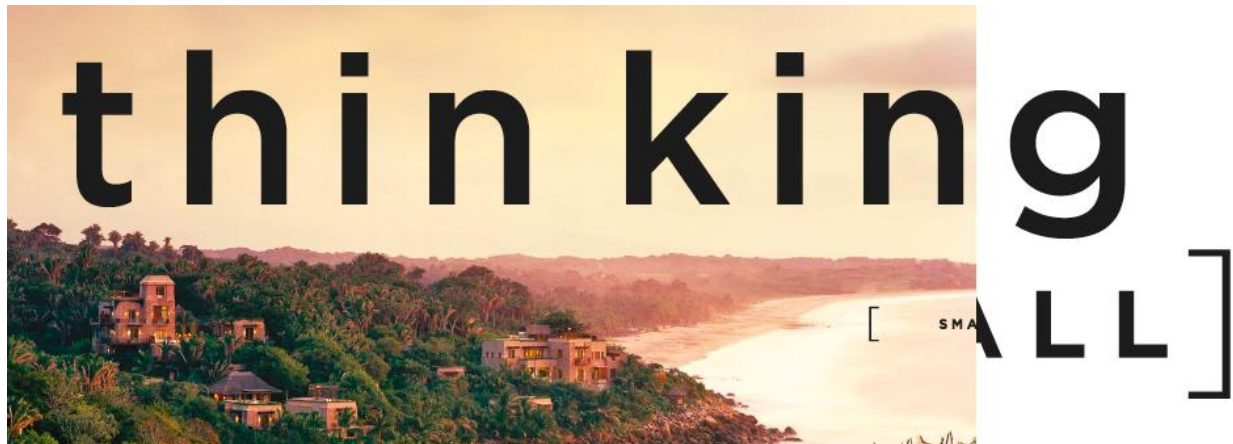
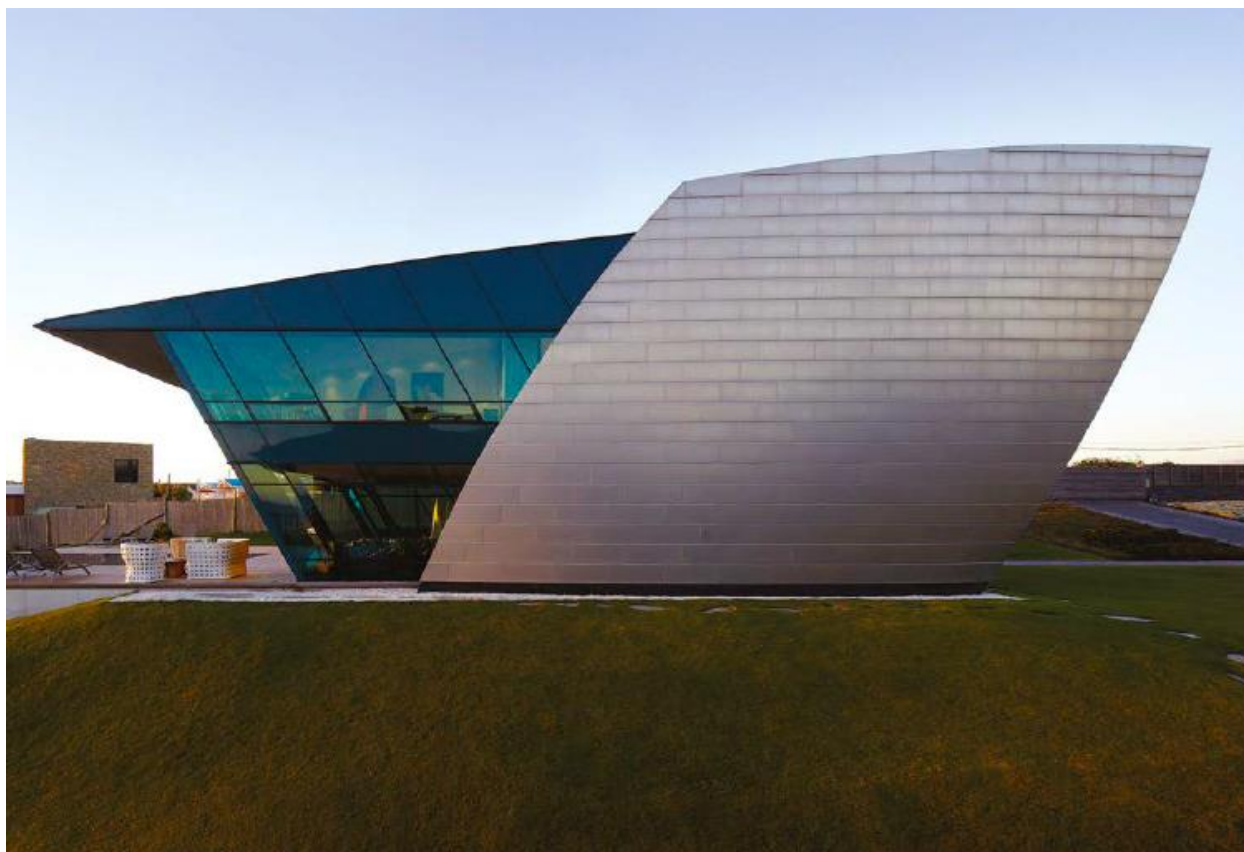




WHEN IT COMES TO
TRANQUILITY IN A
HOTEL, SOMETIMES
LESS IS MORE. SMALL
HOTELS—TYPICALLY
THOSE WITH NO MORE
THAN 20 ROOMS—
CAN MEAN MORE
SPACIOUS SUITES, MORE
PERSONAL SERVICE
AND, OF COURSE,
FEWER GUESTS. HERE
ARE SIX SMALL HOTELS
OFFERING BIG LUXURY.



[uruguay]

LIVING ART:

PLAYA VIK JOSÉ IGNACIO

STARTING RATE: \$600 per night

CONTACT: info@playavik.com,
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THE SLEEPY FISHING VILLAGE OF JOSÉ IGNACIO, ABOUT 40 MILES FROM GLITZY PUNTA DEL ESTE, SWELLS TO HAMPTONITE PROPORTIONS BETWEEN OCTOBER AND FEBRUARY, when affluent visitors transform this tiny peninsula into a jet-setter hot spot. True to its ethos of rural luxury—you'll pay over \$500 for a barefoot dinner for two—José Ignacio lacks high-end hotels, which is one of the reasons Playa Vik stands out from the surrounding whitewashed beach cottages in town.

But when a hotel's main building is referred to as "the sculpture," it's hard not to stand out. Designed by Uruguayan architect Carlos Ott, the titanium, glass and concrete structure sits on a sloping beachfront hill. Its inclined facade features a massive sliding-glass wall that opens to a majestic terrace. A cantilevered 75-foot pool made of black granite includes a fiber-optic-lit star map that makes moonlit swims feel otherworldly.

Playa Vik, which houses notable contemporary artwork including a light installation by James Turrell and paintings by Anselm Kiefer, feels like an inhabitable art collection. The four suites in the main house are appointed with works by South American artists. Surrounding the main building, six two- and three-bedroom casitas, equally full of paintings and sculpture, feature undulating grass "living roofs," another form of art. But despite the property's museum quality, it is far from static. The expected amenities—a beachside fire pit, wine cellar, gym, spa and the new, reservations-only restaurant, Cielomar—remind you Playa Vik is an experience, not an observation.