



Digital Nomads Guides

# Montevideo

• Uruguay •



Bonus Info  
Online!

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# Montevideo

# Free Sample

## *Digital Nomads Guides*

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Everything in this book has been researched thoughtfully and with great care. However, things can change at anytime. We can't rule out mistakes 100%. We are not liable for any damage created by the information in this book. This book is not a substitute for thinking for yourself ;)

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## Why Montevideo?

It's not exactly the center of the universe, but Montevideo is a charming and reasonably-sized city with excellent opportunities to both work and relax hard. It's modest, while it shouldn't be; Uruguay has the fastest internet on the South American continent. Uruguay's capital may be the southernmost on the continent, but it enjoys a liveable climate year round, amplified by the city's palm tree-lined coastal road.

Uruguay's tourism sector isn't as well developed as other countries, which is a definite win for those annoyed by big groups. Most visitors are from neighboring Argentina and Brazil and are largely focussed on visiting Uruguay's sea - and riverside destinations like Punta del Este, Punta del Diablo and - you guessed it! - Colonia del Sacramento. Brazilians will take over the country during summer months (December - February) to avoid the terrible heat up north. This leaves Montevideo at an affordable price. The country is the second tiniest one on this landmass and has relatively good infrastructure, so you can get to anywhere in the country on the same day.

The country has been on the forefront of political issues, being one of the few countries that has had a secular state since its foundation. In recent years, Uruguay has become a little more famous for legalizing marijuana, abortion and same-sex marriage, being the least corrupt country in Latin America and having had the coolest and humblest president. Nicknaming Uruguay the "Holland of South America" or the "Switzerland of Latin America" doesn't really cover it. In fact, the people here are really friendly to foreigners and even the government loves your presence; there's tax exemptions for all foreign cards!

Uruguay is a windy place with heaps of coastline. This results in awesome watersports like sailing and kitesurfing being practiced regularly on its shores. On good days, you can see kites flying right in front of Montevideo's skyline.

Lovers of fast internet, high living standards and good beaches, will adore this country nobody ever talks about. Let's hope this guide won't be the downfall of this place and leading it to succumb to mass tourism!



## About this Guide

Part One of this guide has all the tools you need to get set up in Uruguay, in order of importance. We believe you should just book a flight to Montevideo and not worry about being underprepared. If you read this book at the airport or on your flight, you'll be as prepared as can be in **just 29 minutes**. Important Spanish words are introduced if they're necessary vocabulary. They follow directly after the English. All prices are in United States Dollar (US\$) as it is widely understood, and the Uruguayan Peso is not a major currency and is prone to volatility.

Part Two of this book has specific information about the neighborhoods (*barrios*) in Montevideo. The neighborhoods aren't ordered according to historical importance like in other guides, but rather to lifestyle compatibility in terms of laptop-friendly cafés and coworking spaces. All cafés have been tested by our writers and vouched for by locals and expats living in Montevideo at the time of writing. All cafés included mention the internet speed in Megabit (Mbit), a PowerScore and ZenScore. PowerScore is a rating of the number of charging points out of five, in which five is the best and one is the worst. People with great laptop batteries can go to a café with a low PowerScore, but people with quick-draining batteries should skip over these. ZenScore is about how workable a café is in terms of noise, again with a rating out of five - five being very quiet and one being very noisy. It's not just decibels, it's also how many people are walking by your table causing you to fear for liquid spills over your keyboard. This is of course a little more variable as it's dependent on the time of day and day of the week. Our writers visited all the cafés during a weekday before 17:00.

A newly added Part Three has some relevant information about places in Uruguay besides Montevideo that have different things to offer. There's a few businesses tried and recommended in the same way specific to our guides, but these destinations are mostly to get the holiday feel. We put them in the guide to inspire you to experience more of Uruguay and get some sand between your toes.



## Part One: How to Get Set Up in Montevideo

### Money, ATMs and Prices

The currency in Uruguay is the Uruguayan Peso, just called peso here. The currency code is UYU. People use the \$ symbol, which can be confusing, when you are associating that with the US Dollar. The price of a cup of coffee indicated as \$100 is quite normal. However, prices of houses, computers, phones and other expensive stuff can also be indicated in US\$ or U\$. This is partly to protect the price from the inflation and partly to make it look cheaper.

The peso is very volatile and has a high inflation rate. Don't trust any website or guidebook which states prices in pesos and is older than three months. As of March 2018:

100 UYU = 3.50 USD = 2.90 EUR

ATMs accepting VISA and MasterCard are widely available. That being said, there can be problems with ATMs only working with certain cards or limiting the amount you can withdraw per transaction. Usually you can't get out more than about US\$140 per transaction. Make sure to bring multiple credit cards, preferably at least one VISA and one MasterCard to cover all bases.

There are two main ATM networks and most banks are connected to one of them. They are called Banred and Red BROU. Usually, there is a sign outside the bank, indicating the network. Try both networks and different banks to find out what works best with your cards. Most ATMs of both networks charge about US\$3 per transaction, which is on top of any charges from your own bank. These fees can differ from bank to bank.



Make sure to check out the national Banco República. There is one in every neighborhood. Search them via Google Maps if you can't find one. Banco República owns the Red BROU and they might not charge an additional fee.

Nearly all ATMs in Uruguay dispense not only pesos, but also USD. Take advantage of that, especially if you are travelling on to countries where dollars are hard to come by. The USD is the most accepted currency in all of South America and the best choice for a little emergency fund.

If you go to any ATM, you will be offered many more options than the usual Savings, Checkings or Credit. At Red BROU, the ATM asks you in which currency your account is. Always choose the currency you want to withdraw, to get the best exchange rate. At Banred,



you have the choice between VISA/MasterCard International and VISA/MasterCard Uruguay. Always select International for the same reason.

Exchanging money is easy everywhere, especially in the center. As usual, don't exchange your money at the airport because the exchange rates are better in the city.

Most upper and middle class restaurants and cafés accept credit card payments, but might have a minimum amount around US\$12. As with ATMs, payment via credit card is not very reliable. Make sure to have multiple cards and some backup cash. After typing in your PIN, you might have to sign and sometimes write your passport number on the receipt.

If possible, in restaurants and cafés, always try to pay by credit card. Uruguay has an immediate tax refund for tourists. Every time you pay with a foreign credit card, the tax of 22% automatically gets deducted. You will see the reduction immediately on the receipt, called "Desc. Ley 18999". Depending on your bank, you might get charged the full amount first and get a refund at the end of the month, or only get charged the reduced amount. Keep this in mind as 22% is a lot!



If you are planning to rent a car, make sure you don't pay the full amount online, but in the local store with your credit card. The 22% discount also applies for rental cars, but only if you pay at a local store. If you book a room, it doesn't matter if you pay by card or cash. Accommodation is always tax free for everyone. In supermarkets, you only get a 1% reduction if you pay by card.

It is common to add a tip of 10% to your credit card payment in a café. Just tell the staff when paying that you want to pay for the service (*con servicio*) when handing over the card. They will add the 10% tip to the amount and it will show up separately on your receipt. If you



don't say anything, people might ask, and you could feel guilty saying no. Less polite staff might just add the tip without asking.

Uruguay is one of the more developed and therefore one of the more expensive countries in South America. Some pricing examples:

Half liter bottle of Coke - US\$1.50  
Cappuccino - US\$3  
200 g of cheese - US\$1.40  
1 liter of milk - US\$1.40  
Supermarket sandwich - US\$3  
Pizza for two people - US\$9  
Restaurant meal - from US\$7  
Beer in a bar - US\$4  
Liter of wine in a shop - from US\$2  
Hostel bed - US\$13  
Airbnb room - from US\$20  
Airbnb apartment - from US\$30  
City bus fare - US\$1  
5 km by taxi - US\$5

So, how expensive is it to live in Montevideo for a week? Let's say you are on a budget. You stay in a hostel dorm and cook for yourself or eat (delicious) supermarket sandwiches. You have two beers per week and explore the city by bus once per week. That sums up to a weekly budget of US\$140 or US\$600 per month.

If money is not that tight, you might opt for your own apartment, go to a restaurant every day and have a proper night out twice per week. You explore the city by taxi, since you can't be bothered to figure out the buses. That comes to US\$400 per week or US\$1700 per month. This is about the range you can expect. The biggest factor is obviously your choice of accommodation. Interesting side note: Opting for restaurants every day only makes a difference of US\$40 per week. More about that in the Food section below.

Here is some helpful finance vocabulary:

Is it possible to pay by credit card? - *¿Es posible de pagar con tarjeta de crédito?*

Is there an ATM? - *¿Hay un cajero automático?*

How much? - *¿Cuanto cuesta?*

The bill - *La cuenta*

Tip - *Propina*

Signature - *Firma*





## Part Two: Barrio Guides

*Bonus material unlocked! In the full version of the guide, you'll find the access to the online area here, to find an interactive map and more goodies to use in the city!*

The *barrios* are relatively small in Montevideo - and that's why we've grouped some of them together. The city can best be described as the corner of the country where import-export, international business, education and culture collide, at the location of the *Río de la Plata* that widens towards the Atlantic Ocean. From the namesake *Cerro de Montevideo* you can gaze at the cityscape across the Montevideo bay, a natural harbor. That bay is where the port (*puerto*) is located and thus the fairly stinky industrial area. The port is next to the Old Town (*Ciudad Vieja*) and a contributor to the sketchy feeling of the neighborhood. The economy that this port brings is the main reason Montevideo is Uruguay's capital city.

Montevideo stayed a small city until the beginning of the 20th century, when people left the countryside and came to the city. Roughly half of the country's population now inhabits the Montevideo department. Neighborhoods that used to be independent towns were swallowed up/agglomerated to the main city, most notably former beach resort Carrasco.

The city is fully encircled from the port in the old town to Carrasco and beyond by the famous seaside boulevard the *rambla*. There's many beaches along this road, with short interruptions by land tips (*puntas*) that demarcate where one beach ends and another begins.



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## Centro, Barrio Sur & Palermo

To kick off the specs for a successful trip to Montevideo as a remote worker, it's best to start in the three central *barrios* of the city. Fast-paced people still manage to sip away a *mate*, while a few lost tourists stand in their way. Bypass the crowds by taking a smaller street and notice the peace and quiet easily found when you play to your own rhythm. It pays to be countercyclical in Montevideo's core and Uruguay's backbone. You'll find yourself in good company with other cubicle escapees and pioneering souls. This is a magnificent introduction to a city that so often goes unnoticed.

### Work

*Our free sample only shows one coworking space and one working friendly café. The full guide has 6 places in Centro and 25 in total.*

#### Sinergia

*Avenida Gonzalo Ramírez 1676*

*Mon - Fri 09:00 - 21:00*

*84 Mbit (!)*

From the outside, this dark building with a giant 'S' painted on the garage door looks permanently closed, but ring the bell and someone will buzz you in. Once inside and past the bicycles, you'll realize that you're in coworking heaven. A big spacious room with plenty of colorful chairs and busy people. The whole place has a great flair. Not too quiet, not too loud. And no, the WiFi speed of 84 Mbit is no typo. There are charging points inside every table. In the basement, you can find a kitchen, a big dining table and best of all: table tennis and table football. A great way to relax after work and to make new friends. Also, a great feature is the so called 'focus area' above the main room. People are asked to be more quiet there, so you can always switch based on your mood and workload. The whole place is very community focused and there are regular pitch events, barbeques on the terrace and more. You can get a 10-day pass for US\$98, but there are also some other options including an interesting 'night plan', which allows you to work at night. Check out their website for all the options. You can also try the free trial day, before committing to a plan. This place is how coworking was intended to be.

#### Café Central

*Avenida 18 de Julio 1114*

*Mon - Fri 12:00 - 20:00*

*6 Mbit*

*PowerScore* ★★☆☆☆

*ZenScore* ★★☆☆☆

Be careful not to walk by this place too fast as it only has a tiny storefront at a busy road. Once you're inside - outside of lunch hours - there's this moment that you feel you've entered an oasis of peace. It's generally quiet inside. Pick one of the small tables at the side, a high one or a low one and get settled in. There's some wicked photography on the wall if you need to phase out and think. In spite of the compactness of this place, they have a good



kitchen that sells real meals like canelones and veggie schnitzel (*milanesa*). With your laptop on the table there's not much space for other things, so order their adorably tiny *cortado* as a caffeine refill *slash* appropriately-sized drink.

## Final Words

Did you like this free sample? In the full guide, you'll find so much more, including a total of 25 coworking and café reviews. Head to [digitalnomadsguides.com/montevideo/](https://digitalnomadsguides.com/montevideo/) for more information.

