

Robb Report

What It's Like to Stay at Estancia Vik, a Palatial Cattle Ranch on the Uruguayan Coast

The boutique hotel on 4,000 rugged acres was founded by billionaire husband-and-wife duo Alexander and Carrie Vik.

By **ABBY MONTANEZ** ✎



Estancia Vik

What's the deal?

Estancia Vik is the brainchild of Norwegian-born billionaire businessman Alexander Vik and his wife, Carrie. Opened in 2009, the Spanish Colonial horse and cattle ranch sits on over 4,000 rugged acres in southern Uruguay and is a roughly 10-minute drive from José Ignacio—a chic, seaside village where the Viks own two other boutique hotel properties: Bahia Vik and Playa Vik.

The couple tapped Uruguayan architect Marcelo Daglio to design the palatial property, which is packed with an

assemblage of art from world-famous artists such as contemporary sculptor Pablo Atchugarry. Fun fact: The late David Rockefeller used to visit the estancia every year for his birthday.

Estancia Vik



The ranch offers horseback riding and polo lessons.
ESTANCIA VIK

The best room



Estancia Vik has 12 suites.
ESTANCIA VIK

Forget rooms. Estancia Vik has 12 individually designed suites spread across its two floors, all featuring decor from local artists. During our trip, we stayed in one of the two best suites on the upper level, dubbed Daglio—named after the architect who helped design the property. Across its 900 square feet, there’s an in-room fireplace, an espresso machine, a massive boat-shaped wooden bathtub, and a private wraparound patio with an outdoor shower. If you’re on the hunt for a TV, you won’t find one. Instead, you can pass the time by watching horses and cows roam free or look out to the lagoon.

The Rundown



The property features sculptures by Pablo Atchugarry.
ESTANCIA VIK

Did they greet you by name at check-in?

Yes, as soon as we pulled up to the property, the staff met us outside, welcomed us by name, and immediately took our

bags. There's no official check-in desk here. Instead, we were ushered to the central living room where we plopped down on comfy couches underneath a ceiling frieze by Uruguayan contemporary artist Clever Lara.

Welcome drink ready and waiting when you arrived? (Bonus point if it wasn't just fruit juice)

Yes, a pitcher of fruit-infused water was placed on the table after we sat down. Although, if we wanted something stronger (it was only 9 am), we're sure the staff would've happily obliged. There was also a complimentary bottle of La Piu Belle waiting for us in our suite, a red blend that the Viks produce at their winery in Chile.

Does the resort have a standout perk?

If you're an aspiring cowboy, you've come to the right place. Horseback riding is by far the property's main draw, and before our visit, I could count the times I've saddled up on one finger. We met up with our gaucho guide, Bauti, and embarked on a leisurely one-hour trot around the grounds. I was happy to just be a member of the herd, however, if you're feeling extra adventurous, you can take your equine companion for a swim in the lagoon. The hotel also has a private polo field where guests can take lessons or play with the professionals. When you're done, don't forget to refuel over yerba mate and tortas fritas (Uruguayan fry bread).

Private butler for every room?

No, but all the staff members are exceptionally warm, attentive, and at the same time, pretty low-key. If there's anything you want delivered to your suite, just ask and they'll bring it to you.

Is the sheet thread count higher than 300?

The thread count is a generous 800. There's truly no better snooze than the one after a day of riding, museum hopping, and wine tasting.

Is there a heated floor in the bathroom? What about a bidet?

The bathroom floors aren't heated and come summertime (December to March), you wouldn't want them to be. But yes, there is a bidet.

Are the toiletries full-sized?

No, however, the bathrooms are all stocked with Vik Retreats-branded bottles of shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and body lotion made from green tea.

Is there a private pool for the room's exclusive use?

No, but there is a 65-foot black granite swimming pool at the center of the property. Its position affords sweeping views of the grassland behind it. Oh, and the bottom is lined with fiber-optic lights that mimic a constellation come nighttime.



A pool overlooks the grounds.
ESTANCIA VIK

Is there caviar on the room service menu?

Unlike a typical resort, Estancia Vik doesn't have a room service menu. That said, the hotel does serve Uruguayan caviar, the country's new flagship product.

Is the restaurant worth its salt?

There isn't a formal restaurant here, but breakfast and dinner are served in the dining room. In the morning, you can either dine in or grab a fresh baked pastry and juice if you're in a hurry. One meal worth writing home about was the authentic Uruguayan asado feast which took place in the property's graffiti-clad grill room. At the center is a parilla, or massive barbecue, where different cuts of meat are cooked over an open flame. During dinner, we were brought everything from homemade chorizo to blood sausage, sweetbreads, and short ribs to chow down on.

Do you want to spend Friday night in the lobby bar?

Yes, though, you'll have to head over to the one located in the Basquiat-esque grill room. If you're interested in a lively night out, you can grab tapas at Solera, a local wine bar located just down the road in the village of José Ignacio.

Would you buy the hotel if you could?

In a heartbeat. Especially if it meant we'd get to keep the animals, too.

The Verdict



The grill room is used for hosting traditional Uruguayan barbecues.
ESTANCIA VIK

While Estancia Vik's eclectic array of artwork and rustic ranch vibes might not fit everyone's tastes, the property is an under-the-radar gem waiting to be found. For those looking for more surf than turf, its sister properties—Playa Vik and Bahia Vik—are within easy reach of the beach.

Rates: from \$790

Score: 8