

# Life In Uruguay

## Uruguay

Capital (and largest city): Montevideo  
Location: 34°53'S, 56°10'W  
Official language: Spanish  
Government: Republic  
Independence from Brazil: Declared August 25, 1825. Recognised August 28, 1828  
Area: 90th in the World  
Total: 176,215 km<sup>2</sup> (68,038 sq mi)  
Water (%): 1.5  
Population: 2006 estimate 3,323,906 (132nd)  
Density: 19 /km<sup>2</sup> (50 /sq mi) (156th)  
GDP (PPP) : \$33.98 billion (96th). Per capita: \$9,900 (88th)  
HDI (2004) : 0.851 (high) (43rd)  
Currency: Uruguayan Peso (UYU)  
Time zone: UST (UTC−3). Summer (DST) UDST (UTC-2)  
Calling code: +598  
Internet TLD: .uy  
Member of: UN, OAS, Mercosur, CSN

### About Uruguay

Uruguay, officially the Eastern Republic of Uruguay or the Republic East of the Uruguay (River) (Spanish: República Oriental del Uruguay), is a nation located in the southeastern part of South America. Home to the 3 million people who inhabit the country, 1.7 million live in Montevideo. It is bordered by Brazil to the northeast, the Uruguay River to the west, the estuary of the Río de la Plata (literally "River of the Silver", but commonly known in English as "River Plate") to the southwest, with Argentina on the other bank of both, and finally the South Atlantic Ocean to the southeast. It is the third smallest independent country in South America, larger only than Suriname and French Guiana (an overseas department of France). According to Transparency International, it is the second least corrupt country in Latin America (after Chile).

### History of Uruguay

The inhabitant of Uruguay before European colonization of the area were various tribes of hunter gatherer native Americans, the most well known being the Charrua Indians, a small tribe driven south by the Guaraní Indians of Paraguay. The name "Uruguay" comes from Guaraní. It has many possible meanings since Guaraní is a highly agglutinative language. Two of them are "river of the urus" (uru is a kind of bird) and "river of colorful or 'painted' chinchillas."

The Spanish arrived in the territory of present-day Uruguay in 1516, but the absence of gold and silver limited settlement in the region during the 16th and 17th centuries. Uruguay became a zone of contention between the Spanish and the Portuguese empires. In 1603 the Spanish began to introduce cattle, which became a source of wealth in the region. The first permanent settlement on the territory of present-day Uruguay was founded by the Spanish in 1624 at Soriano on the Río Negro. In 1669-71, the Portuguese built a fort at Colonia del Sacramento. Spanish colonization increased as Spain sought to limit Portugal's expansion of Brazil's frontiers.

The capital Montevideo was founded by the Spanish in the early 18th century as a military stronghold; its natural harbor soon developed into a commercial center competing with Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires. Uruguay's early 19th century history was shaped by ongoing fights between the British, Spanish, Portuguese, and colonial forces for dominance in the Argentina-Brazil-Uruguay region. In 1806 and 1807, the British army attempted to seize Buenos Aires as part of their war with Spain. As a result, at the beginning of 1807, Montevideo was occupied by a 10,000-strong British force who held it until the middle of the year when they left to attack Buenos Aires.

### Politics of Uruguay

Uruguay's politics takes place in a framework of a presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the President of Uruguay is both head of state and head of government, and of a pluriform multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the General Assembly of Uruguay. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. For most of Uruguay's history, the Partido Colorado and Partido Nacional have alternated in power. The elections of 2004, however, brought the Frente Amplio, a coalition of socialists, former Tupamaros, former communists and mainly social democrats among others to power with majorities in both houses of parliament and the election of President Tabaré Vázquez by an absolute majority.

The Reporters Without Borders worldwide press freedom index has ranked Uruguay as:

\* 57th of 168 reported countries in 2006

According to Freedom House, an American organisation that tracks global trends in political freedom, Uruguay ranked twenty-seventh in its "Freedom In The World" index. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Uruguay scores a 7.96, located in the last position between the 28 countries considered to be Full Democracies in the world.

The report looks at 60 indicators across five categories: Free elections, civil liberties, functioning government, political participation and political culture. Uruguay ranks 26th in the World CPI (Corruption Perception Index) composed by Transparency International.

#### Direct Democracy

The Uruguayan constitution allow citizens to challenge laws approved by the parliament by the use of a Referendum, or propose changes to the Constitution by the use of a Plebiscite. During the last 15 years the method has been used several times; to confirm an amnesty to members of the military who violated human rights during the military regime (1973-1985), stop privatization of public utilities companies, defend pensioners income and protect water resources.

#### Administrative divisions of Uruguay

Uruguay consists of nineteen departments (departamentos, singular "departamento):

Department /Area (km<sup>2</sup>) / Population\* / Capital

Artigas / 11,928 / 78,019 / Artigas

Canelones / 4,536 / 485,028 / Canelones

Cerro Largo / 13,648 / 86,564 / Melo

Colonia / 6,106 / 119,266 / Colonia del Sacramento

Durazno / 11,643 / 58,859 / Durazno

Flores / 5,144 / 25,104 / Trinidad

Florida / 10,417 / 68,181 / Florida

Lavalleja / 10,016 / 60,925 / Minas

Maldonado / 4,793 / 140,192 / Maldonado

Montevideo / 530 / 1,326,064 / Montevideo

Paysandú / 13,922 / 113,244 / Paysandú

Río Negro / 9,282 / 53,989 / Fray Bentos

Rivera / 9,370 / 104,921 / Rivera

Rocha / 10,551 / 69,937 / Rocha

Salto / 14,163 / 123,120 / Salto

San José / 4,992 / 103,104 / San José de Mayo

Soriano / 9,008 / 84,563 / Mercedes

Tacuarembó / 15,438 / 90,489 / Tacuarembó

Treinta y Tres / 9,676 / 49,318 / Treinta y Tres

\* 2004

#### Geography of Uruguay

At 176.214 square kilometres of Continental Land and 142.199 square kilometres of jurisdictional waters and small river islands, Uruguay is the second smallest sovereign nation in South America (after Suriname) and the third smallest territory (French Guiana is the smallest). The landscape features mostly rolling plains and low hill ranges (cuchillas) with a fertile coastal lowland. A dense fluvial network covers the country, consisting of four river basins or deltas; the River Plate, the Uruguay River, Merin Lake and the Black River. The major internal river is the Black River or Río Negro. Several lagoons are found along the Atlantic coast. The highest point in the country is the Cerro Catedral at 513.66 meters (1,685 ft 3 in) in the 'Carape' mountain range. To the southwest is the Río de la Plata (River Plate), the estuary of the Uruguay River, which forms the western border, and the Paraná River, that does not run through Uruguay itself.

#### Borders:

Republic of Argentina: Uruguay River to the west and River Plate in the south.

Federative Republic of Brazil: Chuy Stream, 13 km, straight line (Chuy), 8.7 km. San Miguel Stream 13 km. Merim Lake, 280.1 km Yaguaron River, 142.4 km. Small Yaguaron River, 18.5 km. Mine's Stream 20.4 km, Acegua straight line 37.2 km. San Luis Stream 31.3 km. North Branch of the San Luis Stream 3.6 km. Straight line 8 km. 'Cañada' of the Cemetery, 4 km. Straight lines 0.6 km, Santa Ana hill range SE, 168.5 km. Rivera-Libramento 4.8 km. Santa Ana hill range 20.8 km. Black hill range 4189.3 km. Invernada Stream, 37.8 km. Cuareim River 313.4 km.[6]

#### Climate in Uruguay

The climate in Uruguay is temperate: warm summers and cold winters. The predominantly gently undulating landscape is also somewhat vulnerable to rapid changes from weather fronts. It receives the periodic influence of the polar air. Without mountains in the zone that act as a barrier, the air masses freely move by the territory, causing fast variations of the climate. The coolest month is June, while the warmest is January. The rainfall is equally distributed throughout the year, but tends to be a bit more frequent in the autumn months. There can be frequent thunderstorms in the summer.

#### Enclaves and exclaves

Since 1984 Uruguay has an Antarctic base on King George Island in Antarctica, part of the South Shetland Islands archipelago, at 62°11'04"S, 58°54'09"W, some 100 km from the Antarctic peninsula itself.

### Economy of Uruguay

Uruguay has a middle income economy, mainly dominated by the State services sector, an export-oriented agricultural sector and an industrial sector. Uruguay relies heavily on trade, particularly in agricultural exports, leaving the country particularly vulnerable to slumps in commodity prices and global economic slowdowns. After averaging growth of 5% annually in 1996-1998, in 1999-2001 the economy suffered from lower demand in Argentina and Brazil, which together account for nearly half of Uruguay's exports. Despite the severity of the trade shocks, Uruguay's financial indicators remained stabler than those of its neighbours, a reflection of its solid reputation among investors and its investment-grade sovereign bond rating — one of only two in South America. In recent years Uruguay has shifted most of its energy into developing the commercial use of IT technologies and has become an important exporter of software in Latin America.

While some parts of the economy appeared to be resilient, the downturn had severe impact on the local population. Unemployment levels rose to more than 20%, real wages fell, the peso devalued. These worsening economic conditions played a part in turning public opinion against the mildly free market economic policies adopted by the previous administrations in the 1990s, leading to the popular rejection of proposals for privatization of the state petroleum company in 2003 and of the state water company in 2004. The newly elected Frente Amplio government, while pledging to continue payments on Uruguay's external debt, has also promised to undertake a Emergency Plan to attack the widespread problems of poverty and unemployment.

### Agriculture of Uruguay

Agriculture played such an important part in Uruguayan history and national identity until the middle of the twentieth century that the entire country was then sometimes likened to a single huge estancia (agricultural estate) centred around Montevideo, where the wealth generated in the hinterland was spent, as its casco or administrative head. As another saying went, "Uruguay es la vaca y el puerto" ("Uruguay is the cow and the port"). Today, agriculture contributes roughly 10% to the country's GDP and is still the main foreign exchange earner, putting Uruguay in line with other agricultural exporters like Brazil, Canada and New Zealand. Uruguay is a member of the Cairns Group of exporters of agricultural products. Uruguay's agriculture has relatively low inputs of labour, technology and capital in comparison with other such countries, which results in comparatively lower yields per hectare but also opens the door for Uruguay to market its products as "natural" or "ecological."

Campaigns like "Uruguayan grass-fed beef" and "Uruguay Natural" aim to establish Uruguay as a premium brand in beef, wine and other food products.

Recently, an industry has developed around estancia tourism which capitalizes on the traditional or folkloristic connotations associated with gaucho culture and the remaining resources of Uruguay's historic estancias.

### Demographics of Uruguay

Uruguay is primarily populated by people of European origin. According to a study done in 1997, 94% of its population is of white European descent, Spaniards, followed closely by Italians, including numbers of British, Germans, French, Swiss, Russians, Portuguese, Poles, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians, Dutch, Belgians, Croatians, Greeks, Scandinavians, Irish, and Armenians.

Uruguay is the only country in the Americas where Amerindians are now absent. The remaining 6% of the inhabitants are of either African or Asian descent.

Many Swiss colonies such as Colonia Suiza, Colonia Valdense and Nueva Helvecia were founded in the department of Colonia del Sacramento. Also, there are towns founded by early British settlers, like Conchillas and Barker. A Russian colony called San Javier, is found in the department of Rio Negro. Also there are menonite colonies in the department of Rio Negro and in the department of Canelones. One of them, called El Ombu, is famous for its well know Dulce de Leche "Claldy", and is located near the city of Young.

Uruguay has a literacy rate of 96.79% (1996 est), it has a large urban middle class. During the 1970s and 1980s, an estimated 600,000 Uruguayans emigrated, principally to Spain, Italy, Argentina and Brazil. Other Uruguayans went to various countries in Europe, to the USA and Australia.

The birth rate is lower than neighboring countries (16.73 births/1000 population).

### Religion in Uruguay

Church and state are officially separated. Most Uruguayans adhere to the Roman Catholic faith (62%), with smaller Protestant (4%) and Jewish (3%), as well as a large nonprofessing group (31%).

Although the majority of Uruguayans do not actively practice a religion, they are nominally church members in the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities. Political observers consider Uruguay the most secular country in the western and southern hemispheres.

### Society

According to data published by the United Nations, the Gini index for Uruguay equals to 44.8 in 2003, where 100 stands for maximum inequality and 0 for even distribution of the wealth between the population.

Population below Indigence line: 3.01%

Population below Poverty line: 18%

The reports shows the indicators are improving as the country is recovering from the last 2002 crisis, in 2004 poverty indicators reached an all time high.

A new ministry of Social Development was created by the Broad Front Party (Frente Amplio) government led by Tabare Vazquez, and an Emergency Plan which targets the less favoured 200.000 Uruguayans.

### Crime & Public Safety

In 2005 there were 188 homicides in Uruguay, 9486 assaults and 1167 sexual crimes. However, Uruguay remains the country with the lowest crime rate in Latin America and one of the safest in the world, being its capital city, Montevideo, among the 30 safest cities in the world.

### Health and Sanitation

The government of Uruguay has done much to improve its health conditions. Under the national constitution, the State is responsible for all medical functions in Uruguay, and provides free medical care for those who qualify for it, particularly for the aged and those who cannot afford medical costs. This is done by the 'Ministerio de Salud Publica', Ministry of Health, who owns and operate a network of hospitals and clinics all over the country. The biggest one, called Hospital de Clinicas depends of the Medicine Faculty of the University of the Republic (Uruguay). As a result, over time it changed from having one of the highest mortality rates in Latin America to one of the lowest. For example, in 1995, infant mortality was 19.6 per 1,000 in 1995, 17.5 per 1,000 in 1996 to 11.61 per 1000 in 2006, showing a steady and continuous drop in the future.

The government also continues to expand various forms of medical practice to offer the population diverse options of medical treatment in the nation's 65 medical facilities, as well as various forms of state-sponsored insurance plans, on which much of the population depends.

The Ministry of Health in Uruguay has gone to great lengths to provide the nation's 3.4 million people with healthy drinking water. The 1985 census revealed that 15.9% of the population either had no access to drinking water or lived in unsanitary conditions. Estimates now are that only 1.2% of the population has difficulty accessing clean drinking. The State owns the water utility company OSE.

### Culture of Uruguay

There is a Secretary for Education and Culture named Ministerio de Educación y Cultura. The high ratio of literacy, and numerous public and private Radio and TV Broadcasting stations helps to promote communications and culture. The SODRE (Acronym for "Official Service for broadcasting Radio, TV, and Performing Arts") is a noted governmental institution generating cultural activities for the whole country. Created on year 1929, it manages a Symphonic Orchestra, a Chamber Music and Ballet ensembles, and a Choir, among others. Each main city authorities are promoting many other cultural activities as well. By way of example, Montevideo's City Hall (Intendencia Municipal) manages a Philharmonic Orchestra, a Symphonic Band, a Music school, several theaters, among other activities, and promotes many artists to perform all over the city.

### Uruguayan music

Uruguay has a number of local musical forms. The most distinctive ones are candombe, an Afro-Uruguayan percussion-based form, and murga, a form of musical theatre, which both occur yearly during the Carnival period. There is also milonga, a folk guitar and song form deriving from Spanish traditions and related to similar forms found in many Hispanic-American countries. Uruguay is also known for its tango: the famed tango singer Carlos Gardel is rumoured to have been from the Uruguayan town of Tacuarembó.

The popular music of Uruguay, which focuses on rock, jazz and many other Western forms, frequently makes reference to the distinctly Uruguayan sounds mentioned above. The group Los Shakers, 1960s imitators of The Beatles, deserve a special mention as the band that kickstarted the Argentinean rock scene. Also, cumbia, a music style popular throughout most of Central and South America is widely enjoyed by the Uruguayan people, particularly in the rural areas.

#### Tango

- \* Carlos Gardel
- \* Gerardo Matos Rodriguez
- \* Julio Sosa
- \* Romeo Gavioli
- \* Manolo Guardia
- \* Lágrima Ríos
- \* Francis Andreu

#### Electronic Tango

Bajofondo Tango Club: Juan Campodónico, Luciano Supervielle.

#### Milonga/Canto Popular

Alfredo Zitarrosa, Los Olimareños, Eduardo Mateo, Jose Carbajal, Washington Luna, Eustaquio Sosa, Tabare Etcheberry.

#### Other genres

Jaime Roos, Jorge Drexler, Abel Carlevaro, Eduardo Young, Federico Bruera, Esteban Klisich, Fernando Cabrera, Laura Canoura, Ruben Rada, Eduardo Darnauchans, Eduardo Larbanois, Mario Carrero, Santiago Chalar, Erika Busch, Jorge Schelleberg, Hugo Fattorusso, Gaston Ciarlo (Dino), Victor Lima, Mariana Ingold, Roberto Darwin, Jorge Galemire, Jorge Lazaroff, Jorge Do Prado, Jorginho Gularte, Leo Masliah.

### Uruguayan writers

Literature properly speaking starts in Uruguay with the country-flavoured poetry of Bartolomé Hidalgo, 1788-1822. The two leading figures of the Romantic period are Adolfo Berro and Juan Zorrilla de San Martín.

Julio Herrera y Reissig was one of the great fin-de-siècle modernistas, indeed one of the very greatest and subtlest of Latin-American poets. Two leading women are Juana de Ibarbourou and Delmira Agustini, indeed Ibarbourou defined a whole period of Spanish-American sentiment towards the poetic and was immensely popular. Emilio Frugoni and Emilio Oribe were distinguished lyricists.

Outstanding among the prose and fiction figures are Juan Carlos Onetti, Carlos Martínez Moreno, Eduardo Galeano, Mario Benedetti and Jorge Majfud.

Horacio Quiroga was an immensely popular as well as highly individual and flavourful short-story writer who has had vast influence. Constancio C. Vigil was once a beloved, if highly moralistic, children's writer.

Florencio Sánchez remains Uruguay's most famous theater writer.

Montevideo has been the birthplace of three noted French poets: Isidore Lucien Ducasse, Jules Laforgue and Jules Supervielle.

### Cuisine of Uruguay

Uruguayan Food is traditionally based on its European roots. Mediterranean foods, especially from Italy, Spain, France and Germany. Many foods from those countries such as pasta, sausages, and desserts are common in the nation's diet. The Uruguayan barbecue, asado, is one of the most exquisite and famous in the world. A sweet paste, Dulce de Leche is the national obsession, used to fill cookies, cakes, pancakes, milhojas, and alfajores. The alfajores are shortbread cookies sandwiched together with Dulce de Leche or a fruit paste. Dulce de Leche is used also in flan con Dulce de Leche. The national drink is the Grappamiel. Grappamiel is an alcoholic drink which is very popular in rural areas. It is made with alcohol and honey. It is often consumed in the cold mornings of autumn and winter to warm up the body.

A traditional infusion called mate is Uruguayans most distinctive feature. The dried leaves and twigs of the yerba mate plant (*Ilex paraguariensis*) are placed in a small cup. The drink is sipped through a metal or cane straw called bombilla. Hot water is poured into the gourd at near-boiling point so as to not burn the herb and spoil the flavour.

### Sports in Uruguay

Uruguay has an enormous tradition in sports with important achievements in football (Won two football world cups), basketball, cycling and rugby, among others. The first world cup was hosted in the country.

#### Football

The most popular sport in Uruguay, by far, is association football (fútbol), in which the country, represented by the famous uruguayan national football team of the Asociación Uruguaya de Fútbol has earned many honours, including two Gold medals in the Olympic Games: 1924, 1928 and the two World Cups. The two main football clubs (Nacional and Peñarol) are both three times World Champions.

#### Basketball

Basketball is also a very important sport in Uruguay. As a matter of fact, the Uruguayan national basketball team, representing the Uruguayan Basketball Federation, won 12 South American championships, 2 Olympic bronze medals (one in 1952 and the other in 1956), and participated in many panamerican and world championships. Currently, there is 1 Uruguayan by the name of Esteban Batista playing in the NBA (National Basketball Association) for the Atlanta Hawks in the United States - the highest level professional league in the world.

### Tourism in Uruguay

Uruguay is basically a European country, since the majority of its citizens are descended from Spanish and Italian immigrants. Spanish is the official language. Uruguay is more upscale with less poverty and strife than its neighbors. Montevideo is safer than other South American capitals. The old city, Ciudad Vieja, has many colonial buildings that are now museums, art galleries, antique shops and restaurants. For nature lovers, the Eastern Wetlands contain swamps, lagoons, marshes, and streams with hundreds of bird species. UNESCO has declared the area a biosphere reserve. There are plenty of canoeing and fishing opportunities in both Uruguay and Negro River.

The most popular Uruguayan destination is Punta del Este, with the Atlantic on one side and the River Plate on the other. It is an expensive jet set center for nightlife, casinos, and discos. Estancias, rural estates that are working ranches, are located throughout the country if you want a gaucho experience.

Beef lovers will delight in grilled asado eaten in restaurants known as parrilladas or asados. Italian restaurants are everywhere. Try to rent a car to get to see the sights. Public transport in Uruguay is awful, unlike other countries, which have an extensive public transit system. Be prepared to pay much more than you would in Mexico, Central America, Venezuela, Peru, and Ecuador.

White sandy beaches along the Atlantic Ocean east of Montevideo compose Uruguay's version of the Italian and French Rivas. This coastline stretches to the Brazilian border and holds some of the most impressive seaside resorts in South America. Colonia del Sacramento is a coastal town just west of Montevideo and across the Rio de la Plata from Buenos Aires, Argentina. Charming Colonia, a legacy of the Portuguese colony, is an amazing historical site from the 17th century. Its Barrio Historico district is the perfect place for a scenic walking tour to see the colonial houses lining the area's cobblestone streets. Uruguay may be small in size, but the country is big in

friendliness. The natives enjoy welcoming visitors from cold climates all over the world who travel to their sunny shores.

### Destinations in Uruguay

#### Montevideo

Montevideo is the very lively capital of Uruguay. It is a stylish city with a strong European feel to it. The city was founded in 1726 on a promontory between the Rio del Plata and an inner bay; this area is still known as the Ciudad Vieja and is the area of main interest for visitors.

The heart of the old city beats on the Plaza de la Constitucion. On one side is the Catedral with the historic Cabildo, opposite is the Museo Historico Nacional. On the south side is a quite unusual fountain dating from 1881 with an inscription in Spanish that contains a few spelling errors.

Just west along the Calle Rincon is the Plaza Zabala with a monument to the founder of the city: Bruno Mauricio de Zabala. Three blocks north of here and you are in the docks, three blocks south and you are on the rambla Francia, on the Rio del Plata.

Going east from here via the pedestrianized Calle Sarandi, you enter the new city after crossing the Plaza de la Independencia. This is the biggest Plaza of the city. On it you will find the mausoleum of Artigas, the Casa de Gobierno Historico and the Palacio Salvo.

East from here the Avenida 18 Julio takes you to the Tres Cruces Bus Terminal.

Other places of interest are the coastline of white sand beaches, that are almost along the whole city.

There are several parks, in many of which are placed big bronze statues. The most remarkable are the park "El Prado" and the park "Batlle".

The "Cerro" is a hill opposite the Old City from which a wonderful view of the city is given

The "Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales" near the Rodó Park and the "Museo Municipal de Artes Plásticas" near the park "El Prado", are a must see for art lovers.

#### Colonia del Sacramento

Founded by the Portuguese in 1680 on the Río de la Plata, the city was of strategic importance in resisting the Spanish. After being disputed for a century, it was finally lost by its founders. The well-preserved urban landscape illustrates the successful fusion of the Portuguese, Spanish and post-colonial styles.

In 1995 the Historic Quarter of the City of Colonia del Sacramento was added to the Unesco World Heritage list.

Colonia is charming and lively, there are some nice old colonial buildings and there are some good beaches nearby. Although you shouldn't expect nightlife like in Punta del Este there is enough to be done at night as well. There are many nice restaurants in the old city.

From Colonia you can take the ferry to Buenos Aires in Argentina. There are about 10 crossings daily. This takes 50 minutes or 2 hours depending on what 'Buquebus' you take.

#### Punta del Este

The tiny peninsula of Punta del Este, with its yacht harbor and expensive hotels, is Uruguay's most spectacular beach resort. There are two kind of beaches, one at the ocean side and one at the bay side. Each summer, this glamorous Atlantic town draws rich and famous tourists from Europe and South America. Apart from its fantastic beaches, the lively, chic resort of Punta del Este has superb food and scenery. The area is clean and not too pricey: a weekend would cost a couple about \$200 (U.S.) for lodging and meals. Argentinean and Brazilian jet sets spend their summers (December to March) there and the nightlife is amazing. There are three casinos with the most beautiful women in the world.

The areas around Punta del Este are also spectacular and feature great beaches. La Barra, immediately east of PDE, has good food and ice-cream, and beautiful beaches. A lot of the young people drive out here at night for the nightlife as well. Jose Ignacio, which is about a 30 minute drive from PDE, is a small town with great scenery. This is where many of the rich and famous have their summer places to be away from the common people. There's a lighthouse you can pay to climb to get a great view of the Atlantic.

#### Parque Santa Teresa

The Parque Nacional Santa Teresa is a very well kept national park with palm lined avenues and plantation of exotic trees. There are also botanical gardens, a zoo, some fresh water pools for bathing and good beaches - note that the surf is very rough here.

On the site you also find an old Portuguese fort (also called Santa Teresa) which is well worth a visit.

There are different campsites on the premises where you can spend the night. There are also a few bungalows.

#### Salto

Salto is a pretty town of about 80,000 people in the centre of an Orange growing area. The main attraction is the Salto Dam, some 20 km from town. Tours to the dam can be arranged through the tourist office. The Parque Solari is northeast of the centre of town and although it is a bit run down it is still well worth a visit.

Salto is close to the border with Brazil and most travelers will probably either be going or coming that way.

Close to town are a number of hot springs. Fuente Salto is 6 km north of town, Termas del Dayman are 10 km south.