

ANTARCTICA CRUISE – MALVINAS, SOUTH GEORGIA AND ANTARCTICA

USHUAIA to USHUAIA

Embark on an exploration of the world's most remote and mysterious region. The wildlife is fantastic: penguins, seals and whales frolicking in their natural habitat. The landscape is phenomenal: calving glaciers and icebergs carved by time. And the places you'll visit are remarkable: South Georgia, the Falkland Islands, and Antarctica, a white desert of purity marked by legend and history.



Day 1

At 55 degrees latitude south, Ushuaia (pronounced oo-swy-ah) is closer to the South Pole than to Argentina's northern border with Bolivia. It is the capital and tourism base for Tierra del Fuego, the island at the southernmost tip of Argentina. Although its stark physical beauty is striking, Tierra del Fuego's historical allure is based more on its mythical past than on rugged reality. The island was inhabited for 6,000 years by Yámana, Haush, Selk'nam, and Alakaluf Indians. But in 1902 Argentina, eager to populate Patagonia to bolster its territorial claims, moved to initiate an Ushuaian penal colony, establishing the permanent settlement of its most southern territories and, by implication, everything in between. When the prison closed in 1947, Ushuaia had a population of about 3,000, made up mainly of former inmates and prison staff.

Day 2

Days at sea are the perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and catch up with what you've been meaning to do. So whether that is going to the gym, visiting the spa, whale watching, catching up on your reading or simply topping up your tan, these blue sea days are the perfect balance to busy days spent exploring shore side.

Day 3

Located slightly northwest of West Falkland, West Point Island is used for sheep farming and nature observations. Peale's dolphins and the distinctive black and white markings of the Commerson's dolphin can usually be seen in the waters around West Point Island. Rolling moorland and steep cliffs make for great photographic opportunities, but the main attraction is the Devil's Nose, a cliffside colony of Black-browed Albatrosses nesting side-by-side with feisty Rockhopper Penguins. Magellanic Penguins and Magellanic Cormorants can also be found on the island.

Day 4

Saunders Island is the fourth-largest of the Falkland Islands in the western portion of the archipelago. The island's topography is unusual, being made up of three peninsulas linked by narrow necks, and three big upland areas. Today the island is run as a sheep farm, but has historical importance as the location of the first British settlement in the Falklands. Saunders' wildlife is also impressively varied. It is possible to see Gentoo and King Penguins in the open dune and sand-flat area, while Rockhopper Penguins (with the odd pair of Macaroni Penguins in between them), Imperial Shags and Black-browed Albatrosses frequent Mount Richards, the highest point on the island at 457 m (1500 feet). Other key bird species are the Black-throated Finch, Ruddy-headed Goose and Falkland Steamer Duck.

Day 5

Tiny Stanley, capital of the Falklands, seems in many ways like a British village fallen out of the sky. Many homes are painted in bright colours, adding visual appeal to this distant outpost. Not far offshore, the wreck of the Lady Elizabeth, is one of the many vessels remaining as a silent testimonial to the region's frequent harsh weather conditions. The islands, also known by their Spanish name of Islas Malvinas, are home to arguably more tuxedo-clad inhabitants of the penguin variety than human residents. Various species, such as Gentoo, Magellanic and the more elusive King penguins, either live here permanently or use the Falklands as a stopover on their migration route. Darwin found the islands' flora and fauna fascinating - no doubt you will, too.

Day 6-7

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Day 8-10

South Georgia is a breathtaking destination of towering snow-covered mountains, mighty glaciers, and low-lying grasslands that attract an astounding concentration of wildlife. It is possible to find Southern fur seals, Southern elephant seals and a variety of albatross species including Black-browed, Light-mantled Sooty, Grey-headed and the spectacular Wandering Albatross, plus thousands of King and Macaroni Penguins. South Georgia is also linked to the early Antarctic explorers. Captain James Cook first stepped ashore in 1775, but perhaps more famous is Ernest Shackleton's arrival in 1916 following the sinking of his ship Endurance. Shackleton's grave and the whaling museum at Grytviken are highlights, as would be a visit to one of the King Penguin colonies at Salisbury Plain or Gold Harbour.

Day 11-12

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Day 13

Awesome glaciers flecked with pink algae can be seen approaching Elephant Island — so

named either for its elephant-like appearance or for sightings of elephant seals here. Elephant Island is home to several Chinstrap Penguin rookeries, as well as 2,000-year-old moss colonies. Weddell seals and Macaroni Penguins can also be spotted. In 1916, when Ernest Shackleton's ship Endurance was crushed in pack ice in the Weddell Sea, the crew was stranded here for more than 4 months finding shelter under two upturned lifeboats on the spit of land Shackleton's men named 'Point Wild'. The bust of the Chilean captain Luis Pardo has been erected here to commemorate the successful rescue in the tug Yelcho.

Day 14

The Antarctic Sound is a stretch of water named after the first ship to have passed through this body of water from the Bransfield Strait to the Weddell Sea in 1902. The Antarctic eventually sank and crew and scientists had to spend quite some time in this area before they could be rescued. Sites that have to do with this story - like Hope Bay or Paulet Island - are sometimes visited. At Paulet, Hope Bay and Brown Bluff Adelie and Gentoo Penguins breed, as do Kelp Gulls and Cape Petrels, Snow Petrels and Skuas. The Sound's main attractions are the spectacular tabular icebergs that come from the Larsen Ice Shelf further south.

Day 15-16

Remote and otherworldly, Antarctica is irresistible for its spectacular iceberg sculptures and calving glaciers, and for the possibility of up-close encounters with marine mammals and the iconic penguins. The Antarctic Peninsula - the main peninsula closest to South America - has a human history of almost 200 years, with explorers, sealers, whalers, and scientists who have come to work, and eventually intrepid visitors coming to enjoy this pristine and remote wilderness. It is a region of protected bays, unscaled snow-capped mountains, vast glaciers and a few places where whalers or scientists have worked. Just as irresistible are the many Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguin colonies, the seals basking on ice floes, the whales and orcas.

Day 17

Some 770 kilometers (478 miles) south of Cape Horn, the South Shetland Islands are usually the first land seen in Antarctica. Separated from the Antarctic Peninsula by the Bransfield Strait, nine major islands make up the group. The region was the first to be exploited by sealers in the early 19th century, and because of its proximity to South America, it still is the most visited by scientists and tourists. Chinstrap, Adelie, Gentoo and Macaroni Penguins all breed here. In addition, because it is the warmest part of the continent, large moss beds as well as orange, black, grey and green lichens grow - even hair grass and pearlwort manage to survive. Leopard seals, Weddell seals, crabeater seals, Southern elephant seals and Antarctic fur seals can be seen in the water and on the beaches.

Day 18-19

The Drake Passage has a notorious reputation for its turbulent seas due to the westerly winds and the funneling effect of the passage. The Antarctic Convergence, a natural boundary where cold polar water flows northward and warmer equatorial water moves southward, is within the Drake Passage. When these two currents meet, nutrients are pushed to the surface, often attracting a multitude of seabirds and whales. Black-browed Albatross, Sooty Shearwaters and White-chinned Petrels glide in the air currents alongside and in the wake of the ship.

Day 20

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