

Uruguay



Uruguay has traditionally been better off than many other countries in South America, and is known for its progress in education, its advanced welfare system and its liberal laws governing social issues such as divorce. It has become a model for the care of the aged, who form a comparatively high percentage of the population. Good access to health care has contributed to an average life expectancy of 75 years. The health care system has however run into difficulties, with an increasing number of people unable to afford health insurance.

URUGUAY FACTS

Population: 3.4 million (UN, 2003)

Capital: Montevideo

Major languages: Spanish, Portunol or Brasileiro (Portuguese-Spanish mix, spoken on the Brazilian border)

Major religion: Christianity

Life expectancy: 72 years (men), 79 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: 1 Uruguayan peso = 100 centesimos

Main exports: Meat, rice, leather products, vehicles, dairy products, wool, electricity

Average annual income: US \$5,710 (World Bank, 2001)

Internet domain: .uy

International dialling code: +598

Uruguay's economy is characterized by an export-oriented agricultural sector, a well-educated workforce, and high levels of social spending. After averaging growth of 5% annually during 1996-98, in 1999-2002 the economy suffered a major downturn, stemming largely from lower demand in Argentina and Brazil, which together account for nearly half of Uruguay's exports. Total GDP in these four years dropped by nearly 20%, with 2002 the worst year.



Flag Description: nine equal horizontal stripes of white (top and bottom) alternating with blue; there is a white square in the upper hoist-side corner with a yellow sun bearing a human face known as the Sun of May and 16 rays alternately triangular and wavy. For more information go to <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uy.html#top>