



RIDE WORLD WIDE

URUGUAY

ATLANTIC COAST & ESTANCIAS 2024

RIDE INFORMATION

Uruguay means “River of the Painted Birds” in the traditional Guaraní language and has a population of just 3.4 million scattered over an area the size of England and Wales, with more than half living in the capital, Montevideo. Often referred to as South America’s ‘best kept secret’, it has an unexpectedly diverse landscape - a spectacular 660km coastline, eastern wetlands thick with birdlife, fertile rolling grasslands - and a strong local gaucho (cowboy) culture. These routes explore the eastern Rocha province, crossing authentic working cattle ranches, protected National Parkland and riding through sand dunes, groves of enormous palm trees, along deserted beaches and past inland lakes teeming with wildfowl. They are professionally organised by an experienced local team who are friendly, knowledgeable and on a mission to offer an unforgettable experience of this wonderful country.



DATES

The standard itineraries are for 6 or 7 nights with optional extension to 8 or 9 nights. Rides are offered from set dates October to December and February to May. Please see dates at the end of this information sheet and contact us for availability. Private rides can also be arranged for groups on request during the season (subject to availability) with shorter centre-based rides on request year-round.

HORSES

These rides use horses owned by Mauro and team, mostly local Uruguayan Criollos and Criollo crosses. There are about 20 horses, between about 14.2hh and 16hh, well suited to the terrain and a responsive, forward going and thoroughly enjoyable ride. They are trained western style to neck rein and are used to the relaxed South American riding style, with a loose contact with the mouth. Whilst on the farm and around the base the horses go unshod but horse shoes are put on when you head into the hills. Mauro trained as a vet and the horses are extremely well looked after and he takes great care in matching horse and rider.

TACK

Tack is South American style with saddles similar to westerns, covered with a large sheepskin - very comfortable for long hours of riding. Bridles are rawhide and most horses are ridden in the local style bits, like a pelham with long shank. Saddlebags are provided for personal belongings and vehicles transport most equipment.



RIDING

Rides generally include 4 to 6 hours riding a day (on full days), broken up with rests and for lunch. They are lead by Mauro or his sister Macarena. Groups of 4 or more are accompanied by at least one more guide / or gaucho who are on hand to help with tacking up, untacking and so on. The horses are generally prepared / tacked up for you (though you are very welcome to help). Groups are limited to a maximum of 6 or 10 riding guests (depends on itinerary).

WEIGHT LIMIT

90 kgs (14st 2lbs) but please contact us to check suitable horses are available if your weight is close to this (some heavier experienced riders, up to 100kg may also be taken by prior arrangement with a charge of between USD 600 and USD 860 for an extra horse).

PACE

The pace of the rides will vary during the trip according to the terrain and ability of the group, but overall it is moderate with lots of good chances for canters (some fast!) along firm sandy beaches and across grassy meadows.

RIDING EXPERIENCE

To participate in these rides you must be a reasonably competent, intermediate to experienced rider who is used to riding in open country, sometimes at speed, and over varied terrain. To join one of the set departure rides, you should be comfortable, well balanced and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and fast canter and able to control a fit, responsive horse at all paces. Private rides and centred-based riding can be organised for less experienced riders on request. You will always enjoy your trip much more if you are reasonably riding fit and if you are not used to riding for several hours a day, we strongly recommend regular practice before you go to get used to the hours you will spend in the saddle.

TERRAIN

The rides take you through a wide variety of terrain ranging from coastal hills, open grasslands and wide sandy beaches to immense dunes, dense pine forests, marshlands, palm groves and inland lakes. Uruguay has some of the best cattle country in South America and with rolling green hills rather than dramatic mountains, provides wonderful riding country



SAFETY

Rides are lead by an English speaking guide, accompanied by another guide or local gaucho for groups of more than 4 riders. A medical kit for both horses and riders is carried at all times and a mobile 'phone is also carried for emergencies.

ACCOMMODATION

On the Criollo Lands itinerary accommodation is a mixture of camping, local posadas (hostels), hotels and estancias (ranches). Private camps are set up in a carefully chosen setting. Small “dome” tents are used (2 people per tent) with mattresses and bedding supplied. At some spots, a small cabin with shared hot shower & loo (otherwise loos are “open air”). Other nights, and all nights on the Beach & Estancia itinerary, are in guesthouses or small hotels - these vary in style, size and facilities, but are clean, comfortable and carefully chosen. Bedrooms usually have their own private bathroom (although there are a limited number of rooms on some nights and plumbing / hot water can be a little erratic!) At Los Chaja ‘ecolodge’, the horses base at Valizas where you stay for at least a night on all itineraries and all nights if you choose a centre-based ride, accommodation is usually in thatched wooden cabins. These are simple but comfortable - rooms have double or twin beds, each cabin has a shower room and loo, small kitchen area and private veranda. Depending on numbers some of the group may stay at a charming Posada in the village of Valizas, a few hundred yards away.



MEALS

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included each day. Food on the rides is good, plentiful and fresh, and there is usually a varied menu. Uruguay is well known for its excellent beef and 'asados' (barbecues) are commonplace; being on the Atlantic coast also means there is some excellent seafood. Breakfast is generally continental style, bread, bizcochos (local pastries), cheese, jam, butter, cereals, fresh fruit and yogurt. There is always tea and coffee - and of course “mate”, the traditional gaucho drink. (If you are a tea drinker you might want to take your own tea bags - tea is usually herbal). Lunch may be at a local restaurant, or is often a picnic carried in saddlebags, perhaps bread, tomatoes, cheese and cold cuts with fruit. Dinner is usually three courses; for instance a starter of prawns in garlic, fried seaweed or a fresh salad, then barbecue with chorizo and grilled vegetables, followed by baked custard with “dulce de leche” (a caramel jam favourite of South America). Vegetarians can be catered for with prior notice on all rides but please tell us in advance of any dietary restrictions so that special arrangements can be made. Bottled water is provided - other drinks are not included but wine, beer and soft drinks are available to purchase. Uruguayans have been making wine for over 250 years and it is gradually gaining the recognition it deserves as well, with its tannat wines particularly catching the European market’s eye. Wineries are small and still family-owned and run and the wines are virtually all hand-made, a perfect accompaniment to the local beef and lamb.



WEATHER

The climate in Uruguay is sub-tropical, warm to hot and very pleasant for riding. May to September are the coolest driest months with temperatures rarely falling below 10°C (50s F). February to April can be hot, with daytime temperatures up to and above 30°C, though a little cooler in the evenings. In October and November the evenings and mornings are cooler but days can still be hot, up to 30°C. Rain storms are possible throughout the year and there can often be short sharp rainstorms and sometimes cold onshore winds along the coast.

WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.

ITINERARY

Example itinerary - The following is an example of the Criollo Lands & Atlantic Coast - please enquire for the Beach & Estancia itinerary (which has no camping!) Please note that this is only an example and day by day arrangements may be altered if your guide considers this advisable or if local conditions require.

Criollo Lands & Atlantic Coast - Example itinerary

Day 1 - You will be collected from your hotel in Montevideo and taken to the Tres Cruces bus terminal to take the bus to Rocha region. It's about a 4 to 5 hour journey to the starting point in the north east of the country. On the road you will see the large herds of cattle grazing in the pasture, as well as hundreds of horses and gauchos working with them. Arrive at Los Chajá Ecolodge, in Barra de Valizas, in time for lunch and to meet the team and horses. In the afternoon saddle up and start riding through the woods to a hidden lagoon where you can have a refreshing swim! Once on the horses again, you return to Los Chajá along the Atlantic coast, a chance for a long canter in the surf. Dinner and overnight at Los Chajá Ecolodge. (approx 3 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 2 - The ride today starts by taking the horses across the mouth of Valizas' river, ridden or towed by boat, depending on the tides. A full day ride takes you through a fascinating dune system, now a national park, to Cabo Polonio - a fishing village turned 'low key' beach resort. The village is only accessible through these shifting sand dunes making the village an interesting outpost. After visiting the ancient lighthouse and viewing part of the biggest sea lion's colony in Americas, you have lunch at a typical local restaurant, with fresh fish, seaweed, and other typical local seafood on the menu. After lunch ride back to Valizas through the pine forests. At the end of the day's adventure, if the weather conditions allow, you will have the opportunity to swim with your horse! Dinner and overnight at Los Chajá Ecolodge. (5 hours riding). (B,L,D)



Day 3 - After a special homemade breakfast watching the South American screamers (*Chauna torquata*) and the many different storks, egrets, and ibis from your room, you set off on an early morning ride towards the Castillos Lagoon and wetlands. During the morning you cross the pasture lands of ancient *Estancias*, heading towards the second largest lagoon in Uruguay, a central part of the IBA 20 (Important Bird and Biodiversity Area). This area is home to more than 270 different species of resident and migrating birds, such as the screamers, *Rhea americana*, Flamingos and the beautiful black necked swan. Ride through the unique Ombú forest, a strange botanical formation that surrounds the shore of the lagoon. You should see some colourful birds such as Pink egrets and native mammals like the capybaras and armadillos. Your first camp site is in Barra Grande, a private biodiversity reserve, where conservation and agricultural production are at the same priority level. (6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

ITINERARY cont.

Day 4 - A vastly different landscape awaits you today. An early start set off riding into drier and rocky lands. You will see how the landscape changes as you cross pasturelands and palm tree forests. At midday you stop for a picnic - your criollo saddles will be a fundamental part of the well deserved *siesta*! In the afternoon reach *El Mirador* in *Cerro de los Rocha*. This is a private reserve and from a natural viewpoint you will be able to see where you have ridden and where you will be going with your horses in the next few days! Camp is set up in the middle of the native *sierras* forest, full of birdlife and unspoiled nature. Dinner & night in camp at El Mirador (6 hours riding) (B,L,D)



Day 5 - The reward for those who wake up early, before dawn, is the spectacular view from the top of the hill as the first sun rays' reach you. Today's ride is one of the most fascinating, heading toward the coast and leaving behind the highlands. Many different species of woodpeckers, colorful *churrinches* and noisy *bandurrias* are just some of the characteristic birds you may see on the way. In the afternoon you arrive at Don Bosco, a Salesian colony. Situated on the shores of the black lagoon, just beneath the *Cerro de la Virgen* with its beautiful *Higuerones* forest, the biggest native *Ficus* tree in Uruguay, it is a wonderful place to camp! Dinner and camping (or option to upgrade to simple rooms in the lodge) in Don Bosco. (5 to 6 hours riding). (B,L,D)



ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 - Breakfast and prepare the horses. Then set off with local gauchos, first visiting the *Cerro de la Virgen*, an amazing 360 degree lookout, then the forest of *Higuerones*, enormous and ancient epiphyte plants with huge roots that point to the ground, so special that many of them have a personal name! Return to Don Bosco for lunch and in the afternoon you have time to rest, enjoy the peace of the Lagoon and recharge batteries! Those who wish can swim in the lagoon, explore on foot or spend time birdwatching. Dinner and camping (or upgrade to lodge room) at Don Bosco (2 hours riding). (B,L,D)



Day 7 - In the morning, set off riding through estancia lands, crossing wetlands and the palm tree forest so characteristic of this area. More than 7000 centenary palm trees per hectare makes this place unique! There is a good chance today to see wild capybara (the giant guinea pig like animals that inhabit the wetlands), but you need to be very silent and pay special attention to the guide's instructions. Stop for a picnic in the middle of the wetlands. Many historical events took place around these ancient trees which you will learn about during the ride. Continue riding towards the coast reaching *Los Moros* just next to the Atlantic Ocean in the afternoon. Dinner and camping at Los Moros. (6 to 7 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 8 - After breakfast you start heading back to the base at Los Chajas. You can enjoy the open, endless beach ahead of you - it's possible to see dolphins in the surf and sea birds fishing in open waters. Pass through the village Aguas Dulces and enjoy some beautiful canters/gallops on the hard beach with the view of Valizas' sand dunes. Once back at Los Chajá Ecolodge you end the week with a delicious lunch and final toasts. Say goodbye to the horses and a late afternoon bus transfer back to Montevideo and your own arrangements for onward journey. (3 hours riding). (B,L)



ITINERARY cont.

OR Day 8 - After breakfast, you start riding from Los Moros on the beach, heading to the north. The open and endless beach is usually deserted and you are more likely to see some dolphins in the surf nearby or sea birds fishing in open waters than other humans! At midday you stop in the shade close the coast, to enjoy a picnic lunch and let horses rest. In the afternoon continue riding, with chances for some long canters on the hard sand, to reach Punta del Diablo, originally a fishing village now surfers paradise. A chance to explore this characteristic village before reaching your accommodation, a cosy Posada. Dinner and overnight at Punta del Diablo. (5 hours riding) (B,L,D)



Day 9 - Breakfast and set off riding, leaving Punta del Diablo behind, to reach Santa Teresa National Park, a recreational-forest park administrated by the national army. You can visit the different greenhouses where diverse tropical and sub-tropical species of native and foreign plants as well as more of 300 different kinds of roses are cared for by the soldiers. This reserve is a particularly good place to see the protected native fauna like Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) and the Yellow Cardinal (*Gubernatrix cristata*). After a picnic lunch under centenary trees, you continue riding to reach the ancient fortress of Santa Teresa, a Portuguese-Spanish construction built to protect the border between the two empires; a place of dozens of battles! Riding beneath the walls gives you a taste of their history. Continue towards La Coronilla, stopping a short distance before at a comfortable hotel next to the ocean. There may be time to visit the Cerro Verde and Islas de La Coronilla National Park, another Protected Area (SNAP) where the protagonist are the sea turtles! Diner and overnight at Hotel Parque Oceánico. (6 hours riding) (B,L,D)

Day 10 - After a delicious breakfast you start riding into La Coronilla, a well-known gaucho's town on the Atlantic coast. Heading back to the beach you have the chance for an exceptionally long gallop along the pristine sand - and there will be a nice surprise to end the adventure! Lunch and transfer by bus back to Montevideo. (2 to 3 hours riding) (B,L)



DATES & RATES 2024

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Criollo Lands & Atlantic Coast (7 nights) USD 2890 per person

Single supplement USD 240
10th to 17th / 19th March 2024
5th to 12th / 14th May 2024

(2 night extension) USD 870 per person

Single supplement USD 70
20th to 27th / 29th October 2024
17th to 24th / 26th November 2024
15th to 22nd / 24th December 2024

Upgrade from camping to lodge rooms at Don Bosco, USD 120 per room for 2 nights

Beach & Estancia

(6 nights) USD 3280 per person

Single supplement USD 400
7th to 15th / 17th April 2024

(2 night extension) USD 960 per person

Single supplement USD 105

Prices are based on 4 or more riders on all sections.

Maximum is usually 10 riders for Criollo Lands & 6 riders for Beach & Estancia (larger private groups sometimes possible for Beach & Estancia)

Other dates on request for groups, October to December, late February to early May

NOTE: For Riders over the 90kgs weight limit and up to 100kg (dressed in riding gear), a supplement of is charged for a second horse - between USD 600 & USD 860 depending on itinerary / length of ride.

This rate **INCLUDES** all riding, guiding and equipment, twin accommodation, meals as indicated below and transfer by bus from Montevideo to Valizas on Day 1 and return bus to Montevideo on the last day.

The rate does **NOT INCLUDE** international flights to Uruguay and taxes, extra nights in Montevideo, personal medical / travel insurance (compulsory), personal expenditure such as your bar bill at hotels/ the estancias, laundry or telephone calls, transfers outside set times, local departure taxes, any visa fees or any tips you might wish to leave.

Single supplements - The rate quoted above assumes twin accommodation and if you are travelling alone, a single supplement will be payable to book a single room at posadas / hotels. This supplement is compulsory if you are travelling alone but if you are prepared to share a twin room with another guest, please let us know and we will see if we can find someone to share with you. If we find a sharer the supplement will be refunded however we cannot guarantee to find a sharer and if we do not, the supplement will be payable.



INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The meeting point for these rides is Montevideo bus station and you need to be there for 07.00 on day 1 to be in time for the bus transfer to Valizas (so if flying in that morning you should arrive before 5.30). At the end of the ride you are driven back to Montevideo to arrive in the late afternoon - so a late evening flight (21.00 or later) on the last day is possible - however in most cases it's best to stay in Montevideo both before and after the ride.

We can book private vehicle transfers between Montevideo and Valizas if required to give more flexibility with arrival / departure times.

Flights to Montevideo from London are usually via Buenos Aires in Argentina or Sao Paulo in Brazil - there are regular connecting flights from both to Montevideo. British Airways fly to Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo direct. It is also possible fly with Iberia via Madrid or one of the US airlines via North America. Rates vary with the season and airline but expect to pay between £750 and £1200 per person for an economy return. **Please contact us if you would like further information on flights.**

GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking

Visas If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Uruguay for a holiday only and staying less than 90 days you do not need to arrange a visa in advance.

Health No inoculations are legally required for Uruguay if travelling from Europe but the TravelHealthPro website (NaTHNaC) recommends most travellers are vaccinated against Polio and Tetanus. If you are travelling on in Uruguay after the ride you might need additional inoculations - you should in any case consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.

(DRAFT 18/12/2023)

