

Uruguay

Uruguay –officially: La Republica Oriental del Uruguay– meaning the republic on the eastern shores of the Uruguay River, is the smallest independent country in South America. Situated between two South American giants, Brazil and Argentina, it has a European atmosphere and a mild climate. Uruguay is a country of rolling hills and a beautiful coastline dotted with attractive seaside resorts. The first social welfare state in the world, Uruguay has always been very proud of its staunch democratic tradition.



Beautiful Coastline



Montevideo Capital City



Short Facts

- **Area:** 187.000 km², about same size as Republic of Ireland or the North Island of New Zealand
- **Climate:** Located in the southern hemisphere, Uruguay's seasons are the same as Australia's and the reverse of those in the United States and Europe. Although the average temperature in winter (Jul-Aug) is between 5'-15'C, the wind-chill factor can give the impression of lower temperatures. In the summer (Dec-Mar) the average temperatures run around 26'C, but there are days when it reaches 30'C or higher. Changes in temperature come suddenly and it has been said that one can experience the four seasons in one day.
- **Population:** The population, of approximately three million, is of European heritage (mainly Spanish and Italian) and is distributed half in the capital, Montevideo and the other half throughout the country. Uruguay is basically a nation with a large middle class, and boasts the highest literacy rate in the Americas.

· **Religion:** There is no official religion in Uruguay as Church and State have been separated since the beginning of the century. The great majority of the population is Roman Catholic; however, churches and congregations of almost all other faiths can be found in Montevideo and other major cities.

• **Government:** Uruguay is a republic with a President elected for a single five-year term, and a two chamber parliament where the four existing political parties (Colorados, Blancos, Frente Amplio and Nuevo Espacio) are represented.

• **History:** Uruguay's discovery by Europeans dates back to 1516, when Spanish explorers were looking for the connecting passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Colonization of the area occurred later: the city of Montevideo was founded by the Spanish only in 1726 as a defensive fort against the marauding Portuguese who had already founded the city of Colonia 46 years earlier. The war of independence against Spain came in the early 19th century and was relatively short. However, no sooner did the Spaniards retreat than the Portuguese and then the Brazilians and Argentinians invaded the country and fought over its land and the excellent natural port of Montevideo. Uruguay gained its true independence in 1825 and only a few interruptions have occurred in the soundly democratic tradition of this nation.

• **Economy:** Uruguay's chief source of wealth lies in its agriculture, primarily cattle and sheep farming. At present, through MERCOSUR, a joint economic venture with Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, Uruguay will try to take a step forward in its present economy. The monetary unit is Pesos (\$).

• **Education:** The 12-years educational system is divided into two levels: six years of primary school and six years of secondary school. The last two years of secondary school specifically prepare the students for college level studies. Student must choose a course among of different options: biological, science and humanities. All curriculum is set by national educational authorities. This means that elective courses are not usual and students must take all subjects stipulated for a particular option. Wearing a school uniform is compulsory in some schools. The academic year goes from March to November. Holidays include one week at Easter, a two-week winter vacation in July and usually some days of spring break in September.

It is important to realize that the Uruguayan school system is strictly academic. There are a very few extracurricular activities in most schools. Students wanting to participate in sports or other activities must normally find somewhere else like clubs, institutions or some other different groups.



Colonia
del Sacramento



Language: Spanish is the national language. As spoken in Uruguay, it has a characteristic regional flavor. It is said that the soft pronunciation of the "y" and "ll" sounds stem from a 15 th century dialect of Southern Spain, and its musicality has a decided Italian flavor.

In the native tongue:

Amigo.....Friend
Hola!.....Hello!
Como estas?.....How are you?
Como te llamas?.....What's your name?
Me llamo.....My name is
De donde eres?.....Where are you from?
Por favor.....Please
Gracias.....Thanks
Adios.....Good-bye



Soccer

Most popular sport

- **Family life:** Most families live simple, uncluttered lives. As in other Latin American cultures, family ties are strong. Teenagers usually spend a lot of time with the family, either in the house or going out together.
- **Recreation:** Uruguay's most popular sport is futbol (soccer), with basketball ranking second, and then volleyball, tennis, rugby. Dating, if done at all, is usually a group activity. Although going to the movies or dancing are quite popular, young people also attend the theatre, concerts, and lectures. They enjoy going out to one of the numerous cafes or bars for a snack or something to drink. It is not unusual for Uruguayan teenagers to drink wine or beer, especially with meals. Getting drunk, however, is considered inappropriate behavior. It is to be noted that everything starts quite late; for example, parties seldom begin before 10 pm.

YFU in Uruguay: YFU Uruguay was the first YFU organization in Latin America, originating in 1960 after a visit by the Michigan Youth Choir led by YFU founder, Dr. Rachel Andresen. From YFU Uruguay and through its dedication, other organizations were founded and developed in Latin America. YFU Uruguay is proud of its founding role in the region.

· **Exchange with:** Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland.



Orientation

Welcome meeting

· **YFU Activities:** Upon arrival, all semester and year students attend an orientation, this is a welcome meeting given by YFU staff in Montevideo. They also receive a mid-stay orientation, and a re-entry orientation before leaving the country. Orientations usually take the whole weekend. During their stay students are also provided with Spanish courses for the first three months. The first-half semester and year program students have the opportunity to go on a trip to Brazil and to the Iguazu Waterfalls, situated between Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. Students may join in a three day trip to Argentina and in a six day camp with other YFU students in La Paloma located in the East coast of Uruguay.



Exchange Students in La Paloma