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## TATLER

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Edited by ISSY VON SIMSON



### THE HOT TICKET: JOSE IGNACIO, URUGUAY

New Year to Easter is high season in José Ignacio, a frisky fishing village on the south coast of Uruguay. Mario Testino, Philippe Starck, Giuseppe Cipriani and St Barth's regulars who have drifted south jet in from all over the world to this little nook that only the in-crowd has heard of.

They come for the freshest fish lunches at Parador La Caracola, a thatched bar perched between Laguna Garzón and the sea; for antique, silver-collared glass jugs of clericó (white sangria); for endless white-sand beaches sprinkled with Brazilians in micro-bikinis and macho Argentines sitting in groups; for its low-key, candlelit nightlife; for suppers that start at midnight at La Huella, the shabbiest chic beach shack; for ultra-private house parties; for bossa nova thrumming in the salty sea breeze.

José Ignacio is not an easy place to get to (a flight to Buenos Aires, a boat across to Uruguay, car rental and a

bumpy drive through the pampas). But when it comes to hotels, things are looking up with the opening of Estancia Vik, the area's first sophisticated ranch in the middle of 4,000 acres of pasture. Brazilian hotel-mogul Rogerio Fasano flings open the doors to his Las Piedras Fasano any minute now and Adrian Zecha's passionately opposed Setai José Ignacio has certainly stirred up the locals.

Inland, you'll find possibly the best country inn in South America, Argentine chef Francis Mallmann's El Garzón. It only took two visits for his gregarious friend, former Mayfair gallerist Martin Summers, to be lured by the place, to buy a plot of land and to build a house with a small studio for his state-of-the-art telescope. 'Look up there,' he says, pointing to the stars. 'Not a vapour trail in sight.' For now. **Louis de Rohan** Book through *Black Tomato* (tel: 020 7426 9888; [blacktomato.co.uk](http://blacktomato.co.uk)).

Surfers on the beach in José Ignacio, Uruguay