

Sexy Cities



Casapueblo

Sure **SOUTH BEACH** is a sexy place. But I found the pinnacle of sexy in **PUNTA DEL ESTE**, referred to by those in the know simply as **Punta**...And where is Punta, for those not in the know? In Uruguay, on a peninsula point across the river from Buenos Aires. South Beach is amateur hour compared to the action South of the equator in Punta del Este...or just think of South Beach as your party training wheels and then remove them to party hardy in Punta. To me, Punta is a cross between St. Tropez and Aspen sprinkled with South Beach sizzle. St. Tropez for the European flair, Aspen for the cowboy/ranch influence and South Beach for the party atmosphere.

My introduction to **PUNTA DEL ESTE** and **BUENOS AIRES** came via an **Aspen** layover. Like most magical places, they are hard to leave by choice or Mother Nature or other interferences. For example, whenever I plan to leave **Mykonos**, there is an airline strike and I must stay on this island of the Greek Gods longer....to no dismay I may add. Whenever, my ski trip in Aspen is over, snow falls uncontrollably from the heavens grounding all flights out...and my stay continues. It was on one of those trips that I met an Argentine in the airport who piqued my

interest in his motherland. And the rest as they say is history...I fell for the Latin Lover, his country et al including the sexy spot nearby where all of the beautiful people from BA go for summer holiday, Punta del Este. I was soooo enamored with the place that I returned years later with **E! Entertainment** to shoot a TV special. And fast forward to Summer 2006 in South America (January since their seasons are opposite ours) when I returned once again, solo this time sans lover or TV crew to truly experience the place on my own. I went for a week and stayed for a month.



Eduardo Pla sculpture



Eduardo Pla windmill sculpture at Le Club

Punta del Este

THE PLACE - PARADISE FROZEN IN TIME

There must be something in that brown water of **Rio de la Plata**...that makes men worship woman and woman love their men down there. I had barely landed when the pilot offered to carry my luggage to the taxi stand...and then gave me his business card should I need anything else during my stay...I arrived in Punta del Este just in time to drop my bags and head to the polo match of the season. There the first man to catch my eye was the handsome player, **Martin Barrantes** as he held the trophy above his head. Boy those boys are gorgeous...especially in those white polo pants. My next stop that night was a vernissage for famed Argentine artist, **Eduardo Pla** for the unveiling of his windmill sculpture above the beach next to **Le Club**. Finally, I took my jetlagged body to bed.

The first afternoon, I arrived at what I thought was a decent time to hit the beach...3pm, but it was empty. Hmm...then at about 5:30pm the sand started to fill up with beautiful bikini'd bodies. Same strange thing happened that night as I entered my first club at about 4pm...dead til about 5:30am. So I learned that first

day and night that the magic hour in Punta is about 5:30am and pm for both primetime at the beach or the nightclub. That leaves 12 hours on either side to enjoy this decadent place with other distractions.

MAGICAL ENERGY

"It is not about turning on lights, or perhaps it is. But those lights are the ones that shine from within our bodies. A number of surveys have proved that Punta del Este is a zone that favors the experiences of those looking to harmonize their vital energy."

Punta del Este Internacional

There is even a map that exists that shows areas in Punta del Este with a higher positive charge. These are essential points to visit to live better. However, even the locals seem to laugh when I tell them this...and say ya right, that zone is called **Tequilas**, the hottest of all hotspots where the beautiful people party into the wee hours. But there is actually an energy point here for the **Love Goddess**... where a special energy connects human to nature. And Alchemist marriages take place here. Alchemy is about mystery. Punta del Este bears the imprint of many alchemy symbols. But these can only be seen by the eyes of those who know how to read them. Therein lies the magic. Ha...not just any tequila will do to read those signs!

Silly as it may sound, I agree with a real estate brochure that calls it::

"THE PLACE - a frozen paradise...where the countryside, the beach and the sea are in total harmony with nature... and an association of happy spirits exist. It is a place where you can relax without worrying, where you can enjoy every single day on the beach and every fashionable night during the summer. It is a place for people who feel."

Punta del Este was founded by **Francisco Piria** as Piriapolis in the early 1900's as **"The summer resort of the future."** And now only a hundred plus years later in the March 2006 issue of Travel & Leisure it was touted as the next great beach resort. The beautiful people of Buenos Aires vacation each January here and a select group of jetsetters like Supermodel, **Naomi Campbell** and Italian, **Guiseppe Cipriani** frequent the place. In 1890, Piria bought 2700 blocks of sandy lands and created the first summer resort. As an alchemist, he believed that what he created on the outside would transform him on the inside.

"The life of a man should be measured by virtue of what he accomplishes and how he feels in it."

Francisco Piria



Estancias

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH PUNTA

To understand the lay of the land, **LA BARRA** is like South Beach...the center for the scenesters. The city is referred to as the Peninsula which is actually Punta del Este. And the furthest point where the elite live is **JOSE IGNACIO**. I stayed in La Barra on the main drag and could walk to the beach, gym, shops, restaurants and nightlife. Buses and taxis take you to the town. But the polo fields and Jose Ignacio are a ways away and require a car.

Each morning I would choose either the countryside or the beach for my daily jog. A Uruguayan ornithologist named his country "the land of the painted birds" with the 400 species they host. And now I know why. I have never

considered myself a birdwatcher, but I couldn't help but be in awe over what was flying overhead. And the horses seemed to talk to me while the eucalyptus trees breathed fresh scents along my path. One estancia was named **Gin & Tonic** and another **namistas** while yet another the **Pink Ranch** (perhaps a play on Casa Rosada, BA's Pink House like our White House) and **Heaven Ranch**. The beach run was a bit more commercial touting the sponsors of each with flags proudly displaying their names like Movistar or Personal (both local cel phone companies) or **Bikini Beach** where the model agencies host summer houses overlooking the sand.

Like any hotspot, it is best to befriend a local scenester and the celebrity doorman/bouncer. **Valeria** who organizes all of the cool parties in BA and Punta took me under her wings. And being the new blonde on the block, I was fresh meat for the men. And shy they are NOT. For openers, an unbeknownst to me numero uno bachelor/socialite/bad boy walked me home on my first night/morning leaving **Club Tequila**. And for closers, at the season closing party at the **Conrad Hotel**, the bouncer who one moment wouldn't let me in because my name was not on **The List**, was the next moment personally escorting me into the party and showing me the panoramic view from the highest point while giving me a welcome kiss forcing his tongue down my throat before even my first glass of Chandon champagne! And all of the boys I met in between my first and last day were equally flirtatious and attentive. Note to American boys: take "How to treat a woman 101" from any Argentine man! All American women will be grateful you did.

And men don't worry, the women in Punta will send your hearts or other body parts a flutter. Even without the silicone, these beauties are HOT HOT HOT! If not the T, then the A will get your eyes popping. The sexiest fashion show on the planet is the social event of the season hosted by hairdresser extraordinaire, **Roberto Giordano**, each year in Punta. It is staged right on the sand with open-air



Roberto Giordano Fashion Show



stands overlooking the water. As the sun sets, the stage sizzles as Argentine beauties strut their stuff down the catwalk. Supermodel, [Valeria Mazza](#) has passed the baton onto other blonde babes like [Pia Slapka](#) and [Sofia Zamolo](#) and plenty of pretty brunettes. A second show was staged poolside at the super cool [Serena Hotel](#) ([SerenaHotel.com.uy](#)) just as the sun set making for a spectacular backdrop.

Shop til you drop because the pesos go far against the dollar and even further against the euro or pound. My favorites in La Barra are [Kristobelga](#) for cool clothes and [Magma](#) for the best jeans. In Punta, hit [Sexy 24](#) for avant garde couture and cruise the crafts market for local handicrafts. Some funny store names I came across were [Tits](#) plus [Love and Fuckers Clothing Co.](#)

Art galleries galore exist in La Barra with a weekly gallery walk. My favorite was [A. Balut Gallery](#) owned by the renowned [Balut](#) family of architects. It is a uniquely designed Balinese style space with spiritual art. I was drawn into the gallery by the colorful mandalas created by Uruguayan artist, [Ago Paez](#) ([AgoPaez.com](#)). Her father is the famous artist/architect, [Carlos Paez Vilaro](#) who created [Casapueblo](#) ([CarlosPaezVilaro.com/CasaPueblo.swf](#)) in Punta Ballena, the most unique structure in the Punta del Este area and a "must see". My newfound friend, Valeria hosted a VIP sunset party there. It is a working artist studio, gallery and hotel.



Food is delicious in Uruguay. There is an outpost of the known [Novecento](#) there. A cute casual spot for lounging over café leche and tasty delights is [Flo Café & Bar](#). My preferred dining place was [Actitud de Mar](#) for gourmet dining in a nice setting. The name is apropos because "actitud" is what it is all about in trendy Punta. This restaurant has the added ambience of a handsome strolling jazz musician playing the saxophone, [Raul Martinez](#) who serenaded me! And it is next door to the hottest of all hotspots, [Tequilas](#). The other popular nightclub is [Buddha Bar](#) on the beach in La Barra. [La Huella](#) and [Las Negros](#) are the elite eateries in Jose Ignacio.

For workouts, the gym of choice is [La Barra SportsSpa](#) ([LaBarraSportSpa.com](#)). Here my fit spinning instructor, [Ignacio](#) put a simple spin on the class atmosphere by merely lighting some incense and candles. This was our calm before the party storm.... and he also did a marathon 2 hour class to cleanse the club toxins.

And where should you rest your head when you finally leave the party? The classic is [La Posta del Cangrejo](#). The casual one right on the strip is [Hotel Montoya](#) ([HotelMontoya.com](#)). Or if you prefer an ultra modern place with all the amenities, try [Mantra](#)





Hotel (MantraResort.com) with its own spa and casino. Most regulars either own or rent a home for January. And future digs include the **Setai Hotel & Villas** right on the beach in Jose Ignacio. So if you want to invest in your own place this is a sure bet. After all, Uruguay is a tax-free haven.

You can buy some land at only about \$60,000/lot and hire one of the talented architects like **Martin Gomez** to build your own masterpiece. Your wishes are my command. I can fulfill your requests for villa rentals, hotel reservations or land and condo purchases, plus the almighty hook up to be on **"The List"**.

At the beach, I found an amenity I have seen no where else in the world. These vain scenesters have their very own mirrors and beauty centers with blow dryers on the sand. So never a moment or place to look out of place in Punta! And rather than the requisite **Red Bull**, they have an energy drink called **Speed** to keep you going and going like the Energizer rabbit.

Punta vehicles



San Telmo

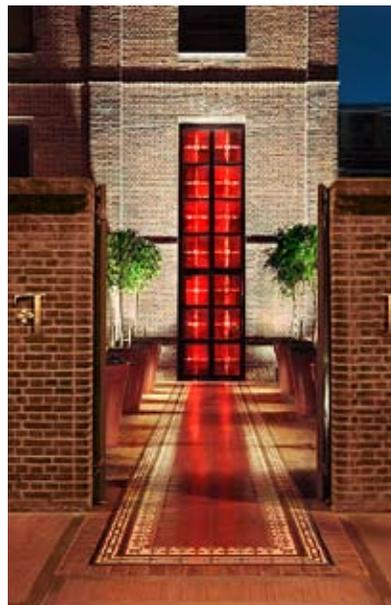


Buenos Aires

After weeks of partying in Punta, I tore myself away and hopped a plane to BA. Not for the party to slow down, but to follow the party portenos to their city of origin. There an old friend, **Alejandra** picked me up at the airport and shuttled me to her hip home in the burbs. It was a cool house designed by a funky female architect. My former Miss Argentina model friend now had a newborn, **Mia**. So it was Momma, Mia & me. Plus, five big dogs... the new haute accessory for the baby boomers.

Soon it was time to pack my bags and move to the big city. In BA, I sampled two great hotels in the gentrified Puerto Madero area. First was **Sofitel Puerto Madero** (HotelMadero.com), more of a business hotel.

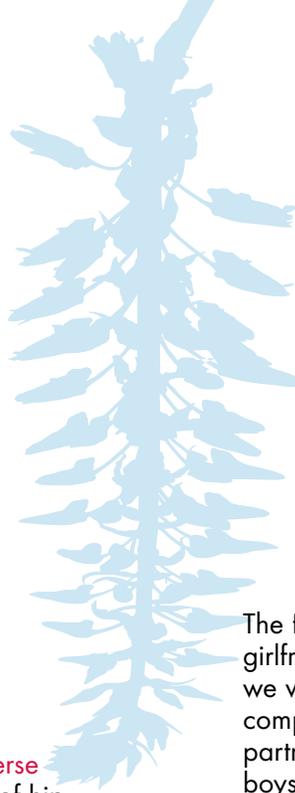
Faena Hotel doorman with Hope



Faena Hotel entrance



Aleandra's House



Hope with Sandy & Andy

Then I tried the renowned **Faena Hotel + Universe** (FaenaHotelAndUniverse.com), the brainchild of hip entrepreneur, **Alan Faena**. This place was designed by **Philippe Starck** with many starkisms. Some hip bed & breakfasts are a nice alternative, like **Malabia House** (MalabiaHouse.com.ar).

My new party pals, **Sandy & Andy** from Punta were BA natives and showed me the town. On previous trips, I had seen the typical tourist attractions and watched tango. This trip was reserved for 'the scene'.

First stop was Palermo Hollywood for lunch at one of the local hotspots, **Grappe** owned by my Playboy friend, **Jorge**. Then onto **PALERMO SOHO** named after NYC's namesake. This is a super hip neighborhood where the shops and restaurants are truly one-of-kind. Even the Nike store is out-of-the box with floral wallpaper.



It's worth a shopping trip to BA towards the end of their summer cuz everything is half price. With the weak peso, for Americans it is about 80% off and for the Europeans 100% off and for the Brits with pounds in their pockets everything is basically free! **Fortunata Alegria** and **Varansi** were my faves for fashions plus **Ona Saez** which has an outpost in South Beach. There are also several great shopping malls, **Patio Bullrich** being the chicest. **LAS CANITAS** is a charming neighborhood as well with nice shops and nightlife. My friend Sandy, lived in a cool pad overlooking the polo field. She even had her own private terrace to view the matches from. How cool is that! It is a small world.

The first night out, we went to **Opera Bay** where my girlfriend knew the owners, **Pancho Villa** and **Francis**. So we were corralled right into the VIP area and handed our complimentary champagne. Turns out these nice guys partnered up with the Crobar boys, **Cal & Kenny** to open a **Crobar BA** which opened in March.

On my last night in BA, I visited the **Ferrari/Maserati Restaurant/Museum** (GrupoModena.com) created by **Julio de Marco**. Then I had dinner at what turned out to be my favorite spot, **Casa Cruz**. At this trendy restaurant I ran into the gorgeous polo player, **Martin Barrantes** who I had spotted upon my arrival in South America a month prior. So now I had come full circle with many wild adventures along the way.



Hope with Polo Player - Martin Barrantes

This was one of the best journeys of my life! I had a blast!

"If you always do what pleases you, at least one person is satisfied."

Katherine Hepburn

Wishing you all SATISFACTION!

HOPE

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