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## Destination: José Ignacio



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### First Look: Playa Vik



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I confess that I am pretty picky about my beaches. I have been lucky enough to walk barefoot on many of the best of them—from ones as far away as [Mnemba Island](#), [Bahia](#) and [Sydney](#) and as close to home as [Harbour Island](#) and the [Hamptons](#). But my recent discovery, the wide, undeveloped stretch of beach in Jose Ignacio, Uruguay ranks up there with the best of them. The little beach town has been the favorite escape of beautiful people from [Buenos Aires](#) and [Santiago](#) for years, but until now there has not been a knock-out beachfront hotel. Well, Playa Vik, which opens next month, is such a stunning that it may just be the sexiest beach in South America. (It's the sister property to [Estancia Vik](#), where I stayed, so I got a sneak peak on my last day.) By the way in Uruguay, “playa” is pronounced “plaja” with a ‘ja’ sound.

With only nine suites, Playa Vik feels like an art aficionado’s ultimate escape—and in some ways it is. Owners Alex and Carrie Vik, who founded nearby Estancia Vik two years ago, hired the renowned Uruguayan architect Carlos Ott (creator of the Opéra de la Bastille in [Paris](#)) to fashion an ultra sleek hideaway that would blend in with the natural landscape (rooftops are planted) and allow residents to revel in the open Atlantic views and great art. A different contemporary artist brought his vision to bear on each of the suites. In separate buildings around a central courtyard, there are three three-bedroom suites; three two-bedroom suites and three master suites in the Sculpture building, which contains the restaurant, sea-facing swimming pool and yes, a major sculpture. The living room of one

suite has walls with a parade of colorful Picassoesque figures; another bears quotes from classic and modern wits such as Rudyard Kipling and Winston Churchill to Richard Prince and Mick Jagger. They are in many languages and cover many bases from “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” to “If you’re not living on the edge, you’re taking up too much room.” One living room of a suite directly facing the Atlantic Ocean has a giant photograph of a breaking wave hanging on one wall, so the resident is literally surrounded by water. Each bathroom, too, is different with some containing wooden canoe-shaped bathtubs that were custom made by Uruguayan boat builders; another is clad with grey stone on the walls and floors and has a glass wall overlooking the beach. The designs are so artful that it’s the first hotel, where I would go on a room tour if it were offered as a daily activity and might even feel gyped as a guest if I didn’t get a glimpse of others’ rooms.

The shared spaces will undoubtedly be special too, though, they were mostly unfinished when I toured. There is an outdoor fire pit by the beach’s edge, a vast wine cellar, a game room and a small spa. The Sculpture building, with massive bronze doors created by acclaimed Uruguayan artist Marcelo Daglio, will house the three master suites, the main restaurant (though meals can also be had on the various decks), a library and the pool area, which juts over the beach and at night sparkles with tiny lights in the bottom like a reflection of the night sky overhead. I would imagine that when Jose Ignacio teems with action during the holidays, Playa Vik will be a haven in walking distance from the action. Estancia Vik, which lies a ten-minute drive up inland, will offer a greater sense of privacy and isolation—it is on 4,000 acres after all—but it isn’t beachfront. So when I head down here again, I imagine that the perfect equation would be a few days at Playa Vik for beach time and a few days at the Estancia for quiet time. For prices and availability, [contact our advisory team](#).



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