

# Discover Uruguay! Your Clients Will Like It

PETER LOWY



PETER LOWY

Punta del Este, South America's premier seaside resort, located where the Rio de La Plata, top of photo, meets the Atlantic Ocean, bottom, offers vacationers everything from unspoiled beaches, water sports, golf, and tennis to art galleries, fine restaurants, night clubs, and casinos.

**T**ourists from the United States are discovering Uruguay and with good reason: it's an oasis of tranquility with a near-perfect climate that eagerly welcomes foreign guests, providing a rich mix of historical, beachside, urban, rural, and ecological offerings.

While the number of travelers from the U.S. doubled from 35,000 in 2002 to 70,000 last year (excluding cruise ships), they constitute a mere fraction of the 2 million visitors that Uruguay receives annually.

To attract more Americans, Uruguay is promoting itself as a multi-destination site – for business events, sightseeing, recreation, and retirement. North Americans only need a valid passport – no visa – to enter the country. A new air terminal at Montevideo's Carrasco International Airport, due for completion later in 2009, expanded port facilities in Colonia for those arriving by boat from Buenos Aires, and new highways underscore Uruguay's commitment to tourism.

"We have a very unspoiled country," Liliam Kechician, Uruguay's Vice Minister of Tourism and Sport, told *Travel World News* recently. "Our campaign—UruguayNatural—is more than a slogan. We're promoting our attitude toward the

way we live."

And it's a seductive attitude. Uruguayans put out the welcome mat – and not just because tourism is the nation's number two industry after agriculture. Walk through Montevideo's Ciudad Vieja (Old City) and a local is likely to stop and say, "Thank you for visiting." It's an authentic display of hospitality that pervades the country.

Located between its giant neighbors of Brazil and Argentina, Uruguay, about the size of Washington state, is defined by soft hills, grassy plains, and a fertile coast. Its population of 3.4 million, mostly of European descent, imparts an international flair to a distinctly Latin spirit. With a literacy rate of 97%, Uruguay ranks with Chile on the Global Peace Index as one of the two most peaceful countries in Central and Latin America.

Reflecting the idea behind UruguayNatural, growth hormones and antibiotics are prohibited in livestock production. As a result, the grass-fed cattle produces delicious meat that is exceptionally lean and high in nutrients. Similarly, fruits and vegetables fresh off the farm are full of natural flavor –

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

## LATIN AMERICA

### URUGUAY FROM PAGE 37

and that's before the country's many talented chefs work their gastronomic magic. Uruguayan wines also have become world famous with those from the Bouza winery, for example, winning award after international award.

The more one gets to know Uruguay, the longer one wants to stay. But for those with limited time, much can be seen in a week or so. Consider the following.

**Colonia del Sacramento** – A one-hour ferry ride across the Rio de la Plata from Buenos Aires, this World Heritage Site is the country's oldest city. Spain and Portugal alternately ruled Colonia since 1680, leaving a quaint historic quarter marked by a unique blend of Spanish and Portuguese architecture. Walk along the cobblestoned streets under yellow street lamps at night and make your way to the Lobo Restaurant on Calle del Comercio for a memorable meal that might include Spanish styled tapas, sautéed prawns, and rib eye steak.

While exploring the region consider making the Sheraton Colonia Gold & Spa Resort, located just outside the city, your base where a staff of 120 pampers guests at this 92-room property. Los Cerros de San Juan, the country's oldest vineyard, about 20 miles from Colonia, hosts groups (minimum of 10) year round. Visits include a tour and sampling of the wines produced from grapes that are harvested by hand at the peak moment of perfection. A lunch of fresh salad and Uruguay's signature meal of parrillada—grilled sausages and steak—completes the visit. El Terruño ("Homeland"), an 800-acre sheep and ostrich breeding station, also near Colonia, showcases the gaucho life. It hosts parties, weddings, and individual tourists and accommodates overnight visitors. Gustavo Raffo, a good humored, bear of a man, is eager for you to enjoy his hospitality.

**Punta del Este** – Located on a peninsula where the Rio de la Plata, the world's widest river, meets the Atlantic Ocean, Punta del Este is South America's premier seaside resort. During the summer (December – March), the normal population of 10,000 balloons to more than half a million, but Punta del Este is prepared, offering everything vacationers might want: sailing, boating, surfing, and other water sports; fine restaurants; and casinos. Summer night life starts late, with dinner usually served after 11 p.m. The Conrad Punta del Este Resort & Casino provides easy access to all the town has to offer – from the calm river beach of Playa Mansa to the wilder ocean surf of Playa Brava. Not to be missed is Casa Pueblo. This rambling, white-washed hillside structure on nearby Punta Ballena, which took 36 years to build, is the home, studio, and gallery of its creator, famed Uruguayan painter and sculptor Carlos Páez Vilaró. Casa Pueblo attracts admirers, especially at sunset. During a delightful summer evening this past January, the artist, now in his eighties, greeted guests with the grace and energy found in his art.

**Montevideo** – This cosmopolitan capital of 1.2 million – featuring historical sites, old and new architecture, world



Uruguay welcomes tourists. At El Terruño, a sheep and ostrich breeding station near Colonia, visitors will be greeted with pastries – and a kiss on the cheek.

class restaurants, music, theater, and more – welcomes business and pleasure travelers alike. The Sheraton Montevideo Hotel, located in a residential neighborhood overlooking the Río de la Plata, is centrally located, offering easy access to all sites. With the beach coming right up to the edge of Montevideo, one can drive along the Rambla with bustling city life on one side and sunbathers relaxing on the other. Ciudad Vieja (the historical quarter) has been rejuvenated in recent years and is now the focal point of nightlife. If you have time, squeeze in a performance at Teatro Solís, a gem of a theater similar in style to Milan's La Scala.

### Getting There

American Airlines, the only U.S. carrier flying to Uruguay, offers five nonstop flights a week from Miami to Montevideo during the November–March high season, and three weekly flights otherwise. Daily connections through Buenos Aires (45 minutes away) are available year round. Montevideo and Punta del Este are the primary ports of call for cruise ships. Ferry service connects Buenos Aires with Colonia, Montevideo, and Punta del Este.

**Uruguay Ministry of Tourism and Sport**  
[www.uruguaynatural.com](http://www.uruguaynatural.com)

## ToursBrasil Returns to Its Roots: Afro-Cultural Tourism in Bahia and Rio

To the people at the Rio de Janeiro destination-management company ToursBrasil, these early months of the Age of Obama have been looking like a good occasion to revive a long-standing relationship, in recent years just a tad in low gear, with North Americans of African descent. There's a good reason for this. ToursBrasil has always had an especially strong program in Brazil's Northeastern State of Bahia, where African influences remain astonishingly vital despite the long age that has passed since the last slave ship disembarked the last slave.

Black Bahians may be Catholic. They may be Evangelical Christians. Many also participate in the rites at the dozens of *candomblés*, where the faithful will from time to time succumb to the drum rhythms and fall into a trance, each possessed by his own or her own particular deity, whether Xango or Ogum or Iansá or Oxumare or some other one of the extensive pantheon. Strange thing about Bahia, though: even the locals who've never set foot in a *candomblé*, be they black, be they white, tend to identify with one or another of the African deities, or *orishas*, they know which day of the week belongs to each one, which color or colors each is associated with, what metal or metals. The whitest members of Bahia's pallid elite may even, consciously or not, pay one little obeisance here, another little obeisance there. Bahia's rhythms sound like Africa, more than North American jazz ever did. The *acarajé* and the *sarapatel* and the *vatapá* taste like Africa, more than chicken and slaw ever did. In Bahia, Africa is simply in the air, and borrowings from African languages even survive in daily speech.

Bahia in the end is Brazil obviously. It is not Africa. But for U.S. visitors, whatever their ancestry, it is fascinating to see a New World black culture whose matrices are unmistakably the forests and savannas of what today are Togo and Nigeria and Angola and not Alabama sharecroppers' shacks or Motown recording studios or Harlem churches.

In Salvador, the capital of Bahia State, ToursBrasil likes to put groups and individuals up in the Pestana Convento do Carmo, a luxury hotel (and a member of The Leading Small Hotels of the World) in the heart of the pulsating Pelourinho district, where ornate 17th and 18th century churches sit cheek by jowl to restaurants at once elegant and exotic and you can be pretty sure of walking out onto the street at any hour of day or night and happening on an exhibition of the Afro-Brazilian martial art *capoeira*. Less expensive hotels, not in former convents, are of course available, as are hotels closer to the beach or on the beach or with different and more extensive leisure facilities. ToursBrasil operates excursions to any number of beautiful and haunting destinations on the



The Pestana Convento do Carmo in the heart of Salvador's Pelourinho.

outskirts of Salvador and in the Bahia hinterland. For people with an interest in the turns Afro-culture has taken in the New World, the excursion to the town of Cachoeira is particularly appealing. ToursBrasil also, needless to say, effortlessly combines a visit to Bahia with a visit to Rio de Janeiro or to any of dozens of other Brazilian hot spots or combinations of them. The emphasis can be on African heritage — or not. No reason, after all, why North Americans of African descent have to be looking for long-lost distant cousins in Brazil any more than do North Americans of German, Italian, Polish, Japanese, or Jewish descent, even though in all these other categories there are also plenty such.

Abraham Peczenik, the founder and president of ToursBrasil, looks back nostalgically on the three or four years in the early 1990s when he ran another program dear to his heart. Back then, he brought a numerous U.S. disc jockeys, all of them from black-oriented stations, down to Rio to do a full week of early-morning programming from the sands of Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana Beach. He brought them one at a time — from Atlanta, from D.C., from Chicago, from New York, from Los Angeles, from San Francisco — and each of the DJs brought 40 or 50 listeners who had responded to the on-air promotions. Mr. Peczenik, who himself was once upon a time a DJ (of jazz) in Buenos Aires, says, "It was great. We got lots of Brazilian musical talent to participate, and when we did it in the month of January, just before Carnival, people who'd come along would go on air and say good morning to their moms, let's say in snow-covered Chicago, from a place where the temperature was just breaking 90 and the water was as warm as in a bathtub." It's a program Mr. Peczenik would like to revive. All he needs is a go-getter U.S. travel agent or tour operator to do the promotional work at the northern end.

**ToursBrasil, [www.toursbrasil.com.br](http://www.toursbrasil.com.br)**

### REMOTA HOTEL, PUERTO NATALES; TIERRA ATACAMA, CALAMA, SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA ANNOUNCE A SPECIAL COMBINED PROGRAM



Remota Hotel in Puerto Natales and Tierra Atacama in Calama, San Pedro de Atacama announce a special combined program for May 2009. These two properties are in the extreme ends of one of the longest countries on earth—Chile. The program includes a three-night stay in Remota, an all-inclusive property at the gateway of the Torres del Paine National Park, Puerto Natales.

The hotel boasts 72 waterfront rooms overlooking the Last Hope fjord and views of the glaciers of the Southern Icefield on Chile's southern coast. Guests can choose among over 20 excursions inside and outside the National Park with small groups guided by bilingual private guides, full use of indoor heated pool and outdoor Jacuzzis and sauna. Transfers in and out of the hotel are also included. Additionally, guests will enjoy a three-night program in Tierra Atacama with transfers included from and to the Calama Airport. Accommodations all have views of volcanoes and the program includes all meals, open bar with soft drink, house wines, beers and liquors. Included also are daily excursions with small groups led by bilingual guides and full use of the Uma Spa with a heated indoor pool, Jacuzzi and sauna. This special program will also include a one-night stay at the Hotel Fundador in Santiago with full breakfast. The special seven-night program is good only in May of 2009 and has a special rate of \$1,989 ppdo.

Remota Hotel, 866-431-0519, [reservas@remota.cl](mailto:reservas@remota.cl), [www.remota.cl](http://www.remota.cl); Tierra Atacama, 800-829-5325, [reservas@tierraatacama.com](mailto:reservas@tierraatacama.com), [www.tierraatacama.com](http://www.tierraatacama.com)

### DEILMANN'S SOUTHAMERICA CRUISES FEATURE \$99 BUSINESS-CLASS AIR AND SHORE EXCURSIONS OR \$2,500 OFF

Peter Deilmann is offering guests who join one of their four South American departures a \$99 business-class air package that includes roundtrip air from a choice of 73 North American gateways and transfers to and from the vessel, or up to \$2,500 off the per-passenger price of the cruise. Each of the four 13- to 20-night voyages, departing in January and February 2010 aboard the company's luxury flagship, *MS Deutschland*, offers something different—whether it is exploring exotic Ecuador, Peru and Chile on the west coast, journeying around Cape Horn, taking in

Antarctica's wildlife, cruising the lush Amazon or visiting Rio at Carnival time. Cruise fares range from \$5,205 to \$23,760 ppdo.

Passengers must book H-category staterooms or above to qualify for business class or \$2,500 off; those booking other categories receive economy-class air or \$1,500 off. H-category and above begin at \$7,405. All guests receive a package of complimentary shore excursions valued at \$700 per person.

The 17-night sailing, departing Panama on January 4, calls on Puerto Caldera, Costa Rica, Guayaquil, Ecuador and Callao and General San Martin, Peru, and ends in Valparaiso. Prices are \$6,220 to \$18,590 ppdo.

The longer 20-night adventure, departing January 21, combines both coasts of South America, with a trip to Antarctica and Britain's Falkland Islands. Adventurers experience Chilean fjords on the way to Punta Arenas, the Beagle Channel en route to Ushuaia, Argentina, then Cape Horn as the *MS Deutschland* heads across the Drake Passage to explore Antarctica. The cruise continues past Deception Island, Admiralty Bay and Elephant Island to the Falklands Islands, ending with an overnight in Buenos Aires. Published prices range from \$7,460 to \$23,760.

Departing Buenos Aires on February 10 on its third leg, the ship makes a series of stops that take in Rio de Janeiro, Uruguay's Ciudad Vieja, beach villages, the Amazon river, and disembarking in Manaus, Amazonia. Prices are from \$6,710 to \$20,610.

The 13-night voyage, departing on February 27, begins with an overnight in Manus using the ship as hotel, then cruises along the Amazon, stopping at Alter do Chão and Rio Cajari preceding entry into the Atlantic and the port of Royal Island, French Guiana. Next are the Caribbean port of Bridgetown, Trinidad and Tobago, and El Guamache, Venezuela before heading to the disembarkation port of La Guaira (Caracas). Published fares are \$5,205 to \$14,365.

Peter Deilmann Ocean Cruises, 800-348-8287, [pdcmail@deilmann-cruises.com](mailto:pdcmail@deilmann-cruises.com), [www.deilmann-cruises.com](http://www.deilmann-cruises.com)

### CANODROS S.A. CRUISING WITH GALAPAGOS EXPLORER II TO ECUADOR

The natural paradise that is the Galapagos is the featured destination of a cruise aboard the *M/V Galapagos Explorer II* ushering in the summer season.

Just for a short period of time, available on departures now until June 2009, *Galapagos Explorer* is offering discounts from \$380 to \$900 per person, depending on the type of cruise and cabin category selected, with rates starting at \$1,160 per person.

*Galapagos Explorer*, the only all suite vessel, offers programs of three-, four- and seven-night cruises on the enchanted archipelago.

Canodros S.A. was created with the vision of establishing an environmentally responsible tourism, committed with the conservation of this archipelago designated as Natural Patrimony of the Humanity by the Organization of Nations United for the Education, Science and the Culture (UNESCO).

Canodros S.A., 800-613-6026, [sales@canodros.com](mailto:sales@canodros.com), [canodros@canodros.com](http://canodros@canodros.com), [www.canodros.com](http://www.canodros.com)

## EL SALVADOR'S ON SALE WITH TARA TOURS' "FUN IN THE SUN" PROGRAM



Tara Tours Inc. proudly has announced the release of a new "Fun in the Sun" program to El Salvador in conjunction with American Airlines.

The new program "El Salvador—Super Special" will spend seven days/six nights at the new five-star Beach Resort Decameron Salinitas—all inclusive for \$1087, including airfare from Miami, adding \$200 more from Newark, New York, Washington, Dallas or Houston; \$250 more from Atlanta, L.Angelos & San Francisco; \$300 more from Chicago and \$350 more from San Juan. (add-ons available from more than 100 USA cities)

The tour package includes: round trip airfare from Miami to El Salvador; 6 nights at Hotel Beach Resort Royal Decameron (four-plus star hotel); transfers on arrival and departure (the hotel is an hour and a half from the airport); all meals at any of the six restaurants (breakfast and lunch are buffet style and a la carte dinners); unlimited domestic and international alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages; daily activities program; non-motorized water sports (wind glider, kayaks, snorkeling and sailboats); beach towels, chairs; tennis courts, basketball, volleys; nightly entertainment; unlimited drinks at the discotheque; taxes and tips included.

Not included are insurance, airport departure taxes (from USA \$88, from El Salvador \$32), tourist card \$10 and any other service not specifically listed.

Tara Tours, [www.taratours.com/EISalvador1.htm](http://www.taratours.com/EISalvador1.htm),  
[www.taratours.com](http://www.taratours.com)

## NATUREAIR NAMED FINALIST IN WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL TOURISM FOR TOMORROW AWARDS

NatureAir, the world's first carbon neutral airline, has been selected as one of three finalists in the 2009 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards conservation category. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) received a record number of entries from more than 40 countries and six continents, with several hundred companies vying this year.

"It is a great honor to be recognized by the WTTC for our efforts in sustainable tourism and conservation. We consider this to be a motivator to continue searching for new ways of doing business that

add positive value to the social and environmental challenges we face in the communities we serve," said Alexi Huntley Khajavi, NatureAir Commercial Director.

NatureAir compensates 100 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions through its preservation and reforestation of tropical forests in southern Costa Rica's rich biodiversity zones of the Osa Peninsula. Since the projects beginning in 2004 the airline has compensated for nearly 20,000 tons of carbon dioxide through the protection of more than 500 acres of tropical forests. In addition, the company's innovative use of bio-diesel (a mix of vegetable oils and recycled cooking oils) is estimated to reduce 160 tones of CO2 emissions per year.

"The Tourism for Tomorrow Awards judging process goes beyond just what a company says it is doing in sustainable tourism. Our next phase of judging involves an on-site expert evaluation of each finalist to assess what they are doing in practice, leading up to the selection of one winner in each category," said Costas Christ, Chairman of Judges.

Since 2003, the WTTC's prestigious awards recognize best practices in sustainable tourism in four different categories—Destination Stewardship, Conservation, Community Benefit and Global Tourism Business.

The winners from each category will be announced at the 9th Annual Global Travel & Tourism Summit in Brazil this May.

NatureAir, [www.natureair.com](http://www.natureair.com)

## SUNBREEZE HOTEL & SUNBREEZE SUITES

AMBERGRIS CAYE, BELIZE



*The SunBreeze Hotel features 43 rooms offering the facilities and services of a resort while the SunBreeze Suites has 20 oceanfront fully equipped suites. \*Dive packages from US\$1,232 ppdb for 7 nights deluxe room accommodations, room taxes, 4 days local 2 tank boat dives, 1 tank night dive and round trip air transfers.*

*\*Packages valid through April 20, 2009*

### SUNBREEZE HOTEL

email:  
[sunbreeze@btl.net](mailto:sunbreeze@btl.net)  
website: [www.sunbreezehotel.com](http://www.sunbreezehotel.com)  
toll free: 1-800-688-0191

### SUNBREEZE SUITES

email:  
[sunbreesesuites@sunbreesesuites.com](mailto:sunbreesesuites@sunbreesesuites.com)  
website: [www.sunbreesesuites.com](http://www.sunbreesesuites.com)  
toll free: 1-800-820-1631

**GUESTS SAVE UP TO \$600 PER SUITE AT AAA 5-DIAMOND GRAND VELAS ALL SUITES & SPA RESORT**

Travelers receive complimentary spa treatments, rounds of championship golf and a credit towards their final bill at Grand Velas All Suites & Spa Resort, the all-inclusive luxury resort in Riviera Nayarit, Mexico.

With more than a 33% savings, the "Air Bonus" package is available for guests who book a minimum of three nights by April 30 to travel by December 18, 2009. Included in the package is a credit starting at \$120 per suite; one 25-minute massage at Grand Velas Spa per adult, per day, or a round of golf at the Jack Nicklaus or Tom Weiskopf 18-hole par 72 championship golf course per adult, per day; and a 60-minute guided hydrotherapy circuit, complete with an herbal steam sauna and hydro-reflexology area, per adult, per stay.

The "Air Bonus" credit, applied to the bill upon checkout, can be used for additional spa treatments or it can simply be deducted from the total cost of the bill, which translates to money back for the cost of the flight. Suite rates through April 30 start at \$399 ppdo. From May 1 through December 18, rates start at \$352 ppdo.

Grand Velas All Suites & Spa Resort is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World and a recipient of the AAA Five-Diamond

Award. Located just 15 minutes north of Puerto Vallarta on Banderas Bay, Grand Velas features 267 ocean-view suites, ultra-spacious Spa Suites and two- and three-bedroom Imperial Suites. Grand Velas Spa is the crown jewel of the resort and a member of Leading Spas of the World. The spa features 20 treatment rooms, over 80 spa treatments, a high-performance gym and exercise room, spa boutique and a beauty salon. Five restaurants feature stylish decor and a la carte gourmet dining, and unlimited premium brands are available throughout the hotel.

The resort also offers tiered three-temperature infinity pools with iPod minis, tennis court, 25,321 total square feet of meeting space, special entertainment for adults and kids, and the Grand Kids' Club.

**Grand Velas All Suites & Spa Resort,**  
[www.vallarta.grandvelas.com](http://www.vallarta.grandvelas.com)

**TOURISM IN MEXICO FORGES AHEAD DESPITE WORLD'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK**

More than 500 million dollars will be invested in the Pacific Coast in the creation of a new beach resort development to attract tourism with the construction of Mexico's newest resort town just started, expected to be the biggest project of its kind in the last 25 years.

Twice the size of Cancún, located in Escuinapa, 65 miles South of Mazatlán, the resort town aims to be one of the best destinations in Mexico and around the world, featuring top-notch infrastructure including highways, hotels, golf courses and marinas.

Although it has yet to be named, the master-planned resort has a strong environmental commitment to maintain the ecological balance in the area within its more than 5,800 acres made up of 155 species of birds such as the ibis and tiger eagle as well as four types of mangroves.

The area also has impressive archeological sites, relaxing fishing villages and is surrounded by charming islands.

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Mexico; in fact revenue generated by tourists reached \$13.2 billion in 2008. The creation of this project alone is expected to create 150,000 jobs and attract more than three million national and international tourists each year with an estimated population of 500,000 by 2025.

Mexico has seen the benefits of the "substitution effect" in which, due to the persisting economic scenario, these destinations within Mexico are an "added value" to Americans who are trading their long-distance vacations for places near the U.S. In 2008, Mexico welcomed 22.6 million international visitors. That's a 5.9-percent increase from the previous year, of which 18 million were Americans.

Airlines are responding to this demand by adding new flights. This increased connectivity along with Mexican culture, infrastructure and diversity, plus a strong dollar and excellent exchange rates, make traveling to Mexico more affordable than ever.

**Mexico Tourism Board (MTB),** [www.visitmexico.com](http://www.visitmexico.com)



*The Lodge at Chua Creek*  
*Wildly Civilized™*  
**Belize**

"Thank you for making our honeymoon perfect. We don't want to leave but we're taking away with us wonderful memories of hiking, birdwatching, horseback riding, Mayan sites, and of course Margaritas. This is truly a special place and we are lucky to have spent time with you all. We'd cannot do Chua Creek justice. Whatever you do, you're doing it right. A wonderful place!"  
 - John & Kate Farman, Chicago, USA

*Adventure Centre and Spa*

Email: [reservations@chuaresort.com](mailto:reservations@chuaresort.com) Call Toll Free (877) 709-8218  
[www.chuaresort.com](http://www.chuaresort.com)