

Montevideo:

a destination for congresses and events.





Liliam Kechichián

Uruguay's Minister of Tourism and Sports

Which are the main features of Montevideo as a tourist city, being at the same time the capital city of Uruguay?

Firstly, Montevideo is the main destination point of Uruguay. Around one million of the 2,800,000 tourists that Uruguay receives each year choose Montevideo. The city has a human dimension which is very attractive for tourists coming from large cities. Its cultural diversity makes it very interesting for them. Not just its seafront, but also the historical quarter of the Ciudad Vieja, with its distinctive Italian architecture, and some other particularities, make it a unique city.

Which are its strengths as a destination point?

The number of hotel rooms -which used to be a weakness eight or ten years ago- has been growing. In the short future Montevideo will have between 2,500 and 3,000 new hotel beds. We have a very interesting hotel offering, including international hotel chains such as Sofitel, Hyatt, and Hilton. Montevideo features a significant number of skilled human resources. It holds many public and private hotel schools which produce highly qualified graduates. However, there is still a lot to be done in language management. I would say that Montevideo's strength is the strength of Uruguay as a whole: a well-respected country, which holds an investment grade, as the new Conrad investors underlined.

Montevideo takes advantage of this image to a large extent. Montevideo does not have clearly distinguished tourist seasons, does it?

Tourists come all over the year. Despite February Carnival, summer used to be a low season, but it is not anymore. I think the city has become a sun-and-beach destination. In this sense, we have worked with Argentine provinces such as Mendoza, Tucumán, Misiones, and Corrientes, where people choose different beaches to spend holidays. Montevideo attracts many tourists from these provinces. The tourist season is not as clearly defined as it used to some years ago.

Summer coincides with the cruise season, and it is said that those who arrive on board of a cruise come back later to stay longer. Does this happen in Montevideo?

Cruises are a sort of letter of presentation for cities. Many tourists get surprised at what they find when they arrive here, in the south of South America. They have told us that Montevideo is a hidden jewel. The return by other means happens less in Montevideo than in Punta del Este, as hotel surveys have proven.

Which three places of Montevideo would you recommend visiting? Where would you take visitors?

Definitely to the Ciudad Vieja. I would first show them Plaza Zabala, one of the most typical pictures of Montevideo. Then I would take them to the Memorial de los Detenidos Desaparecidos, in the Cerro area, to watch Montevideo bay. Strangely enough, despite displaying one of the most beautiful views of the city, this place is little visited. Thirdly, I would show them the seafront (rambla), and then I would take them to see a Carnival show in the Teatro de Verano



Daniel Martínez
Mayor of Montevideo



Which are the goals for 2015 regarding tourism when taking charge of the City Hall of Montevideo?

Our city is the main destination for tourists in a national level. We want to put Montevideo into the dynamic, sustainable and inclusive cities in the region. For that purpose, we are working on recreation and also creating new tourists centers based on plans that we are developing in areas preserved for their heritage. We focus on the diversity of the tourist offer and we don't forget to work together with the private sector.

How the infrastructure and the services we offer grew?

The people arriving into Montevideo will see a modern city prepare to receive tourist from our country and also from other parts of the world. When cruises arrives into the Port, we have a tourist office nearby, in the Port Market, and another one in the City Hall. Also the museums became a reference for tourists. We continue to emphasize in the hotel area, diversifying the offers and complementing with gastronomical and cultural events. We can mention some of them such as the Hotel Casino Carrasco and some hotels boutique specialized in different neighborhoods of Montevideo. We are trying to increase the potential of Montevideo as a reference for the conference and events circuit. The Investment Office allow us to work with the investors in order to identify the business opportunities.

Why the cultural offer matters?

Montevideo is recognized for the quality and diversity of its cultural offer. Today we have an increasing number of shows on the week and also on weekends. Also our culture is reflected in each event along the year such as candombe, murga, the “criollas” (the countryside brought into the city), the “Movida Joven” (cultural event focus on the youngest), etc. Not only the main cultural circuit in Montevideo matters but we work also to create a new ones in different neighborhoods.

Which are the challenges that Montevideo faces regarding the region?

Montevideo was vanguard creating the network “Mercociudades”. It's an economical and financial hub for tourists coming from everywhere. We are working together with the national government in order to enhance as a logistical regional hub. This process of value added has to be develop together with the sister cities that we have around.

Which places would you choose to visit on the weekend?

I'm a huge fan of soccer and a visit to the Centenario Stadium it's a place you cannot miss. The coastline walk in any of the places you visit will surely enchant you. Another place to point it out is the Cerro of Montevideo with a unequaled view of Montevideo and its bay. Finally, the “Barra de Santa Lucía” where you can do water activities in the Santa Lucia River and enjoy gastronomical and hand craft activities.



Montevideo

The seafront and its beaches, the longest Carnival in the world, the kindness of its people, and the cultural richness of a capital city “with a human dimension” are some of the dearest values of Montevideo.



Lying on the River Plate, Montevideo is the capital city of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, the political and economic center of the country, and the administrative headquarters of the MERCOSUR. With near one million and a half inhabitants, almost a half of the country's population, it is the largest city of Uruguay. It has a mild climate, with an annual average temperature of around 17°C, and four clearly distinguished seasons.

The quality of life of Uruguayans stands out in the region. Due to its political, social and macroeconomic stability, Uruguay is one of the safest countries in the world. In 2006 Mercer Human Resources ranked Montevideo as the Latin American city with the best quality of life.

The entire province department of Montevideo is a reference destination in the River Plate region and in Latin America. Throughout the year, Montevideo offers visitors a diverse and busy cultural and recreational agenda, captivating landscapes, and priceless values such as the warmth and hospitality of its people.



Montevideo beaches on the River Plate are famous for their fine white sand. Its over 30-kilometer long seafront allows for walking, running, cycling, and exercising at its outdoor gym equipment, and it is one of the main attractions of the city. The proximity between the urban and rural areas increases the variety of tourist proposals. Just 20 minutes away from the center of the city, there appear tourist estancias and wineries which put tourists in touch with nature, and give access to the cultural traditions of Uruguayan countryside.

Montevideo beaches

The fine white sands and the calm waters of the River Plate are one of the main attractions of Montevideo. All the beaches are fit for swimming and feature life saving and monitoring services.

Ramírez, Pocitos, Buceo, Malvín, and De los Ingleses beaches hold an ISO 14001 Environmental Management certificate, making Montevideo recognized by its environmental performance in managing the capital city beaches. Montevideo beaches lie along a 30-kilometer coastline, popularly known as the rambla.

This is the largest socialized coastal area of Latin America, nominated for UNESCO World Heritage Site. Just in a few minutes, visitors can get out from a meeting room, enjoy the beach, practice sports such as golf or navigation, go shopping, visit rural areas, or attend a cultural show.

A tourist bus service with multilingual audio tracks in seven languages offers a safe and speedy way to get to know the main attractions of the city. Also, visitors can easily get from Montevideo to other tourist points of the country, as distances in Uruguay are very short.



In 2013 Montevideo was declared Ibero-American Capital of Culture for a second time. This distinction was awarded on the 200th Anniversary of Artigas' 1813 Instructions, and was an opportunity for celebrating together with all the arts: the city goes on partying, with a rich agenda of events and spectacles.

Business tourism

Its strategic location within the MERCOSUR, and its high-quality infrastructure and services make Montevideo a city constantly chosen to host important events.





In Uruguay business meeting continues growing and specializing, in search of a better positioning and of the professionalization of the sector. This sector is booming. In recent years it has increased its offering with the addition of LATU, the renovated Teatro Solís, and the modern Auditorio Adela Reta del Sodre, among the most significant works. At the same time, new first-class hotels have arrived through investments made by major international hotel chains, such as Sofitel, Hilton, and Hyatt.

The enhancement, advisory and monitoring services provided by different enterprises in congresses and conventions is supported by AUDOC (Spanish acronym for 'Uruguayan Association of Organizers of Congresses, Fairs, Exhibitions, and Related Events').

AUDOC is a member of COCAL (Federation of Entities Organizing Congresses and Related Events in Latin America), and of the Montevideo Tourist Conglomerate, a public-private institutional system for the management of tourist destination points.

Benefits of holding congresses in Montevideo

Some of the competitive advantages offered by Uruguay in this sector are: VAT payment exemption for congress rooms and associated services; a policy which fosters the organization of congresses; the existence of the SOS protocol, which provides economic support to the associations and entities which suggest Uruguay for hosting congresses; and cutting-edge services and technology.

Go to the service providers directory:
www.descubrimontevideo.uy/turismo-de-reuniones



Access ways

By air

Carrasco Airport, located in the outskirts of Montevideo, has direct air connection with Argentina (Buenos Aires), Brazil (San Pablo, Porto Alegre and Río de Janeiro), Chile (Santiago), Paraguay (Asunción), Peru (Lima), Panama (Panama City), Spain (Madrid), France (Paris) and USA (Miami).

Also, it features international connections through the following airlines: Aerolíneas Argentinas, Austral, Iberia, Sol Líneas Aéreas, GOL, TAM, Lan Chile, Taca, Copa Airlines, American Airlines, Air France, Air Europa, and BQB.

In architectonic terms, Carrasco Airport was ranked first in the world in the 'Transport' category of a contest organized by the US organization www.architizer.com. The contest winners were selected by a jury composed of 200 architecture and design professionals.



By River

Montevideo port has a direct river connection with Buenos Aires port, which takes just over two hours. A combination of river and land connection with Buenos Aires is also possible through the port of the city of Colonia. Fast ships crossing the River Plate cover around 11 daily frequencies.

Main congresses held in Montevideo

- XVI Ibero-American Summit of Chiefs of State and Government - 2006
- XV International Conference of the Latin American Association of Linguistics and Philology - 2008
- XII Meeting of Latin American Geographers - 2009
- 53rd Annual Meeting of the IDB Board of Governors - 2012
- II ICCA Latin America Meeting - 2013
- International Sport Press Association Congress - 2015
- Hostelling International - 2016

Tips for Montevideo tourist

Seafront

Along over 30 kilometers of coastal line on the River Plate, visitors can walk, bike, run, or just contemplate the sunset. Montevideo's seafront features emblematic views of the Southern Cone within safe surroundings. Also, there are new free-use outdoor gym stations for working out.

Candombe: drumbeat in the city

An infectious rhythm as few others, candombe emerged from the ethnic mix of beats brought by black Africans arrived as slaves. Illustrated by the llamadas (drum calls) parade, candombe can be heard at weekends and holidays in different neighborhoods of Montevideo, such as Sur, Palermo, Córdón, Buceo, and Malvín, among others.



World Football Monument

The Estadio Centenario (Centenario Stadium) was inaugurated on 18th July 1930 to play the first Football World Cup, which was won by Uruguay's national team. It was declared World Football Monument by FIFA, and accommodates 60,000 spectators. Beneath the stadium homage tower, in the Olímpica stand, a Football Museum holds the treasured wealth of the rich history of local football. Visits: Mondays to Fridays, from 10 am to 5 pm.

Sundays: Feria de Tristán Narvaja

One of the most typical places of Montevideo, truly a 'flea market' with a centenary tradition -it was opened in 1909- it has become a sort of ritual both for Montevideo dwellers and tourists. It features an offer of items as ample and rich as extravagant: fruit and vegetables coexist with books, disks, antiquities, collectibles, decorative items, art crafts, and all imaginable stuff. It starts at Tristán Narvaja St. and 18 de Julio Ave., and extends across several blocks. Open on Sundays, from 9 am to around 4 pm.

Enjoying the Uruguayan meat, wine and jam

Visitors can enjoy Uruguayan delicious charcoal-grilled meat slowly cooked at a restaurant barbecue. Meat can be accompanied by a large variety of embutidos and organ meats, such as sausages, blood sausages, mollejas, and kidney. Beverage may consist of a Tannat wine, an outstanding wine variety of our country, and dessert may be based on dulce de leche, a typical jam of the River Plate region. Put together, these constituents ignite an irresistible passion.

Another option to taste meat is trying the famous Uruguayan chivito: a sandwich made of grilled beef tenderloin, lettuce, tomato, hard-boiled eggs, pepper, and mayonnaise, and which may also include ham, bacon, mozzarella cheese. It is usually accompanied by French fries.



The wine paths

Montevideo wine region is located beyond Colón and Lezica neighborhoods. Uruguay stands out due to its privileged geographical location for the production of fine wine (35^º southern latitude, the same as Mendoza and Chile's central valley). Continuing with a centennial family tradition, its excellent wineries produce different wine varieties, among which the Tannat stands out. This Uruguayan distinctive wine variety was introduced in the country by Basque-French Pascual Harriague in the 19th century. Tourist wineries and vineyards are a not-to-be-missed stroll.

A tango city

Montevideo, co-creator of the tango, offers interesting places to live the actual experience of the tango dance. Bars and cafes offer tango performances, in which professional or amateur artists share with the public their passion for the River Plate music. For those visitors who enjoy dancing, there are tango and milonga dancing places with diverse proposals.

Before the construction of the Palacio Salvo, the corner of 18 de Julio Ave. and Andes street held the famous patisserie La Giralda, where in 1917 La Cumparsita -the famous tango ever, written by Uruguayan Gerardo Matos Rodríguez- was played for the first time. La Cumparsita -declared cultural hymn of Uruguay- can be heard every day at 12 and at 18.30 hours, played by a "talking monument" located in said traditional corner of Montevideo

The longest carnival in the world

From late January to March, Montevideo celebrates the longest carnival in the world. This popular celebration was born from different migratory currents, mainly Spanish and African. Even when several street parades are held, among which the Inauguration Parade (last Thursday of January) and the Llamadas (first Thursday and Friday of February) stand out, the Uruguayan carnival is mainly a "carnival of shows". Carnival groups take their music and humor to raised platforms installed in different neighborhoods, known as tablados, or to the Teatro de Verano, seat of the official Carnival Contest.

Mercado Agrícola

This is one of the newest attractions of the city. A building which held a traditional fruit and vegetable market for a century was restored and inaugurated in 2013 as a gastronomic and shopping center. All the culinary traditions of the city, as well as crafts, gifts, and entertainment for all the family, merge in one hundred commercial premises.



El Prado

Born in the colonial period, it owes its name to the rural farms in the fringes of the city. This neighborhood has been traditionally associated to the rich ranching aristocracy of the nineteenth century. Since the 1860s these families built near the Miguelete creek luxurious country holiday houses. Cultural and historical traces coexist with a 106-hectar public park. Within a few blocks are the stables of businessman José Buschental; the Quinta de Haedo; the "Juan Manuel Blanes" Municipal Museum of Fine Arts, which houses paintings by Juan Manuel Blanes and Pedro Figari, remarkable Uruguayan master painters; the Botanical Garden, depositary of more than a thousand plant species; the Rose Garden; the Japanese Garden; the majestic Hotel del Prado, and -at the corner of Reyes-Suárez streets- the Presidential Residence.

Diverse Montevideo

With a disposition open to the region and the world, Uruguay has had since the early 20th century advanced social laws in the recognition of labor and social rights. Today, this legislation is completed with the enactment of anti-discrimination, change of sex, concubinage, adoption, and, since April 2013, equal marriage laws. Thus the State guarantees the respect of human rights, and contributes to building a more inclusive and diversity-tolerant city. These advances are accompanied by a versatile service offer, adapted to the different expectations and tastes of visitors.



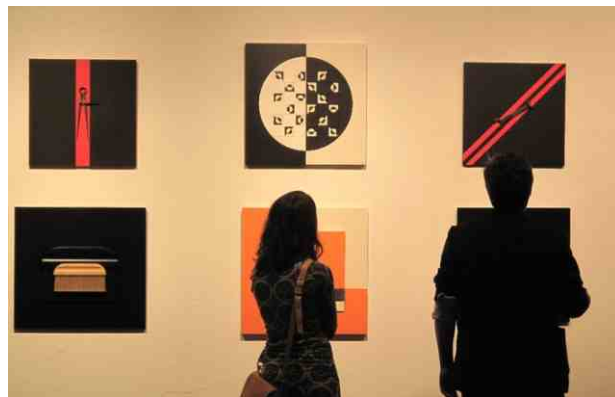
Rural Montevideo

Santiago Vazquez is the most distant town of Montevideo. It is located 22 kilometers from downtown, near the wildlife and flora reserve of Parque Lecocq, the wetlands, and the Santa Lucía river. The rural area surrounding the town, and the nearby area of Melilla feature a rich variety of rural tourism farms. There 80% of the flowers and most fruits and vegetables consumed in Montevideo are produced.



Montevideo and its museums

The city offers a wide range of museums and galleries to visit. From the more traditional ones, linked to history and art, with outstanding painting exhibitions by masters such as Torres García, Gurruchaga and Figari, down to unique showcases, such as the Open Air photo-galleries, fragments of the colonial Wall, up to the history of the Uruguayan football, beef, carnival, memory, etc. Over 30 Montevideo museums offer visitors memorable cultural experiences



Arnaldo Nardone
Past President of the International Congress & Convention Association [ICCA]



How much experience does the city have in hosting meetings?

The sector has shown dynamism in everything that surrounds business tourism: corporate and association aspects, exhibitions, fairs, shows, sports and cultural events. Our position as administrative capital and seat of the MERCOSUR Parliament is also very positive, considering that we receive micro-region meetings that strengthen the industry. The 2012 IDB summit was a significant test for us, as it was the previous Summit of Heads of State. Also, we have held major international conferences. This has forced us to refine the services we provide, in the degree as we get to know better the needs of these markets, giving us a competitive advantage over other destinations which lack this kind of experience.

Is the current infrastructure of the city sufficient?

I think it is. Considering that 87% of the world market is composed of meetings which do not exceed 1,000 delegates, I do not know why we should aim at the remaining 17%, if we are not able to meet their needs. Montevideo can perfectly host events such as the Summit of Governors, with 2,300 attendees and a plenary of 1,900 people. I think we need to inform those who can bring business meetings and conferences that our infrastructure is adequate to hold them.

How important would it be to have a Convention Bureau in Montevideo?

The original Convention Bureau of Montevideo was founded in 1999 by a group of eight hotels. It is an international entity required by business initiators, the key element to generate actions in a given destination for hosting international meetings. In a very smart decision, Montevideo Tourism Conglomerate is taking steps to activate this Bureau again through a number of partners that will enable the city to continue growing. Even when Montevideo already has a market share, there is still a lot to be achieved. Around 400 meetings could be brought to Uruguay, and we are working in this sense.

Is the demand for meetings in Latin America steadily growing?

Absolutely. 10 years ago North America -including Mexico- tripled us in the number of meetings. They hosted almost 980, and us just 320. In 2012 North America hosted 1,198 meetings, and Latin America 1,062. That is, we have shortened the difference in relation to North America, overcoming Oceania and Africa. We expect a very prosperous future, and for this we need to establish a common strategy in the region. The public sector is a major event manager, likely to continue growing. They have another virtue: they give us visibility and presence as a destination.

How good are Montevideo prices?

Hotel rates are low if you compare them with other capital cities of the region. I think we are at a competitive level. We have the advantage that in Uruguay all services related to regional and international meetings are tax-exempted, a competitive strength that no other destination in the region has.



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