

# Condé Nast **Traveler**



## **This Small Village in Uruguay Is the Next Major Destination for Modern Art Lovers**

Long established as a food destination, Uruguay's Garzón is making strides as a hub for international art.

The last time I drove to Garzón, several miles down a bumpy gravel road flanked by grasslands, I saw a traffic light. In this [Uruguayan](#) country village of about 200 people, it felt wholly unnecessary. Then I noticed that both the red and the green lights were permanently on, and that the pole was actually a twisted arch. It turned out to be a site-specific installation by the Argentinean artist Leandro Erlich.



Work by Uruguayan artist Diego Santurio at Garzón Sculpture Park

Much like [Marfa, Texas](#), before it, Garzón is a middle-of-nowhere former railroad stop that is now becoming an art destination. At least some credit for the town's changing identity goes to Francis Mallmann, master of open-fire

cooking. When he opened a small hotel and restaurant there, also called Garzón, in 2004, the tiny town was thrust onto the global stage. Some of his famous friends started visiting, including British art dealer Martin Summers and tailor to the stars John Pearse. Soon Belgian painter Eva Claessens bought and renovated a dilapidated turn-of-the-century house in town, and later acquired a small studio and gallery space in 2020. “There's something magical there that alters your perception of time; it's like going back 100 years,” says Piero Atchugarry, a [Miami-based](#) gallerist who established Garzón Sculpture Park near the village almost a decade ago. “That kind of downshift is very good for art.”

Scattered along 390 acres of forests, trails, and wetlands, this outdoor museum features massive contemporary works by the likes of Eduardo Basualdo, an important conceptual artist from [Buenos Aires](#), and Alan Sonfist, an American pioneer of the Land Art movement. In 2019, Atchugarry opened a gallery overlooking Garzón's verdant central plaza, where you can still catch glimpses of traditional Garzón, like gauchos on horseback and cattle roundups. Last January, Atchugarry's gallery unveiled an exhibition by Danish artist Adam Jeppesen, who created a series of blurred, haunting portraits using algorithms. The latest art space in Garzón is Walden Naturae, an offshoot of Buenos Aires's W Galería that arrived last December. Set in a newly built 5,380-square-foot brick-and-glass warehouse, it exhibits provocative contemporary works by Latin American artists like the young Uruguayan Candela Bado, whose seemingly metallic chains made from ceramic express strength in fragility.



Israeli artist Gal Nissim and her installation on display at Campo Artfest

More recently, American photographer Heidi Lender founded the village's most ambitious cultural institution to date: Campo, a creative colony that hosts mid-career artists from around the globe as they paint, sculpt, or simply draw inspiration from the rural stillness. “I loved it here and felt a calling to create a community,” says Lender, adding that she strives to help people “become more conscious” through artistic expression. Every December, as South American summer starts, Campo holds Campo Artfest, a festival showcasing the work of residents like Erlich, who now calls Garzón home. The event attracts a sophisticated, international crowd, most of whom drive in from [José Ignacio](#), the traditional fishing village turned chic resort town less

than an hour away. Sometime in the next two years, Campo plans to move into a new campus designed by Rafael Viñoly, Uruguay's most famous architect. “My hope is that Campo grows,” says Lender. “But that Garzón remains the best-kept secret.”

<https://www.cntraveler.com/story/garzon-uruguay-modern-art-destination>