



Uruguay

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Stay

- Hostel Estancia El Galope (p533)
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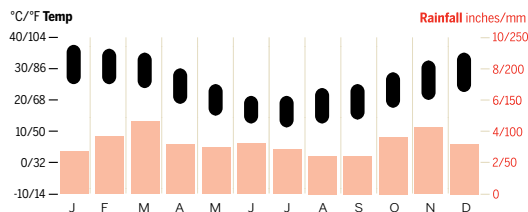
Why Go?

Wedged like a grape between Brazil's gargantuan thumb and Argentina's long forefinger, Uruguay has always been something of an underdog. Yet after two centuries living in the shadow of its neighbors, one of South America's smallest countries is finally getting a little well-deserved recognition. Progressive, stable, safe and culturally sophisticated, Uruguay offers visitors opportunities to experience everyday 'not-made-for-tourists' moments, whether caught in a cow-and-gauche 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 it pays to dig 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 interior, where vast fields spread out like oceans.

When to Go

Montevideo



Feb Street theater and drumming consume Montevideo during Carnaval celebrations.

Mar Tacuarembó's gaucho festival, plus lower prices on the still-sunny Atlantic coast.

Oct Soak in Salto's hot springs, or channel Carlos Gardel at Montevideo's tango festival.

AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency**
Uruguayan peso (UR\$)
- ➔ **Language** Spanish
- ➔ **Money** ATMs widespread; 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\$3.28
Australia	A\$1	UR\$18.90
Brazil	R\$1	UR\$10.14
Canada	C\$1	UR\$19.95
Euro zone	€1	UR\$29.25
Japan	¥100	UR\$20.25
New Zealand	NZ\$1	UR\$17.35
UK	UK£1	UR\$34.95
USA	US\$1	UR\$21.20

Set Your Budget

- ➔ **Budget hotel room**
UR\$1200
- ➔ **Chivito** (Uruguayan steak sandwich) UR\$110-210
- ➔ **Montevideo bus ride**
UR\$21
- ➔ **1L bottle of local beer**
UR\$120
- ➔ **Coffee** UR\$65

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 early-20th-century 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 hot springs of Salto.

With a whole two weeks to spare, get out and explore Uruguay's interior, ride horses on a tourist *estancia* (ranch) 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 American and Air Europa, 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.
- ➔ **Ñoquis** 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.
- ➔ **Tannat** Uruguay's beloved, internationally acclaimed red wine.
- ➔ **Grappamiel** Strong Italian-style grappa (grape brandy), sweetened and mellowed with honey.