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The Intrigue of Vik

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What does it take to create a truly outstanding hotel? In November, Absolute Travel's Robyn Mark, husband Nick, and their adorable son Alex (7 months old!) set out to discover the answer with two weeks at the Uruguayan and Chilean Vik Retreats. What we think they'll find: A certain Vik je ne sais quo.

More than impeccable service, fine décor, and all the amenities (and then some), a remarkable property must possess intrigue. The catch: intrigue cannot merely be conjured with a fantastic spa or a world-class menu. Intrigue must inhabit the space—speaking through the landscape, and breathing through every detail. No one knows this better than the proprietors of the Vik Retreats.



The Vik properties certainly have all the makings of five star accommodations, but what sets them apart from the masses is their unconventional approach to the craft of hotelier. Founded by Alexander Vik, a man who survived an avalanche whilst heli-skiing and was recently named 2014's Most Interesting Man in the World by Forbes magazine, the four properties that comprise the Vik Retreats portfolio are nothing if not intriguing. Unanimously the Vik properties veer from the beaten path, lean toward the thoughtful and artistic, and thrive on honoring the natural landscape. 360-degree views, pools lined with hand painted murals of the constellations, and on-site vineyards are all par for the field at the Vik properties.



In sum, the Vik portfolio includes two well-established hotels in Uruguay and two set to open to much excitement in early Fall of 2014, one in Uruguay and one in Chile. But the totality of the Vik properties is difficult to impart beyond saying it must simply be experienced firsthand. Here's why: Estancia Vik and Playa Vik in José Ignacio, the pillars of the Vik retreats, have redefined the landscape of luxury travel in Uruguay; the soon-to-open Bahia Vik is shortlisted to be the Uruguayan destination to visit in 2014; and the homegrown \$100 a bottle signature Bordeaux of the Chilean Viña Vik sold out through pre-orders.

Estancia Vik



Guests who visit the sprawling Estancia Vik, a white stucco and red tiled roofed estate surrounded by 1,500 acres, report arriving to gauchos casually galloping through the wide-open fields, sending-up flocks of white doves in their wake. They describe happening upon each unexpected detail from beds to doorknobs designed by local artisans, marble edged pools, al fresco pear and pecorino salads, a 5,000 bottle wine cellar, and exploring swaths of Marlboro country that abut stretches of ocean side beach.

Playa Vik



At the ultra-private Playa Vik, modern architecture reigns supreme. The six casas are multi-tiered, glass-paneled bungalows with living roofs. The casas emerge from a grassy hillside and perch over calm waters, promising unforgettable evenings fireside in the sunken lounge, sunrise yoga sessions on the broad balconies, and long soaks in the en-suite jacaranda wood tubs. The installation art pieces, which include a pulsating wall of light by James Turrell and a molded acrylic bench by Zaha Hadid, heighten the modern aesthetic. As does the sleek seventy-five foot long Uruguayan Absolute Nero black granite pool and the central sculpture garden which houses important works by international and Uruguayan artists.

Bahia Vik



Bahia Vik has yet to officially open its doors, but with six bungalows and a main house nestled amongst the sand dunes of stylish José Ignacio, the latest addition to the Vik properties is already creating a buzz amongst the Uruguayan jet set crowd and beyond. An original Klimt-esque mural, hand painted onsite by a Uruguayan artist, in the entrance foyer sets the tone for the property. The property unfolds with color, which is everywhere—in the form of huge, primary-color paintings, festive dishes at the bohemian-chic La Susana restaurant, and the wash of the landscape. The transition between beach and built space is almost imperceptible: the private bungalows step-out onto the sand, the contemporary central patio incorporates the hues and lines of the dunes, and the pool melds into the surrounding garden.

Viña Vik



Those seeking reprieve after hiking trips in Patagonia or the Atacama Desert will revel in relaxation, food, and wine at the golden-roofed Viña Vik winery and lodge. Found in the Chilean Millahue Valley, or “land of gold,” Viña Vik is the fourth and most prestigious of the Vik properties with floor-to-ceiling glass walls boasting 360-degree views of the Vik vineyards. Leslie Overton, our Managing Director exclaimed, “I would have stayed here forever,” after her visit last year. We can see why. Circling the open-air zen garden, each of the 22 rooms features the work of a different artisan—ranging from an original mural of the vineyard to an LED installation and a penny-encrusted bathroom. Between sampling the signature Vik wines and dining on local fare, guests may enjoy on-property activities and amenities including the lap pool, yoga studio, solarium, wine treatments at the spa, tours of the winery, horseback riding, mountain biking, trekking, and star gazing.



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