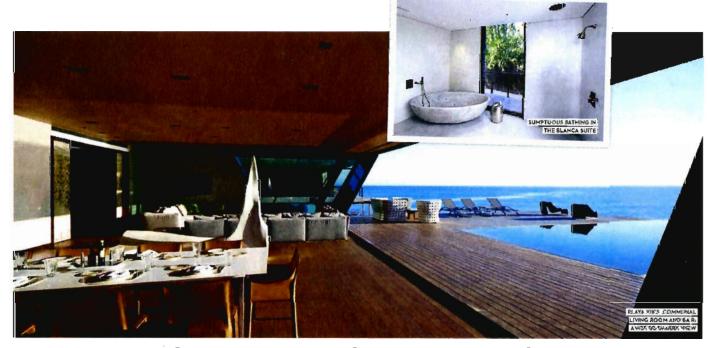
STYLIST

TRAVEL

ESCAPE Routes

WHEN DID YOU LAST GET YOUR PASSPORT STAMPED?



Designer luxury on the coast of Uruguay

When it comes to It destinations, Uruguay is definitely having a moment. It first appeared on the radar in 2009 with the opening of Estancia Vik, a beautiful, state-of-the art reach in the ightzy hotspot of Punta del Este, on Uruguay's coast. The safest of the South American countries, it turns out that Latin Americans have been holidaying there for years, attracted by the pristine bleaches and upscale hangouts. But while the rest of the world is just discovering the area, the local glitterati have already moved on. Twelve miles mortheast to the tiny fishing village of José Ignacio, to be exact, drawn by the cool, bohemian vibe (the likes of Shakira, Argentinean polo stars and Latin filmmakers all have homes nere). It now looks set to be on every cool-hander's map with the opening of what could be the most sturning hotel Stylist has ever encountered

Set against the rustic whitewashed cottages of José Ignacio, the modernist retreat of Playa Vik stands in jaw-dropping contrast. It is the sister property to Estancia Vik, also owned by Norwegian.

born financier Alex Vik. This time he collaborated with renowned Uruguay-born architect Carlos Ott (Sest known for the Opéra die la Bastille in Paris) to de sign a bleach front property consisting of six casas, a central 'sculpture' building which houses a further four suites, an und erground play room, spaland wine cellar, as well as a stonning elevated infinity pool.

It's hard to say what impressed Stylist the most (as this place has the wow-factor pozing out of every wall) but the central building's entrance certainly hadius at "hello". You enter the 55-foot inclined facade through a monumental bronze door, created by celebrated artist Pablo Atchugarry, and are immediately struck by the



communal space flooded with light.
One minute you're brushing past
a sculptural bench - teberg, by Zahar
Hadid - the next you're dining against
a wall of pulsating light by James Tarrell.
This is serious, grawn-up luxury.

Straight ahead is a vast, stiding glass wall opening onto an expansive terrace and the resort's highlight, the Absolute Nero pool, jutting precariously over the Atlantic. The possibly the most dramatic swim Stylist has ever had. Dive is at night and you'll be further charmed by the celestial map on its black granite floor made from try fibre optic lights.

Why it's hot We loved the mix of ultra-modern design crossed with an eco conscience, especially in the Casa Raices where Stylist stayed. Each casa is individually designed but all have amazing living roofs strewn with hotpink bougainvillea, retractable glass walls and wooden terraces. Our stand-alone house had alightly mad scribbled murals on the walls in the living area, but the sumpluous bedroom (all fine linens and state-of-the-art gardgelry), lovely stone fireplace and the stand-alone, jacar anda-wood oval bath provided a great contrast. But our

favourite part was the affigiores a local caramel cookies, which appeared in our room each day. It's the simple things...

Eating and drinking. Whilemany hotels these days feature Michelin-starred restaurants, dining at Playe Vik is refreshingly low-key. For casual meals, the nightly barbecue is farnastic, with fresh seafood such as black drum fish and calamari being shared around with other guests, along with sides of fresh vegetables and homemade breads, laside, the Parillero dining room is slightly more formal and focuses on Uruguyan beef dishes and the country's famed wines, 5,000 of which are housed in the 40-foot cellar.

Photo opportunity Stylist will never forget the evenings haddled under a blanket by the outside fire off. Here we breathed in the fresh sea breeze and were awed by endless views of the majestic coastline. Playa Vik is the ultimate spot to watch what is considered the best sunset in the world.

Casas from £490 per night, including breakfast; playavik.com. British Airways (lies to Montevideo via Buenos Aires; ba.com