

ANTARCTICA CRUISE

USHUAIA to USHUAIA



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 2-3

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 4

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 5-7

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 8

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 9-10

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Day 11

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