



# Uruguay

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## Why Go?

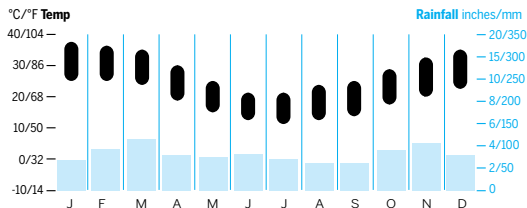
Now more than ever, Uruguay is a country that moves to its own grooves. While nearby Argentina and Bolivia lurch from one crisis to the next, Uruguay as a nation moves forward much like its citizens – calm and self-assured. Social reforms are moving along nicely and, while there will always be complaints, much of the population seems pretty happy.

Traveling in Uruguay has never been easier. The excellent hostel scene, extensive bus network, good restaurants and abundant campsites make it a backpacker's dream. Even world-class destinations such as Colonia del Sacramento and Punta del Este offer abundant cheap sleeps in all but the absolute peak periods.

People come for the wild, surf-pounded beaches, for celeb-spotting at Punta and the history-soaked smugglers' port of Colonia. They stay for the people – warm, open and sincere folk who have constructed one of South America's most progressive societies. And when they leave, they almost always say they're coming back.

## When to Go

### Montevideo



**Dec–Mar** As temperatures rise the beaches pack out and Uruguay comes into its own.

**Feb–Apr** The 40 days leading up to Easter see Montevideo's streets filled with *candombe* music.

**Jun–Oct** Chilly temperatures mean no crowds and discounted accommodations.

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Uruguayan peso (UR\$)
- » **Language** Spanish
- » **Money** ATMs and credit card facilities widespread
- » **Visas** Not required for nationals of Western Europe, Australia, USA, Canada or New Zealand
- » **Time** GMT minus three hours; daylight savings October to March

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 176,215 sq km
- » **Population** 3.5 million
- » **Capital** Montevideo
- » **Emergency** ☎911
- » **Country code** ☎598

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	UR\$21.8
Canada	C\$1	UR\$21.4
Euro zone	€1	UR\$27.2
New Zealand	NZ\$1	UR\$17.2
UK	UK£1	UR\$33.8
USA	US\$1	UR\$20.9

## Set Your Budget

- » **Bed in hostel** UR\$1000
- » **Four-hour bus ride** UR\$425

## Resources

- » **Mercopress News Agency** ([www.mercopress.com](http://www.mercopress.com))
- » **Uruguay Tourism Ministry** ([www.turismo.gub.uy](http://www.turismo.gub.uy))
- » **Uruguay surf info** ([www.olasyvientos.com.uy](http://www.olasyvientos.com.uy))

## Connections

Coming from Argentina, most people arrive by boat, departing either from Buenos Aires (for Montevideo and Colonia del Sacramento) or Tigre (for Carmelo). Land crossings are also possible (and much cheaper), leaving from the Argentine towns of Colón, Gualeguaychú and Concordia. There are various crossings from Brazil – the one most commonly used is Chuí/Chuy.

## ITINERARIES

### One Week

With a week up your sleeve you won't see it all, but if you keep on the move you can see some of the best of what Uruguay has to offer. Start in the easygoing, picturesque historical river port of Colonia and head for the urban attractions of Montevideo, both an easy ferry ride from Buenos Aires. From Montevideo, 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 or the relaxed beach-party town of Punta del Diablo. Alternatively, follow the Río Uruguay upstream toward Iguazú Falls via the quirky industrial museum at Fray Bentos and the wonderful hot springs of Salto.

### Two Weeks

Adding another week will allow you to do the above at a more leisurely pace, plus get out and explore Uruguay's scenic and little-visited interior, where the *gaucho* (cowboy) tradition lives on.

## 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 speciality 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
- » **Grappa con miel** Strong Italian-style grappa (grape brandy), sweetened and mellowed with honey