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# PORT EXPLORER



## PUNTE DEL ESTE

### URUGUAY

The official name for the country commonly referred to as Uruguay is; “La Republica Orientales del Uruguay”. Translated into English; “Uruguay’s Eastern Republic”. That is a big beautiful name for a small beautiful country and Punta Del Este is its most luxurious playground.

Punta Del Este was once known to the old time fisherman and seamen as Cabo Santa María and the sleepy little village was known as Balneario Ituzaingó. By barely 2°s, the tip of the peninsula is the southern most point of land in all of Uruguay. But imaginary coordinates on yachting charts are not the reasons why so many sleek boats tie up or drop anchor in Punta Del Este.

Today Punta Del Este is one of the most beautiful and prestigious seaside resorts in the world. The town is enjoyed by fun loving families, wealthy businessmen, preeminent artists, super models and international movie stars. The spectacular view of the town and bay from the hill top of “lomo de la ballena” (the whale’s back) leaves no doubt as to why Punta Del Este is so popular.

Uruguay’s most important location for international capital investments has helped to make the town one of the most fashionable in all of South America. Many foreigners have built or bought beautiful vacation homes in Punta Del Este and the town now has about 10,000 year-round inhabitants. But in the high summer season (between the end of December and the beginning of March) the town hosts over ½ million holiday seekers. It is understandable then that over 60% of tourist generated revenue enters Uruguay through Punta Del Este.

The town is filled with wonderful cafes and shops. The harbor is bustling with fancy pleasure craft and sturdy fishing boats. The harbor front is a great place to stroll with a cool drink. There is live music and entertaining street performers. All in all Punta Del Este is a beautiful town in a magnificent setting, a perfect place to simply relax and enjoy.



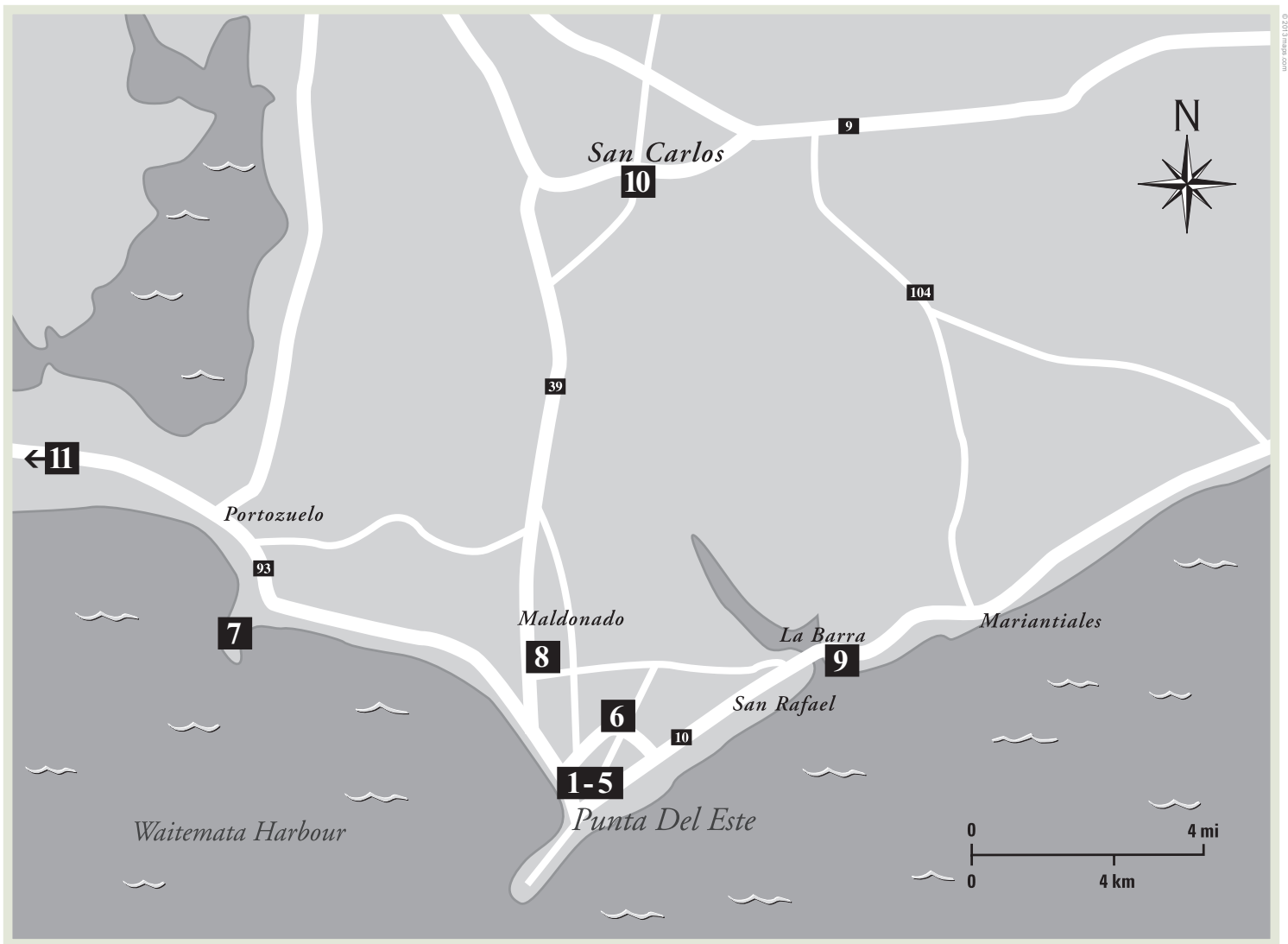
### HISTORY

In February, 1512, upon the death of the great Italian explorer Americo Vespucci, King Ferdinand appointed Spanish navigator Juan Diaz de Solis the nation’s “Chief Royal Pilot”. Over the following years Diaz, his sailors and his small fleet explored South America’s Atlantic coast. In 1515 the Captain discovered and sailed into Uruguay’s unknown and uncharted Río de la Plata ... he never sailed out.

Historians disagree as to what truly happened. The remaining ship and surviving crew quickly returned to Spain (a year earlier than planned) and emotionally reported to their king that along the banks of the Río de la Plata, in their first encounter with Uruguay’s indigenous Charrua tribe, the heroic Captain and his brave shore-party were ruthlessly ambushed, killed, and then ... as the remaining crew members watched in horror from the safety of their ship...Captain Diaz de Solis was roasted and eaten by the brutal savages. It is a tragic story ... filled with courage and sacrifice ... such a dramatic and poignant ending ... yet highly suspicious in it’s far too convenient dénouement.

It is much more likely that the Captain’s crew, angry with the incredibly harsh conditions that they faced, mutinied in Uruguay, killed Diaz and his supporters then quickly sailed back home to the comforts of Spain, perfecting and rehearsing during the Atlantic crossing their account of blaming the Indians for the murderous deed. The Charrua tribes never had the opportunity to tell their side of the story...they were soon to be wiped out by the next wave of Iberian “explorers”.

When the Spanish and Portuguese realized that Uruguay had neither silver nor gold they were not sure what to do with it. This



did not stop the two countries from fighting over it, however. Spain eventually established the first permanent settlement of Villa Soriano 1624. It would take just over a century for Spain to gain complete control of Uruguay.

In 1811 Uruguay rebelled against Spanish rule. Though having to continually struggle against Portugal and Brazil, Uruguay finally gained politically recognized independence in 1828. A large wave of European immigrants (primarily Italian and Spanish among many others) came to Uruguay in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Internal strife, political divisions, civil war, foreign intervention, failed governments, faulty economic theory, Marxist guerrilla movements and military coups all added up to many decades of hardship for the people of Uruguay. In 1985 civilian rule was restored under a Constitutional Republic system of government.

#### PUNTA DEL ESTE PLACES OF INTEREST

**1** The **Beaches of Punta Del Este** and the surrounding area are some of the most beautiful and popular in all of South America. From Playa (beach) los Inglese near the southern point all the way up the coast to Playa Jose Ignacio...just pick a spot in the sand...you can't go wrong.

**2** The **Meteorological Station** provides a great view of the surrounding area. The small museum has historic pictures of the city and an interesting collection of metrological instruments.

**3** **Plaza Artigas** is a great street market where talented artisans offer visitors a wide selection of well made crafts.

**4** **Gorlero Avenue** is lined with wonderful restaurants, cafes and chic outlets for those in need of serious retail therapy. It is the place to relax with a cold drink and people watch.

**5** The **Faro de Punta Del Este** is located near the southern point and is the symbol of the city. This lighthouse was built in the mid 1800s and the views of the surrounding waters and coastline are simply beautiful.

**6** The **Ralli Contemporary Art Museum** is home to a wonderful collection of sculptures and paintings by celebrated South American artists. A number of originals by the great Salvador Dali are on display.

## Beyond Punta Del Este

**7 Casapueblo** is the amazingly designed and hand-built home of Uruguayan born, world famous artist Carlos Paez Vilaro. The house was built, perhaps sculpted is a better description, in the late 50s high on the terraced cliffs overlooking the Atlantic.

**8 Maldonado** is just north of Punta Del Este and was founded in 1755 making it one of the first towns to be established in Uruguay. The town has a wonderful cathedral, a cultural museum and a military museum dedicated to General Jose Gervasio Artigas, a national hero of Uruguay. The Museum of American Art displays a beautiful collection of pieces from contemporary artists and others that date back 5,000 years to the pre-Colombian period.

**9 The Museo Del Mar**, just up the Atlantic coast in La Barra, is an interesting (strange in a fun way) marine museum that displays a wide collection of sea animals including the skeleton of a large whale.

**10 Parque Municipal Zoologico Medina** is a nice zoo with a number of inter-active displays and exhibits. The zoo is in San Carlos, just a short distance north of Punta Del Este.

**11 Montevideo** is the capital of Uruguay. It has a classic European feel to it. There are parks and plazas, monuments and open markets and beautifully designed "old world" buildings.

## SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Punta Del Este and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, guests are advised to take with them only the items they need and to secure any valuables.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed.

Tipping: A 10% tip is customary at restaurants.

## LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALITIES

Uruguay's cuisine has been directly influenced by the European immigrants that have come to the country bringing their favorite recipes with them. Mediterranean Spanish and Italian dishes are among some of the most popular. Pascualina is a spinach pie made with a filling of vegetables, cheese, milk and eggs, covered with dough and baked till golden brown. Asado is the way the Uruguayans BBQ, on a grill over an open flame or skewered and slow roasted close to hot coals. Choripan is a tasty, convenient and popular sandwich made with grilled sausage (chorizo) and covered with a mixture of oregano, parsley, garlic, red and black pepper, balsamic vinegar and olive oil...all served on a fresh baguette. Caruso Sauce is made with onions, ham, cream, nuts and mushrooms then poured hot over fresh pasta. Its origins are passionately debated. Uruguay stakes its claim as having two of its Italian chefs create it in 1915 in honor of the great Italian/American opera tenor Enrico Caruso who was on tour in South America at the time. The sauce is certainly named for Caruso, who loved food second only to singing, but whether he created it himself or his chef friends in New York were the first or whether Uruguay has the honor...it is still a wonderful pasta sauce.

Grappa miel is Uruguay's national drink. A honey and alcohol concoction, it was introduced to the country by Italian immigrants. Mate, a hot herbal tea, is also very popular.

## SHOPPING FACILITIES

Avenida Gorlero is the primary upscale shopping area in Punta Del Este. Artigas Square is where visitors can find a wide variety of well made handicrafts. Many stores offer a discount if the purchase is made with cash rather than a credit card.

## LOCAL CURRENCY

The national currency is the Peso Uruguayo (Ur\$). Most banks have ATMs.

## POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES

The Post Office is located at 1035 Gorlero Avenue

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card:

AT&T: 000.410

MCI: 000.412

## TRANSPORTATION

Car rentals are available and reasonably priced, especially when compared to the taxis that are very expensive. A reliable shuttle bus covers all the major beaches along the Atlantic coast.

