

Condé Nast Traveler

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2011

A 45-page special section.

15th Annual *Hot* List 2011 The Year's 124 Top New Hotels

URUGUAY

Playa Vik, José Ignacio

Following his art-fetooned Estancia Vik near Uruguay's exclusive José Ignacio beach resort, Norwegian-born financier Alex Vik has picked a prime shoreline site in the village itself for Playa Vik. Designed by Uruguayan architect Carlos Ott, the beach hotel contrasts startlingly with José Ignacio's modest, whitewashed cottages: Six light-filled two- and three-bedroom casitas, walled in glass and roofed with sea grasses, surround a titanium-and-glass main building. There you'll find an additional four suites, a Zaha Hadid-designed molded acrylic bench, and a wall of pulsating light from artist James Turrell in a dining area overlooking the beach. Rooms are decorated with Nordic precision, their walls daubed with murals or hung with collages and abstract oils, each item of furniture an artwork in itself: a black vinyl cup-board plastered with

manga-style cartoons, an easy chair fashioned from scarlet rope, a hull-shaped bathtub of jacaranda wood. Companionable, multicultural staff provide a vital human touch, setting guests immediately at ease. Days are spent lolling among plovers and oystercatchers on Playa Mansa; visitors return to sluice off in the cantilevered black granite pool, its illuminated floor mapping the Southern Hemisphere sky, and gather around the outdoor fireplace to dine on codling and drumfish landed daily by José Ignacio's remaining fishermen.

WHICH ROOM TO BOOK: The Azul Suite, one of the guest rooms in the Casa Mar casita, has a privileged ocean view and a wide balcony swept by sea breezes (598-94-605212; vikretreats.com; doubles, \$450-\$1,100). ●●●●●●●●

STROKE OF GENIUS

The cantilevered swimming pool at Playa Vik in José Ignacio, Uruguay. PAGE 194



5 Best Place for a Moonlit Swim

The cantilevered black-granite pool with tiny twinkling lights mapping the Southern Hemisphere's constellations at **Playa Vik**, in José Ignacio, Uruguay. You'll have stars (if not chlorine) in your eyes.