

# TOWN & COUNTRY

JANUARY 2013

## JOSE IGNACIO

South America's rustic gem.

**PLAYA PLEASURES**  
Beachgoers relax on the sandy shores of José Ignacio, on Uruguay's south coast.

THE SCENE

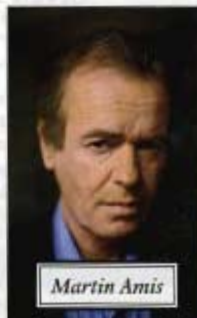
THE WORD HAS LONG BEEN OUT ABOUT URUGUAY'S flashy beach resort Punta del Este, but this smaller, more exclusive gem 40 minutes up the coast has a budding art and food scene that has some calling it an up-and-coming version of St. Bart's or St.-Tropez. The high season is from November through March, but "the Season"—the period when the glitterati fill the former fishing village—runs from just before Christmas through the second week of January.





WHO GOES

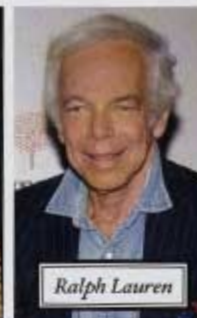
WHILE CHIC SOUTH AMERICANS SUCH AS ACTRESS **MIRTHA LEGRAND** AND FASHION DESIGNER **ALAN FAENA** HAVE BEEN COMING HERE FOR YEARS, THE TOWN HAS MOSTLY REMAINED UNDER THE RADAR. IT'S PERHAPS FOR THAT REASON THAT AN ECLECTIC GROUP OF NOTABLES HAS STARTED COMING HERE TO ESCAPE THE CROWDS. **RALPH LAUREN**, **NAOMI WATTS**, PHOTOGRAPHER **MARIO TESTINO**, AND RESTAURATEUR **GIUSEPPE CIPRIANI** HAVE BEEN SPOTTED. MEANWHILE, **MARTIN AMIS** OWNS A HOUSE HERE WITH HIS WIFE, WHO IS HALF URUGUAYAN.



Martin Amis



Naomi Watts



Ralph Lauren

From top: Playa Vik; Hotel Las Piedras Fasano; La Huella.



# DON'T MISS

The Playa Vik, with 19 suites, added a dramatically sexier option to the town's previously limited lodging scene when it opened on Playa Mansa ("calm beach") two years ago. It's owned by Norwegian investor Alex Vik and his American wife, Carrie; it was designed by Uruguayan architect Carlos Ott (in collaboration with the Viks); and it features art installations by Pablo Atchugarry, Zaha Hadid, and James Turrell. (Atchugarry, whose foundation is located nearby, in El Chorro, sculpted the hotel's bronze front door.) A burgeoning art scene in town includes the Galería de las Misiones, which shows major South American

artists. About 20 miles inland, Francis Mallmann, an Argentine known for cooking over fires, has a boutique hotel and restaurant, El Garzón. Another new hotel option is Las Piedras Fasano, which sits on 1,200 acres 12 miles west of José Ignacio; an Arnold Palmer-designed golf course is scheduled to open there this summer. The best place for lunch is La Huella, a beachfront spot serving fresh fish cooked simply in a relaxed setting that has attracted the likes of New York restaurateur Frank Falcinelli, of Frankies Spuntino. For dinner book a table at Marismo (anything before 11 p.m. is like dining before 6 p.m. in New York), which is tucked away down a dirt road and has wood tables on the beach. At the restaurant, known for slow-roasted lamb, candles light the area and a bonfire provides heat at night. The younger crowd heads to Tequila, in Punta del Este, for late night revelry that rarely wraps up before 4 a.m.

INSIDE GUIDE



NACHO FIGUERAS

"I've been going to José Ignacio since I was a little boy. I like that it's still, for now at least, not very developed. You rent a house in town and you don't even get in your car. You go on a bicycle or you just walk everywhere. I go to the beach, of course, every day with my family. I like to have lunch at La Huella, which is one of my favorite restaurants in the world. They have very good grilled fish and calamari, and an amazing dulce de leche lava cake. There's a surf shop in town that is really nice, and there's a great place to buy things for the house called Sentido. A lot of times I combine going there with my family on vacation with a little bit of polo at the Punta del Este Polo Club."



Clockwise from top left: Bottega Veneta clutch (\$3,850); Chanel sandals (\$362); Pablo Atchugarry sculpture (price on request); Tommy Hilfiger swimsuit (\$68); Bare Minerals Ready Eyeshadow 4.0 in Wild Thing (\$30); Dolce & Gabbana bag (\$1,925); John Masters Organics Sea Mist Sea Salt Spray (\$16.50).

For details see page 116.