

THE TIMES



SATURDAY

August 13 2016 | thetimes.co.uk | No 71988

Weekend Newspaper of the Year **Only £1.50**

Max 23C min 6C

Great summer walks special

Weekend: 20 best trails

Your guide to the new football season

12-page pullout
Henry Winter meets Claudio Ranieri **News**



Flying start Jessica Ennis-Hill, right, began the defence of her heptathlon title in Rio, beating Brianne Theisen-Eaton of Canada in the 100m hurdles. Pages 12-14 and pullout

Cool Portugal 20 chic hotels

Weekend

Eat! Nadiya Hussain bakes

Magazine

Mr Tinder The man who changed the way we date

Magazine

'We will match EU cash'

Treasury pledges £4 billion a year to replace lost funding after Brexit

Sam Coates Deputy Political Editor

Scientists, university researchers and infrastructure projects will have their levels of European Union funding guaranteed after Brexit under a Treasury plan expected to cost £4 billion a year.

Payments to farmers at the present rates will also be guaranteed for the next four years, the Treasury said. After that a new scheme is planned.

Philip Hammond, the chancellor,

signalled that he would ensure the continuation of support for infrastructure projects, scientists and other university research programmes, with moves to try to reduce uncertainty and boost investment in coming months.

The announcement is at odds with threats from ministers before the referendum that funding would suddenly disappear when Britain left the EU.

The Treasury says that thousands of British organisations will benefit. It guarantees that all projects that receive

cash from EU structural and investment funds — typically infrastructure projects and grants for poorer areas — will continue to be funded indefinitely.

After Mr Hammond's autumn statement, expected in November or December, the Treasury plans to offer unlimited guarantees on a case-by-case basis. When agriculture funding ends in 2020, a new scheme is planned.

The department wants to give some certainty to bodies such as universities that will apply for EU cash while

Britain remains a member. Last month vice-chancellors warned that academics in other EU countries were beginning to withdraw from joint funding applications for multiyear projects with British researchers. There were also anecdotal reports of scientists and other academics rejecting offers of posts at leading universities.

British universities have done disproportionately well in securing EU research funds in the past, winning

Continued on page 2, art 5

26 Travel

South America

Cool Uruguay: chic retreats and deserted beaches

Ralph Lauren, Naomi Campbell and fashionistas love the unspoiled coastline in this little-known country. Times fashion director Anna Murphy checks it out



A-listers visitors, including Shakira, Ralph Lauren, Naomi Campbell and Princess Caroline of Monaco.

You can fly in via Montevideo — the country's usually low-key capital, which loses its head over carnival from late January to early March — or through neighbouring Buenos Aires, which has more to offer in terms of conventional sightseeing (an interconnecting flight is only 40 minutes).

Why do those glam Manhattanites love Uruguay so? Because of its coastline, which unwinds over 400 miles (650km) and which, apart from the Costa-style horrors of Punta del Este, is still largely untouched by man.

When I visited in November, the beginning of the season, I pretty much had the place to myself. In high season, which is Christmas and new year, it supposedly gets busy in chic retreats such as José Ignacio. Or so I was told, but a Vogue editor friend who went one new year — for a house party being held by a zeitgeisty New York fashion designer — said there were all of 25 people on the beach.

This, after my fortnight of playing at Robinson Crusoe, sounds like 24 people too many. Uruguay does this to you. When I go back — and I am determined that I shall — it will be in March, which apparently offers the perfect combination of fabulous weather and nobody else.

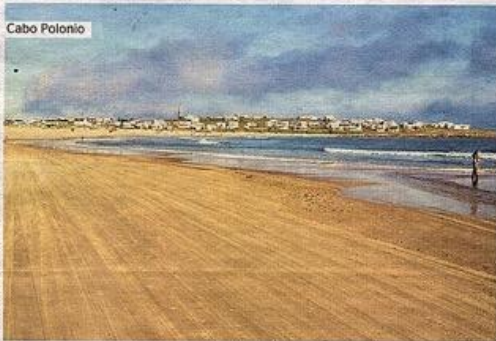
José Ignacio is the apex of Uruguay cool; a former fishing village built on a rocky headland flanked by two never-ending beaches that follow the blueprint here: the ocean-facing brava with frisky surf on one side, the more sheltered mansa on the other. The village is built around a 19th-century lighthouse and fringed with tiny coves, some sandy, some filled with drifts of amethyst mussel shells.

There may be some of the smartest restaurants in South America here, but the roads aren't paved and there is nothing so

I thought I couldn't care less about birds. Matters ornithological played no part in my decision to go to Uruguay, a small, underpopulated chunk of Latin America sandwiched between Argentina and Brazil. I had no idea that, even by the impressive standards of the continent, this country punches above its weight twitching-wise; nor, unsurprisingly, that Uruguay means "river of birds" in the extinct native language of Charruan.

No, I wanted to go there because I had heard that its Atlantic coastline was a glorious incarnation of the end of the world — wild and wonderful in equal measure. But the birds! Oh, the birds. They were so beautiful, so ludicrously amped up. And was it my imagination or were they flirting with me? "Hey, look at us!" they seemed to be saying. Swallows with exaggeratedly long tails; large bluish-hued thrushes that tapped at my window every morning, the only alarm call I have ever enjoyed; tiny scarlet ground-nesters that would fly up like a shattered ruby as I walked the dunes that flanked the deserted golden beaches.

Few British people make it here, and I am not going to pretend it isn't a long way away. Yet it is very much on the map for fashionable New Yorkers, and it's almost as far away from them. And it's not short of



Playa Vik

Cabo Polonio

Estancia Vik, José Ignacio



Your lift to Cabo Polonio

21st-century as a cash machine (as I discovered to my cost).

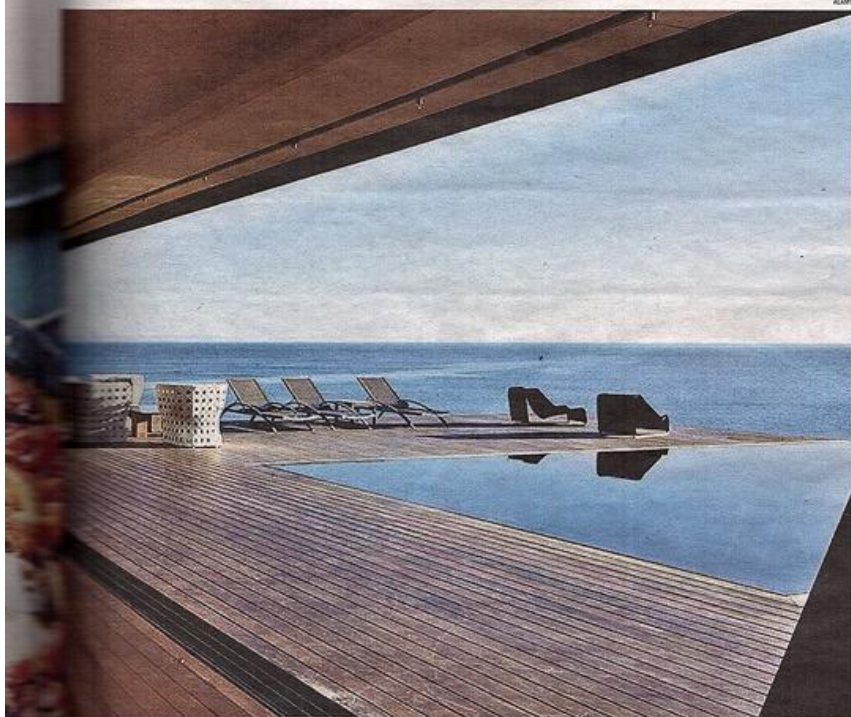
Traditional fishermen's houses, white-washed and topped with green corrugated-iron roofs, sit cheek by jowl with stunning modernist iterations of stealth wealth built for said New Yorkers, as well as affluent Argentinians and some bloke called Martin Amis. Indeed, Uruguay should be a place of pilgrimage not only for lovers of nature but of modern architecture. What little new building there is on the coast tends to be superlative interesting yet not flashy. A stroll through José Ignacio is like watching one of the better episodes of *Grand Designs*.

Courtesy of the celebrated Norwegian hotelier Alex Vik (whose mother was born in Uruguay), you can even stay in a couple of hotels so architecturally distinctive as to get Kevin McCloud excited. Playa Vik, in the centre of town — such as it is — looks space age, with a swimming pool that juts out into the wide

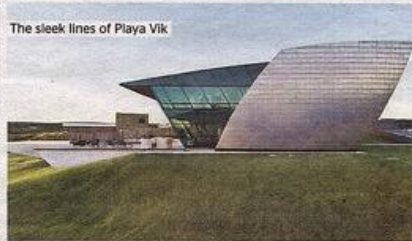
blue yonder (see sidebar). The beachside Bahia Vik is a series of minimalist pavilions in the dunes.

There is a third Vik hotel a few miles inland; Estancia Vik, where I stayed, is built to look like a traditional ranch from the outside but is daringly reinvented inside, with rooms decorated by different local artists. It even has an art-adorned parillero, or barbecue room, charriling beef being something of a national obsession. (Meat-lovers should add Uruguay to their must-visit list. Order a mixed grill at a restaurant and you will be asked if you want one steak or two.) Oh yes, and then there's the private polo field. It's that kind of place.

Set on a grass plain of 4,000 acres, with a meandering river, clusters of ancient ceiba and coronilla trees, and grazing horses and cattle, Estancia Vik represents the other side of Uruguay: cowboy country. You can ride for hours on one of the stable's hardy criollo horses, uninterrupted by people, buildings or roads; the only thing you need concern yourself with is whether you can manage a brace of prime rib when



The sleek lines of Playa Vik



Modern art and barefoot luxury: Uruguay's most stylish beach hotel

It takes about four seconds to get into the psyche of Playa Vik. That's the time required to get out of my car, walk up to the gate and wonder what sort of hotel doesn't have a nameplate. As I'm about to ring the bell, I hesitate. Am I in the right place? The sleek modernist buildings and lack of hubbub bring to mind a clinic of some sort. Or maybe a private compound. Certainly not a hotel.

I guess that's the point, though: this isn't a hotel that's touting for passing trade. It's luxury at its most discreet. This makes you feel all the more privileged as Sabrina, the multilingual reception manager, presses your room key into your hand.

Actually, Playa Vik is a sort of private compound about 30 miles from Punta del Este and home to some of the huge modern art collection built up by its owner, the Norwegian-born billionaire Alex Vik.

My room is within the Sculpture, the hotel's central titanium and glass building. As you walk through its big bronze front door, which is in fact an artwork by the Uruguayan sculptor Pablo Atchugarry, you are greeted by an enormous two-part Anselm Kiefer canvas. The view ahead of the pool and the southern Atlantic is pretty alluring but it's hard not to be distracted by a curvaceous Zaha Hadid bench and the James Turrell light installation in the library to the left.

Each room has been decorated by a Uruguayan artist — mine, Caras, features a mural of faces, including Vik's and the artist Martín Vergés's (a bit offputting when you're getting dressed), and a sycamore bath. The room is enormous, light, airy, lots of blond wood and right on the beach, so it has a stonking sea view.

The overall effect is unshowy and, thanks to the lovely staff, unimposing. Yet this place has superwealth running through its veins, as a quick recce to the library proves: *Blueprint to a Billion* by David G Thomson; *The Trouble with Prosperity* by James Grant. Do people really read this stuff on holiday?

The hotel starts to make perfect sense when you begin exploring its surroundings. Playa Vik is in José Ignacio, once a fishing village but now with considerably bigger fish to fry. From December through to February, this little cluster of houses attracts an awful lot of

well-heeled Argentinians who have bought up local properties. While glitzy Punta del Este up the road pulls in the Russians, the cruise ships and the hookers (think Marbella), laid-back José Ignacio has been likened to the Hamptons in the Sixties. Heaven knows whether that's true, but one thing certainly is — today's prices are similarly stratospheric. A tuna sandwich and Diet Coke in a café by the village green is £15. In Sentido, a cool-hunter's treasure trove of homewares a few yards from the beach, cushions are £100.

But my, the lifestyle is seductive. The most popular restaurant is La Huella, on Playa Brava, which is the beachside shack of your dreams. Lunch is relaxed, while dinner is cosy, with the inky darkness illuminated by the most romantic lighting (candles, tealights, fairy lights) I've seen in a restaurant. The



plancha-style prawns are delicious; the steak with oregano and chilli chimichurri a perfect advert for South American beef. When the bill comes, don't dare look down — whip out your credit card and keep people-watching.

My two abiding memories of José Ignacio are from Playa Vik. One is the swimming pool: at night fibre-optic lights illuminate its granite floor with mesmerising reflections of the constellations above. The other is waking up every morning, grabbing the remote control and raising the electric blinds to a view that José Ignacio's many second-homeowners pay millions for. That's what I want when I'm rich, a view like that. Although, frankly, just the blinds would do. **Amanda Linfoot**

Need to know
Amanda Linfoot was a guest of Journey Latin America (020 8600 1881, www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk), which has overnight B&B, staying for two nights at Estancia Vik in Montevideo, four nights at Estancia Vik in José Ignacio, and two nights at Brisas de la Pedrera in Rocha, starting from £2,436pp. The price includes flights from Heathrow, car hire and B&B



Cabo Polonio



you get back to the (quite literal) ranch. The landscape feels quasi-European — you can see why 18th-century Spanish settlers felt at home here — but also, in its vastness, its endlessness, ravishingly other. Farther inland is the town of Garzón, like something out of a John Wayne film, where, somewhat incongruously, the cele-

brated Argentine chef, Francis Mallmann, runs one of the best restaurants on the continent. There are also five rooms, for those who can't move anywhere fast after a plate of roasted piglet.

Back to the coast, and ruta nacional 10 heads northeast out of José Ignacio and back in time. First there's the Garzón ferry, which takes you over the lagoon of the same name. It's a charmingly gimcrack affair, tiny — I found myself breathing in as I drove on to it — and although it was originally winch-operated, it is now towed by a tired-looking motorboat. Once across the water, ruta nacional 10 becomes track nacional 10.

Actually it's more of an unpaved road than a mere track — good enough for the locals to bomb along at 60mph — but still. It is flanked on one side by more of those endless deserted beaches and on the other by empty grasslands and forests.

The drive is exhilarating for those of us who come from the overstuffed Old World. (Indeed, driving in Uruguay generally is positively enjoyable, the landscapes breathtaking, the wide straight

roads empty, the few drivers courteous.) La Pedrera is quaint former fishing village number two and has a lovely relaxed boutique hotel called Brisas de la Pedrera, a pretty (and minuscule) historic centre and more of those architectural McCloud-pleasers. Even in high season there is less of a scene here than in José Ignacio. Strung out along the beaches are small fair-weather communities, with homes ranging from simple wooden huts to more modernist beauties, many of which can be rented on websites such as Airbnb.

From La Pedrera you can make a day trip to the off-grid settlement of Cabo Polonio, farther east on a wind-and-wave-whipped headland that one can't help suspecting the Atlantic is thinking about reclaiming as its own. Leave your car by the road and take one of the scheduled cross-country vehicles that cover the four miles across the sand to a higgledy-piggledy community of huts, hippies and some very happy-looking seals. And the ocean, of course, looking truly epic even by Uruguayan standards. The end of the world? I think, I may have found it.

Need to know

Anna Murphy was a guest of Journey Latin America (020 8600 1881, www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk), which has overnight B&B, staying for two nights at Estancia Vik in Montevideo, four nights at Estancia Vik in José Ignacio, and two nights at Brisas de la Pedrera in Rocha, starting from £2,436pp. The price includes flights from Heathrow, car hire and B&B