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ART BEACH RETREAT

A stylish and arty new hotel has just opened on the coast of Uruguay, amidst the sand dunes of José Ignacio, reports **Max Broquen**

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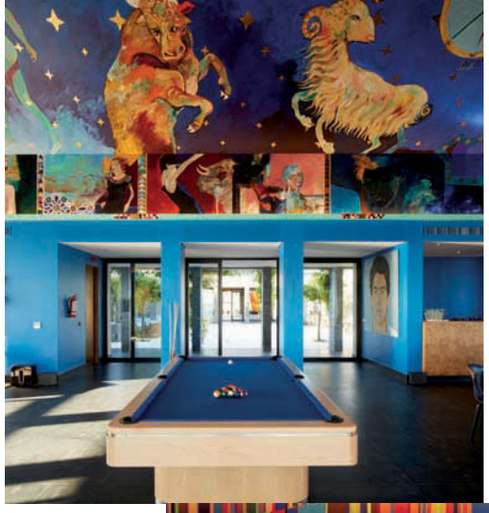
Located amidst the sand dunes on the gorgeous Playa Mansa in José Ignacio, a former fishing village that has recently become popular a beach party destination during the summer, Bahia Vik José Ignacio is the latest hotel by Vik Retreats, also known for the award-wining hotels Estancia Vik and Playa Vik. Art, design and architecture are once again the focus of this pristine beach retreat (its owner Alexander Vik is an art collector).

Spanning ten acres of beach dunes on the José Ignacio peninsula, Bahia Vik faces west with sweeping views across the Southern Atlantic Ocean and Playa Mansa. Designed by Alexander and Carrie Vik in association with internationally acclaimed Uruguayan architect Marcelo Daglio, Bahia Vik José Ignacio is the vision of a natural and contemporary retreat that embraces the beachfront landscape and surrounding area. As with all Vik Retreat properties, Bahia Vik is a singularly remarkable celebration of its individual locale as well as internationally renowned for showcasing unparalleled art and architecture. While sister property Estancia Vik recalls Spanish Colonial style and Playa Vik embodies avant-garde design, Bahia Vik reflects contemporary beach living, with a seamless flow between indoors and outdoors inspired by art and Vik luxury. The debut of Bahia Vik further solidifies José Ignacio, Uruguay as one of the world's most coveted destinations, offering travelers a truly one-of-a-kind experience through warm, personalised service, innovative design and an incomparable location.

Celebrating the ambiance of its chic setting, Bahia Vik consists of eleven uniquely designed bungalows tucked into the sandy beach dunes, with one central building around which retreat living revolves. This main building, built of a stunning Uruguayan grey slate, is defined by open architecture and flowing spaces, encouraging conviviality among guests of the property. Upon entering the retreat's main building through garden walls, guests enjoy views of the Southern Atlantic Ocean through the spacious reception area, and the verdant open-air courtyard around which the structure centers. To either side of the entrance, guests can find a large library, game room and a small boutique offering a curated selection of Uruguayan art and local crafts. Just down the walkway visitors can also discover a fully equipped gym and luxurious spa, while across the sun-filled courtyard, an expansive double living room and dining room look out onto four stunning dark stone beachside reflecting pools set in the dunes and surrounded by al fresco lounging and dining areas. The main building boasts ten unique suites, all with large private terraces. With two levels of guestrooms in the main building, upper level master suites have the added advantage of either broad sweeping views of the Uruguayan landscape or sparkling ocean.



Facing page and this page: Interior and exterior views of the hotel boasting vibrant art

There are 37 rooms between Bahia Vik's main building and its collection of beachfront bungalows. Each of the bungalows features distinct exteriors, art-filled interiors and a unique design scheme creating a destination that is unlike any other. Tucked into the breezy José Ignacio beach dunes, bungalow design intentionally blends the interior and exterior to encourage maximum enjoyment of the natural environment. Swaying beach grasses and other local flora divide the bungalows from one another, providing privacy for bungalow guests while simultaneously embracing the relaxed spirit of José Ignacio, which is at once bohemian and luxurious.

Each abode incorporates vibrant works of art that tell through color and form tales from contemporary society. As an extension of the Vik Retreats collection, artist involvement is again an important focus at Bahia Vik, where a wide range of contemporary Uruguayan and international artists created site-specific installations for each retreat space. While the work of several beloved artists featured at neighboring retreats Estancia Vik and Playa Vik reappear at Bahia Vik, many new talents are showcased as well, giving the latest Vik Retreat its own distinctive aesthetic.

Just steps away from Bahia Vik guests find a world class dining experience at La Susana. The vibrant seaside restaurant and beachfront club offers travelers and locals alike the unique opportunity to enjoy the best location and innovative design while savoring the flavors of Uruguay in a majestic natural setting. Masterfully combining the freshest local and seasonal ingredients in the relaxed and lively environment, the menu features traditional Uruguayan fare with a contemporary twist, including the celebrated Uruguayan asado, complemented by a tailored selection of distinctive cocktails and VIK Wine, which was created at VIK Vineyard in Millahue, Chile. The 2011 vintage, which was just recently released on the market, has quickly become one of South America's most buzzed about wines.

A true sanctuary nestled in the Uruguayan coast, since its debut Bahia Vik José Ignacio has become a home away from home for international travelers. For years Vik Retreats have drawn a loyal following of guests who have fallen in love with the unique juxtaposition of the remarkable art and hospitality offered each luxurious retreat, and the relaxed beauty of the area. Bahia Vik is no exception. The stunning property provides a refreshing take on the travel experience, creating a space where travelers feel as if they are in the comfort of their own home. Bahia Vik works in tandem with its two sister properties in Uruguay, and the three Vik Retreats offer two distinct beachfront experiences at Bahia Vik and Playa Vik, complemented by a traditional countryside retreat in the rolling hills of the Estancia. The singular combination of landscapes and atmospheres was the inspiration behind creating the neighboring properties, allowing guests to experience the incredible diversity of Uruguay, where Alexander and Carrie Vik originally set out to create their own home, and ultimately ended up welcoming travelers from around the globe. ■ bahiavik.com

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