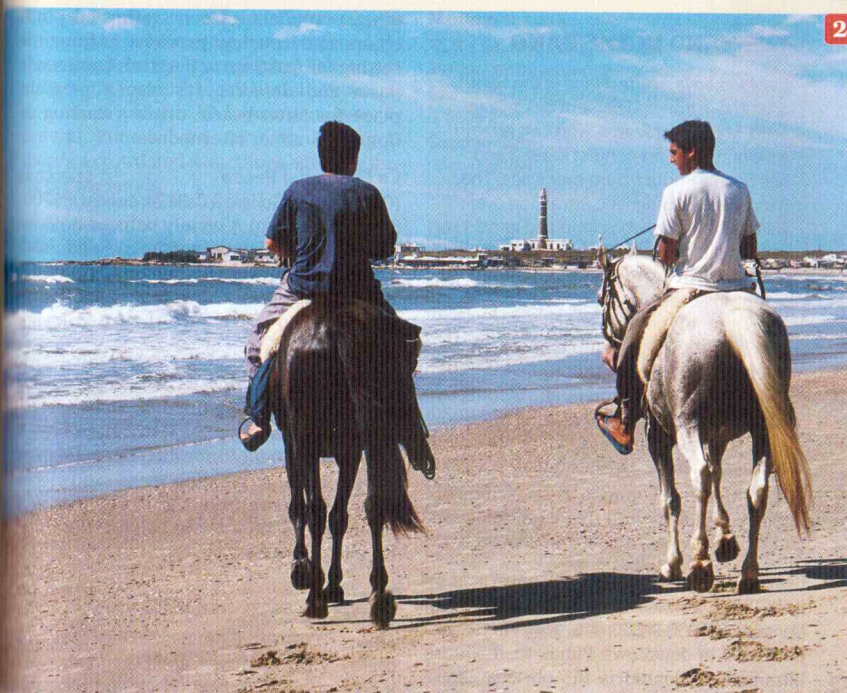
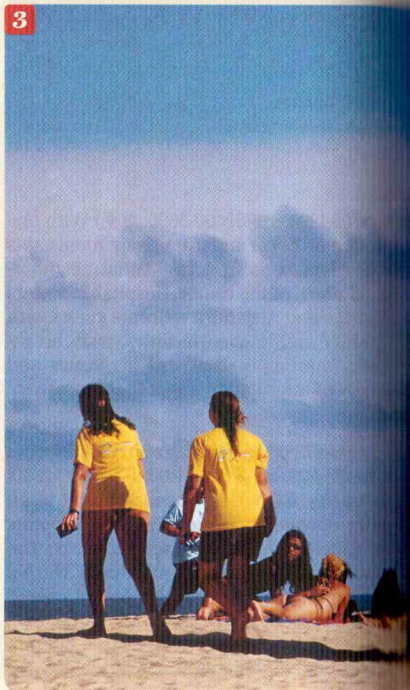
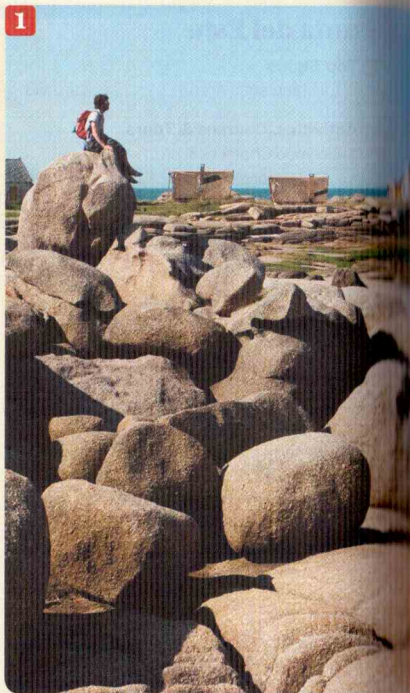
5 Grab an ice-cream and head for the waves. Family-friendly La Paloma (p540), tucked behind a wall of sand dunes, is the very picture of unadorned beachside fun.

La Pedrera

6 No view on Uruguay's entire Atlantic coast matches the wide-angle perspective from La Pedrera's (p542) cliffs. Join the surfers up top and contemplate your beach options for the day.

Clockwise from top left

- 1.** Punta del Diablo (p545) **2.** Cabo Polonio (p543)
3. Playa Brava (p532), Punta del Este



THE HAND IN THE SAND

La Mano en la Arena (Hand in the Sand), sculpted in iron and cement by Chilean artist Mario Irarrázabal, won first prize in a monumental art contest in 1982 and has been a Punta fixture ever since. The hand exerts a magnetic attraction over visitors to Punta, who climb and jump off its digits and pose for thousands of photos with it every year.

Up close, the hand is starting to show its age. There's graffiti scrawled all over it, and its ungraceful cement base often gets exposed by shifting sands. But watch out – the hand's still likely to reach out and grab you!

The comfortable common areas include big-screen computers with free wi-fi, some loud and fancy couches, a pool and a small bar.

Conrad Resort & Casino LUXURY HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎4249-1111; www.conradhotels.com; Parada 4, Playa Mansa; dUR\$5400-14,000; 📞📺📺) For five-star amenities in downtown Punta, the high-rise, ultramodern Conrad is the obvious choice. Better rooms have terraces with sea views, the pool and spa complex is fabulous, and the casino offers entertainment extravaganzas.

Camping San Rafael CAMPGROUND \$
(☎4248-6715; www.campingsanrafael.com.uy, in Spanish; camp sites per person UR\$170-250, per vehicle UR\$40; ☺Nov-Easter) This campground, near the bridge to La Barra, has well-kept facilities on woody grounds, complete with store, restaurant, laundry, 24-hour hot water and other amenities.

Eating

Lo de Charlie MEDITERRANEAN \$\$\$
(☎4244-4183; Calle 12, No 819; dishes UR\$352-615; ☺lunch & dinner Dec-Mar, dinner Wed-Mon, lunch Fri-Sun Apr-Nov) Owned by a fishing buddy of local artist Carlos Páez Vilaró and decorated with some of his work, this is one of Punta's premier restaurants. The endless culinary delights include gazpacho, risotto, homemade pasta, fish and shellfish.

Il Baretto ITALIAN \$\$\$
(☎4244-5565; www.ilbarettopunta.com; cnr Calles 9 & 10; pizza UR\$210-350, dishes UR\$390-620; ☺dinner daily mid-Dec-Carnaval, Thu-Sun rest

of year) Candlelit garden seating on plush chairs and couches provides a romantic setting for feasting on Baretto's homemade pasta and desserts. It's also a pleasant place for 'after-beach' drinks, starting at 6pm on summer afternoons.

La Fonda del Pesca SEAFOOD \$\$
(Calle 29, btwn Gorlero & Calle 24; dishes UR\$200-300; ☺noon-11pm) A vividly painted hole-in-the-wall specializing in fish, La Fonda also serves up plenty of local color. Owner-chef Pesca makes personal appearances at diners' tables to make sure they're enjoying themselves.

Chivitería Marcos CHIVITOS \$\$
(Rambla Artigas, btwn Calles 12 & 14; chivitos UR\$210; ☺11am-4am Dec-Mar, 11am-4pm & 8pm-late Apr-Nov) Montevideo-based Marcos earned its fame building mega-sandwiches to order. Choose from the 11 toppings and seven sauces, then try to balance the thing back to your table.

Virazón SEAFOOD \$\$\$
(☎4244-3924; www.virazon.com.uy; cnr Rambla Artigas & Calle 28; dishes UR\$275-625; ☺lunch & dinner) Virazón serves great seafood. Grab a spot on the beachside deck and have fun watching the waiters try to look dignified as they cross the street with loaded trays.

Baby Gouda Deli Café CAFE \$\$
(☎4277-1874; Ruta 10, Km 161, La Barra; dishes from UR\$250; ☺noon-1am) An ultracool deli-café with an inviting outdoor deck, on the main drag in La Barra, a couple of blocks up from the beach.

Artico SEAFOOD \$\$
(Calle 8 No 1181; dishes UR\$185-290; ☺lunch & dinner) This port-side fish wholesaler does a brisk business in grilled seafood and paella, with lower prices that reflect its cafeteria-style service. There's also a salad bar (per 100g UR\$60). It's one of the few places in Punta where you can eat by the water without spending a fortune.

Supermercado Disco SUPERMARKET \$
(Calle 17, btwn Gorlero & Calle 24; ☺8am-11pm) For shelter from Punta's high prices, shop for groceries or grab a snack from the *rotisería* (delicatessen) here.



Drinking & Entertainment

A cluster of clubs in Punta's port area stays open all year (weekends only in low season). During the super-peak season from Christmas

through January, an additional slew of beach clubs with ever-changing names open along Playa Brava, on the beach road to La Barra.

Bear in mind that it's social suicide to turn up at a nightclub before 2am here. In general, Punta's bars stay open as long as there's a crowd and sometimes have live music on weekends.

Moby Dick PUB
(www.mobydick.com.uy; Calle 13, btwn Calles 10 & 12) This classic pub near the yacht harbor is where Punta's dynamic social scene kicks off every evening.

Company Bar BAR
(☎4244-0130; Calle 29, btwn Calles 18 & 20) In downtown Punta, this place is open all year for dinner and drinks, with an international mix of live music from 10pm onwards.

Mambo Club CLUB
(☎448956; cnr Calle 13 & Calle 10) A popular dance spot featuring Latin grooves.

Soho DJ
(www.sohopuntadeleste.com, in Spanish; Calle 13, btwn Calles 10 & 12) Another dependable year-round dance spot featuring an ever-changing cast of international DJs.

Medio y Medio JAZZ
(www.medioymedio.com, in Spanish; Camino Lussich s/n, Punta Ballena) This jazz club and restaurant near the beach in Punta Ballena brings in performers from Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil.

Cine Libertador CINEMA
(Gorlero 796) Open year-round with movies on two screens.

Shopping

Manos del Uruguay WOOLENS
(www.manos.com.uy; Gorlero, btwn Calles 30 & 31) The local branch of Uruguay's national cooperative, selling fine woolsens.

Feria Artesanal HANDICRAFTS
(Plaza Artigas) Artisans' fair on Punta's central square.

Information

Internet Access

High-priced internet places pop up like mushrooms each summer, but most close in the off-season. There's paid internet (per hour UR\$60) year-round at the bus station. Many hotels and restaurants offer free wi-fi, and there's free municipal wi-fi on Plaza Artigas.

Money

Punta's many banks, ATMs and exchange offices are concentrated along Gorlero.

Banco de la República Oriental (cnr Gorlero & Calle 25)

Cambio Gales (cnr Gorlero & Calle 29) Currency exchange.

HSBC (cnr Gorlero & Calle 28)

Post

Post office (Gorlero 1035)

Telephone

Antel (cnr Calles 25 & 24; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Another dependable option for internet (per hour UR\$45) in the low season.

Tourist Information

Centro de Hoteles y Restaurantes (☎4244-0512; www.puntadeleste.com; Plaza Artigas; ☺8am-midnight Dec-Mar, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat Apr-Nov) Helps with hotel bookings.

Municipal tourist office (☎4244-6510; www.maldonado.gub.uy; Plaza Artigas; ☺8am-midnight Dec 15-Mar 1, 8am-6pm rest of year) Maintains additional branches at bus station and at the corner of Calle 31 and the Rambla.

National Tourism Ministry (☎4244-1218; puntadeleste@mintur.gub.uy; Gorlero 942; ☺10am-5pm)

Getting There & Away

Air

Aeropuerto Internacional de Punta del Este (PDP; www.puntadeleste.aero) is at Laguna del Sauce, 20km west of Punta del Este. All airlines following fly direct to Buenos Aires' Aeroparque;

Aerolíneas Argentinas (www.aerolineas.com.ar; Edificio Santos Dumont, Gorlero, btwn Calles 30 & 31)

BQB (www.flybqb.com) New cut-rate carrier, planning to expand to other destinations.

BUSES FROM PUNTA DEL ESTE

DESTINATION	COST (URS)	DURATION (HR)
Montevideo	170	2¼
Carrasco	170	1¼
Airport (MVD)		
Piriápolis	70	1
Punta del Diabolo	235	3
Rocha	117	1½

Pluna (www.flypluna.com) Also flies to São Paulo, Brazil.

Sol (www.sol.com.ar) Also flies to Rosario, Argentina.

Bus

From Punta's **bus terminal** (☎4249-4042; cnr Calle 32 & Bulevar Artigas), dozens of daily buses ply the coastal route to Montevideo. COT also has two daily northeast-bound buses to Rocha, the transfer point for La Paloma, La Pedrera and Cabo Polonio.

Getting Around

To/From the Airport

COT runs direct minivans from the bus station to Punta del Este's airport (UR\$100, 20 minutes), leaving 1½ hours before each flight.

Bus

Minibuses leave every 20 minutes in summer from platform 8 at Punta's bus terminal and serve the eastern beaches en route to La Barra (UR\$26, 20 minutes); others run to points west, including Punta Ballena.

Car

Car-rental outlets are ubiquitous near the bus terminal and along Gorlero. Some of the better deals include **Punta Car** (Bulevar Artigas 101), **Multicar** (Gorlero 860) and **Dollar** (Gorlero 961).

La Paloma

POP 3500

In the pretty rural department of Rocha, on a small peninsula 225km east of Montevideo, placid La Paloma is less developed, less expensive and much less crowded than Punta del Este. The town itself is rather bland and sprawling, but it has attractive sandy beaches and great surfing. Streets radiating diagonally from Av Nicolás Solari (the main street) are named after classical deities,

making for funny-sounding intersections such as Eros and Adonis. On summer weekends the town often hosts free concerts on the beach, making accommodations bookings essential.

Sights & Activities

El Faro del Cabo Santa María LIGHTHOUSE (admission UR\$15; ☉9am-1pm & 2:30pm-sunset) The 1874 completion of this local lighthouse, marked La Paloma's genesis as a summer beach resort. The unfinished first attempt collapsed in a violent storm, killing 17 French and Italian workers who are buried nearby. Outside is a solar clock using shadows cast by the lighthouse.

Peteco Surf Shop

(Av Nicolás Solari, btwn Av El Sirio & Av deNavío) SURFING rental shortboard/longboard/kayak/bodyboard/sandboard/wetsuit per day UR\$400/600/800/400/400/400) The best surfing beaches are Los Botes, Solari and Anaconda southwest of town, and La Aguada and La Pedrera to the north. This very friendly surf shop rents all the necessary equipment and can hook you up with good local surfing instructors.

Laguna de Rocha

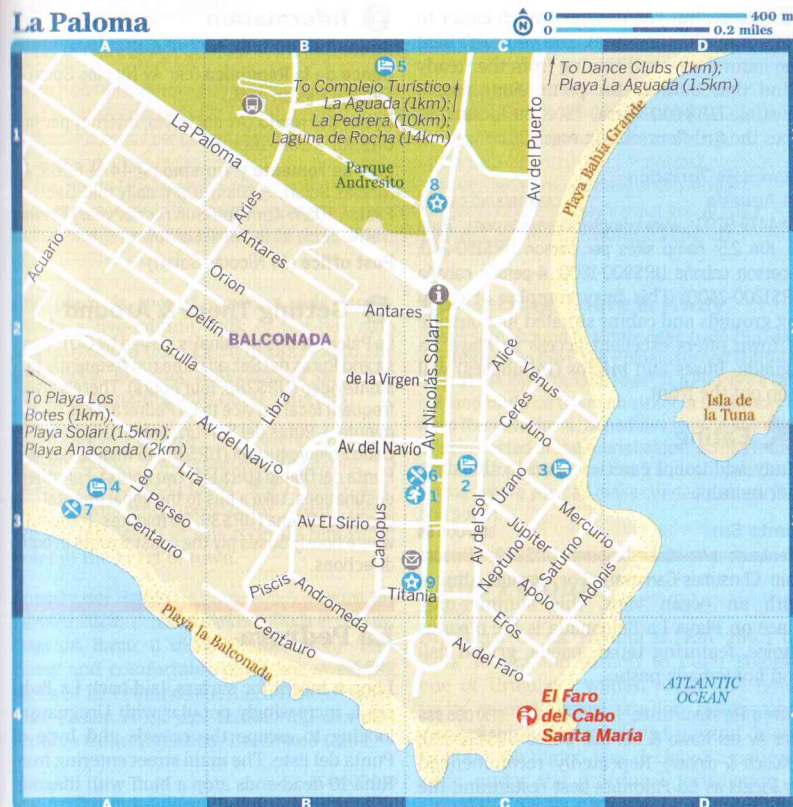
(RESERVE) An ecological reserve protected under Uruguay's SNAP program (see p530), is a vast wetland 10km west of La Paloma with populations of black-necked swans, storks, spoonbills and other waterfowl.

Sleeping

Hotel Bahía

(☎4479-6029; www.elbahia.com.uy; cnr Av del Navío & del Sol; d UR\$1500-2400, with air-con UR\$2200-3000; 🍷🍷) For its central location and overall comfort, Bahía is hard to beat. Rooms are clean and bright, with firm mattresses and bedside reading lights.

La Paloma



La Paloma Hostel

(☎4479-6396; www.lapalomahostel.com; Parque Andresito; HI member UR\$280-400, nonmember UR\$340-480; ☺closed variably in winter) Just north of town, this thatched-roofed hostel in shady Parque Andresito has large dorms with sleeping lofts, an indoor-outdoor kitchen and a lounge area with fireplace.

La Balconada Hostel

(☎4479-6273; www.labalconadahostel.com.uy; Centauro s/n; dm UR\$480-800, d with shared/private bathroom from UR\$1600/2200; 🍷) This surfer-friendly hostel has an enviable location a stone's throw from La Balconada beach, about 1km southwest of the center. Take a taxi from the bus station and the hostel will pick up the tab.

Hotel La Tuna

(☎4479-6083; hoteleslatunaycribe.com; cnr Neptuno & Juno; s/d/tr from UR\$950/1400/1950, 4-person apt UR\$2300; 🍷🍷) The building is

La Paloma

Top Sights

El Faro del Cabo Santa María..... C4

Activities, Courses & Tours

1 Peteco Surf Shop.....C3

Sleeping

2 Hotel BahíaC3

3 Hotel La TunaC3

4 La Balconada HostelA3

5 La Paloma Hostel..... B1

Eating

Bahía Restaurante.....(see 2)

6 Heladería Popi.....C3

7 Punto Sur.....A3

Entertainment

8 Centro Cultural La Paloma.....C1

9 Cine La PalomaC3

Peteco Resto-Pub.....(see 1)

WORTH A TRIP

FARO JOSÉ IGNACIO

The rich and famous flock to this highly fashionable little beachside town with its pretty lighthouse 30km east of Punta. Staying here is not for the faint of wallet; US\$1000-a-night accommodations are the rule, such as the oceanfront **Playa Vik** (☎094-605212; www.playavik.com; Calle Los Cisnes; 🍷🍷🍷), recently opened by billionaire Scandinavian businessman and art patron Alex Vik. To soak up José Ignacio's rarefied atmosphere without breaking the bank, head for the delightful beachside eatery **Parador La Huella** (☎4486-2279; www.paradorlahuella.com; Playa Brava; ☺lunch & dinner Dec-Mar, lunch Fri-Sun, dinner Fri & Sat May-Nov), which specializes in sushi, grilled fish and clay-oven-fired pizza. Two buses daily make the 45-minute trip from Punta (UR\$59), stopping in the main square near the **tourist office** (☎4486-2409; www.ligadejoseignacio.org; ☺9am-2pm Fri-Mon).

an eyesore, but you can't get much closer to the water without a boat, and you can't beat the natural air-conditioning from the steady wind that buffets this point. Four rooms (costing UR\$400 extra) face the ocean, as does the 3rd-floor dining room.

Complejo Turístico La Aguada

CAMPGROUND, CABIN \$
(☎4479-9293; www.complejolaaguada.com; Ruta 15, Km 2.5; camp sites per person UR\$150-240, 2-person cabaña UR\$900-1800, 4-person cabaña UR\$1200-2400) This busy complex of camping grounds and cabins situated just outside of town offers excellent access to Playa La Aguada. Buses and *micros* (minibuses) will stop out the front.

Eating

Many additional eateries open in the summer months.

Punto Sur

SEAFOOD \$\$
(Centauro s/n; dishes around UR\$250; ☎noon-2am Christmas-Carnaval) For casual dining with an ocean view, this summer-only place on Playa La Balconada is the obvious choice, featuring tapas, paella, grilled fish and homemade pasta.

Bahía Restaurante

SEAFOOD \$\$\$
(cnr Av del Navío & del Sol; dishes UR\$190-390; ☎lunch & dinner) Repeatedly recommended by locals as La Paloma's best restaurant, the Bahía specializes in seafood.

Heladería Popi

ICE CREAM \$
(Av Nicolás Solari s/n; ice cream UR\$50-80; ☎noon-midnight) La Paloma's favorite ice cream shop.

Entertainment

In summer, take a midnight stroll out toward Playa La Aguada and follow your ears to La Paloma's string of **dance clubs**, lined up in a row like the thatched-roofed houses of the *Three Little Pigs*. Other entertainment options include:

Peteco Resto-Pub

PUB
(Av Nicolás Solari) Behind Peteco Surf Shop, this patio bar hosts live music nightly in summer.

Cine La Paloma

CINEMA
(Av Nicolás Solari) Has twin screens showing movies throughout the summer.

Centro Cultural La Paloma CULTURAL CENTER
(Parque Andresito) Shows occasional movies and hosts other cultural events year-round.

Information

Antel (Av Nicolás Solari)

Banco de la República (cnr Av Nicolás Solari & Titania) Has an ATM.

Cyber del Navío (Av del Navío; internet per hr UR\$30; ☎9am-10pm)

Liga de Fomento y Turismo (☎4479-6088; Av Nicolás Solari; ☎10am-10pm daily mid-Dec-Easter, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun rest of year) On the traffic circle at the heart of town.

Post office (Av Nicolás Solari)

Getting There & Around

La Paloma's bus terminal is served by COT, Cynsa and Rutas del Sol; all three run frequently to Montevideo (UR\$282, four hours). There's also frequent local service to La Pedrera (UR\$35, 15 minutes). Rutas del Sol runs twice daily to the Cabo Polonio turnoff (UR\$70, 45 minutes) and Punta del Diablo (UR\$141, two hours). For other destinations, take a bus to the departmental capital of Rocha (UR\$39, 30 minutes, frequent), where hourly buses ply the coastal route in both directions.

La Pedrera

POP 225

Long a mecca for surfers, laid-back La Pedrera is increasingly popular with Uruguayans looking to escape the crowds and hype of Punta del Este. The main street entering from Ruta 10 dead-ends atop a bluff with magnificent long views north toward Cabo Polonio and south toward La Paloma. Outside the summer months, tourist services are limited.

Sleeping & Eating

Rates drop dramatically in the off-season.

La Casa de la Luna

HOSTEL \$

(☎4470-2857; www.lacasadelaluna.com.uy; Ruta 10, Km 230; camp sites per person UR\$400, dm UR\$550-600, d UR\$1800; ☎☎) This small, homey hostel north of town offers camping, dorms and three upstairs doubles with distant ocean views. There's a guest laundry and a comfy common area with internet, DVD player and fireplace. Owner Paula has been instrumental in developing a two-hour nature trail exploring the surrounding *cárcavas* (badlands) ecosystem.

El Viajero La Pedrera Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(☎4479-2252; www.elviajeroapedrera.com; cnr Calles 3 & 11; dm without bathroom UR\$340-550, d with bathroom UR\$1200-2200; ☎Nov-Easter; ☎☎) Part of Uruguay's largest hostel chain,

HORSING AROUND IN THE HILLS

An hour inland from La Pedrera, the Sierra de Rocha is a lovely landscape of grey rocky crags interspersed with rolling rangeland. **Caballos de Luz** (☎099-400446; www.caballosdeluz.com; r per person incl full board & horseback rides UR\$2000), run by the multilingual Austrian-Uruguayan couple Lucie and Santiago, offers hill-country horse treks lasting from two hours to a week, complete with three delicious vegetarian meals daily and overnight accommodation in a pair of comfortable thatched guest houses. They'll meet you at the bus station in Rocha, or you can drive there yourself (it's about 30 minutes off Hwy 9).

this place is tucked down a side street, within a five-minute walk of the bus stop and only 500m from La Pedrera's beach. The front deck, fire ring, and outdoor barbecue all invite mingling with other travelers.

Brisas de la Pedrera

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎4479-2265; www.brisasdelapedrera.com; d UR\$2600-5600; ☎Oct-Easter; ☎☎) Sunny, spacious rooms and spectacular ocean views are the big draws at this recently renovated hotel in the heart of town.

Posada del Barco

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎4479-2028; posadadelbarco@adinet.com.uy; Playa del Barco; d UR\$1700-3100; ☎☎) This classy and comfortable place has sweeping views of La Pedrera's southern beach. Its annual Easter Week jazz festival attracts performers from Argentina, Brazil and Cuba.

Perillán

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(cnr Av Principal & Rambla; dishes UR\$360-420; ☎lunch & dinner Nov-Easter) Candlelit and cozy, with colorfully decorated wooden tables, excellent seafood, a good wine list and an outdoor deck with a front-row seat on the crashing waves across the street, this is the perfect spot for a romantic dinner. Specialties include *gambas al ajillo* (garlic shrimp) and *cazuela de mariscos* (seafood stew with shrimp, squid, octopus and potatoes in a rich tomato broth).

Costa Brava

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(dishes UR\$250-400; ☎lunch & dinner daily Dec-Mar, dinner Fri & Sat, lunch Sat & Sun Apr-Nov) Perched atop the bluffs overlooking the Atlantic, Costa Brava is all about seafood accompanied by an unbeatable view.

Information

La Pedrera's **tourist office** (☎Dec-Easter) is in a tiny wooden kiosk on Calle Principal, a few blocks in from the beach. The closest ATMs are in La Paloma. Most accommodations in town offer free wi-fi and/or guest computers.

Getting There & Away

Buses southbound to Montevideo (UR\$293) and northbound to the Cabo Polonio turnoff (UR\$40) stop at the gigantic OSE tower (La Pedrera's tallest landmark) on the main street, a few blocks in from the waterfront. Schedules vary seasonally; a list is posted at the tourist office, across from the bus stop. There are also frequent buses to Rocha, where you can make connections north and south.

Cabo Polonio

POP 95

Northeast of La Paloma at Km 264.5 on Ruta 10 lies the turnoff to Cabo Polonio, one of Uruguay's wildest areas and home to its second-biggest sea-lion colony, near a tiny fishing village nestled in sand dunes. In 2009 the region was declared a national park, under the protective jurisdiction of Uruguay's SNAP program (see boxed text, p530). Despite a growing influx of tourists, Cabo Polonio remains one of Uruguay's most rustic coastal villages. There are no banking services, and the town's limited electricity is derived from generators, solar and wind power.

Sights & Activities

Faro Cabo Polonio

LIGHTHOUSE

(admission UR\$15; ☎8:30am-sunset) Cabo Polonio's striking lighthouse provides a fabulous perspective on the point itself, the sea-lion colony, and the surrounding dunes and islands.

Wildlife viewing is excellent year-round. Below the lighthouse, southern sea lions (*Otaria flavescens*) and South American fur seals (*Arctocephalus australis*) frolic on the rocks every month except February. You can also spot southern right whales from late August to early October, penguins on the beach in July, and the odd southern elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*) between January and March on nearby Isla de la Raza.

Surfing classes (per hour UR\$250) are available in high season along with sandboard, skimboard and surfboard rentals (per hour UR\$100). Inquire at the shop with the crazy surfing penguin logo, in the square where trucks from Ruta 10 drop you off.

Local accommodations can arrange **horseback rides** (per hour UR\$200 to UR\$250) along the beach and into the surrounding dunes.

Sleeping & Eating

Places listed here are open year-round. Many locals also rent rooms and houses. The hardest time to find accommodation is during the first two weeks of January. Off-season, prices drop dramatically.

Cabo Polonio Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(☎099-445943; www.cabopoloniohostel.com; dm/d UR\$600/1050) Lit by candlelight and limited solar power, this hostel has hammocks overlooking the beach and a wood stove for cooking and staying cozy on stormy nights. Recommended for anyone wanting to appreciate Cabo's rustic simplicity.

Posada y Parador

GUESTHOUSE \$\$\$

La Cabaña
(☎099-550595; posadalacaniada@gmail.com; dm/d UR\$600/1500) Near the far end of Cabo Polonio's southern beach, this rustic posada mixes dorms and private rooms in a two-story house with spacious decks overlooking the dunes and ocean. Amenities include fishing gear, surfboards and meals cooked in the clay oven using fresh seafood and organic produce from the owners' garden. Solar and wind power provide all the electricity.

Pancho Hostal del Cabo

HOSTEL \$

(☎095-412633; www.hostaldelcabo.com; dm UR\$500) Providing bare-bones dorms on two levels, Pancho's popular hostel is impossible to miss – you'll see the yellow corrugated roof, labeled with giant red letters, from the truck as you enter town.

La Perla del Cabo

HOTEL-RESTAURANT \$\$\$

(☎4470-5125; www.laperladelcabo.com, in Spanish; r UR\$2000-4000) The unexceptional rooms at this beachfront hotel feel way overpriced in summer, but its prime location near the lighthouse makes it worth considering in the off-season. The attached restaurant (mains UR\$215 to UR\$295) has nice views of the ocean and is one of Cabo's few dependable year-round eateries.

Getting There & Away

Rutas del Sol runs two to five buses daily from Montevideo to the Cabo Polonio turnoff (UR\$317, 4½ hours), where waiting 4WD trucks offer rides across the dunes into town (UR\$150 roundtrip, 30 minutes).

Laguna de Castillos

Northwest of Cabo Polonio is the Laguna de Castillos, a vast coastal lagoon that shelters Uruguay's largest concentration of ombúes, graceful tree-like plants whose anarchic growth pattern results in some rather fantastic shapes. In other parts of Uruguay the ombú is a solitary plant, but specimens here – some of them centuries old – grow in clusters, insulated by the lagoon from the bovine trampling that has spelled their doom elsewhere.

At **Monte de Ombúes** (☎099-295177), on the lagoon's western shore (near Km 267 on Ruta 10), brothers Marcos and Juan Carlos Olivera, whose family received this land from the Portuguese crown in 1793, lead two- to three-hour excursions (per person, five-person minimum UR\$300). Tours begin with a 20-minute boat ride through a wetland teeming with cormorants, ibis, cranes and black swans, followed by a hike through the ombú forest. Departures are frequent in summer (pretty well anytime five people show up); other times of year, phone ahead for reservations.



Guardia del Monte

(☎099-

872588, 4475-9064; www.guardiadelmonte.com; Ruta 9, Km 261.5, Laguna de Castillos; r per person incl breakfast/half-board/full board UR\$1700/2100/2500), overlooking the lagoon's northern shore, is at the end of a 10km dead-end road. This now-tranquil hideaway was established in the 18th century as a Spanish guard post to protect the Camino Real and the coastal frontier from pirates and Portuguese marauders. The lovely *estancia* house still oozes history, from the parlor displaying 18th-century maps and bird drawings to the kitchen's Danish woodstove salvaged from an 1884 shipwreck. All rates include optional afternoon tea, plus walking and horseback excursions along the lakeshore and into the surrounding ombú forest. Tasty meals are served on the ancient brick patio or in the cozy dining room, where a roaring fire beckons on chilly nights. Access to Guardia del Monte is from Ruta 9, a few kilometers south of the town of Castillos.

Punta del Diablo

POP 820

Once a sleepy fishing village, Punta del Diablo has long since become a prime summer getaway for Uruguayans and Argentines, and the epicenter of Uruguay's backpacker beach scene. Waves of seemingly uncontrolled development have pushed further inland and along the coast in recent years, but the stunning shoreline and laid-back lifestyle still exert their age-old appeal. To avoid the crowds, come outside the Christmas to February peak season; in particular, avoid the first half of January, when as many as 30,000 visitors inundate the town.

From the town's traditional center, a sandy 'plaza' just inland from the ocean, small dirt roads fan out in all directions. To get to the marina and the hostels listed following, head downhill 200m to the waterfront and continue northeast along the shoreline.

Sights & Activities

During the day you can rent surfboards or horses along the town's main beach, or trek an hour north to Parque Nacional Santa Teresa. In the evening there are sunsets to watch, spontaneous bonfires and drum sessions to drop in on...you get the idea.

Sleeping

The town's hostel scene has taken off dramatically in recent years, and there are several offerings beyond those listed here. *Cabañas* are the other accommodations of choice; this term applies to everything from rustic-to-a-fault shacks to custom-built designer condos with all modern conveniences. Most *cabañas* have kitchens and require you to bring your own bedding. For help finding something, ask at the supermarket in town, or check online at www.portaldeldiablo.com.uy. Rates skyrocket between Christmas and February.



El Diablo Tranquilo

HOSTEL \$\$

(☎4477-2519; www.eldiabltranquilo.com; dm UR\$720-960, tw UR\$2000-2200, d UR\$2200-3300; @☎) One of South America's most appealing hostels, this exceptionally well-designed place is the brainchild of expat American Brian Meissner. Follow the devilish red glow through the entryway, past the animated crowd on the circular fireside couch, and you'll find a mix of dorms and

cushty doubles with endless perks. Along with wi-fi, high-speed computers, hammocks, a guest kitchen and laundry service, there are Paypal cash advances, bike and surfboard rentals, yoga and language classes and horseback excursions. Unsurprisingly, the average guest stay is nearly a week, and things can book up even in winter.

Two blocks downhill, right beside the beach, is EDT Playa Suites, Diablo Tranquilo's even cushier sister hostel. The best rooms upstairs have fireplaces, full-on ocean views and great sound systems, while the raucous bar-restaurant downstairs offers reasonably priced food (UR\$160 to UR\$220), beach service, and a party scene lasting late into the night. Undecided about what to drink? Spin the wheel of fate, and hope you don't land on the 'bartender's choice' – it's been the genesis of some pretty scary concoctions.

Del Norte Vengo y En El Sur Me Quedo

CABAÑA \$\$\$

(☎099-878357; jasyo2876@yahoo.com; d UR\$1600-2400, q UR\$1600-2800) Two blocks north of the plaza, these colorful two-level *cabañas* have upstairs decks, ocean views, and satiny curtains and bedspreads. The young owners have lived in the US and speak excellent English.

La Casa de las Boyas

HOSTEL \$

(☎4477-2074; www.lacasadelasboyas.com; Playa del Rivero; dm UR\$300-800, apt UR\$2000-3200; @☎☎) A stone's throw from the beach and a 10-minute walk north of the bus stop, this hostel offers a pool, a guest kitchen, dorms of varying sizes and two kitchen-equipped apartments.

Eating

In high season, simply stroll the beachfront for your pick of seafood eateries and snack shacks by the dozen. Places listed here are among the few that remain open in winter. Another dependable year-round choice is the bar-restaurant at El Diablo Tranquilo.

El Viejo y El Mar

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(full meals incl wine UR\$360-400) At the dunes' edge, south of the town center, 'old man' Ernesto has just re-opened this delightfully ramshackle restaurant, suffused with a rustic-hip atmosphere. The candlelit walls are adorned with fishing nets, wine bottles, lanterns and guitars, and you're offered

whatever he's serving that night; the fixed-price menu usually includes fish, wine and dessert.

Cero Stress

INTERNATIONAL \$\$ (mains UR\$210-340; ☺lunch & dinner) With a rustic interior dining room, an open kitchen and outdoor terraces with lovely ocean views, this laid-back eatery serves an eclectic menu featuring *rabas* (fried squid), *chivitos*, shrimp tacos, seafood stew and grilled fish with rice and vegetables. It also makes a mean *caipirinha* (Brazilian cocktail with sugar-cane alcohol).

Lo de Olga

SEAFOOD \$\$ (mains UR\$150-285; ☺lunch & dinner) For delicious home-cooked fish and puffy-as-a-cloud *buñuelos de algas* (seaweed fritters), don't miss this sweet family-run restaurant on the way down to the port.

Information

Punta del Diablo has no ATMs except for the temporary ones set up briefly each summer. Bring cash with you, as few businesses accept credit cards and the nearest banks are an hour away in Castillos (40km southwest) or Chuy (45km north).

Getting There & Away

Rutas del Sol, COT and Cynsa all offer service to Punta del Diablo's new bus terminal, 2.5km west of town, which opened in early 2012. Between Christmas and Carnival, all buses terminate here, leaving you with a five- to 10-minute shuttle (UR\$25) or taxi (UR\$100) ride into town. During the rest of the year, buses continue from the terminal to the town plaza near the waterfront.

Several direct buses run daily to Montevideo and Chuy on the Brazilian border; for other coastal destinations, you'll need to change buses in Castillos or Rocha.

BUSES FROM PUNTA DEL DIABLO

DESTINATION	COST (URS)	DURATION (HR)
Castillos	59	1
Chuy	59	1
Montevideo	364	5
Rocha	117	1½

Parque Nacional Santa Teresa

This **national park** (☎24477-2101; www.ejrcito.mil.uy/cal/sepae/sta_teresa.htm, in Spanish), 35km south of the Brazilian border, is administered by the army and attracts many Uruguayan and Brazilian visitors to its relatively uncrowded beaches. It offers 2000 dispersed camp sites in eucalyptus and pine groves, a very small zoo and a plant conservatory. There are also various grades of *cabañas* for rent; in January, prices range from UR\$1400 for a basic A-frame to UR\$3700 for a fancier oceanfront unit; between March and November these rates get slashed in half.

Buses from Punta del Diablo (UR\$35, 15 minutes) will drop you off at Km 302 on Hwy 9; from here, you will need to walk or take a shuttle 1km to the Capatacía (park headquarters), where there's a phone, post office, market, bakery and **restaurant** (dishes UR\$90-240; ☺9am-10pm).

The park's star attraction, 4km further north on Ruta 9, is the impressive hilltop **Fortaleza de Santa Teresa** (admission UR\$15; ☺10am-7pm daily Dec-Mar, 10am-6pm Thu-Sun Apr-Nov), begun by the Portuguese in 1762 and finished by the Spaniards after its capture in 1793. At the park's northeastern corner is **Cerro Verde**, a coastal bluff protected under Uruguay's SNAP program (see the boxed text, p530).

UNDERSTAND URUGUAY

Uruguay Today

Recent years have seen a radical development in Uruguayan politics. After nearly two centuries of back-and-forth rule between the two traditional parties, Blancos and Colorados, Uruguayans elected the leftist Frente Amplio to power in 2005 and again in 2009. Over that span, the Frente Amplio government has presided over numerous social changes, including the banning of smoking in public, the legalization of abortion and civil unions between same-sex partners, and an ambitious program called Plan Ceibal that has distributed internet-ready laptops to every student in the country.

The current president, José Mujica, is noteworthy for having survived 13 years of imprisonment and torture during Uru-

guay's period of military rule (including two years imprisoned in the bottom of a well). Even so, in the same election that brought Mujica to power, Uruguayans voted down a referendum that would have opened the doors to prosecuting human rights abuses perpetrated during the 1973-1985 military dictatorship. The issue continues to divide the country, as evidenced by a May 2011 Congressional vote which nearly overturned these amnesty provisions (despite Mujica's own urgings to let sleeping dogs lie).

Mujica is well known for his grandfatherly style and humility. He famously donates over two-thirds of his salary to charities, refuses to live in the presidential palace, and for most of his political career he has eschewed suits and ties in favor of sweaters.

History

Uruguay's aboriginal inhabitants were the Charrúa along the coast and the Guaraní north of the Río Negro. The hunting-and-gathering Charrúa discouraged European settlement for more than a century by killing Spanish explorer Juan de Solís and most of his party in 1516. In any event there was little to attract the Spanish, who valued these lowlands along the Río de la Plata only as an access route to gold and other quick riches further inland.

The first Europeans to settle on the Banda Oriental (Eastern Shore) were Jesuit missionaries near present-day Soriano, on the Río Uruguay. Next came the Portuguese, who established present-day Colonia in 1680 as a beachhead for smuggling goods into Buenos Aires. Spain responded by building its own citadel at Montevideo in 1726. The following century saw an ongoing struggle between Spain and Portugal for control of these lands along the eastern bank of the Río de la Plata.

Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian peninsula in the early 19th century precipitated a weakening of Spanish and Portuguese power and the emergence of strong independence movements throughout the region. Uruguay's homegrown national hero, José Gervasio Artigas, originally sought to form an alliance with several states in present-day Argentina and southern Brazil against the European powers, but he was ultimately forced to flee to Paraguay. There he regrouped and organized the famous '33 Orientales,' a feisty band of Uruguayan patriots

under General Juan Lavalleja who, with Argentine support, crossed the Río Uruguay on April 19, 1825, and launched a campaign to liberate modern-day Uruguay from Brazilian control. In 1828, after three years' struggle, a British-mediated treaty established Uruguay as a small independent buffer between the emerging continental powers.

For several decades, Uruguay's independence remained fragile. There was civil war between Uruguay's two nascent political parties, the Colorados and the Blancos (named, respectively, for the red and white bands they wore); Argentina besieged Montevideo from 1838 to 1851; and Brazil was an ever-present threat. Things finally settled down in the second half of the 19th century, with region-wide recognition of Uruguay's independence and the emergence of a strong national economy based on beef and wool production.

In the early 20th century, visionary president José Batlle y Ordóñez introduced such innovations as pensions, farm credits, unemployment compensation and the eight-hour work day. State intervention led to the nationalization of many industries, the creation of others and a new era of general prosperity. However, Batlle's reforms were largely financed through taxing the livestock sector, and when exports faltered mid-century, the welfare state crumbled. A period of military dictatorship began in the early 1970s, during which torture became routine, and more than 60,000 citizens were arbitrarily detained, but the 1980s brought a return to democratic traditions.

Culture

The one thing that Uruguayans will tell you that they're *not* is anything like their *porteño* cousins across the water. In many ways they're right. Where Argentines can be brassy and sometimes arrogant, Uruguayans tend to be more humble and relaxed. Where the former have always been a regional superpower, the latter have always lived in the shadow of one. Those jokes about Punta del Este being a suburb of Buenos Aires don't go down so well on this side of the border. There are plenty of similarities, though: the near-universal appreciation for the arts, the Italian influence and the gaucho heritage. Indeed, the rugged individualism and disdain that many Uruguayans hold for *el neoliberalismo*

(neoliberalism) can be traced directly back to those romantic cowboy figures.

Uruguayans like to take it easy and pride themselves on being the opposite of the hot-headed Latino type. Sunday's the day for family and friends, to throw half a cow on the *parrilla* (grill), sit back and sip some *mate*. The population is well educated. The gap between rich and poor is much less pronounced than in most other Latin American countries, although the economic crises of the early 21st century have put a strain on the middle class.

Population

With 3.3 million people, Uruguay is South America's smallest Spanish-speaking country. The population is predominately white (88%) with 8% mestizo (people with mixed Spanish and indigenous blood) and 4% black. Indigenous peoples are practically nonexistent. The average life expectancy (just over 76 years) is one of Latin America's highest. The literacy rate is also high, at 98%, while population growth is a slow 0.5%. Population density is 19.8 people per sq km.

Religion

Forty-seven percent of Uruguayans are Roman Catholic. About one-third are from other Christian denominations. There's a small Jewish minority, numbering around 18,000. Uruguay has more self-professed atheists per capita than any other Latin American country. According to a 2008 American Religious Identification Survey, only slightly more than half of Uruguayans consider themselves religious.

Sports

Uruguayans, like just about all Latin Americans, are crazy about *fútbol* (soccer). Uruguay has won the World Cup twice, including the first tournament, played in Montevideo in 1930. The most notable teams are Montevideo-based Nacional and Peñarol. If you go to a match between these two, sit on the sidelines, not behind the goal, unless you're up for some serious rowdiness.

Asociación Uruguayo de Fútbol (202-400-7101; Guayabo 1531) in Montevideo can provide information on matches and venues.

Arts

Despite its small population, Uruguay has an impressive literary and artistic tradition. The country's most famous philosopher and essayist is José Enrique Rodó, whose 1900

essay *Ariel*, contrasting North American and Latin American civilizations, is a classic of the country's literature. Major contemporary writers include Juan Carlos Onetti, Mario Benedetti and Eduardo Galeano.

The most famous Uruguay-related film is Costa-Gavras' engrossing *State of Siege* (1973), filmed in Allende's Chile, which deals with the Tupamaro guerrillas' kidnapping and execution of suspected American CIA officer Dan Mitrione. Among the best movies to come out of Uruguay recently are César Charlone's award-winning *El Baño del Papa* (2007), based on Pope John Paul II's 1988 visit to Uruguay, and *3 Millones* (2011), in which father-son team Jaime and Yamandú Roos document their experiences accompanying Uruguay's football team to the 2010 South Africa World Cup.

Theater is popular and playwrights like Mauricio Rosencof are prominent. The most renowned painters are the late Juan Manuel Blanes, Pedro Figari and Joaquín Torres García. Sculptors include José Belloni.

Tango is big in Montevideo - Uruguayans claim tango legend Carlos Gardel as a native son, and one of the best-known tangos, '*La Cumparsita*,' was composed by Uruguayan Gerardo Matos Rodríguez. During Carnival, Montevideo's streets reverberate to the energetic drumbeats of *candombe*, an African-derived rhythm brought to Uruguay by slaves from 1750 onwards. On the contemporary scene, several Uruguayan rock bands have won a following on both sides of the Río de la Plata, including Buitres, La Vela Puerca and No Te Va Gustar.

Food & Drink

Uruguayan cuisine revolves around grilled meat. *Parrilladas* (restaurants with big racks of meat roasting over a wood fire) are everywhere, and weekend *asados* (barbecues) are a national tradition. *Chivitos* are hugely popular, as are *chivitos al plato* (served with fried potatoes instead of bread). Vegetarians often have to content themselves with the ubiquitous pizza and pasta, although there are a few veggie restaurants lurking about. Seafood is excellent on the coast. Desserts are a dream of meringue, *dulce de leche* (milk caramel), burnt sugar and custard.

Tap water is OK to drink in most places. Uruguayan wines (especially tannats) are excellent, and local beers (Patricia, Pilsen and Zillertal) are passable.

Uruguayans consume even more *mate* than Argentines. If you get the chance, try to acquire the taste - there's nothing like whiling away an afternoon with new-found friends passing around the *mate*.

In major tourist destinations such as Punta del Este and Colonia, restaurants charge *cubiertos* (cover charges of UR\$20 or more). Theoretically these pay for the basket of bread offered before your meal.

Environment

Though one of South America's smallest countries, Uruguay is not so small by European standards. Its area of 176,220 sq km is greater than England and Wales combined, or slightly bigger than the US state of Florida.

Uruguay's two main ranges of interior hills are the Cuchilla de Haedo, west of Tacuarembó, and the Cuchilla Grande, south of Melo; neither exceeds 500m in height. West of Montevideo the terrain is more level. The Río Negro flowing through the center of the country forms a natural dividing line between north and south. The Atlantic coast has impressive beaches, dunes, headlands and lagoons. Uruguay's grasslands and forests resemble those of Argentina's pampas or southern Brazil, and patches of palm savanna persist in the east, along the Brazilian border.

The country is rich in birdlife, especially in the coastal lagoons of Rocha department. Most large land animals have disappeared, but the occasional ñandú (rhea) still races across northwestern Uruguay's grasslands. Whales, fur seals and sea lions are common along the coast.

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Directory A-Z Accommodations

Uruguay has an excellent network of hostels and campgrounds, especially along the Atlantic coast. Other low-end options include *hospedajes* (family homes) and *residencial-es* (budget hotels).

Posadas (inns) are available in all price ranges and tend to be homier than hotels. Hotels are ranked from one to five stars, according to amenities.

PRICE RANGES

The following price ranges, used in Sleeping listings throughout this chapter, refer to a double room with bathroom in high season. Unless otherwise stated, breakfast is included in the price.

\$	less than UR\$1000
\$\$	UR\$1000-2000
\$\$\$	more than UR\$2000

Country *estancias turísticas* (marked with blue National Tourism Ministry signs) provide lodging on farms (see the boxed text, p529).

Activities

Punta del Diablo, La Paloma, La Pedrera and Punta del Este all get excellent surfing waves, while Cabo Polonio and the coastal lagoons of Rocha department are great for whale and bird watching, respectively. Punta del Este's beach scene is more upmarket, with activities such as parasailing, windsurfing and jet skiing.

Horseback riding is very popular in the interior and can be arranged on most tourist *estancias* (see p529).

Business Hours

Opening times for individual businesses in this guide are only spelled out when they deviate from the standard hours outlined below.

Banks 1-6pm Mon-Fri. Exchange offices usually keep longer hours.

Bars, Pubs & Clubs 6pm-late. Things don't get seriously shaking until after midnight.

Restaurants noon-3pm & 9pm-midnight or later. If serving breakfast, open around 8am.

Shops 8:30am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat. In larger cities, department stores and supermarkets stay open at lunchtime and/or Sundays.

Electricity

Uruguay uses the same electrical plug as Argentina. See p590 for details.

Embassies & Consulates

All listings are in Montevideo:

Argentina (☎2902-8166; cmdeo.mrecic.gov.ar; Cuareim 1470)

Australia (☎2901-0743; www.dfat.gov.au/missions/countries/uy.html; Cerro Largo 1000)

Brazil (☎2707-2119; monteideu.itamaraty.gov.br; Artigas 1394)

Canada (☎2902-2030; www.canadainternational.gc.ca/uruguay; Plaza Independencia 749, Oficina 102)

France (☎2-1705-0000; www.ambafrance-uruguay.org; Av Uruguay 853)

Germany (☎2902-5222; www.montevideo.diplo.de; La Cumparsita 1435)

Netherlands (☎2711-2956; www.holanda.org.uy; Leyenda Patria 2880, 2nd fl)

New Zealand (☎2622-1543; Miguel Grau 3789)

UK (☎2622-3630; ukinuruguay.fco.gov.uk; Marco Bruto 1073)

USA (☎2-1770-2000; uruguay.usembassy.gov; Lauro Muller 1776)

Festivals & Events

Uruguay's Carnival (see p506) lasts for more than a month and is livelier than Argentina's. Semana Santa (Holy Week) has become known as Semana Turismo – many Uruguayans travel out of town and finding accommodations is tricky during this time. Other noteworthy events include the beer festival in Paysandú (p523) and Tacuarembó's Fiesta de la Patria Gaucha (p528).

Food

For information about Uruguayan cuisine, see p548 and p496.

Gay & Lesbian Travelers

Uruguay has gotten more GLBT-friendly in recent years. In January 2008 it became the first Latin American country to recognize same-sex civil unions nationwide.

In Montevideo, look for the pocket-sized **Friendly Map** (www.friendlymap.com.uy) list-

PRICE RANGES

The following price ranges, used in Eating listings throughout this chapter, refer to a standard main course.

§ less than UR\$175

\$\$ UR\$175-300

\$\$\$ more than UR\$300

ing GLBT-friendly businesses throughout Uruguay.

Health

No vaccinations are required for Uruguayan travel. Uruguay has a good public-health system, and tap water is generally safe to drink. In this book, hospitals are listed under the Information heading for each city.

Insurance

Worldwide travel insurance is available at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services. You can buy, extend and claim online anytime – even if you're already on the road.

Internet Access

Internet cafes are commonplace in cities and larger towns; access costs about UR\$20 per hour. Many Antel (state telephone company) offices also provide internet for UR\$19 to UR\$45 per hour.

Legal Matters

Illegal drugs are freely available in Uruguay, but getting caught with them is about as much fun as anywhere else in the world, and Uruguayan police and officials are not as bribe-hungry as many of their South American counterparts.

Maps

ITMB (shop.itmb.ca) publishes a useful map depicting Montevideo on one side and Uruguay on the other. Other good map sources in Uruguay include Ancep service stations, the **Automóvil Club del Uruguay** (www.acu.com.uy) and **Servicio Geográfico Militar** (www.sgm.gub.uy).

Money

Prices in this chapter are in *pesos uruguayos* (UR\$), the official Uruguayan currency. Banknote values are 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000. There are coins of one, two, five and 10 pesos. For exchange rates, see p496.

US dollars are commonly accepted in major tourist hubs, where top-end hotels and even some budget accommodations quote US\$ prices. However, beware of poor exchange rates at hotel desks. In many cases, you'll still come out ahead paying in pesos. Away from the touristed areas, dollars are of limited use.

ATMS

In all but the smallest interior towns, getting cash with your ATM card is easy. Machines

marked with the green Banned or blue Redbrou logo serve all major international banking networks.

ATMs dispense bills in multiples of 100 pesos. To avoid getting stuck with large bills, don't request multiples of UR\$1000 (ie take out UR\$900 rather than UR\$1000, UR\$1900 rather than UR\$2000 etc).

Many ATMs dispense US dollars, designated as US\$, but only in multiples of US\$100.

CREDIT CARDS

Most upmarket hotels, restaurants and shops accept credit cards.

MONEYCHANGERS

There are *casas de cambio* in Montevideo, Colonia, the Atlantic beach resorts and border towns such as Chuy. They keep longer hours than banks but often offer lower rates.

TIPPING

Restaurants 10%

Taxis Round up a few pesos

Post

Postal rates are reasonable, though service can be slow. If something is truly important, send it by registered mail or private courier.

Public Holidays

Año Nuevo (New Year's Day) January 1

Día de los Reyes (Epiphany) January 6

Viernes Santo/Pascua (Good Friday/Easter) March/April (dates vary)

Desembarco de los 33 (Return of the 33 Exiles) April 19; honors the exiles who returned to Uruguay in 1825 to liberate the country from Brazil with Argentine support

Día del Trabajador (Labor Day) May 1

Batalla de Las Piedras (Battle of Las Piedras) May 18; commemorates a major battle of the fight for independence

Natalicio de Artigas (Artigas' Birthday) June 19

Jura de la Constitución (Constitution Day) July 18

Día de la Independencia (Independence Day) August 25

Día de la Raza (Columbus Day) October 12

Día de los Muertos (All Souls' Day) November 2

Navidad (Christmas Day) December 25

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodations reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out hotels.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay. Best of all, you can book online.

Telephone

Uruguay's country code is ☎598. Antel is the state telephone company, with offices in every town. There are also private *locutorios* (telephone offices) everywhere.

As of 2010, all Uruguayan landline numbers are eight digits long, beginning with 2 for Montevideo or 4 for elsewhere in the country. Cell phone numbers consist of a three-digit prefix (most commonly 099) followed by a six-digit number. If dialing internationally, drop the leading zero.

Public phones require prepaid cards, sold in values of 25, 50, 100, 200 and 500 pesos, available at Antel offices or newspaper kiosks.

Many internet cafes have headphone-microphone setups and Skype installed on their computers.

CELL (MOBILE) PHONES

Rather than use expensive roaming plans, many travelers bring an unlocked cell phone (or buy a cheap one here) and simply insert a local SIM card. These are readily available at most kiosks, as are prepaid cards to recharge your credit.

Note that it's best to unlock your phone in your home country, since reliable providers of this service are hard to find in Uruguay.

Time

Uruguay Standard Time is three hours behind GMT and one hour ahead of Argentina. Daylight-saving time, when clocks are moved forward one hour, starts on the first Sunday in October. Clocks are put back an hour on the second Sunday in March.

Tourist Information

The **National Tourism Ministry** (www.turismo.gub.uy) operates 13 offices around the country. It distributes excellent free maps for each of Uruguay's 19 departments, along with specialized brochures on *estancia* tourism, Carnival, surfing and other subjects of interest to travelers. Most

towns also have a municipal tourist office on the plaza or at the bus terminal.

Travelers with Disabilities

Uruguay is slowly beginning to plan for travelers with special needs. In Montevideo you'll find newly constructed ramps and dedicated bathrooms in high-profile destinations such as Plaza Independencia and Teatro Solís, and disabled access on the CAI bus line. However, there's still a long way to go. Many budget hotels have at least one set of stairs and no elevator. On the bright side, taxis are cheap and locals are glad to help however they can.

Visas

Nationals of Western Europe, Australia, the USA, Canada and New Zealand automatically receive a 90-day tourist card, renewable for another 90 days. Other nationals may require visas. For extensions, visit the **Dirección Nacional de la Migración** (☎2916-0471; Misiones 1513) in Montevideo, or local offices in border towns.

Volunteering

All Uruguayan organizations accepting volunteers require a minimum commitment of one month, and many require at least basic Spanish proficiency. Following are some Montevideo-based groups:

Academia Uruguay (www.academiauruguay.com) Language school offering volunteer opportunities in Montevideo.

Karumbé (www.karumbe.org) Sea turtle conservation.

Women Travelers

Uruguayans are no slouches when it comes to *machismo*, but women are generally treated with respect, and traveling alone is safer here than in many other Latin American countries.

Getting There & Away

Flights and tours can be booked online at lonelyplanet.com/bookings.

Entering the Country

Uruguay requires passports of all foreigners, except those from neighboring countries (who need only national identification cards).

Passports are necessary for many simple, everyday transactions, such as checking into hotels.

Air

Airports & Airlines

Montevideo's **Carrasco International Airport** (MVD; aeropuertodecarrasco.com.uy) is the main port of entry, although a few direct flights from Argentina and Brazil serve **Punta del Este International Airport** (PDP; www.puntadeleste.aero). For specific information on flights that serve each airport, see p539.

Pluna, the Uruguayan national carrier, has an excellent safety record.

Airlines with direct flights to Uruguay:

Aerolíneas Argentinas (www.aerolineas.com.ar)

American Airlines (www.aa.com)

BQB (www.flybqb.com)

Copa (www.copaair.com)

Gol (www.voegol.com.br)

Iberia (www.iberia.com)

LAN (www.lan.com)

Pluna (www.flypluna.com)

Sol (www.sol.com.ar)

TACA (www.taca.com)

TAM (www.tam.com.br)

Land & Sea

Uruguay shares borders with the Argentine province of Entre Ríos and the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. Major highways and bus services are generally good, although buses from Montevideo to Buenos Aires are slower and less convenient than the ferries across the Río de la Plata. For Iguazú Falls, traveling via Argentina is faster and more straightforward than traveling through Brazil.

Getting Around Bus

Buses are comfortable, fares are reasonable and distances are short. Most companies distribute free timetables. In the few cities that lack terminals, all companies are within easy walking distance of each other, usually around the main plaza.

Reservations are unnecessary except during holiday periods. On peak travel dates a

URUGUAYAN BORDER CROSSINGS

FROM	TO	ROAD NUMBER/DESCRIPTION
ARGENTINA		
Buenos Aires	Montevideo	Boat (Buquebus)
Buenos Aires	Colonia	Boat (Buquebus, Colonia Express, Seacat)
Tigre	Carmelo	Boat (Cacciola)
Gualeduaychú	Fray Bentos	Represa de Salto Grande (dam)
Colón	Paysandú	Puente General Artigas (bridge)
Concordia	Salto	Puente General San Martín (bridge)
Concordia	Salto	Boat (Transporte Fluvial San Cristóbal)
BRAZIL		
Chuí	Chuy	Hwy BR-471/UR-9
Jaguarão	Río Branco	Hwy BR-116/UR-26
Aceguá	Aceguá	Hwy RS-153/UR-8
Santana do Livramento	Rivera	Hwy BR-293/UR-5
Quaraí	Artigas	Hwy RS-060/UY-30
Barra do Quaraí	Bella Unión	Hwy BR-472/UY-3

single company may run multiple departures at the same hour, in which case they'll mark a bus number on your ticket; check with the driver to make sure you're boarding the right bus, or you may find yourself in the 'right' seat on the wrong bus!

Most towns with central bus terminals have a fee-based left-luggage facility.

Car & Motorcycle

Visitors to Uruguay who are staying less than 90 days need only bring a valid driver's license from their home country. Uruguayan drivers are extremely considerate, and even bustling Montevideo is quite sedate compared with Buenos Aires.

Uruguay imports all its oil. Unleaded gasoline cost UR\$35.60 a liter at the time of research.

The **Automóvil Club del Uruguay** (www.acu.com.uy) has good maps and information.

HIRE

Economy cars rent for upwards of UR\$1000 a day in the high season, with tax and insurance included. Online bookings are often cheaper than in-country rentals. Most credit-card companies' automatic LDW (loss-damage-waiver) insurance covers rentals in Uruguay.

ROAD RULES & HAZARDS

Drivers are expected to turn on their headlights during the daytime on all highways. In most towns, alternating one-way streets are the rule, with an arrow marking the allowed direction of travel.

Outside Montevideo, most intersections have neither a stop sign nor a traffic light; right of way is determined by who reaches the corner first. This can be nerve-wracking for the uninitiated! Arbitrary police stops and searches are rare.

Outside the capital and coastal tourist areas, traffic is minimal and poses few problems. Roads are generally in reasonable shape, but some interior roads can be rough. Keep an eye out for livestock and wildlife. Even in Montevideo's busy downtown, horse-drawn carts still operate, hauling trash or freight.

Hitchhiking

It's not uncommon to see locals hitchhiking in rural areas, as gas is expensive and relatively few people own cars. Safety is not as serious a concern as in most other countries, although foreigners looking to hitch a ride may encounter some raised eyebrows.

Local Transportation

Taxis, *remises* (radio-dispatched taxis) and local buses are similar to those in Argentina. Taxis are metered, and drivers calculate fares using meter readings and a photocopied chart. Between 10pm and 6am, and on weekends and holidays, fares are 20% higher. There's a small additional charge for lug-

gage, and passengers generally tip the driver by rounding fares up to the next multiple of five or ten pesos. City bus service is excellent in Montevideo and other urban areas, while *micros* (minibuses) form the backbone of the local transit network in smaller coastal towns such as La Paloma.

Understand Argentina

ARGENTINA TODAY 556

Economic woes and sporting success.

HISTORY 558

Spanish rule, independence and the Dirty War.

LIFE IN ARGENTINA 568

Devotion to family and *fútbol* – find out what makes the everyday Argentine tick.

ARGENTINE CUISINE 570

The humble cow never tasted so good.

THE SOUNDS OF ARGENTINA 576

Traditional *folklorico* music and the sultry tango.

LITERATURE & CINEMA 578

A rich literary heritage and vibrant, evolving film industry.

NATURAL WORLD 580

Coastline, mountain ranges, grasslands and a wide range of flora and fauna.