

# Painted Birds Trail, Uruguay

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## Itinerary

### Day 1 – Montevideo

Those arriving will be met at the Carrasco International Airport and driven along the wonderful coastline called “Rambla” to downtown Montevideo and to your hotel for check-in.

Today is set aside to relax and explore the coastal city of Montevideo. You will have lunch at the lively Port Market, before setting off on a short walking tour of the ‘old city’ of Montevideo.

Dinner is to your own account tonight.

Overnight at Don Boutique Hotel in Montevideo.

The following is the usual itinerary. Local conditions, weather and the ability of the group can sometimes cause the itinerary to change, but always with your best interests in mind.



### Day 2 – 18<sup>th</sup> century Fortin de San Miguel

After breakfast you are driven (c. 4 hours) to the Brazilian border and into Rocha, arguably the most beautiful province in Uruguay with its pristine beaches, emerald shores and networks of lagoons.



Lunch will be at Estancia La Rosada, located close to the small town of La Caronilla. After lunch, set off on an introductory ride on the estancia (c. 2 hours) to get to know your horse.

After the ride you have a typical ‘merienda’ (afternoon tea) and then continue to Fortin de San Miguel, built in the same stone as the nearby Portuguese fortress. On a clear day there are superb views out across an enormous stretch of fresh water called the Merin Lagoon which lies right on the Brazilian border. This area is home to a wide variety of birds, as well as native trees and bushes.

It is a 30-minute drive to your accommodation.

Dinner and overnight at hotel Fortin de San Miguel.

### Day 3 – Barra de Chuy beach – Brazilian border

After breakfast you are driven to Chuy (c. 10 minutes), a very curious town straddling the border where you can step into Brazil and hear the locals speaking a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese.



Set off on a three to four-hour ride towards the coast. After a picnic lunch and a siesta, the ride picks up pace as you go along the wonderful, isolated beach of Barra Chuy. Visitors seldom reach this beach so you should be able to experience long, exhilarating canters with no signs of habitation. Eventually you will arrive 22km further south at La Coronilla where you overnight in a small beachside hotel.

Dinner and overnight at Parque Oceanico.

#### **Day 4 - Santa Teresa National Park**

Today you ride south, alternating beaches, sand dunes, pine forests and coastal hills where you may see dolphins feeding in the waters below. Continue your ride to the sizeable Santa Teresa National Park. The centrepiece of the park is a fort, built in 1762 by the Portuguese to defend the edge of their territories. The fort was completed by the Spaniards who took it by assault a year later. There followed a succession of the fort being conquered and then lost, before the newly forming Uruguay finally captured and held the fort in 1825. The fort is surrounded by 3,000 hectares of forest containing over 2 million trees.



Depending on the weather, lunch, a traditional picnic, will be close to the fortress or on the beach.

After lunch, and a siesta, ride along the forest trails and down to the beach, passing a shipwreck buried in the sand – one of many along this treacherous stretch of coastline.

Continue along the coast towards the lovely town of Punta del Diablo.

Dinner and overnight at Posada Terrazas de la Viuda.



#### **Day 5 – Cabo Polonio – shifting sands & sea lions**

A short drive to meet the horses. From here ride into a desert-like landscape. Journey on horseback through a natural animal reserve - an area designated as a Biosphere Natural Reserve by UNESCO.



Ride towards Cabo Polonio, a charming fishing village which can only be reached by horse or four-wheel drive. The fascinating part of the area is the huge area of shifting sand dunes, as you ride through it, it is possible to imagine that you are right in the middle of the Sahara.

The area of Cabo Polonio was named after a Spanish galleon that went down nearby. Luckily the Beagle, with Charles Darwin on board had more luck. Darwin was able to spend a good period of time in Uruguay collecting species and most likely starting to formulate his theories of evolution.

After lunch at a seaside restaurant you go on foot to visit the lighthouse, seals and sea lions that populate the small islands and make up one of the largest seal populations in the world. Occasionally you may glimpse a migrating whale. For the hardy, a chance to swim in the Atlantic Ocean!

Later you ride back along the beaches towards the small town of Valizas.

Dinner and overnight at Posada Valizas.

#### **Day 6 – Wetlands, lagoons and Ombu forests**

After breakfast, begin your ride along the beach to the hidden Briosso Lagoon and towards the wetlands of Rocha. Ride alongside the Castillos Lagoon, across untouched countryside, palm groves and Ombu forests.



Stop for a picnic lunch along the way before reaching Guardia del Monte.

Dinner and overnight at Estancia Guardia del Monte.

#### **Day 7 – The wetlands of Castillos Lagoon**

Begin the day with a lovely breakfast full of homemade goodies. The ride this morning starts towards the neighbouring estancia Barra Grande, crossing wetlands and a magic forest of Ceibos, Coronillas and native trees.



Lunch will be a typical Uruguayan 'asado' before riding back to Guardia del Monte.

Dinner and overnight at Estancia Guardia del Monte.

#### **Day 8 – Castillos Town**

After breakfast you may have the chance to work alongside the gauchos and their trusty dogs as they tend to the cattle and sheep on this working estancia. The wonderful, friendly gauchos of Guardia del Monte, with their berets, 'bombachas' (riding trousers) and knives tucked into their belts seem to have been born on a horse!

A game of armadillo jumping often inadvertently gets underway when riding with gauchos, as the little armour-plated animals make a dash for their holes when the horses approach.



After lunch at Guardia del Monte, ride towards the small town of Castillos, where you have the chance to visit a local 'gaucho shop'. There are various items for sale, such as traditional leather bridles, 'bombachas', gaucho hats and colourful ponchos.

It is soon time to say goodbye to your horses before heading back to Montevideo.

Flights should depart 19:00 or later.

## Accommodation

The accommodation used along the route is a selection of the most interesting and charming hotels, lodges and ranches available in the areas you visit. The properties are clean, comfortable and provide a good level of service. Each hotel or estancia has its own price list for alcohol.

It is possible to request a single room in advance and a single supplement is payable. If you are willing to share, then a single supplement is payable when booking and refunded only once a sharer has been found for you.

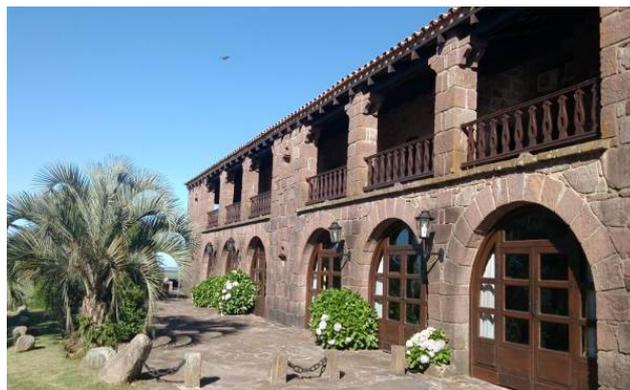
Most rooms have private bathrooms, although Posada Valizas is a smaller property and so you need to be prepared to share a bathroom here.

Your first night is spent at **Don Boutique Hotel** in Montevideo. The hotel is centrally located in the historic part of Montevideo, with galleries, theatres, cafes and museums within walking distance. There are 21 guest rooms, each with en-suite bathrooms, Wi-Fi and a safe. 24-hour room service is available. The hotel has a swimming pool on site.



(Pic: Typical guest room at Don Boutique Hotel)

The second night is spent at **Fortin de San Miguel**. Here there are pleasant gardens, a swimming pool and relaxed atmosphere.



On the third night of the ride you stay at **Parque Oceanico** near La Coronilla.



The following night is spent in Punta del Diablo at **Posada Terraza de la Viuda**, a small guesthouse located just a few hundred metres away from the beach.



On your fifth night you stay at **Posada Valizas**, a charming guesthouse with pretty gardens and a cosy living room.



There are two ensuite rooms and four rooms sharing two bathrooms. Since space is limited here, it may be necessary to share bathrooms even if you are in a single room. This will be dependent on the size and make-up of the group. WiFi is available.

Your final two nights are spent at **Estancia Guardia del Monte**, a traditional working cattle estancia on the edge of Castillos Lagoon.



The main house has four guest rooms with en-suite bathrooms. There is a lovely guest lounge with cosy fireplaces and lovely gardens in which to relax and unwind.



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For more information contact in the saddle. Tel: 01299 272 997, Email: [rides@inthesaddle.com](mailto:rides@inthesaddle.com), Internet: [www.inthesaddle.com](http://www.inthesaddle.com)