

Secret Beaches and Private Islands: A Guide to José Ignacio, Uruguay

Beginning in November and running through February, Uruguay's José Ignacio transforms from a sleepy fishing village into a buzzing haven for surfers and international jet-setters swapping their winters for South America's summer season. It's a lively and social scene indeed, but for those seeking a quieter, mellow respite from the stresses of urban life, it's still very possible to enjoy this popular coastal destination while keeping a low profile. From a secret beach club on a secluded island to a yoga studio with massage therapy on the menu, here are some ways to relish in José Ignacio's more laid-back offerings.



Bahia Vik

Stay: Bahia Vik

Flanked by two beaches on either side, José Ignacio is a tip of land that pokes out into the ocean. Brava Beach, known for its tremendous waves and ideal surfing conditions, makes it a popular destination for beachgoers. Just a five-minute walk across the peninsula is Mansa Beach, Brava's sleepy, less raucous counterpart—and the better side for sunset views. Visitors seeking anonymity and a more intimate hotel experience away from the madding crowd will find sanctuary at two-year-old Bahia Vik. Comprising a main guesthouse and 11 private bungalows overlooking Mansa Beach, each dwelling is uniquely designed, both inside and out, using different materials such as wood, steel, and black zinc.

Around sunset, most guests flock to the hotel's restaurant, La Susana, a breezy, cabana-style setup situated just off to the side of the property, where locals and visitors come together over fresh ceviche and the spectacular vistas.



Estancia Vik

Take a Ride: Horseback Riding at Estancia Vik

You don't have to be a guest at Estancia Vik, a sprawling property under the same ownership as Bahia Vik, to relish in its breathtaking views on horseback. Just a 10-minute drive inland transports you from the beach to a magnificent ranch house surrounded by fields and mountains, with gauchos waiting at the stable to lead you on a ride.