

## travel & lifestyle



Above, a cantilevered pool and works of art are among the pleasures at Playa Vik. Below, the restaurant La Caracola is accessed by rowing boat

### Heat seeking

Behind the sleepy exterior of Uruguay's José Ignacio lies a sophisticated town that's attracting global style tribes

**J**osé Ignacio, the sleepy spit of rugged coastline 30 minutes south of (but a world away from) the fleshpots of Punta del Este, has become the winter hot-spot for globe-trotters and glamorous bohos. In attitude and appearance, José Ignacio is a surfer town: there are no traffic lights, no cash points, no high-rise buildings and no big-name brands. Yet there's a stealthy sophistication at play here.

Pitched along the coast are the sublime concrete-and-glass holiday homes of Brazil and Argentina's beautiful people (who hop here on the Buquebus ferry from Buenos Aires). Beach-shack *paradores* employ VIP lists to mitigate the Christmas rush, including regulars Mario Testino, Gisele and Shakira. Miami hotel The Setai popped up last year in the form of a temporary bar and restaurant, while laid-back (but rigorously edited) clapboard boutiques have sprung from the sand to sell homewares and hippie fashion at big-city prices. Thankfully, it's still a long, long way from the rampant development of Punta del Este. Discos and neon are banned, hotels can't build above two storeys, and parties have a 2am curfew. And if you avoid the festive period, the only sound in José Ignacio you'll hear are the waves crashing on the beach. Here's *Vogue's* guide:

**FASHIONABLE DIGS:** Playa Vik José Ignacio ([Playavik.com](http://Playavik.com)) opened earlier this year. Art by James Turrell, Anselm Kiefer and Zaha Hadid competes for your attention, and a cantilevered pool hangs 32ft above the beach below. The Setai ([Setaijoseignacio.com](http://Setaijoseignacio.com)) opens soon, but for a more authentic experience, try Posada Paradiso ([Posadaparadiso.com](http://Posadaparadiso.com)), a

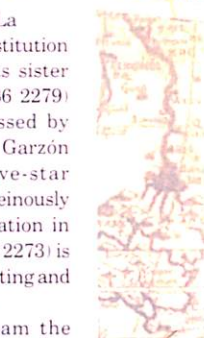
relaxed hippie place, or La Posada del Faro ([Posadadelfaro.com](http://Posadadelfaro.com)), with its South American-chic interiors. Casa Suaya ([Casasuaya.com](http://Casasuaya.com)) is a slick boutique hotel with a hint of French flair; Casa Chic ([Casachicjoseignacio.com](http://Casachicjoseignacio.com)) is an all-white, driftwood abode, which lives up to its name.

**SHOPPING:** Buy dresses by Soledad Twombly, handmade shoes, Forties furniture, glass, and leather bags at stylish boutique Mutate.

**SIP AND SUP:** With its billowing white curtains and chill-out tunes, La Huella ([Paradorlahuella.com](http://Paradorlahuella.com)) is an institution for sushi and sundowners. Visit its sister restaurant, La Caracola, (00 598 486 2279) on a nearby private island accessed by rowing boat. Don't miss Hotel El Garzón ([Restaurantegarzon.com](http://Restaurantegarzon.com)), a five-star restaurant 45 minutes inland, with heinously expensive rooms. Getting a reservation in high season for Marismo (00 598 486 2273) is a drag, but the candle-lit, barefoot setting and packed tiki bar are worth the effort.

**GO GAUCHO:** Cowboys still roam the Uruguayan Pampas. Try life in the saddle with horses from Haras Godiva ([Harasgodiva.com](http://Harasgodiva.com)), or take a picnic to the polo matches held in front of Estancia Vik ([Vikretreats.com](http://Vikretreats.com)).

**ONLY THE BRAVE (AND BUFF):** South American bikinis are tiny. Buy yours at Manga Rosada. But don't surf in them (big waves + little bikini = maximum embarrassment). CS



Left, buy handmade shoes and Forties furniture at Mutate. Right, the all-white Casa Chic. Above right, La Posada del Faro