**Uruguay Facts and Culture**

* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Uruguay/family.htm) In the cities, most people live in modern apartment buildings or small houses. The very poor live in shantytowns called... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Uruguay/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Uruguay/fashion.htm) Western style of clothing is worn. Uruguay's gauchos (cowboys) wear baggy pants called bombachos, wide brimmed black hats that offer... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Uruguay/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Uruguay/visiting.htm) Uruguayans frequently drop in on their friends. Telephoning first is not necessary. Hospitality is always extended to visitors. A gourd... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Uruguay/visiting.htm)

**Uruguay Facts**

Uruguay stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital  | Montevideo  |
| Government Type  | constitutional republic  |
| Currency  | UYU  |
| Population  | 3,324,460  |
| Total Area  | 68,037 Square Miles176,215 Square Kilometers  |
| Location  | Southern South America, bordering the South Atlantic Ocean, between Argentina and Brazil  |
| Language  | Spanish, Portunol, or Brazilero (Portuguese-Spanish mix on the Brazilian frontier)  |

Map of Uruguay



**Uruguay Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

The Repú blica Oriental del Uruguay (the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, or roughly translated, the Republic East of the River Uruguay) covers an area of 72,200 square miles, about as large as Greece or the state of Montana. Uruguay’s topography is divided into three parts: the southern area, a belt of gently undulating plains; the western part, an extension of Argentina’s flat pampas; and the northern area, an extension of southern Brazil’s low regions and broad valleys. Maximum elevation above sea level is about 2,000 feet; the average being about 490 feet. Few natural forests exist, but extensive forestation with pine and eucalyptus trees has been undertaken.

**Geography - note**

second-smallest South American country (after Suriname); most of the low-lying landscape (three-quarters of the country) is grassland, ideal for cattle and sheep raising

**Uruguay Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location  | South America  |
| Total Area  | 68,037 Square Miles176,215 Square Kilometers  |
| Land Area  | 67,573 Square Miles175,015 Square Kilometers  |
| Water Area  | 463 Square Miles1,200 Square Kilometers  |
| Land Boundaries  | 1,024 Miles1,648 Kilometers  |
| Irrigated Land  | 699 Square Miles1,810 Square Kilometers  |
| Border Countries  | Argentina 579 km, Brazil 985 km  |
| Coastline  | 410 Miles660 Kilometers  |
| Geographic Coordinates  | 33 00 S, 56 00 W  |
| Terrain  | mostly rolling plains and low hills; fertile coastal lowland  |
| Highest Point  | 514 Meters  |
| Highest Point Location  | Cerro Catedral 514 m  |
| Lowest Point Location  | Atlantic Ocean 0 m  |
| Natural Resources  | arable land, hydropower, minor minerals, fisheries  |
| Time Zone  | UTC-3 (2 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)  |
| Daylight saving time  | +1hr, begins first Sunday in October; ends second Sunday in March  |

**Uruguay Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Except for a small subtropical area in the northwest, the climate is even throughout Uruguay. Temperatures are generally mild, but seasons are distinct: summer daytime temperatures average 70 degrees Fahrenheit and rarely exceed the mid-90s; autumn (March-May) is mild; and spring (September-November) is often damp, cool and windy. In winter, monthly temperatures range from 44ï¿½ 60 degrees Fahrenheit with rare frost. However, humidity, averaging 75% year round, intensifies the cold. Average annual rainfall is 39.5 inches.

**Uruguay Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate  | Except for a small subtropical area in the northwest, the climate is even throughout Uruguay. Temperatures are generally mild, but seasons are distinct: summer daytime temperatures average 70 degrees Fahrenheit and rarely exceed the mid-90s; autumn (March-May) is mild; and spring (September-November) is often damp, cool and windy. In winter, monthly temperatures range from 44ï¿½ 60 degrees Fahrenheit with rare frost. However, humidity, averaging 75% year round, intensifies the cold. Average annual rainfall is 39.5 inches.  |
| Terrain  | mostly rolling plains and low hills; fertile coastal lowland  |
| Natural Resources  | arable land, hydropower, minor minerals, fisheries  |
| Natural Hazards  | seasonally high winds (the pampero is a chilly and occasional violent wind which blows north from the Argentine pampas), droughts, floods; because of the absence of mountains, which act as weather barriers, all locations are particularly vulnerable to rapid changes from weather fronts  |
| Irrigated Land  | 699 Square Miles1,810 Square Kilometers  |
| Environmental Issues  | water pollution from meat packing/tannery industry; inadequate solid/hazardous waste disposal  |
| Environment - International Agreements  | party to: Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic-Marine Living Resources, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands signed, but not ratified: Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation  |

**Uruguay Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population  | 3,324,460  |
| Population Growth Rate  | 0.25%  |
| Urban Population  | 92.5%  |
| Population in Major Urban Areas  | MONTEVIDEO (capital) 1.672 million  |
| Nationality Noun  | Uruguayan(s)  |
| Nationality Adjective  | Uruguayan  |
| Ethnic Groups  | white 88%, mestizo 8%, black 4%, Amerindian, practically nonexistent  |
| Languages  | Spanish, Portunol, or Brazilero (Portuguese-Spanish mix on the Brazilian frontier)  |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change  | 0.45%  |

**Uruguay Medical Information**

Facilities for medical care in Uruguay are considered adequate. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

**Uruguay Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP)  | 8%  |
| Death Rate/1,000 population  | 9.52  |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate  | 24.8%  |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population  | 3  |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population  | 3.74  |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population  | 9.2  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population  | 8.17  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population  | 10.2  |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years  | 4.5%  |
| Total Fertility Rate  | 1.86  |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49)  | 77%  |
| Contraceptive Prevalence - note  | note: percent of women aged 15-50  |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births  | 29  |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate  | 0.7%  |
| HIV Aids People Living With  | 9,900  |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved  | 0.5%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved  | 94.9%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved  | 99.9%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved  | 3.6%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved  | 96.5%  |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved  | 95.8% |

**Uruguay Crime**

**Crime Information**

Street crime is common throughout Montevideo and criminals may resort to violence when the victims resist. Common targets for criminals may include tourists, individuals openly carrying valuable items, and motorists in unlocked vehicles stopped at busy intersections, including Montevideo's riverfront road known as the Rambla.

You should exercise reasonable caution to minimize your exposure to crime. Criminals are opportunists and prey on unwary people, particularly those carrying cameras, pocketbooks, laptops, or backpacks. Lock your valuables in secure hotel safes and empty your wallets of excess credit cards and cash. If dining at an outdoor restaurant, keep an eye on your belongings at all times. While driving, it is best to keep all car doors locked, windows open no more than one inch, and purses, bags, briefcases, and other valuables out of sight on the floor or in the trunk. Parked cars, particularly in the Punta Carretas and Pocitos neighborhoods, also have been broken into.

Parts of Montevideo’s Ciudad Vieja are popular tourist attractions, but the only sections of Ciudad Vieja with continual police patrols are Plaza de la Independencia, the pedestrian street Sarandi, and the Mercado del Puerto. Muggings have occurred in other parts of Ciudad Vieja - particularly for travelers walking alone or couples walking at night. A smart alternative is to call for a taxi for evening travel between restaurants, bars, and hotels. Muggings and other street crime also have occurred in residential districts of the downtown area, including Pocitos and Punta Carretas.

Montevideo continues to experience armed robberies of patrons at crowded restaurants. Most of these crimes have occurred late at night, so you should exercise additional caution if you choose to dine late.Burglaries and attempted burglaries are increasingly common in upscale residential neighborhoods, including Carrasco, Montevideo. A combination of preventive measures including rigorous use of locks and alarms, strong grillwork on all windows, guard dogs, keeping a residence occupied as much as possible, and using a security service is recommended.

During the summer months (December-March), beach resort areas such as Punta del Este see an increase in the number of petty street crimes and residential burglaries.

Exercise common sense in your activities in Montevideo and in Uruguayan resort areas, and be attentive to your personal security and surroundings in these areas.

Uruguayan law enforcement authorities have increased the number of patrol cars in residential areas and of uniformed policemen on foot in areas where criminal activity is concentrated. Patrol cars are clearly marked and equipped with cellular phones. Most police do not speak English.

**Uruguay Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in Uruguay, you are subject to its laws. If you break the law in Uruguay, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It is important to know what activities are legal and what activities are illegal wherever you go. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different from our own. Criminal penalties can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. There are also some activities that may be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States. Engaging in sexual conduct with children and using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country remains illegal in the United States and may subject you to prosecution in the United States.

Persons violating Uruguay’s laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Uruguay are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Do not buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available, as you may be breaking local law.

The Uruguayan Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing strictly enforces all regulations regarding hunting permits, as well as seasonal and numerical limits on game. Visitors who contravene local law are subject to detention by the authorities and the seizure of their weapons. Under Uruguayan law, seized weapons can only be returned after payment of a sum equivalent to the value of the property seized. Hunters are also subject to stiff fines for hunting without all appropriate permits.

Arrest notifications in host country: Uruguayan law enforcement officers are trained to automatically notify the U.S. Embassy in Montevideo if a U.S. citizen is detained or arrested. To ensure that the United States is aware of your circumstances, request that the police and prison officials notify the U.S. Embassy immediately if you are arrested or detained.

**Uruguay Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth  | 76 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female  | 79 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male  | 73 Years  |
| Median Age (female)  | 35 Years  |
| Median Age (male)  | 32 Years  |
| Median Age  | 34 Years |

**Uruguay Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language  | Spanish, Portunol, or Brazilero (Portuguese-Spanish mix on the Brazilian frontier)  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over can read and write  |
| Literacy Female  | 98.4%  |
| Literacy Male  | 97.6%  |
| Literacy Total  | 98%  |

**Uruguay Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP  | 4.5%  |
| Literacy - female  | 98.4%  |
| Literacy - male  | 97.6%  |
| Literacy - total population  | 98%  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over can read and write  |
| School Life Expectancy - female  | 17 Years  |
| School Life Expectancy - male  | 14 Years  |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary)  | 16 Years  |

**Uruguay Age of Population**

Age 0-14: 21.4 %Age 15-24: 16.0 %Age 25-54: 38.8 %Age 55-64: 9.9 %Over 64: 13.9 %Highcharts.com

**Classroom**

School uniforms are required only in private schools.

Schools are beginning to deal with an unusual problem for Latin America—overcrowding. Schools in both rural and urban settings have insufficient supplies and teachers. Children from higher income families are more likely to get past these challenges and graduate to university studies.

School lunch in Uruguay is usually a very well-balanced, nutritional meal, often consisting of some sort of vegetable soup, fish or chicken with rice or potatoes, a salad, cooked vegetables, and dessert (such as ice cream or fruit).

The typical school day used to be in four-hour shifts to accommodate the number of students in limited schooling facilities. But a few years ago, especially in the lower-income areas, schools have begun switching from four hours per day to eight hours per day in an attempt to raise test scores, especially in language and literacy. It also helps to keep at-risk kids off the streets longer each day.

Because Uruguay is the most technologically savvy country in Latin America, a small number of elementary schools in the country have been chosen to begin piloting the ambitious “One Laptop per Child” project begun by Nicholas Negroponte, former director of the media lab at the Massachesetts Institute of Technology. The goal is to create and distribute highly functional yet inexpensive ($100 each) laptops for students throughout the world. Needless to say, the children in the schools testing the new computers are very excited.

**Education Culture**

The majority of Uruguayans are descendants of European immigrants with a long tradition of educational priorities. Thus, 92% of all children in the country attend kindergarten, and many attend preschool beginning at age 4. Public schooling is free and required for children from ages 6 to 14 years old. Almost all children are able to complete this requirement. Most rural areas, however, only have elementary schools, so children must go to nearby cities if they are to attend high school. Despite this challenge, Uruguay has the highest secondary school attendance in Latin America at 85%, double the average for the southern hemisphere!

The school year begins in the first or second week of March and goes until mid-December. There are often three holiday vacations also: a week before Easter, a midwinter holiday of two weeks in the middle of July, and another spring break for a week in September.

The university in Monevideo was for many years the only university in Uruguay. In recent years, a number of private universities and institutions have been founded to supplement this traditional university, founded almost 200 years ago. Furthermore, there is a nationwide system of vocational schools. Other institutes of higher learning include facilities for training teachers. Currently, one out of every three workers in Uruguay has completed vocational or university studies. Because of this, Uruguay is known for its technological advances in Latin America, and for the way it easily adapts to the changing technologies of the world.

It is worth noting that before World War II, Uruguay had perhaps the strongest economy in all of Latin America. However, since that time, and especially during the past 20 years, the economy has been declining, which means that social programs that depend on tax dollars, such as education, has also been declining. So while the tradition and basic infrastructure is solid, the educational system is gradually becoming more brittle, especially for lower income families whose children must hit the streets to market some small trinkets or food in an effort to not only improve their situation but more often just to eat.

**Learning**

The school system is broken into two six-year periods, the first six years are primary school, followed by six years in secondary school. The last two years of secondary school are designed especially for students preparing for university studies. During those final two years, students must choose between three different focuses: biology, science, or humanities.

The courses of study are established by a national organization, which means for students that they cannot choose any elective courses but can study only the subjects outlined for each school year by that organization.

The average student to teacher ratio is 21 to 1. Some of the poorer schools approach ratios of 40 to 1.

**To School**

Kids will either walk or ride public transportation buses to school, and then return home the same way. Uruguay has a very well-developed public transportation sytem. In some areas, bicycles may be the best way to get around, but walking remains most common. Children typically stay at school for lunch.

**Uruguay Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name  | Montevideo  |
| Country Name  | Uruguay  |
| Local - Long  | Republica Oriental del Uruguay  |
| Full Country Name  | Oriental Republic of Uruguay  |
| Local - Short  | Uruguay  |
| Government Type  | constitutional republic  |
| Capital - geographic coordinate  | 34 51 S, 56 10 W  |
| Daylight Savings Time  | +1hr, begins first Sunday in October; ends second Sunday in March  |
| Capital Time Difference  | UTC-3 (2 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)  |
| National Holiday  | Independence Day, 25 August (1825)  |
| Constitution  | 27 November 1966; effective 15 February 1967; suspended 27 June 1973; revised 26 November 1989 and 7 January 1997  |
| Legal System  | civil law system based on the Spanish civil code  |
| Suffrage  | 18 years of age; universal and compulsory  |

**Uruguay Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch  | chief of state: President Jose "Pepe" MUJICA Cordano; Vice President Danilo ASTORI Saragoza (both since 1 March 2010); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government head of government: President Jose "Pepe" MUJICA Cordano; Vice President Danilo ASTORI Saragoza (both since 1 March 2010) cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president with parliamentary approval elections: president and vice president elected on the same ticket by popular vote for five-year terms (may not serve consecutive terms); election last held on 29 November 2009 (next to be held in October 2014) election results: Jose "Pepe" MUJICA Cordano elected president; percent of vote - Jose "Pepe" MUJICA Cordano 54.8%, Luis Alberto LACALLE 45.2%  |
| Legislative Branch  | bicameral General Assembly or Asamblea General consists of Chamber of Senators or Camara de Senadores (30 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms; vice president has one vote in the Senate) and Chamber of Representatives or Camara de Representantes (99 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)elections: Chamber of Senators - last held on 25 October 2009 (next to be held in October 2014); Chamber of Representatives - last held on 25 October 2009 (next to be held in October 2014)election results: Chamber of Senators - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Frente Amplio 16, Blanco 9, Colorado Party 5; Chamber of Representatives - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Frente Amplio 50, Blanco 30, Colorado Party 17, Independent Party 2  |
| Judicial Branch  | Supreme Court (judges are nominated by the president and elected for 10-year terms by the General Assembly)  |
| Regions or States  | 19 departments (departamentos, singular - departamento); Artigas, Canelones, Cerro Largo, Colonia, Durazno, Flores, Florida, Lavalleja, Maldonado, Montevideo, Paysandu, Rio Negro, Rivera, Rocha, Salto, San Jose, Soriano, Tacuarembo, Treinta y Tres  |
| Political Parties and Leaders  | Broad Front (Frente Amplio) - formerly known as the Progressive Encounter/Broad Front Coalition or EP-FA [Jorge BROVETTO] (a broad governing coalition that includes Movement for Popular Participation or MPP, New Space Party (Nuevo Espacio) [Rafael MICHELINI], Progressive Alliance (Alianza Progresista) [Rodolfo NIN NOVOA], Socialist Party [Eduardo FERNANDEZ and Reinaldo GARGANO], Communist Party [Eduardo LORIER], Uruguayan Assembly (Asamblea Uruguay) [Danilo ASTORI], and Vertiente Artiguista [Mariano ARANA]); Colorado Party (Foro Batllista) [Pedro BORDABERRY and Julio Maria SANGUINETTI]; National Party or Blanco [Luis Alberto LACALLE and Jorge LARRANAGA]  |
| International Law Organization Participation  | accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction; accepts ICCt jurisdiction  |
| International Organization Participation  | CAN (associate), CD, CELAC, FAO, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, LAES, LAIA, Mercosur, MIGA, MINURSO, MINUSTAH, MONUSCO, NAM (observer), OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, PCA, UN, UNASUR, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNMOGIP, UNOCI, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO  |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders  | Chamber of Commerce and Export of Agriproducts; Chamber of Industries (manufacturer's association); Exporters Union of Uruguay; National Chamber of Commerce and Services; PIT/CNT (powerful federation of Uruguayan Unions - umbrella labor organization); Rural Association of Uruguay (rancher's association); Uruguayan Network of Political Womenother: Catholic Church; students  |

**Uruguay Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product  | $56,270,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - official exchange rate  | $57,110,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - real growth rate  | 3.5%  |
| GDP Per Capita  | $16,600.00 (USD)  |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture  | 7.5%  |
| GDP by Sector- Industry  | 21.5%  |
| GDP by Sector- services  | 71%  |
| Population Below Poverty Line  | 20.9%  |
| Inflation Rate  | 6.9%  |
| Labor Force  | 1,637,000  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture  | 13%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry  | 14%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services  | 73%  |
| Unemployment Rate  | 6.8%  |
| Fiscal Year  | calendar year  |
| Annual Budget  | $17,500,000,000 (USD)  |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP  | -2.6%  |
| Public Debt (% of GDP)  | 81.9%  |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP  | 30%  |
| Major Industries  | food processing, electrical machinery, transportation equipment, petroleum products, textiles, chemicals, beverages  |
| Industrial Growth Rate  | 16.5%  |
| Agriculture Products  | rice, wheat, corn, barley; livestock; fish  |
| Currency Code  | Uruguayan peso (UYU)  |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14  | 7%  |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14  | 51,879  |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate  | 11.3%  |

**Uruguay Economy**

**Economic Overview**

Uruguay's well-to-do economy is characterized by an export-oriented agricultural sector, a well-educated workforce, and high levels of social spending. After averaging growth of 5% annually during 1996-98, in 1999-2002 the economy suffered a major downturn, stemming largely from the spillover effects of the economic problems of its large neighbors, Argentina and Brazil. For instance, in 2001-02 massive withdrawals by Argentina of dollars deposited in Uruguayan banks led to a plunge in the Uruguyan peso and a massive rise in unemployment. Total GDP in these four years dropped by nearly 20%, with 2002 the worst year due to the serious banking crisis. Unemployment rose to nearly 20% in 2002, inflation surged, and the burden of external debt doubled. Cooperation with the IMF and the US has limited the damage. The debt swap with private creditors carried out in 2003, which extended the maturity dates on nearly half of Uruguay's $11.3 billion in public debt, substantially alleviated the country's amortization burden in the coming years and restored public confidence. The economy is expected to resume growth in 2004 (perhaps 4% or more) as a result of high commodity prices for Uruguayan exports, the weakness of the dollar against the euro, growth in the region, low international interest rates, and greater export competitiveness. On the negative side, in December 2003 the electorate voted to repeal the law permitting a cautious liberalization of the energy industry.

**Uruguay Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports  | $6,700,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Exports  | meat, rice, leather products, wool, fish, dairy products  |
| Top Export Partners  | Brazil 22.1%, US 8.4%, Germany 5.4%, Argentina 5.1%, Mexico 4.2%, Italy 4.1%, Paraguay 4.1%, Spain 4%  |

**Uruguay Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports  | $8,300,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Imports  | machinery, chemicals, road vehicles, crude petroleum  |
| Top Import Partners  | Argentina 23.1%, Brazil 17.5%, US 8.9%, Mexico 4.7%, China 4%  |

**Uruguay Flag**

The creators of the flag were inspired by the national colors of Argentina, and by the design of the American STars and Stipes. The nine stripes represent the nine original regions of Uruguay. The sun is a symbol of freedom.

**Uruguay Flag Description**

nine equal horizontal stripes of white (top and bottom) alternating with blue; there is a white square in the upper hoist-side corner with a yellow sun bearing a human face known as the Sun of May and 16 rays alternately triangular and wavy

Uruguay flag



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anthem Lyrics English  | Orientals, our nation or the grave,Liberty or with glory we die.Its the vows that our souls pronounceand which heroicly we will fullfill.Liberty, Liberty, Orientals.This is the outcry which our nation savedand its braves in fierce battlesof sublime enthusiasm enflamedThis Holy gift of Glory we deservedTyrants: Tremble!Liberty in combat we will Cry Out!and even dying, Freedom we shall also Shout! |

**Uruguay Interesting Facts**

* Birthday celebrations in Uruguay include the principal ritual of a birthday is the cake with candles and lights out, with the eternal song "Happy Birthday to you" At the end of the song, the birthday person blows out the candles and all guests applaud or cheer, some make jokes, whistle loudly, and touch the birthday person's shoulder or head. When a girl reaches the age of 15, she puts on a formal dress and dances a waltz with possible suitors.
* By law, children under fifteen cannot work unless they have a special permit. In practice, however, many children younger than fifteen work in restaurants and family businesses. The prevalence of children begging in the streets of the cities increased during the 1990s.
* Festivals of music and dancing are held throughout the year in different towns and cities. Montevideo hosts a Candombe festival in May and a tango festival called Joventango in October.
* In 1939, the Graf Spee, a small German battleship, after sinking several British ships in the Battle of the Atlantic, was cornered near Montevideo harbor by the British navy. The Uruguayans were not sympathetic to the Germans and insisted that the battleship leave the harbor. Rather than surrender to the British, Captain Hans Langsdorf sent his crew ashore and scuttled his ship in the Río de la Plata. This event is remembered as an important confrontation early in the Second World War.
* In the west, along the River Uruguay, there are several well-known hot springs, such as Termas de Daymán and Termas del Arapey, where the waters are rich in minerals. People go there to relax in the warm waters and relieve ailments such as arthritis.
* Just outside Montevideo, in the town of Atlántida, is a remarkable church designed by Uruguayan engineer and architect Eladio Dieste and built in 1959. The brick walls of the church curve in and out like the waves of the sea.
* One of the longest murals in the world was painted by the Uruguayan artist Carlos Páez Vilaró. The mural stretches along the side of a tunnel that connects the two buildings of the Pan American Union in Washington. Vilaró also painted a mural for the United Nations building in New York City.
* Personal visiting cards are common in Uruguay. New acquaintances or business people will exchange cards when they first meet. Among young people this custom is not common, but it is still expected among professional working people.
* Students have to make their own way to school, since there is no school bus system. In the countryside, getting to school is more difficult, since schools in rural zones are widely dispersed. Some students have to find lodgings near their school or university.
* The Costa-Gavras movie, State of Siege (1973), is set in Uruguay in the early 1970s. It explores the conflict between Uruguay's government and the leftist Tupamaro guerrillas.
* The drinking of yerba mate is a respected tradition in Uruguay. Sharing a gourd of yerba mate is also a good way to socialize and exchange information. During the military regime of the 1970s, when public gatherings of citizens were discouraged, drinking mate was one way that people could still get together and talk freely.
* The gauchos, or Uruguayan cowboys, chase rheas on horseback and throw boleadoras at them to tangle their feet. Boleadoras are leather thongs tipped with leather-covered stones. Inuit hunters in Canada use a similar weapon to snare small birds.
* The official name of Uruguay is La Repú blica Oriental del Uruguay, which means 'the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.' This name refers to the country's location on the east bank of the Río de la Plata. The word 'Uruguay' is thought to have come from an indigenous word meaning 'the river of shellfish.'
* The ombú is a huge evergreen tree that grows in the prairies of Uruguay. It can reach great heights and provides a point of reference as well as shelter for travelers.
* There is a small community of Jews in Montevideo. Most are Ashkenazic immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe.
* Uruguay's soccer team won gold medals at the Olympic Games in 1924 and 1928. The Uruguayans were also the first to host, and to win, the World Cup, in 1930. They won again in 1950.
* Uruguay is a member of MERCOSUR, an economic alliance uniting Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.
* Uruguayan women obtained the right to open separate bank accounts in 1918.

**History of Uruguay**

*José Gervasio Artigas, Leader of the independence movement*

WHEN SPANIARDS DISCOVERED the territory of present-day Uruguay in 1516, they found only a rolling prairie populated by groups of Indians living in primitive conditions. When confronted by the Spaniards, the Indians fiercely defended their freedom and their independent way of life. their continued ferocious resistance to Spanish conquest, combined with the absence of gold and silver, discouraged settlement in this region during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Colonization by Spain began to increase, however, when Portugal showed an interest in expanding Brazil’s frontiers to the Río de la Plata Estuary in the late seventeenth century (see uruguay/uy00\_06a.pdf"> fig. 1). Indeed, the early history of Uruguay is dominated by the struggle between Spain and Portugal and then between Brazil and Argentina for control of the Banda Oriental (as Uruguay was then known), the eastern side, or bank, so called because the territory lies to the east of the Río Uruguay, which forms the border with Argentina and flows into the Río de la Plata.

The conquistadors imported cattle, which were well suited to the region, with its abundant pastureland, temperate climate, and ample water supply. Cattle soon became the main source of wealth and consequently the main attraction of the region, and the territory was opened up by hardy pioneers and gauchos, or cowboys, whose wide-ranging way of life contributed in no small part to the spirit of independence that has long characterized Uruguay. Montevideo was founded by the Spanish in the early eighteenth century as a military stronghold. The Spanish fleet used its natural harbor, which soon developed into a commercial center competing with Buenos Aires, the Argentine capital established on the opposite shore of the Río de la Plata.

The move to independence began, as elsewhere in Latin America, in the early nineteenth century. Uruguay’s revolt against Spain was initiated in 1811 by José Gervasio Artigas, a gaucho chieftain who became a hero of the independence movement. Artigas is known to Uruguayans as the father of Uruguayan independence, although his attempt to gain autonomy for the country within the boundaries of a regional federation was unsuccessful. Independence was not finally and formally achieved until 1828, following a war between Brazil and Uruguayan patriots supported by Argentina. British diplomatic mediation ended the conflict and resulted in the recognition of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay (República Oriental del Uruguay) as an independent state. Nevertheless, civil wars, invasions, and foreign intervention continued to disrupt the nation’s development until the end of the nineteenth century.

The two political parties that have dominated Uruguayan political life since independence were born in these early years of instability, although at that time they were little more than feuding bands of gauchos. The issue that provoked the initial major confrontation was federalism versus unitary rule. In 1838 the federalist sympathies of General Manuel Oribe (president, 1835-38) led to a revolt by the forces of General José Fructoso Rivera (president, 1830-35), who again became president following the defeat of Oribe and his followers. Oribe’s forces, supported by merchants, landowners, and the high clergy, became known as Blancos in reference to the white (*blanco*) hatbands they wore to distinguish their own men from the enemy on the field of battle. Rivera’s forces, representing more liberal urban elements, were distinguished by red (*colorado*) hatbands and thus were designated Colorados. The political lines drawn in the 1830s evolved into two rival parties: the Colorado Party (Partido Colorado), which identified itself as the defender of Uruguayan sovereignty and as the champion of the common man and liberalism, and the National Party (Partido Nacional, usually referred to as the Blancos), which stood for order and conservatism and declared itself protector of the faith.

During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, a period that included fifteen years of military rule, there were frequent confrontations and clashes between the Colorados and the Blancos and among competing rival factions of the Colorados. A growing gulf between the capital city and the interior contributed to a solidification of the previously somewhat amorphous ideologies of the two parties as the Colorados recruited urban immigrant groups, especially laborers, and the Blancos represented more conservative rural elements.

Political stability came about in the first two decades of the twentieth century largely through the efforts of the dominant figure in the Colorado Party. José Batlle y Ordóñez (president, 1903-07, 1911-15) brilliantly promoted the social, economic, and political modernization of the country until his death in 1929, guiding a social transformation that reordered virtually every aspect of national life. His programs included the establishment of a comprehensive social welfare program, the encouragement of domestic industry, the improvement of working conditions, the expansion of education, and the separation of church and state.

Batlle y Ordóñez’s Colorado successors did not uniformly or consistently share his commitment to economic and social reform, but progress toward political, social, and economic modernization nevertheless continued. Between 1946 and 1956, Luis Batlle Berres (president, 1947-51), a nephew of Batlle y Ordóñez, was the leading political figure. Espousing neo-Batllism, he attempted to further industrialize the economy, develop its agricultural sector, and expand the state apparatus, as well as to renew social progress. But the process came to a halt in the mid-1950s as a result of economic difficulties and ended with the triumph of the National Party (the Blancos) in 1958, after more than ninety years of Colorado government.

During the eight Blanco administrations (1958-67), instruments of state-directed economic policy were dismantled, relations with the International Monetary Fund (uruguay/uy\_glos.asp#IMF"> IMF--see Glossary) became closer, and the livestock sector became increasingly important. Nevertheless, the economic crisis continued, and political and social turbulence increased. Unions formed a centralized organization in which the left had a dominant influence, and an urban guerrilla group, the National Liberation Movement-Tupamaros (Movimiento de Liberación NacionalTupamaros --MLN-T) was formed.

In 1967 the Colorados regained power, but President Jorge Pacheco Areco (1967-72) enforced a limited state of siege throughout most of his tenure. He applied a price- and wagefreeze policy to fight inflation, banned leftist groups, and called in the military to repress the Tupamaros, whose acts of urban terrorism posed a major national security threat. In 1972 Pacheco’s successor, President Juan María Bordaberry Arocena (1972-76), supported by the military, declared a state of "internal war," closed the General Assembly, persecuted the opposition, banned unions and leftist parties, and curtailed civil liberties. The military dictatorship that he instituted also implemented a neoliberal, monetarist, economic policy that sought to reverse years of capital flight and economic stagnation by increasing exports and controlling inflation. Although it scored some economic successes, the military suffered a defeat in 1980 after submitting an authoritarian constitution to a plebiscite. From then on, civil political leaders returned to the political scene, and in 1984 the majority of the political parties and the military agreed to call for elections in November 1985, thus allowing for a transition to democracy.

**Uruguay History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Uruguay Year in History | Uruguay Timeline |
| 1500  | **Spanish colonists began to arrive in Uruguay.**Spanish colonists began to arrive in Uruguay.  |
| 1516  | **Juan Diaz de Solis became the first European to land in Uruguay.**Juan Diaz de Solis became the first European to land in Uruguay.  |
| 1600  | **Spanish and Portuguese settlers colonized Uruguay.**Spanish and Portuguese settlers colonized Uruguay.  |
| 1726  | **Spanish found Montevideo and take over Uruguay from the Portuguese.**Spanish found Montevideo and take over Uruguay from the Portuguese; many of the indigenous people are killed.  |
| 1776  | **Spain encompassed all of its territories in south-east South America to create one large colony.**Spain encompassed all of its territories in south-east South America to create one large colony called the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata.  |
| 1777  | **Spanish colonists attacked Colonia to drive out the Portuguese.**Spanish colonists attacked Colonia to drive out the Portuguese.  |
| 1800  | **Italian immigrants began to settle in Uruguay.**Italian immigrants began to settle in Uruguay.  |
| 1800  | **Jose Gervasio Artigas organized an army to fight for independence from Spain.**Jose Gervasio Artigas organized an army to fight for independence from Spain.  |
| 1810  | **Overthrow of the king of Spain by Napoleon.**Overthrow of the king of Spain by Napoleon.  |
| 1812  | **Orientales fight against Argentinian and Brazilian invaders.**Orientales, or Uruguayans from the eastern side of the River Plata, fight against Argentinian and Brazilian invaders.  |
| 1814  | **Montevideo surrendered ending the control of Spain over Uruguay.**Montevideo surrendered ending the control of Spain over Uruguay.  |
| 1816  | **Portuguese troops attack Uruguayans.**Portuguese troops attack Uruguayans.  |
| 1825  | **A group of Uruguayan patriots revolt against Brazil.**A group of Uruguayan patriots revolt against Brazil. Argentina supported the patriots in their fight against Brazil  |
| 1828  | **Uruguay became an independent nation.**Uruguay became an independent nation.  |
| 1830  | **Uruguay adopted its first constitution and Jose Fructuoso Rivera became the first president.**Uruguay adopted its first constitution and Jose Fructuoso Rivera became the first president.  |
| 1838  | **Civil war between Whites and Colorados, or Reds.**Civil war between Whites (the future conservative party) and Colorados, or Reds (the future liberals).  |
| 1865  | **Uruguay joins Argentina and Brazil in war against Paraguay, which is defeated.**Uruguay joins Argentina and Brazil in war against Paraguay, which is defeated.  |
| 1933  | **Opposition groups excluded from politics following military coup.**Opposition groups excluded from politics following military coup.  |
| 1962  | **Campaign by Tupamaros guerrillas.**Campaign by Tupamaros guerrillas.  |
| 1984  | **Violent protests against repression and deteriorating economic conditions.**Violent protests against repression and deteriorating economic conditions.  |
| 2004  | **Left-winger Tabare Vazquez wins presidential elections.**Left-winger Tabare Vazquez wins presidential elections, marking a dramatic political shift.  |

**Uruguay Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| August 25th  | **Independence Day** |

**Uruguay Recipes and Diet**

Uruguay food and meal customs

**Diet**

Uruguayans eat meat at most meals. Beef and lamb are relatively cheap and Uruguayans prepare them in many ways. The traditional asado is a barbecue where the meat is cooked slowly over coals.

Other ways to prepare meats include sausages (salchichas) or soups (pucheros) prepared with meat and vegetables. The parrillada is a typical Uruguayan dish of roasted meats prepared in various ways. Chivito is a steak sandwich and hungaras are spicy sausages served in a roll. Milanesa Uruguaya is a breaded, deep-fried steak.

Breakfast is usually a light meal, with bread and jam and a cup of coffee or mate. Lunch may be a large meal at home, but in factories and schools most people just have a sandwich. The most substantial meal of the day is dinner, which Uruguayans eat late in the evening. Soup, salad, steak, bread, wine, cheese and fruit, followed by coffee or tea, make up a typical Uruguayan meal.

In the countryside, the gauchos often camp under the branches of the ombu tree, and light a fire for a barbecue. They boil water to make yerba mate, a bitter tea, which they drink from a hollowed gourd through a silver tube tipped with a strainer. This silver tube is called a bombilla and is often finely engraved. The gourd of yerba mate is passed from person to person. Gauchos play their guitars and vie with each other in improvising songs called payadas de contrapunto.

Food in Uruguay



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**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Uruguay Clothing and Fashion**

Western style of clothing is worn. Uruguay's *gauchos* (cowboys) wear baggy pants called *bombachos*, wide brimmed black hats that offer protection from the sun.



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**Dating, Family and Children Uruguay**

**Family and Children**

In the cities, most people live in modern apartment buildings or small houses. The very poor live in shantytowns called cantegriles on the outskirts of the cities. In the countryside, houses are usually only one story and made of red brick, often with red tile roofs and open verandas.

Most families are small, with only one or two children. Sometimes a grandparent or other elderly relative shares the house with a couple and their children.

Cattle ranches on the plains are still staffed by gauchos, the cowboys of South America. Most wear the traditional clothing of baggy pants, black boots, long-sleeved cotton shirt and wide-brimmed black hat. In bad weather, they wear a poncho. Gauchos spend most of their time on horseback, rounding up herds of cattle or sheep, branding them, and mending fences. They live on an estancia in a building like a dormitory, which they share with other gauchos

**Uruguay Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

Uruguayans address people who are not close friends or family very formally. Señor, Señora or Señorita, that is Mr., Mrs. or Miss, are the usual forms of address. People may also be addressed according to their professions: lawyers may be addressed as Doctor, accountants as Contador, engineers as Ingeniero.

**Gestures**

It is traditional to shake hands with visitors when they arrive and when they depart. When men greet each other, they may hug each other, or pat each other on the back. Women usually kiss each others' cheeks. In conversation, Uruguayans stand close together when they talk.

**Visiting**

Uruguayans frequently drop in on their friends. Telephoning first is not necessary. Hospitality is always extended to visitors. A gourd of yerba mate is often the first thing offered. In Uruguay, it is customary to greet strangers when passing on city streets. However, rural residents tend to be quite friendly to strangers.

**Uruguay Church and Religion**

Uruguay is a secular state. The government has eliminated connections between the church and state. Religious teaching is not permitted in public schools.

Uruguay was the home of Juan Luis Segundo, one of the leading writers on liberation theology. Segundo and other writers encouraged Catholics to help liberate the poor and powerless from oppression in all forms. Priests, nuns and lay people who supported the movement went to work in local communities as literacy teachers, health workers and educators.

Uruguay has a small minority of Protestants, which includes a group called the Waldensians. This group originated in the Alpine areas of southern France and northern Italy in the 13th century. The Waldensians opposed many Catholic practices and were persecuted for their beliefs. In the 19th century, several groups of Waldensians emigrated to Uruguay and Argentina. They founded the Colonia Valdense on the River Plate in the 1850s. This was one of the earliest Protestant communities in South America.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on religion. The penal code prohibits mistreatment of ethnic, religious, and other minority groups.

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom.

54 percent designated themselves as Roman Catholics, 6 percent as evangelical Protestants, 5 percent as Protestants, 9 percent as believers without a religious affiliation, and 26 percent as nonbelievers. The mainline Protestant minority was composed primarily of Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, and Baptists. Other denominations and branches included evangelicals, Pentecostals, Mennonites, Eastern Orthodox, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) The Unification Church was active in the country and had major property holdings, including a daily newspaper. There was a Muslim population that lived primarily near the border with Brazil.

Many Christian groups performed foreign missionary work. Groups reported no difficulties obtaining visas for religious work. Statistics indicated that there were an estimated 780 Mormon missionaries from neighboring countries and the United States in the country.

There is strict separation of church and state. All religious groups are entitled to tax exemptions on their houses of worship, and there were no reports of difficulties in receiving these exemptions. To receive the tax exemptions, a religious group must register as a nonprofit entity and draft organizing statutes. It then applies to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which examines the legal entity and grants religious status. The group must reapply every five years. Once the ministry grants religious status, the church can request an exemption each year from the taxing body, which is usually the municipal government.

The religious holy days of Three Kings Day, Carnival (the Monday and Tuesday prior to Ash Wednesday), Holy Thursday, Good Friday, All Souls' Day, and Christmas are celebrated as official national holidays but with secular names.

Muslims may obtain an optional identity card that identifies their religious affiliation to employers and allows them to leave work early on Friday. A Muslim representative stated that employers generally respected this practice.

Religious instruction in public schools is prohibited. Public schools allow students who belong to minority religious groups to miss school for religious holidays without penalty. There are private religious schools, which are mainly Catholic and Jewish.

**Students Life in Uruguay**

**Mornings**

Mornings at home in Uruguay may differ from home to home, depending on which European community the family’s ancestry comes from. In any case, children arise early and have a light breakfast of local bread and a tea-like drink called yerba maté (the national drink) or fruit juice before heading off to attend school.

**School**

Kids will either walk or ride public transportation buses to school, and then return home the same way. Uruguay has a very well-developed public transportation sytem. In some areas, bicycles may be the best way to get around, but walking remains most common. Children typically stay at school for lunch.

**Classroom**

School uniforms are required only in private schools.

Schools are beginning to deal with an unusual problem for Latin America—overcrowding. Schools in both rural and urban settings have insufficient supplies and teachers. Children from higher income families are more likely to get past these challenges and graduate to university studies.

School lunch in Uruguay is usually a very well-balanced, nutritional meal, often consisting of some sort of vegetable soup, fish or chicken with rice or potatoes, a salad, cooked vegetables, and dessert (such as ice cream or fruit).

The typical school day used to be in four-hour shifts to accommodate the number of students in limited schooling facilities. But a few years ago, especially in the lower-income areas, schools have begun switching from four hours per day to eight hours per day in an attempt to raise test scores, especially in language and literacy. It also helps to keep at-risk kids off the streets longer each day.

Because Uruguay is the most technologically savvy country in Latin America, a small number of elementary schools in the country have been chosen to begin piloting the ambitious “One Laptop per Child” project begun by Nicholas Negroponte, former director of the media lab at the Massachesetts Institute of Technology. The goal is to create and distribute highly functional yet inexpensive ($100 each) laptops for students throughout the world. Needless to say, the children in the schools testing the new computers are very excited.

**Student Learning**

The school system is broken into two six-year periods, the first six years are primary school, followed by six years in secondary school. The last two years of secondary school are designed especially for students preparing for university studies. During those final two years, students must choose between three different focuses: biology, science, or humanities.

The courses of study are established by a national organization, which means for students that they cannot choose any elective courses but can study only the subjects outlined for each school year by that organization.

The average student to teacher ratio is 21 to 1. Some of the poorer schools approach ratios of 40 to 1.

**After School Activities**

Extracurricular activities in Uruguay are largely nonexistent. If children want to participate in sports or other interests, they must join a community club. This is consistent not only with the Latin American school experience in general but also with their European heritage, where sports are dominated by private clubs. Some private schools—especially for Americans living in the country—tend to offer more after-school activities than public schools so that the children will more readily fit into American schools when their families move back to the United States.

**Student Free Time**

The most popular sport in Uruguay is soccer, as is the case in most Latin American countries. Also popular, however, are basketball and rugby. Because most people in the country live along the coast, all Uruguayans, including children of all ages, spend a lot of time at the beaches. Swimming is therefore a natural pastime as well.

For teens, dating is usually a group activity. They enjoy going to movies, dancing, live theater, and concerts. They also enjoy going to a café for a drink or snack and just hang out.

**Evenings**

The traditional family structure that is so very important to most of Latin America is beginning to break up in Uruguay, especially in lower income families. In many such families, the average age for grandparents is 30-32. The mothers are 14-16, and many have no steady partner. In 2004, there were more divorces than marriages in Uruguay. Nonetheless, families are still the most important social structure in the country, and evenings are usually spent with family. (Summer vacations are usually spent at the beach with the family.) So evenings usually bring family dinner, chatting together around the dinner table, and perhaps entertaining another family of friends in your home for some simple conversation and light refreshments.

As in many countries, television has reduced socializing at movies and has moved such gatherings to the homes. When kids don’t get together with friends, they tend to watch television with their families at home in the evenings.

The people of Uruguay eat a lot of meat, especially beef. So meals tend to revolve around beef dishes but also include plenty of vegetables and fruit. The evening meal is often eaten from nine to ten at night.

**Education Culture**

The majority of Uruguayans are descendants of European immigrants with a long tradition of educational priorities. Thus, 92% of all children in the country attend kindergarten, and many attend preschool beginning at age 4. Public schooling is free and required for children from ages 6 to 14 years old. Almost all children are able to complete this requirement. Most rural areas, however, only have elementary schools, so children must go to nearby cities if they are to attend high school. Despite this challenge, Uruguay has the highest secondary school attendance in Latin America at 85%, double the average for the southern hemisphere!

The school year begins in the first or second week of March and goes until mid-December. There are often three holiday vacations also: a week before Easter, a midwinter holiday of two weeks in the middle of July, and another spring break for a week in September.

The university in Monevideo was for many years the only university in Uruguay. In recent years, a number of private universities and institutions have been founded to supplement this traditional university, founded almost 200 years ago. Furthermore, there is a nationwide system of vocational schools. Other institutes of higher learning include facilities for training teachers. Currently, one out of every three workers in Uruguay has completed vocational or university studies. Because of this, Uruguay is known for its technological advances in Latin America, and for the way it easily adapts to the changing technologies of the world.

It is worth noting that before World War II, Uruguay had perhaps the strongest economy in all of Latin America. However, since that time, and especially during the past 20 years, the economy has been declining, which means that social programs that depend on tax dollars, such as education, has also been declining. So while the tradition and basic infrastructure is solid, the educational system is gradually becoming more brittle, especially for lower income families whose children must hit the streets to market some small trinkets or food in an effort to not only improve their situation but more often just to eat.

**Uruguay Sport and Recreation**

Young boys spend hours playing soccer on the street or in parks. Young women may join a volleyball or basketball team or take dance classes. Children often play games with colored marbles. Small boys like to make slingshots which they use to hunt small birds and to crack the insulating porcelain around electrical high wires.

Polo is also a popular sport among the well-to-do. Gauchos play a traditional game called pato in which two teams of horsemen compete for possession of a ball with handles. Gauchos can also demonstrate their skills in a criolla (rodeo). They try to stay on wild horses that fight to throw off their riders.