



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## URUGUAY

### ATLANTIC COAST & CRIOLLO LANDS 2026

#### RIDE INFORMATION

Uruguay, which means “River of the Painted Birds” in the traditional Guaraní language, 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. The riding routes we offer 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. Rides are professionally organised by a friendly, knowledgeable and experienced local team who are on a mission to offer an unforgettable experience of this wonderful country.



#### DATES

The standard progressive itineraries are for 7 nights with optional extension to 9 nights. Rides are offered from set dates between March and May and October to December. 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

The rides use horses owned by your guide, Mauro and his team, mostly local Uruguayan Criollos and Criollo crosses. There is a selection of about 20 horses, most are between about 14.2hh and 16hh and all are 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 at and around the base the horses go unshod but they are shod for longer rides that head into the hills. The horses are extremely well looked after by Mauro (who trained as a vet) 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 local style long-shanked bits. Saddlebags are provided for personal belongings and vehicles transport other equipment needed during the rides.



## RIDING

Rides generally include 4 to 6 hours riding a day (on full days), broken up with rests and for lunch. Most are lead by Mauro personally or occasionally by his sister Macarena, with riding groups of 4 or more also accompanied by a back-up rider or gaucho who is on hand to help with tacking up, untacking and so on. The horses are generally prepared / tacked up for you (although you are always very welcome to help). Groups are limited to a maximum of 10 riding guests

## WEIGHT LIMIT

The rider weight limit is 90 kgs (14st 2lbs) but please contact us to check suitable horses are available if your weight is close to this. Occasionally a heavier experienced rider, up to 100kg *may* be taken by prior arrangement with a charge for an extra horse.

## PACE

The pace of the rides varies during each trip according to the terrain and ability of the group, but overall rides are at a moderate pace, usually 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 gentle, rolling green hills, rather than dramatic mountains, provides wonderful riding country.



## SAFETY

Rides are lead by a bi-lingual English / Spanish speaking guide, accompanied (if the group is 4 or more riding guests) by a back-up rider or local gaucho. Your guide carries a mobile 'phone for emergencies and is in regular contact with a back-up vehicle. A small medical kit for both horses and riders is also carried.

## ACCOMMODATION

On the Criollo Lands itinerary accommodation is a mixture of camping, local posadas (hostels), hotels and estancias (ranches). The standard 7 night itinerary includes 5 nights in private camps with the option to upgrade to rooms on 2 of these nights. Camps are set up in a carefully chosen setting and use small "dome" tents (2 people per tent) with mattresses and bedding supplied. At some spots, there is a small cabin close by with shared hot shower and loo (otherwise loos are "open air"). Other nights 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 the main base, Los Chaja 'ecolodge' at Valizas, where guests stay for at least one night on all itineraries and all nights on centre-based rides, accommodation is usually in thatched wooden cabins. These are simple but comfortable - rooms have double or twin beds and each cabin has a shower room and loo, small kitchen area and private veranda. Depending on group numbers some riders may stay at a charming Posada in the village of Valizas, a few hundred yards away



## MEALS

Rides include all meals from lunch on the first day to lunch on the last day with food that is good, varied, plentiful and fresh. Uruguay is well known for its excellent beef and 'asados' (barbecues) are commonplace; being on the Atlantic coast also means there is some excellent local 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 – perhaps a starter of prawns in garlic, fried seaweed or a fresh salad, then a barbecue with chorizo and grilled vegetables, followed by baked custard with "dulce de leche" (a caramel jam favourite of South America). Vegetarians can be well catered for with prior notice but please tell us in advance of any dietary restrictions so that special arrangements can be made. Bottled water is included - other drinks are not although 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 eye of the European market. Wineries are generally small and still family-owned, with wines 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 months although temperatures rarely fall below 10°C (50s F). February to April can be hot, with daytime temperatures up to and above 30°C, although a little cooler in the evenings. In October and November, evenings and mornings are cooler but days can still be hot, up to 30°C. Rain is possible throughout the year and there can often be short sharp rainstorms and sometimes a chilly onshore wind along the coast.

## WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when your booking is confirmed.

## ITINERARY

**Example itinerary** - The following is an example of the itinerary planned for the Criollo Lands & Atlantic Coast Ride - but please note it is only an example and the route, accommodation and other day-by-day arrangements may be altered by your guiding team in their absolute discretion if they consider this advisable or if local conditions require.

### Criollo Lands & Atlantic Coast

**Day 1** - Make your way to the Tres Cruces bus terminal in Montevideo to take the bus to Rocha region (tickets provided) departing at 07.00. It's about a 4 to 5 hour journey to the ride meeting point in north east Uruguay but always interesting to see the countryside, often with large herds of cattle out grazing, as well as the horses and gauchos that work them. Arrive at Los Chajá Ecolodge, in Barra de Valizas, in time for lunch and to meet the team and horses. In the afternoon after settling in, horses will be saddled and you head off on a first ride to try them, riding through the woods to a hidden lagoon where you might stop for a quick swim. After drying off, mount up again to ride back along the Atlantic coast to Los Chajá, a chance for a long canter on the beach to try your horse. Dinner either at the ride base or at a restaurant in the nearby town. Overnight Los Chajá Ecolodge or a nearby posada. (approx. 3 hours riding). (L,D)

**Day 2** - After breakfast, today starts by taking the horses across the mouth of Valizas' river, either riding them or letting them swim behind the boat, depending on the tides. Then the full day riding through a fascinating dune system, now a national park, to Cabo Polonio - a fishing village turned 'low key' beach resort. Only accessible through the shifting sand dunes, it is an interesting outpost. After visiting the ancient lighthouse and viewing part of the biggest sea lion's colony in the Americas, stop for lunch at a typical local restaurant, with fresh fish, seaweed, and other typical local seafood on the menu. After lunch ride back through the pine forests to Valizas and if the weather allows, perhaps a chance to swim with your horse. Dinner is either at the base or at a restaurant in the town. Overnight Los Chajá Ecolodge or a nearby posada (about 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 often seen near the lodge, set off on an early morning ride towards the Castillos Lagoon and wetlands. During the morning the route crosses 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 - screamers, Rhea americana, Flamingos and the beautiful black necked swan. Ride through the Ombú forest surrounding the shore of the lagoon, perhaps spotting colourful pink egrets and native mammals such as capybaras and armadillo. Reach the first campsite in Barra Grande, a private biodiversity reserve, where conservation and agricultural production are of equal importance. Dinner and night in camp (about 6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

## ITINERARY cont.

**Day 4** - An early start with breakfast in camp, before mounting up to start riding through a vastly different landscape. First head through a drier, rocky area which changes as you cross pasturelands and palm tree forests. At midday stop for a picnic - you will discover that your criollo saddle is a fundamental part of the well-deserved siesta. In the afternoon reach *El Mirador* in *Cerro de los Rocha*, a private reserve, and time to walk to a natural viewpoint with a view of the route you've ridden and where you will be going over the next few days. Camp is set up in the middle of the native forest, full of birdlife and unspoiled nature. Dinner and night in camp at El Mirador (about 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 sun's first rays appear. The ride today, heading towards the coast and leaving the highlands behind, is one of the most interesting, with a chance to see many different species of birds along the way - woodpeckers, colorful *churrinches* and noisy *bandurrias*. In the afternoon arrive at Don Bosco, a colony of Salesian monks, 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 night in camp (or an option to upgrade to simple rooms in the lodge) in Don Bosco (about 5 to 6 hours riding). (B,L,D)



## ITINERARY cont.

**Day 6** - Breakfast and once horses are saddled set off with local gauchos, first visiting the *Cerro de la Virgen*, an amazing 360 degree lookout, then the forest of *Higuerones*, where enormous and ancient epiphyte plants have huge roots that point to the ground - so special that many of them have a personal name. Ride back to Don Bosco for lunch and in the afternoon time to rest, enjoy the peace of the Lagoon and recharge batteries. If you wish swim in the lagoon, explore on foot or just relax and spend time birdwatching. Dinner and night in camp (or upgrade to lodge room) at Don Bosco (about 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 of seeing wild capybara (the giant guinea pig like animals that inhabit the wetlands) today - although you need to be very quiet and pay careful attention to your guide's instructions. Stop for a picnic in the middle of the wetlands and your guide will tell you of the historical events that took place around these ancient trees. After lunch ride on towards the coast reaching *Los Moros* just next to the Atlantic Ocean in the afternoon. Dinner and night in camp at Los Moros. (6 to 7 hours riding). (B,L,D)

**EITHER Day 8** - After breakfast start riding back to the base at Los Chaja, with the open, endless beach ahead of you and a chance to see dolphins in the surf and sea birds fishing in open waters. Pass through the village of Aguas Dulces, then a lovely canter on the hard sand with views of the Valizas' sand dunes. Once back at Los Chajá Ecolodge end the week with a delicious lunch and final toasts before saying goodbye to the horses and a late afternoon bus transfer back to Montevideo usually arriving about 20.00. Your own arrangements for onward journey (about 3 hours riding). (B,L)



## ITINERARY cont.

**OR With extension Day 8** - After breakfast, start riding north from Los Moros along the beach which is usually deserted and where you are more likely to see dolphins in the surf or sea birds fishing in the open waters than people. At midday stop for a picnic in the shade whilst the horses rest. In the afternoon continue riding, with chances for some long canters on the hard sand, until you reach Punta del Diablo, originally a fishing village now surfers paradise. Time to explore this characteristic village before reaching the night's accommodation, a cosy Posada. Dinner and overnight at Punta del Diablo (about 5 hours riding) (B,L,D)



**Day 9** - Breakfast and set off riding from Punta del Diablo to Santa Teresa National Park, a recreational-forest park administrated by the national army. Time to visit the different greenhouses where diverse tropical and sub-tropical native and foreign plants, as well as over 300 varieties of rose, are cared for by the soldiers. The reserve is a particularly good place to see protected native fauna such as Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*), Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*) and Yellow Cardinals (*Gubernatrix cristata*). After a picnic lunch under centenary trees, continue riding to the ancient fortress of Santa Teresa, a Portuguese-Spanish construction built to protect the border between the two empires and site of dozens of battles. Riding beneath the walls gives a taste of their history. Continue towards La Coronilla, stopping a short distance before at a comfortable ocean-side hotel. There may be time to visit the Cerro Verde and Islas de La Coronilla National Park, another Protected Area (SNAP) known for sea turtles. Dinner and night at Hotel Parque Oceánico (about 6 hours riding) (B,L,D)

**Day 10** - After a delicious breakfast start riding into La Coronilla, a well-known gaucha town on the Atlantic coast. Then heading back to the beach, the chance for an exceptionally long gallop along the pristine sand - and a nice surprise to end the adventure! Lunch and transfer by bus back to Montevideo (about 2 to 3 hours riding) (B,L)



## DATES & RATES 2026

**Please note that 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 Ride:**

**7 nights - USD 3287 per person sharing** (single supplement USD 306)

**2 night extension - ADD USD 898 per person sharing** (single supplement USD 127)

8th to 15th / 17th March 2026

18th to 25th / 27th October 2026

5th to 12th / 14th April 2026

8th to 15th / 17th November 2026

3rd to 10th / 12th May 2026

13th to 20th / 22nd December 2026

Upgrade from camping to lodge rooms at Don Bosco, USD 60 per person sharing a twin room (USD 120 per person single room) for 2 nights

**NOTE** Prices assume at least 4 riders on each section. Maximum is usually 10 riders.

Ride departures will be confirmed for less than 4 but if the riding group on any section is just 2 or 3 riders, a small group supplement is charged. This is:

USD 790 per person of 2, USD 250 per person of 3 for the 7 night itinerary;

USD 400 per person of 2, USD 310 per person of 3 for the 2 night extension.

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

Rates **INCLUDE** all riding, guiding and equipment, twin share accommodation (single if paying supplement), meals (from lunch first day to lunch last day) and transfer by public bus from Montevideo to Valizas on Day 1 and return bus to Montevideo on the last day.

Rates do **NOT INCLUDE** international flights to Uruguay and taxes, extra nights in Montevideo, personal medical / travel insurance (compulsory), drinks / bar bill throughout, any other personal expenditure at hotels/ estancias (eg laundry, telephone calls), transfers outside set times, any visa fees and any tips you might wish to leave staff.

### **Los Chaja Ranch Stay:**

**4 nights - USD 1249 per person**

Single supplement USD 412

**6 nights - USD 1804 per person**

Single supplement USD 565

**Rates INCLUDE** riding (varies from 2 to 5 hours a day), meals, twin share accommodation (single if paying supplement) and some local visits.

Rates do **NOT INCLUDE** travel to / from Los Chaja, extra activities you may wish to arrange (on free mornings / afternoons), personal medical / travel insurance (compulsory), drinks, personal expenditure (eg laundry, any transport etc), visa fees and any tips you might wish to leave.

**Single travellers** - Standard rates assume twin share accommodation and if you are travelling alone, the single supplement will be payable to book a single room / tent. This is compulsory if you are travelling alone but if you are prepared to share twin accommodation with another guest, please let us know and we will see if we can find a sharer. The supplement will be refunded if we find a sharer but we cannot guarantee a sharer and if we do not find one, the supplement is charged.



## FLIGHTS AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

The meeting point for the Criollo Lands Ride 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 **05.30**). At the end of the ride you are taken to the bus stop for the afternoon bus back to Montevideo (tickets included) which arrives around 20.00 - so a late evening flight departure (**22.00** or later) on the last day is possible - however in most cases it is advisable 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. **These are charged extra - please ask for a quote.**

For a stay at Los Chaja Ranch meeting is in Valizas (we can arrange bus tickets from Montevideo if required).

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 to fly with Iberia via Madrid or with one of the US airlines via North America. Airfares 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 Tetanus. If you have particular health risks or are travelling on in Uruguay after the ride you might need additional inoculations - always consult a health professional for further and more detailed advice.

**(DRAFT 01/12/2025)**

