



Uruguay

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Mercado del Puerto (p937)
- ➔ Café Picasso (p949)
- ➔ Don Joaquín (p941)
- ➔ Resto-Pub 70 (p955)
- ➔ Candy Bar (p937)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ El Galope Horse Farm & Hostel (p941)
- ➔ Estancia Panagea (p947)
- ➔ Ukelele Hostel (p936)
- ➔ Tas D'Viaje (p951)
- ➔ El Diablo Tranquilo (p954)
- ➔ Ah'Lo Hostel Boutique (p943)

Why Go?

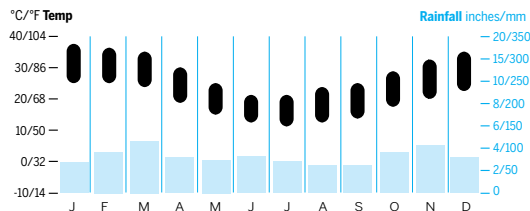
Now more than ever, Uruguay is a country that moves to its own grooves. While its neighbors lurch from one crisis to the next, Uruguay as a nation moves forward much like her citizens – calm and self-assured. Social reforms are moving along nicely and, while there will always be complaints, much of the 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 celeb-spotting at Punta, the history-soaked smugglers' port of Colonia, the Atlantic coast's wild, surf-pounded beaches and the wide-open skies of Uruguay's interior. They stay for the people – warm, open and sincere folk who have constructed one of South America's most progressive societies.

When to Go

Montevideo



Jan & Feb Street theater and *candombe* drumming consume Montevideo during Carnival.

Mar Tacuarembó's *gaucho* festival, plus smaller crowds and lower prices on the sunny Atlantic.

Nov Enjoy a springtime soak in Salto's thermal baths or experience Uruguay's *estancias*.

AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency** Uruguayan peso (UR\$)
- ➔ **Language** Spanish
- ➔ **Money** ATMs widespread; credit card widely accepted
- ➔ **Visas** Not required for many nationals of Western Europe, Australia, USA, Canada or New Zealand
- ➔ **Time** GMT minus three hours

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Area** 176,215 sq km
- ➔ **Population** 3.3 million
- ➔ **Capital** Montevideo
- ➔ **Emergency** ☎ 911
- ➔ **Country Code** ☎ 598

Exchange Rates

| | | |
|-------------|-------|----------|
| Australia | A\$1 | UR\$21.2 |
| Canada | C\$1 | UR\$21.4 |
| Euro zone | €1 | UR\$32.2 |
| New Zealand | NZ\$1 | UR\$19.9 |
| UK | UK£1 | UR\$44.4 |
| USA | US\$1 | UR\$29.8 |

Set Your Budget

- ➔ **Hostel bed** US\$15-25
- ➔ **Four-hour bus ride** UR\$500

Resources

- ➔ **Uruguay Tourism Ministry** (www.turismo.gub.uy)
- ➔ **Guru/Guay** (<http://guruaguay.com>)
- ➔ **Uruguay surf info** (www.olasyvientos.com)

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 from the Argentine towns of Colón, Gualaquay-chú and Concordia. The most common point of entry from Brazil is at Chuí/Chuy.

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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* 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 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.