

Wine Enthusiast's Wine Lover's guide to
SOUTH AMERICA: Chile, Argentina & Uruguay



© FOURNIER

MATT WILSON



HIKING IN THE ANDES



SLOWKAR

From the minute you set foot in Mendoza, the Andes start burning an indelible mark in your memory bank. Peaks like El Plata and Tupungato, both over 20,000 feet in elevation, sit sentinel over tens of thousands of vineyard acres and create a postcard visual.

Yet, Mendoza is more than just mountains and Malbec, the region's signature grape. Over the past 15 years, this desert wine region, located some 700 miles west of Buenos Aires, has evolved into a top destination for wine tourism. New hotels, architecturally impressive wineries and greatly improved gastronomy—no longer limited to the *asado*, Argentina's famous grilled-meat feast—are today's prime attractions.



MUN @ CASARENA



SIETE COCINAS



SIETE COCINAS



LA JUNTADA PULPERIA



SIETE FUEGOS

WHERE TO DINE

Mendoza's restaurants were once restricted to *parrillas* (steakhouses) and pasta joints (it was primarily Italian immigrants who flooded into Mendoza in the 19th century and built up the city). In recent years, chefs have taken international cues to bring the dining scene up to speed. A prime example is **Mun @ Casarena**, a winery-based Pan-Asian restaurant in Vistalba run by the Korean-American sushi chef Mun Kim, who also offers make-it-then-eat-it cooking classes. For lighter fare, **Pan y Oliva** at the Familia Zuccardi winery in Maipú infuses housemade olive oil into almost every dish on its Tuscan-meets-California menu. Meanwhile, the winery's more traditional restaurant in its **Casa del Visitante** (visitors' center) offers tried-and-true fare like *morcilla* (blood sausage), empanadas and all sorts of perfectly grilled meats (try the lamb roasted whole on a cross). In Mendoza city, **Siete Cocinas** is the forum for Buenos Aires-born chef Pablo del Rio to showcase refined cuisine from Argentina's seven primary food regions. Winery owners and winemakers can be found eating and drinking here on a regular basis. Beef eaters will no doubt love the pricey, cash-only **La Barra**, where the *provoleta* (grilled domestic provolone topped with herbs and spices) and steaks are outstanding. In Chacras de Coria, a tree-filled suburb of Mendoza, Nadia Harón, wife of international vintner José Manuel Ortega, prepares progressive set menus in an old adobe house at her restaurant, **Nadia O.F.** Located three blocks from Mendoza's main plaza, a newer entry to the gastronomic scene is **María Antonieta**, a trendy European-style bistro with sidewalk tables and good breakfasts. It's owned by Vanina Chimeno, who's married to Francis Mallmann, Argentina's best-known chef, with whom she worked for many years. Speaking of Mallmann, one can't go wrong dining at his longstanding **1884 Restaurante Francis Mallmann**, located just south of Mendoza in Godoy

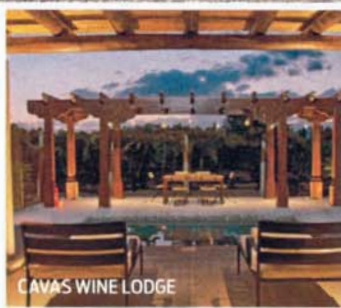
MUN @ CASARENA



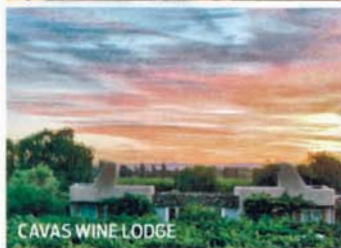
MUN @ CASARENA



1884 RESTAURANTE FRANCIS MALLMANN



CAVAS WINE LODGE



CAVAS WINE LODGE



ENTRE CIELOS

Cruz. However, to get the fullest and newest taste of Mendocino cuisine as interpreted by Mallmann, head south about 90 minutes to the Valle de Uco and dine at **Siete Fuegos**, located at the Vines of Mendoza resort. Everything on the menu, from bacon-wrapped shrimp to peaches topped with brown sugar and wild flowers, is cooked over open fires. (For asado recipes from Mallmann, see page 38).

WHERE TO STAY

Cavas Wine Lodge is a beautifully designed Relais & Chateaux property in the Agrelo wine district. Private casitas



offer west-facing views of the Andes, while owners Martín Rigal and Cecilia Diaz Chuit and their staff will attend to your every need. Swiss-owned **Entre Cielos** in Vistalba blends into Mendoza's desert topography. Its oft-photographed, highly funky Flores Blancas "room," which stands above a vineyard out back, is more like a spaceship on stilts, while its Hamam Turkish-style spa should not be missed. For high-end lodging deep in the Mendoza countryside, Vines of Mendoza's **The Vines Resort & Spa**, which opened in late 2013, features 22 posh villas, a full-scale spa and the above-mentioned Siete Fuegos restaurant. As ambitious a project as Mendoza has ever seen, it's one of the hottest boutique hotels in the world. For more conventional hotels in Mendoza city, the **Diplomatic Park Suites**, **Park Hyatt** and **Sheraton** are well-run, full-service operations.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Los Chulengos is a classic *estancia* (ranch) in the Tupungato hills run by the affable Palma family. Come for fly fishing, horseback riding, an asado and maybe even see a wild puma. Contact **Slowkar** to get behind the wheel of a 1960's Citroën CV3, then cruise the streets of Mendoza—just make sure you're comfortable operating a dashboard gearshift. **Ayllu Arte Popular**, in Chacras de Coria, is where to shop for handmade crafts. Among other things, they sell beautiful steak knives, woven products and *matés*, the hand-held vessels locals use to sip an herbal tea of the same name.

BUDGET TIP

The **Memorial de la Bandera del Ejército de Los Andes** in downtown Mendoza displays the original flag carried in 1817 by General José de San Martín, who led the united armies in key battles that resulted in the liberation of Argentina, Chile and Peru from Spain. It's basically a small museum, and quite educational. Admission is free.

WHEN TO GO

While the sun almost always shines in Mendoza, you may want to avoid the region's broiling summers and cold winters by visiting in the spring (September–December) or fall (March–April), when the vines and ubiquitous *alamos* (poplars) change colors.

LOCAL IN THE KNOW

Veronica Mausbach, owner of specialty travel agency Vintura, says, "If there's a heaven, they serve the empanadas from **La Juntada Pulpería**, located at the corner of routes 92 and 94 in Vista Flores. The secret is in how the beef is processed; not ground, but patiently sliced with a very sharp knife. And the dough melts in your mouth because they aren't afraid to use lard. The place is housed in a traditional *casona* and no English is spoken, so bring your Spanish dictionary."

WHERE TO TASTE

Atamisque is a French-owned winery situated near the town of Tupungato whose claim to fame is its trout farm, along with a restaurant that cooks the fish to perfection. The property includes four modern casitas should you want to spend the night, as well as a par-3 golf course. **Bodegas Salentein** is Mendoza's signature winery in terms of architecture and landscaping. Its visitors' center is home to the Killka art gallery, a tasting lounge and restaurant. **Pulenta Estate** in the Alto Agrelo district offers visitors a chance to put on a blindfold and try to identify 15 natural aromas commonly found in wine. **Bodega Norton** in Perdriel provides several tasting opportunities. One of the best is the Empanadas y Vinos tour that includes several wines served alongside a trio of clay-oven-baked empanadas. The winery's La Vid restaurant is quite good and emphasizes local favorites like empanadas, pastas, salads and lamb chops. Deep in the southern reaches of the Uco Valley, in the San Carlos district, is **O. Fournier**, whose visionary winery has been called the Flying Saucer. Taste wines over lunch or dinner at the Urban restaurant, where you can look out onto a stunning desert landscape. **Vines of Mendoza** operates a tasting room and "blending lab" in the heart of Mendoza city. Come and taste wines in flights or try to blend like a winemaker (reservations required).



Considering that Chile is shaped like a fashion model—elongated and skinny as a rail—it's almost mind-boggling how much natural beauty and unique topography is packed within the country's borders.

In the north, you have the Atacama, the driest desert on Earth, while in the deep south, you'll find the glaciers of Patagonia as well as active volcanoes and crystalline lakes.

On the western edge, there are 2,700 miles of spectacular Pacific Ocean coastline, and to the east, of course, are the towering Andes.

In between are Chile's many wine valleys: Elqui, Limarí and Choapa to the north; Aconcagua, Casablanca, Maipo, San Antonio, Rapel, Colchagua, Curicó and Maule in the middle; and Itata, Bío Bío and Malleco to the south.

Chile ranks as one of the most inviting wine-producing countries in the world to visit. It's a mostly safe nation that has worked hard over the past two decades to escape the shadows of its darkest times (from 1973–90, the military ran the country). Thanks to its populace's strong work ethic, the country's roads and highways, telecommunications systems and politics have taken huge turns for the better.

Home to talented chefs, otherworldly seafood, genuinely nice hotels and hundreds of wineries—big and small—Chile is the perfect vacation destination.

With the help of a GPS, plus Chile's excellent signage and cell-phone coverage, you should feel comfortable driving almost anywhere in the country. Hiring an experienced driver/guide or using buses and trains are other means of getting around this easy-to-navigate country.

Today, Chile is arguably South America's most stable, accessible country. Home to talented chefs, otherworldly seafood, genuinely nice hotels and hundreds of wineries—big and small—it's the perfect vacation destination, especially if drinking good wine and eating well are priorities.

And while most trips to Chile will include some time in Santiago (see the guide to the nation's capital on page 86), travelers should spend at least two days in the Casablanca Valley wine region and the coastal city of Valparaíso. Then enjoy a couple of additional days in the Colchagua Valley, one of *Wine Enthusiast's* Top 10 Wine Travel Destinations of 2012.

With this insider's guide as a road map, travelers can explore the best of a country whose scenic grandeur far exceeds its geographic waistline.



Zero Hotel



Chef Pilar Rodríguez



CASABLANCA VALLEY AND VALPARAÍSO

Situated about 45 minutes west of Santiago, the Casablanca Valley is Chile's preeminent cool-climate wine region. It's here where you can literally breathe in the smells of Sauvignon Blanc and the Pacific Ocean.

Another 30 minutes westward from Casablanca and you're in Valparaíso, historically Chile's main port city. It's now a magnet for artists, international travelers and anyone with a Bohemian leaning.

As you enter the Casablanca Valley from Santiago, consider stopping at House, Casa del Vino, owned and operated by Grupo Belén. Here, you can tour the facilities where winemaker Sven Bruchfeld crafts the group's signature Tiraziš, a cool-climate Syrah that hails from old bush vines. House offers daily tours in English and Spanish, its glass-enclosed restaurant looks out onto vineyards, and its shop sells the group's wines as well as a local Casablanca olive oil called Izaro.

Another tasty stop is Casas del Bosque, one of Chile's best makers of crisp, pungent Sauvignon Blanc. Here, you can tour the vineyards and winery, but the highlight is lunch at Tanino, the winery's on-premise restaurant. The eatery features dishes like seared Pacific salmon with crunchy shrimp and white asparagus paired with Chardonnay, or phyllo pockets stuffed with Wagyu beef and goat cheese that go ideally with the winery's earthy, herbal-leaning Syrah.

KICKING BACK, SEASIDE

After lunch, continue on to Valparaíso and check into Casa Higuera or the nearby Zero Hotel. Both have cool vibes and offer excellent views of the harbor. Dinner is within walking distance of both hotels, either at Café Turri, where traditional seafood and a superb wine list await, or Pasta e Vino, for what many consider the best Italian food in Chile. A nightcap at Café Vinilo, which features a number of small-production wines as well as excellent Pisco Sours, is a good way to finish your day.

Assuming you stayed up late at Café Vinilo, work off that fogginess by getting lost amid the labyrinth of narrow streets that snake up and down Valparaíso's hillsides. Being an artist-friendly place with a bit of a rough edge, many streets feature houses covered in color-

ful graffiti, and there are numerous lifts that can take you up and down the steepest hills.

After your morning walk, head north in the direction of Viña del Mar, Chile's one-town Riviera, where you can catch some rays on the beach before having a seafood lunch and a nice bottle of wine at Portofino.

TAKE A DETOUR

After lunch, head back in the direction of Santiago, but detour to the San Antonio Valley. Check into La Casona at Matetic Vineyards, one of Chile's nicest winery-based hotels. A stay here includes all meals and a tour of Matetic's ultramodern winery, which puts out superb Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc as well as interesting Gewürztraminer and Riesling. Get a good night's rest in your fluffy bed, because tomorrow you're going to cover some ground on your way to the Colchagua Valley (the drive from San Antonio to Colchagua will take about three hours).

With the help of a GPS, plus Chile's excellent signage and cell-phone coverage, you should feel comfortable driving almost anywhere in the country.

As soon as you arrive in this warm-climate wine region located about 100 miles south of Santiago, you'll be happy you came. Colchagua feels a lot like California's Napa Valley—except that in Colchagua, many locals still get around on horseback and wear ponchos and *chupayas* (wide-brimmed cowboy hats).

Check into the Residence at Lapostolle, a five-star Relais & Chateaux property perched above the famed Apalta Vineyard that Lapostolle shares with other wineries, including Montes, Ventisquero, Santa Rita and Neyen. The Residence is Chile's most high-end, high-priced winery lodging option. The four cabins that comprise the hotel, however, come with every luxury, from high-thread-count sheets and spacious

THE GREAT BEYOND

Should you be spending more than a week in Chile, several places worth visiting require a flight from Santiago. Among the best are San Pedro de Atacama, a quirky but civilized gateway to the world's most arid desert; Torres del Paine National Park in Patagonia; Easter Island, where the eco-resort Explora has an outpost; and the southern Lake District, near the city of Puerto Montt, where one can fish for wild trout and salmon, or head inland to see volcanoes like Pucón and Villarrica.



Lapostolle





Museo Colchagua

walk-in closets to wood-burning fireplaces. Included in the tariff are three meals each day, plenty of wine, a tour of Lapostolle's architecturally impressive Clos Apalta winery, horseback riding through the vineyards and transportation throughout the valley. For more affordable lodging options, including the Hotel Santa Cruz Plaza in the town of Santa Cruz, contact the offices of Ruta del Vino, which handles wine-related tourism in the valley.

LOCAL EATS

For restaurant meals, consider these spots: Rayuela, located at Viu Manent winery, which specializes in grilled meats and fish; La Casita de Barreales, offering Peruvian-inspired cuisine in a quaint adobe house; and Vino Bello, where Italian dishes are prepared by a Chilean chef who trained in California.

Your next full day starts in Santa Cruz with a visit to the Museo Colchagua. Exhibits here detail Chilean history, from precolonial days through colonialism and modern times. You will see more amber, nautical maps, weapons, tools and machinery than you'd ever imagine existed, and it's easy to spend hours here.

DINE IN STYLE

If you're traveling with a group of six or more, you should reserve a daytime "session" with Pilar Rodríguez, a personable and skilled private chef who runs her Food & Wine Studio at Viu Manent. For a memorable lunch, take part in Rodríguez's three-hour interactive session. Diners work with the chef to prepare a six-course wine-and-food lunch that incorporates such native Chilean ingredients as *merkén* (a spice made from ground smoked chilies), quinoa and *maracuyá* (passion fruit). And, while on the subject of doing it yourself (or at least with a teacher), consider blending your own wine while touring Viña MontGras.

POLO PURSUITS

For your final night's stay, head back toward Santiago and get off the Pan-American Highway just north of San Fernando. Check into Hotel Casa Silva and enjoy dinner overlooking the property's polo field, where a match or practice session is almost always taking place. On the walls of the restaurant, which also functions as the polo clubhouse, hundreds of photos depict the Silva family and others participating in polo matches and other equine events like the so-called Chilean rodeo. It's a perfect final taste of the *huaso* (cowboy) culture that, along with wine, defines life in the Colchagua Valley.



Pilar Rodríguez's Food
& Wine Studio at Viu
Manent Winery

SANTIAGO INSIDER'S GUIDE

With a population of 6 million, Santiago is home to a plethora of top-notch restaurants, wine bars and hotels. Here's your agenda for two (or more) perfect days in the Chilean capital.



1 BOCANÁRIZ



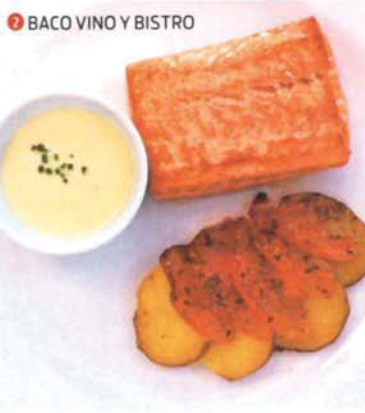
5 BAR LIGURIA



9 CASA REAL HOTEL

EAT

- 1 **Bocanáriz** Along with small plates, this Lastarria wine bar offers themed flights of Chilean wines as well as 300+ bottles listed on a hulking wall-mounted chalkboard.
- 2 **Baco Vino y Bistro** A winemaker haunt, it specializes in Gallic classics like briny oysters and duck confit. The wine list features superb Chilean and French wines.
- 3 **Mestizo** A swanky spot known for indoor-outdoor seating and views of Bicentennial Park.
- 4 **Fuente Alemana** Popular for sandwiches such as the *lomito* (roast pork) and *churrasco* (steak), piled with smashed avocado and mild green chilies.
- 5 **Bar Liguria** A popular spot with a party vibe, wacky wall hangings and traditional Chilean grub like crab soup (*chupe de jaiba*).



2 BACO VINO Y BISTRO



12 LA CHASCONA



6 THE AUBREY



13 VINA SANTA CAROLINA



While Chilean wine is famous, the country's gastronomy is lesser known. But Chile has a strong culinary tradition that dates back many centuries.

With its 3,000 miles of coastline, Chile's seafood offerings are some of the best on earth. Beyond Chilean sea bass—which is actually the Patagonian toothfish—the country's waters offer up tons of tuna, hake and conger eel.

From the shell, there's abalone, king crab, razor clams, oysters, mussels and more. Sea urchin to barnacle, swordfish to salmon, if it lives in the southern portion of the Pacific Ocean, you can eat it in Chile.

Back on dry land, Chile is about as fertile a country as there is on earth, and not just for wine grapes. It's also one of the leading growers and exporters of avocados, tree fruits and berries.

In addition, farmers in the north of the country cultivate some of the world's most exotic fruits, things like the *cherimoya*, *lúcuma*, *maracuyá* (passion fruit) and *carica* (Chilean papaya). And that's not even getting into the wide range of vegetables grown in Chile.

A CULINARY MOSAIC

Chile's modern-day cooks can also find inspiration in traditional recipes passed down over the centuries. There's the *empanada de pino* (meat turn-

over), *pastel de choclo* (corn pie with a meat filling) and the *cazuela* (Chilean stew), all introduced to the country's immigrant populations by native Indians, primarily the Mapuches and Araucanos.

"I would say that our cuisine is a fusion of the indigenous kitchen, things brought by the Spanish conquistadors, and finally, the influence of immigrants from Europe," says Pilar Rodríguez, once Tommy Hilfiger's director of marketing for Latin America and now one of Chile's best-known chefs.

As for how such food goes with Chilean wine, there are lots of potential happy marriages, i.e., raw shellfish or ceviche with Sauvignon Blanc; empanadas with anything light to medium in body—white, red or rosé; crab and fish with Chardonnay; and grilled meats with reds that range from Cabernet Sauvignon to Carmenère, Chile's signature grape.

SIMPLY FRESH

"I can take a perfect piece of Easter Island tuna, and all I need to do is make a crust of Chilean sea salt, cilantro seeds from the south, and *merkén*, which is a unique Chilean smoky spice made from special red chilies originally grown by the Mapuches," says Rodríguez. "This dish would go nicely with Pinot Noir or an elegant Chardonnay."

Make that a Chilean Pinot Noir or Chardonnay.

The following are two quintessential Chilean recipes to try at home along with wine pairing suggestions.



U

A Y

URUGUAY'S TOP VARIETIES

Known for the swank beach resort of Punta del Este and the cosmopolitan vibe of its capital, Montevideo, Uruguay is the No. 4 wine-producing country in South America by volume.

It's bordered to the north by Brazil, to the west by the Uruguay River and Argentina, to the southwest by the Río de la Plata and to the southeast by the Atlantic Ocean.

Uruguay's first vines were most likely brought from Buenos Aires by Spanish colonists, but the end of the 19th century saw a new wave of immigrants from Italy and Spain, especially from the Basque region in northern Spain.

The newcomers carried over vines and rootstock from their respective countries and began making wine in the New World. In addition to familiar varieties, they also brought Tannat, a grape from Madiran in southwestern France.

In the past 20 years, many vineyards have been replanted. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Albariño and more now grow alongside 100-year-old Tannat vines.

These newer vines are just beginning to hit their stride, which makes it an exciting time to explore the wines of Uruguay. The *departamentos* that are most important for winemaking in Uruguay are Canelones, Colonia, Montevideo and Maldonado.

—Mike DeSimone & Jeff Jensen

● TANNAT

Introduced by 19th-century Basque settlers, it offers strong, supple tannins and aromas of dark fruits, tobacco and saddle leather. Old-vine Tannat may come from century-old plantings. Newer clones are often blended with Bordeaux varieties or Pinot Noir.

● ALBARIÑO

This transplant from Spain's Galicia region is a grape to watch for in Uruguay. Grown mostly in Garzón and Canelones, this aromatic white variety is made into both lean, citrus-focused wines and a more complex lees-aged style.

● CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Rich tannins and flavors of black cherry, cassis, violet, baking spices and pencil lead lend themselves to varietal

or blended bottlings of this classic French grape. It's often blended with other Bordeaux grapes or with Tannat.

● CHARDONNAY

Flavors of tropical fruit and green apple abound in one of Uruguay's most popular white varieties. Made in stainless steel, it shows a light, fruity style. Oaked renditions have barrel-induced aromas of caramel, butter and toasted bread.

● SHIRAZ/SYRAH

Versions called "Shiraz" usually lean toward the bold New World style, while those labeled "Syrah" trend more toward French elegance. Either way, look for flavors of blackberry, spice and ground pepper, bottled on its own or blended with Tannat. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

BODEGA GARZÓN, MALDONADO

MONTEVIDEO & PUNTA DEL ESTE INSIDER'S GUIDE



WHERE TO EAT

1 **El Palenque** With locations in Montevideo's Mercado del Puerto and Punta del Este, this popular *parrilla* (grill) specializes in grass-fed Uruguayan beef. 2 **El Viejo y Querido Café Almacén** It's all about authenticity and quality at this homey Montevideo (Punta Carretas) lunch and dinner hangout. 3 **La Huella** Located on the beach in José Ignacio, this is the Punta del Este area's must-try restaurant. Go for seafood dishes like grilled sea bass and steamed clams. 4 **Sí Querida** Offering down-home dining in an old garage, this kitschy Maldonado spot is known for wood-oven pizza and roast wild boar. 5 **Restaurante Garzón** The outpost of famed Argentine chef Francis Mallmann employs a cooking method known as *infiernillo*, where meats and vegetables are placed between two live fires.





■ WHERE TO EXPLORE

11 **Montevideo's Ciudad Vieja** Walk the oldest parts of the nation's capital, including Plaza Independencia and Calle Sarandí. Don't miss the painted houses in Barrio Reus, the historic Jewish quarter. 12 **Teatro Solís**: See a show at Montevideo's oldest theater, built in 1856 and renovated a decade ago. 13 **Bodega Bouza** This boutique winery 15 minutes from Montevideo is owned by a family with Galician roots. Take a tour and focus on the Albariño. 14 **Casapueblo** Designed by the late artist Carlos Páez Vilaró, this whitewashed cliffside hotel and museum in Punta Ballena looks like Santorini by way of Gaudí, with great sunset views. 15 **La Barra/José Ignacio** Hit world-class beaches—Montoya, Bikini and Manantiales—then gallery-hop through these once-sleepy, now red-hot towns to the east of Punta del Este.

—Mike DeSimone & Jeff Jensen



6 SOFITEL MONTEVIDEO CASINO CARRASCO & SPA

■ WHERE TO STAY

6 **Sofitel Montevideo Casino Carrasco & Spa** Occupying a landmark waterfront building in the city's Carrasco section, this recently renovated property dates back to 1921.

7 **My Suites** Billed as a boutique "wine" hotel, this modern traveler's lodge in Montevideo's Pocitos neighborhood offers wine tastings five nights a week.

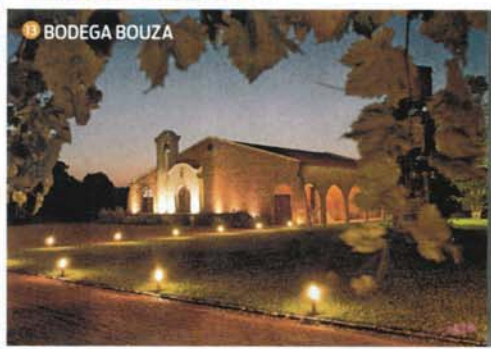
8 **Fasano Las Piedras** Set inland from the water amid rocky outcrops, this is Punta del Este's top resort. Play golf, shuttle to a private beach or relax in your Isay Weinfeld-designed casita.

9 **Playa Vik** Merging modern design, top-level service and an unrivaled oceanfront location in José Ignacio, Playa Vik appeals to well-heeled beach lovers.

10 **Narbona Wine Lodge** Located at Narbona winery in Carmelo, about 150 miles west of Montevideo, this Relais & Chateaux property offers five luxurious suites with winery or vineyard views.



9 PLAYA VIK



13 BODEGA BOUZA



7 MY SUITES



8 FASANO LAS PIEDRAS



10 NARBONA WINE LODGE