

*BIG FIVE*  
TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

# *Uruguay* **Travel Guide**



**The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions, and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip. Be sure to check the reading listing included here for more information.**

*"Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So... get on your way."*

-Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss)

## MONTEVIDEO

Elevation: 72 feet

Latitude: 34 52S

Longitude: 056 12W

### Average Temperature

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	72	71	68	62	56	51	50	51	54	58	64	69

### Average Precipitation

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
in.	2.9	2.6	3.9	3.9	3.3	3.2	2.9	3.1	3	2.6	2.9	3.1

## CLIMATE

Uruguay has an exceptionally fine temperate climate, with mild summers and winters. Summer is from December to March and is the most pleasant time; the climate during other seasons offers bright, sunny days and cool nights.

**Clothing:** Medium weight clothing for winter; lightweight clothing and raincoat required

**Laundry Facilities:** Laundry can be done at the major hotels at the appropriate charges imposed by the hotels. There are no laundry facilities in remote areas or on cruise vessels.

## PASSPORTS / VISAS

**Passports:** For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

**Visas:** U.S. and Canadian citizens do not require visas in advance. Citizens from other countries, consult the nearest Uruguay consulate.

**Important:** Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

**Please note:** Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

## AIRPORT FORMALITIES

**Time Zone:** GMT - 3.

**Flight times (approximate):** From Montevideo to London is 15 hours 15 minutes (including 1 hour 30 minutes stopover in Madrid) and to New York is 14 hours.

**On Arrival:** Upon your arrival, proceed through Customs and Immigration, obtain your luggage, and exit the airport. If you have booked a complete package with Big Five tours, a representative will be holding an identifying sign. We recommend you change money at airports, hotels, or local banks.

**Airport Taxes & International Departure Tax:** US\$12 is levied on international departures (US\$6 to Buenos Aires).

**Uruguay Customs:** The following items may be imported into Uruguay without incurring customs duty by persons over 18 years of age (50 per cent of these allowances for persons under 18 years of age): 400 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 500g of tobacco; 2l of alcohol; 5kg of foodstuffs. Total value of exempted imports not to exceed US\$150.

**U.S. Customs:** Your personal exemption is \$800. There are also limits on the amount of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products you may include in your duty-free personal exemption.

Regulations frequently change so please contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044. For updated information, visit the Customs & Border Protection website. The web address is: [www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml](http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml).

## LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffel bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside. Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

## CAMERAS & FILM

**Photography:** Always approach people with an attitude of respect and ask permission before taking photographs. Do not take anyone's picture without permission. Many times it is necessary to negotiate a fee beforehand. The same general rule about asking permission also applies to photographing places of worship, religious festivals, and rural homesteads. Never take any photos of airports, police or government buildings, military installations, or borders.

**Equipment:** Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. And, don't forget your camera operation manual, filters, and a flash unit. Cameras should be packed with good cushioning. The roads are sometimes rough, and vibration can do damage. Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean your equipment frequently. Bring along a puffer brush and lens cleaning tissues.

**Lenses:** A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is a good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will

work well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Point and shoot cameras are nice for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to be desired when photographing animals, scenics, and nature. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

**Film:** It is always best to bring whatever film you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. You'll be surprised at how much film you use when you are trying to capture all those special moments. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

It is helpful to set up a numbering system for your film, marking each roll with masking tape and numbers or letters, before leaving home. This way you can code the rolls of film and where they were shot. It's quite a job to sort through hundreds of pictures with no clue where or when they were taken.

Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible and request a hand search of your film. While security people are often obliging, some are not, so allow a little extra time. X-rays are cumulative on exposed and unexposed film so the more times film is x-rayed, the more risk of damage. This is especially true with older machines found in many countries. Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are worth the small investment. Do not have film in your camera because it may be opened for inspection.

**Note:** Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest carrying your film in your carry-on luggage and placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage.

**Video:** If you are planning to shoot video on a safari, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Do not plan to buy videotape in abroad. Videotape is not affected by airport x-ray - only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts. You will probably have no problem finding a plug in most of the lodges and larger tented camps, but be prepared with plenty of batteries.

**Batteries:** Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries tend to be expensive.

## HEALTH

**Current risks:** There is a slight risk of typhoid fever but no cases of polio have been reported in Uruguay in recent years. Vaccination against typhoid is advised.

**Food & drink:** Tap water is considered safe to drink. Drinking water outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and sterilization is advisable. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

**Health care:** Uruguay has an excellent medical service. Private health insurance is recommended.

Please keep in mind that these requirements change frequently. Tour members should consult their personal physicians and / or the Center of Disease Control in Atlanta, for any recommended general and/or specific health measures at the time of travel. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta has a fax information service with updated travel information. To receive these documents, call 404-332-4565 and follow the prompts.

## SAFETY

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss.

Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Most of the lodges, hotels, and camps have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them. Be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Do not walk around unfamiliar cities alone at night. Be wary of entering into conversation with unknown people on the street. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Don't carry a lot of packages at once. Purses should be zippered and have short shoulder straps so you can protect them with your upper arm. Wallets and passports should not be carried in your back pocket, and expensive watches, chains and jewelry should not be worn. Don't leave cameras or binoculars in sight of any open window. Do not leave any valuables or money unattended in your hotel room. If you follow these precautions, you probably won't have any trouble. Common sense is the best deterrent to theft.

**Carry Your Passport.** Please ensure that you carry your passport or tourist card at all times. Never go anywhere (not even the Post Office) without your passport or tourist card. Should you ever be asked, you should be able to present your identification, your passport, tourist card, or visa. Not having it with you could mean a trip to the Police Station.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or the Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page: <http://travel.state.gov>.

## TRAVELER'S ETIQUETTE

In addition to looking out for one's own safety, the conscientious guest has the obligation of treating his hosts with respect and courtesy. An effort to speak the local language, no matter how rudimentary, is always appreciated as are good manners and discretion in the use of cameras. Above all, one must remember that the polite guest, in a country no less than in a private home, is obliged to learn from and adapt to the ways of his hosts, rather than expecting them to accept his customs.

Travel necessitates being a good-natured realist as well as a romantic, and requires an agreeable acceptance of situations as they exist, not as each of us might prefer them

to be. A good attitude makes for an enjoyable travel experience. If you are this appreciative traveler, we want you with us because we know you'll be a wonderful companion and have the time of your life.

Political unrest is an unfortunate reality in the world today, and sometimes changes to your final itinerary may be necessary to ensure your safety while traveling.

A concern for conserving the remaining natural wonders, boundless beauty, and diversity of our small planet is necessary, and always appreciated.

You are entering the blissful and rejuvenating world of discovery; be open to the experience. Our tours are dedicated to the individual with an inquiring mind. This is a time for you to escape the stresses and strains of your everyday life.

## SMOKING

In Uruguay smoking is not allowed in cinemas or theatres or on public transport. We suggest that passengers refrain from smoking in public areas, sightseeing vehicles, and when aboard any cruise vessel while in the cabins, the dining area, or community areas. There are designated areas for smoking on cruise vessels. Please dispose of cigarette butts in the appropriate receptacles or ashtrays.

## BUSINESS HOURS

**Banks & Exchange Bureaus:** M - F 1300-1700

**Business Offices:** M - F 0830-1200 and 1430-1830

**Shops and Commerce:** M - F 0900-1200 & 1400-1900, Sat 0900-1230

**Restaurants:** Varies

## CURRENCY / BANKING

**Currency:** Peso Uruguayo (urug\$) = 100 centécimos. Notes are in the denominations of urug\$1000, 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of urug\$10, 5, 2 and 1.

**Currency Exchange:** Visitors are advised to buy local currency at banks and exchange shops, as hotels tend to give unfavorable rates.

**Credit Cards:** MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are the most commonly used. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available. ATMs may reject US or European credit cards.

**Traveler's Checks:** Sterling traveler's checks can only be changed at The Bank of London & South America; visitors are therefore advised to carry US Dollar traveler's checks (US\$50 and US\$100 denominations only).

**Personal Checks:** Not accepted.

## SHOPPING

Special purchases include suede jackets, amethyst jewelry, and paintings. The Tristan Narvaja Market is famous for its antiques and there are many antique shops in the Old Town.

## FOOD & DRINK

The majority of Uruguayan restaurants are parrilladas (grill-rooms), which specialize in the country's most famous

traditional dish, the asado (barbecued beef). Beef is part of most meals and comes in many forms, including the asado de tira (ribs), pulpa (boneless beef), lomo (fillet steak) and bife de chorrito (rump steak). Costillas (chops) and milanesa (a veal cutlet) are also popular, usually eaten with mixed salad or chips. Chivito is a sandwich filled with slices of meat, lettuce and egg. Other local dishes are puchero (beef with vegetables, bacon, beans and sausages), pizza, pies, barbecued pork, grilled chicken in wine, cazuela (stew), usually served with mondongo (tripe), seafood, morcilla dulce (sweet black sausage made from blood, orange peel and walnuts) and morcilla salada (salty sausage). Desserts include dulce de leche (milk sweets), chaja (ball-shaped sponge cake filled with cream and jam), mossini (cream sponge), lemon pie and yemas (crystallized egg yolk). Table service is usual in restaurants. Cafes or bars have either table and/or counter service.

Uruguayan wines are of good quality. A popular drink is medio-medio (half dry white wine and half champagne). Beers are very good. Imported beverages are widely available. Local spirits are caña, grappa and locally distilled whisky and gin. There are no set licensing hours.

## TIPPING

Tipping is usually ten per cent when no service charge is added. Taxi drivers expect a tip. Tipping is solely at your discretion.

Your professional, licensed guide and driver, who accompany you, work very hard to ensure that you receive the best BIG FIVE service, tour quality, and satisfaction. If you wish to reward them for their work, we suggest the following:

- \$5-\$10 per person per day for services rendered by any licensed guide/naturalist.
- \$2-\$4 per person per day for services rendered by driver.

## INTRODUCTION TO URUGUAY

Uruguay is one of the smallest of the South American republics. It is bounded to the north by Brazil, to the southeast by the Atlantic, and is separated from Argentina in the west and south by the River Uruguay, which widens out into the Rio de la Plata estuary. The landscape is made up of hilly meadows broken by streams and rivers. There is a string of beaches along the coast. Most of the country is grazing land for sheep and cattle. Montevideo, the most southern point of the nation, accommodates more than half of the population. About 90 per cent of the land is suitable for agriculture, although only 12 per cent is used in this way. Uruguay is known as the 'Oriental Republic' because it stands on the eastern bank of the Rio de la Plata.

**Language:** The official language is Spanish. Some English is spoken in tourist resorts

**Post:** Post offices open 0800-1800 (main post office in the old city, Montevideo: 0900-1900). Airmail to Europe takes three to five days.

**Phone:** IDD is available to Uruguay, but callers from Uruguay may experience difficulty, although direct dialing is possible. Country code: 598. Outgoing international code: 00. The local telephone service, which is operated by the Government, is generally adequate, but long-distance calls may take a considerable time to be put through.

**Internet:** E-mail can be accessed from Internet cafes in main urban areas.

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Continental flat three-pin or round two-pin plugs.

**Population:** 3,313,000 (1999).

**Religion:** Roman Catholic is the predominant religion.

**Holidays:**

- Jan 1 ----- New Year's Day
- Jan 6 ----- Epiphany
- Feb 23 & 24 ----- Carnival
- Apr 8 ----- Maundy Thursday
- Apr 9 ----- Good Friday
- Apr 19 ----- Landing of the 33 Patriots
- May 1 ----- Labor Day
- May 18 ----- Battle of Las Piedras
- Jun 19 ----- Birth of General Artigas
- Jul 18 ----- Constitution Day
- Aug 25 ----- National Independence Day
- Oct 12 ----- Discovery of America
- Nov 2 ----- All Souls' Day
- Dec 25 ----- Christmas Day

**Note:** Many businesses close during Carnival Week and during Tourist Week (Easter). The principal festival is the national Carnival Week (starting Mar 3 in 2003). Although this 'fiesta' is officially only for the Monday and Tuesday preceding Ash Wednesday, most shops and businesses close for the entire week. Houses and streets are appropriately decorated and humorous shows are staged at open-air theatres.

**Constitution and Government:** A Republic since 1967, Uruguay gained independence from Spain in 1828.

**Head of State and Government:** President Jorge Batlle Ibañez since 1999.

**ECONOMY**

Uruguay is one of the more prosperous Latin American countries. The economy is traditionally agricultural, with beef and wool being the most important products; dairy exports to other Latin American countries are substantial. Crop farming is widespread, producing mostly cereals, rice, fruit and vegetables. The largest component of the Uruguayan economy is manufacturing, which is concentrated in oil and coal-derived products, chemicals, textiles, transport equipment and leather products. The oil and coal, both for manufacturing and energy consumption (the latter supplemented by Uruguay's own hydroelectricity stations), are imported. Mining is confined to small-scale extraction of building materials, industrial minerals and some gold.

After some difficulties in the early part of the decade, which saw the Government accept an IMF-imposed austerity program, the Uruguayan economy performed well during the 1990s. However, Uruguay's economic health depends heavily on that of its two large neighbors, Argentina and Brazil. Both Latin American giants have been in the doldrums recently, and Uruguay's output fell by one per cent during 2000, a trend which continued in 2001. Then, in August 2002, as both Argentina and, to a lesser extent, Brazil were gripped by

financial crises, the Government was forced to shut down the financial system to prevent collapse. Loans from the IMF and the United States, totaling US\$3 billion, have allowed the financial system to continue functioning. Uruguay is a member of Mercosur, the principal regional trade bloc, as well as the Asociación Latinoamericana de Integración (ALADI) and the Inter-American Development Bank. The country's main trading partners are Brazil, Argentina, the USA and Germany.

**HISTORY**

In 1516, the death of Spanish explorer Juan de Solis, at the hands of indigenous tribes, while exploring the River Plate basin, coupled with the apparent absence of appreciable mineral deposits, discouraged further expeditions until the following century. Fierce opposition from the two main groups inhabiting what is now Uruguay – the Charrua and the Guarani – plagued would-be colonists for the next 300 years, before they were finally subdued, mainly through the combined effects of large-scale killings and imported disease. Parts of the territory were settled by the Spanish in the 1620s and the Portuguese in the 1680s; as a result Uruguay became a major bone of contention between these rival European powers. The Spanish prevailed in the early 18th century, after the establishment of a settlement at San Felipe de Montevideo (which eventually became the Uruguayan capital) in 1726. With a fine natural harbour, Montevideo soon assumed an important role in the region, as both a commercial centre and a Spanish naval base. Moreover, an intense rivalry developed between the city and Buenos Aires, which lay on the opposite bank of the Rio de la Plata basin. In 1776, Buenos Aires was chosen as the capital of the newly established Spanish Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata, which governed a territory including Montevideo.

The final split between the two cities was triggered in 1808, by the overthrow of the Spanish King Ferdinand VII by Napoleon, in favor of the latter's brother, Joseph. Soon afterwards, the military governor of Montevideo, Javier Elio, successfully lobbied to allow him control of the city independent of Buenos Aires, while paying nominal subservience to King Ferdinand. In 1810, the criollos of Buenos Aires – descendants of Spanish families who had immigrated to South America – unseated the Spanish Viceroy. But in the interior, in the region known as the Banda Oriental, most of the population backed the new regime in Buenos Aires and rallied to a regional military commander, Jose Artigas, in opposition to Elio. Although Artigas' nine-year military campaign was ultimately unsuccessful – he was eventually exiled to Paraguay, where he died in 1850 – it laid the seeds of Uruguayan independence. Artigas himself is now recognized, along with Bolivar, Zapata and others, as one of the founding fathers of the independent nations of South America. His example and the political momentum it had created inspired others, notably Juan Antonio Lavalleja, whose 'Liberation Crusade' finally led to the 1825 declaration of independence by the political representatives of the Banda Oriental and the formal creation of the Uruguayan state in 1828. Throughout much of this early 19th-century period, the future Uruguay was occupied by Portuguese troops from neighboring Brazil (who finally defeated Artigas); interventions – military and otherwise – by its larger neighbouring powers were to become a recurrent feature of Uruguay's political history.

A principal and, in many ways, parallel characteristic of Uruguay's domestic politics is the deep schism between the two major political parties, both of which can trace their

origins to the early years of independence. The liberally inclined Colorado Party and the right-wing National Party are commonly known as 'Reds' and 'Whites' or Blancos (by virtue of their once distinctive hatbands, rather than the color of their politics). The conjunction between internal and external forces became apparent during the Great War of 1843-52, which centered on the siege of Montevideo, then under Colorado control, by Blanco forces. The war, which was eventually won by the Colorados, established the pattern whereby Argentina and Brazil became the guarantors of Uruguayan independence, with the intervention of global powers on occasion – Britain and France in the 19th century, the United States in the 20th century.

Over time, the Colorado Party has come to be dominated by the Batlle family, one of the great modern political dynasties. Under the progressive Colorado administrations of José Batlle y Ordóñez between 1903 and 1915, Uruguay established Latin America's first welfare state, gave women the vote and abolished both the death penalty and the link between church and state.

In 1933, in the first of a series of interventions in domestic politics during the 20th century, the military took power. Between 1951 and 1966, following the introduction of a new constitution, Uruguay was governed by an unusual form of collective leadership known as 'collegiate government'. This lasted until 1966, after which economic difficulties led to an increase in labor unrest and the emergence of the Tupamaros guerrilla movement. In 1973 the military once again took charge and remained in power until 1985, by which time the Tupamaros had been defeated and all left-wing political activity outlawed. In a pattern common to other Latin American dictatorships of the era, hundreds of alleged opponents of the regime disappeared (presumed murdered); their fate is now being investigated by a government commission established in 2000. Dr Julio Sanguinetti of the Colorados held the presidency from 1985 until the presidential and congressional elections in November 1989, when the Blancos, under the banner of the Partido Nacional, achieved a majority in the National Assembly and their candidate, Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera, was victorious in the presidential race. The new government adopted the South American trend in economic policy by selling off some state-owned businesses, reducing government spending and attracting foreign investment. It has also joined the Mercosur trading bloc with its neighbors.

The Uruguayan left has experienced something of a resurgence since the mid-1990s. A leading light was the massively popular Tabaré Vázquez, Mayor of Montevideo until 1994, whose combination of radical politics and pragmatic problem solving has greatly improved the quality of life in the capital. Tabaré Vázquez is associated with the leftist coalition, Frente Amplio (Broad Front), which, in conjunction with dissident Blancos and other smaller groups, created the Encuentro Progresista (EP), which fought several exceptionally close elections in the 1990s. However, the November 1994 presidential and legislative elections were both won by the Colorados and the incumbent Sanguinetti, returned for a second term of office. Sanguinetti retired before the next presidential poll in November 1999, which was won by yet another member of the Batlle clan, Jorge Luis. The simultaneous National Assembly elections saw the leftist EP returned as the largest single party but excluded from office by an alliance of Colorados and Blancos. The EP also dominated the simultaneous National Assembly elections but was unable to secure an absolute majority and now finds itself in opposition to a centre-right coalition of the Colorados and the Partido Nacional.

The government has since been preoccupied with serious economic problems related to the financial crises in Uruguay's two large neighbors, Argentina and Brazil. The situation in Argentina has caused particular difficulties – the country came close to economic collapse amid widespread public disorder in August 2002. In the wake of that, Uruguay has sought and received financial assistance from the IMF, the US, European Union and others.

## URUGUAY'S DIVERSE REGIONS

Uruguay is increasingly drawing more visitors each year, and for good reason. The country enjoys 500km (300 miles) of fine sandy beaches on the Atlantic and the Rio de la Plata, woods, hills, hot springs, hotels, casinos, art festivals and numerous opportunities for sport and entertainment.

The capital contains more than half of Uruguay's population and is the country's natural trading centre. There are nine major bathing beaches, the best of which are Malvin, Pocitos, Carrasco and Miramar. The suburbs have restaurants, nightclubs and hotels. Montevideo's architecture combines colonial, European and modern influences. The old inner city, known as the Ciudad Vieja (Old Town), is a small peninsula surrounded by the sea near the metropolitan port. The Cabildo (the old town council hall), the Cathedral, the Plaza Matriz, the Plaza Zabala and the Port Market are fine examples of Uruguay's colonial past. The Old Town, also a centre for antique shops, contrasts dramatically with the rising number of modern buildings and office blocks surrounding the area. The most interesting entrance to the city is via the Puerta de la Ciudadela (Door to the Citadel), part of the old wall that still surrounds Montevideo leading on, via the Plaza Independencia, to the popular and lively city center.

To the west of Montevideo is Colonia Suiza ('The Swiss Colony'), reached by hydrofoil from the capital. It has a delightful old quarter. Other beach resorts along the Uruguayan coast include Atlántida, Piriápolis and the fishing port of Paloma. Carmelo on the River Uruguay and Mercedes on the Río Negro (a tributary) are amongst the many picturesque river ports; further up the Uruguay is Salto, one of the country's largest cities. Fray Bentos, near Mercedes, gave its name to the famous processed meat company. The journey north through Florida and Durazno to Tacuarembó on the Brazilian border takes one through the heart of the country's agricultural lands. The beautiful hills surrounding the town of Minas are well worth a visit, as is Colonia del Sacramento, which has been rebuilt in its original 18th-century style.

## DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored.

But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects. Consider the following for your next scheduled trip:

- Start your trip rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine, however, just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- Once comfortably onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment on the plane. Bright lights have been shown to have a strong effect on individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eye shades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Get adequate rest before starting on your journey to help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

In addition to the many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, and others, there are many books relating to Uruguay. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. These books may be obtained through most bookstores or on the World Wide Web.

### **THE CITY OF YOUR FINAL DESTINATION**

**by Peter Cameron**

Peter Cameron's sublime, beautiful novel *City of Your Final Destination* concerns true love and a young academic's struggle to break free from a life he's molded but doesn't want to live. Omar Razaghi, who's pursuing a Ph.D. at a Midwestern university, fudges his application for grant money, stating he has already obtained authorization from the family of the deceased minor novelist Jules Gund. When he belatedly seeks permission to proceed, the three executors--Gund's brother, Adam; former wife Caroline; and Arden, Gund's mistress and mother of Gund's daughter, Portia--decline. Prompted by his girlfriend, Deirdre, Omar shows up unexpectedly in Uruguay, seeking to convince the family of his--and their--need for a biography of Jules Gund to exist.

### **THE TREE OF RED STARS**

**by Tessa Bridal**

In her first novel, *Bridal* blends the memories of a young girl growing up in Montevideo with the reality of Uruguay under repressive regimes in the 1970s. Mischievous Magdalena Ortega Grey, born into a life of privilege, delights in her best friend, Emilia (with whom she sits in the branches of the poinsettia tree of the title), her gossipy aunts, and her neighbors, among them, darkly handsome Marco Aurelio Pereira, so appealing but--because he is five years older than she--so seemingly unattainable. As a university student and USIS employee, Magda--her political consciousness rising as she matures--joins friends in the urban-guerrilla Tupamaro movement, providing information aiding in the assassination of a USIS official and the kidnapping of British ambassador Geoffrey Jackson (an actual event in 1971). Close friends are imprisoned and tortured, and eventually Magda and Marco (an army colonel working for revolution from the inside) join their ranks. This book is a moving fictional account of events that must be remembered. Michele Leber

*For Young Readers:*

### **URUGUAY (DISCOVERING SOUTH AMERICA)**

**by Charles J. Shields, James D. Henderson**

Presents information on the geography, history, economy, and people of Uruguay. Includes a chronology, recipes, project ideas, and more.

**URUGUAY (CULTURES OF THE WORLD)**  
by Leslie Jermyn

Describes the geography, history, government, economy, people, lifestyle, religion, language, arts, leisure, festivals, and food of the smallest country in South America.



# **NOTES:**