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PORT EXPLORER

Montevideo URUGUAY

GENERAL INFORMATION San Felipe y Santiago de Montevideo overlooks the north shore of the Rio de la Plata where the waters of the mighty river meet the Atlantic Ocean. At first the site was simply a small Spanish military fort built in 1714 as a way of countering Portugal's expansion of Brazil. However, settlers were not very interested in the area. The Spanish governor in Buenos Aires, Don Mauricio Zabala, offered cattle and land to the first groups that would come and lay the foundations of a town. Among the earliest to arrive were families from Spain's Canary Islands. They sailed into the small bay and came ashore in 1726.

Over the next decades Montevideo slowly grew into an essential port for trade between the "Old and New World". In the late 1700s Montevideo had developed into one of the most important and profitable ports in all of South America. By 1828 Montevideo was the capital of Uruguay. But difficulties in dealing with Argentina and Brazil persisted. At one point (1843-1852) military forces from Buenos Aires laid siege to the city for nine years.

Today, with a population a little over 1.5 million, Montevideo, especially the "Old City" has a classic and inviting European charm and elegance. There are broad boulevards, peaceful parks and refreshing fountains, stately plazas and imposing monuments dedicated to respected national heroes. The city has colorful, bustling markets and beautifully designed old world buildings. The busy harbor attests to the fact that Montevideo remains Uruguay's primary port. However, it is the well deserved reputation of the warmth of her people that makes Montevideo one of the nicest cities in all of South America.

HISTORY By means of Papal decree, in 1493, just after the return of Captain Christopher Columbus from his discovery of the West Indies, Pope Alexander VI drew a north to south line down a map of the earth (as it was known at the time). With the stroke of his pen, and the promise of untold riches, the pope divided all the newly discovered lands west of 38° W as belonging to Spain and everything east of the line as belonging to Portugal. A couple years later, with the signing of the Treaty of Tordesillas, the line would be moved eight degrees further west thereby giving much of modern day Brazil to Portugal.

Little Uruguay would be caught in the crush of the two superpowers. When the Spanish and Portuguese realized that Uruguay had neither silver nor gold, they were not sure what to do with the region. This did not stop the two countries from fighting over Uruguay, 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 still having to continually struggle against Brazil and Argentina, 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, military coups and juntas all added up to many decades of hardship for





## PLACES OF INTEREST

the people of Uruguay. In 1985 civilian rule was restored under a Constitutional Republic system of government.

### MONTEVIDEO PLACES OF INTEREST

**1 The Old City** is the soul of Montevideo. A comfortable walk will take visitors to **Plaza Constitucion**, the heart of the city. There is the beautiful Cathedral, the Town Hall, Stock Exchange and Customs House. The graceful European style 19th century architecture and the narrow winding streets will take you back to the colonial period. At the Plaza de la Independencia, a handsome arch is a vivid reminder of the city's defensive fortifications. The statue in the plaza is dedicated to the nation's hero, Jose Gervasio Artigas.

**2 La Museo Historico Nacional** (The National History Museum) is housed in and around the former residences of the country's first president, Fructuoso Rivera and other distinguished national heroes. The museum traces the history of Uruguay from the earliest indigenous tribes, through colonization and up the present.

**3 Museo del Gaucho y de la Moneda** is located in the heart of the Old City. The Museum is dedicated to the Uruguayan cowboys known as "gauchos". Famous, beloved and respected as much as those hardy men in the old west in the United States, the museum displays many authentic artifacts and articles used in the every day life of those who rode the ranges of Uruguay's cattle lands.

**4 Plaza Virgilio** and its impressive monument are dedicated to those members of Uruguay's Navy who have heroically given their lives in service to the country. The plaza provides wonderful panoramic views of the city.

**5 The Solis Theatre** began construction in 1857. It is and has always been the heart of the city's performing arts. For over 150 years the theater has played host to stage productions, symphonic and popular music concerts, ballets and operas. The beautiful theatre is the oldest still in use in South America. The facility was restored to its former glory in 2004.

**6 Joaquin Torres Garcia Museum** houses many of the works of one of Uruguay's most famous artists. The mu-

seum is located near the Plaza Independencia.

### Beyond Montevideo

**7 Colonia del Sacramento** is a small town about 2 ½ hours west of Montevideo. The Old Town area is a beautiful example of colonial architecture with its church, homes and cobblestone streets. The town was one of the first to be founded in Uruguay and dates back to 1680. The town overlooks the Rio de la Plata and has been a point of contention between the Portuguese and Spanish many times over the centuries.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS** To make the most of your visit to Montevideo 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, Shore Excursion TV Channel 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:** 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.

**Local drink:** *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** One of the main shopping areas in Montevideo is along Avenida 18 de Julio. Plaza Matriz has an interesting flea-market. Mercado de los Artesanos (the Artisans Market) has some exceptional handmade crafts. Many stores and vendors will 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** A Post Office, Internet Café, Western Union and phones for international calls are all available at the pier.

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

AT&T: 000.410

MCI: 000.412

Sprint: 000.41.877

**TRANSPORTATION** Many major car rentals companies have offices in Montevideo. Taxis are reasonably priced and have a good reputation. Buses are reliable and run frequently.

**TOURIST INFORMATION** The city has a good reputation for being one of the safest in South America. But still take precaution with your valuables as you should wherever you go. The downtown and areas frequented by visitors have "Tourist Police". These special officers are easily recognizable, extremely helpful and speak many languages. The Ministry of Tourism has an office at the port entrance.

### USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Yes - Si

No - No

Good Day - Buenos Dias

Good Bye - Adios

Thank-you - Gracias

You're welcome - De Nada