

New hotels, clubs define Punta del Este summer

It happens almost overnight in [Punta del Este](#), on any one of the days between Christmas and New Year's. Every year its two-lane coastal highway goes from deserted to bumper-to-bumper between the beachside paradises of Jose Ignacio and Manantiales to the high-rise sprawl of Punta del Este. Even this year with yet another Argentine financial crisis and Brazilian economic decline, Punta is hotter and busier than ever as the Uruguayan Riviera proves itself an apt peer to the glittery playgrounds of St. Barths, St. Tropez and Ibiza.

You can close your eyes until you get there. We actually don't even like most of Punta, wincing at its vertical sprawl until finally arriving in La Barra that's home to a new installment of [Paul](#), one of BA's top home design stores, and Trading Post by antiquarian Aaron Hojmann. A mix of poorly planned real estate developments and empty storefront have taken their toll on La Barra this year, lacking worthy restaurants other than stylish Flo that now seems lost among its lackluster neighbors. Further north, Montoya remains steadfastly tranquil with its canopy of coastal pine trees and new pop-up of [Moby Dick](#) beach club along its beach. In Manantiales, [Fish Market](#) and [La Linda](#) remain divine culinary destinations despite development rampant on the town's outskirts that make us somewhat fearful of this surf town's future.



In Jose Ignacio, progress has been well balanced with the addition of [Bahia Vik](#) occupying the former Setai development just south of the village. Arguably Uruguay's top hoteliers, [Vik Hotels](#) curates a modern design resort infused with local art and waterfront address privy to NYC hedge funders and their entourages that float between the three Vik properties within the area. [La Susana](#), its on-site beach club offers a stylish and sandy address for DJ-fueled sundowners and ho-hum evening supper. In town, foodie newcomers include [Mostrador Santa Teresita](#) that's an all-day communal dining room as well as Santas Negros located a bit inland offering epic local cuisine from the family behind La Huella that's refreshingly devoid of anything commercial or tourist even in January high-season.