



## FALKLAND ISLANDS: KEY EXPERIENCES

The Falkland Islands are located in the South Atlantic, about 300 miles from the nearest point on the South American mainland. Made up of two large islands (East and West Falkland) and some 778 smaller islands, visitors to the Falkland Islands can enjoy a wealth of experiences and activities. Highlights include:

### ➤ **Birds and Wildlife**



*King penguins*

#### **Penguins**

There is no better place to see penguins than in their natural environment. For bird watchers and photographers, there can be few more enjoyable experiences than watching a colony of penguins going about its business. But why are penguins so fascinating? Perhaps it's because each of the five species in the Falklands have their own eccentric habits and characters.

King penguins are tall and elegant. They gather together on the Islands' coastal greens, males and females taking it in turn to keep their one egg warm in a feathery pouch on their feet. King penguin chicks are far from elegant though. Looking like beaked teddy bears, they wander round for up to a year waiting to develop their adult colour.

Some distance away from the kings live the Magellanic penguins. They are known to Islanders as jackasses, because of the loud donkey-like calls they make when standing at the entrance to their underground nests.

With characteristic bright pink beaks and white headbands, the gentoo penguins show their eccentric nature by walking as far as possible inland before choosing a nesting site. The gentoos gather together in colonies to protect them from gulls that can dive in and carry off a chick.

Visitors to the Falklands particularly like to watch the noisy and quarrelsome rockhoppers and macaronis, the smallest breed of penguin on the Falklands. Their inability to fly or even walk very well doesn't stop them from nesting at the top of cliffs! The macaroni penguins do not breed until they are six or seven and produce the equivalent of only one egg a year. They are particularly vulnerable to environmental change, like pollution, disturbance and global warming, which is why they are suited to the clean, green Falkland Islands.

#### **Birds**

The Falkland Islands provide the world's main breeding area for the huge black-browed albatross, or the mollymawk, as they are known to Islanders. They live for some thirty years and return to the same nest site every spring, often choosing the noisy company of the rockhoppers. They have a wingspan of up to eight feet and can fly for miles without flapping their wings.



*Imperial shag & rockhopper penguins*

Although the coastline is dominated by penguins and albatross,

they are just part of the array of Falklands birds. The endemic Falklands steamer duck can also be found in coastal areas. It is a flightless bird, but still uses its wings, as paddles (like those of a steam boat), to swim faster. You will also find kelp geese, oystercatchers and the little Cobb's wren feeding along the shore.

The Islands are home to one of the world's rarest birds of prey, the striated caracaras or Johnny rook. Many are amazed when they first encounter a Johnny rook, with its handsome markings and agility on the ground and in the air. As a large bird of prey, it is a powerful predator, yet it is very tame.

The Islands also provide important breeding sites, within areas of tall tussac grass, for the tiny tussac bird, night heron, Falkland thrush and black-throated finch.

## **Mammals**



*Sea lion - photo: Derek Pettersson*

Along the sandy beaches you will find elephant seals and sea lions. The bulls of both species gather large groups of breeding females around them and furiously fight off other males who may cast an eye in their direction. The seals, which can weigh up to two tonnes, won't threaten humans providing they keep at a respectable distance. They will be far more concerned about the orcas or killer whales waiting just offshore. Another species of seal, the fur seal, also lives on the Islands, but is rarely seen, as it tends to stay in inaccessible areas. Porpoises and dolphins can also be spotted.

## ➤ **Flora**

The wonderful flora and fauna of the Islands make it a special destination for the botanist and nature enthusiast. Beyond the coastal fringes, delicate wild flowers can be found growing amongst the tall tussac grass. The diddle dee, which grows densely along the slopes of the Islands, yields fruit that makes delicious jam. The story goes that, if you eat the distinctly flavoured diddle dee during your visit, you will always return to the Falkland Islands. Close by you will find pale maiden, the Falklands' national flower, the almond flower, and even a few native strawberry plants.



*Diddle dee*

## ➤ **Fishing**



*Photo: Falkland Islands Holidays*

Few places can offer true wilderness fishing like the Falklands. Remote, unspoilt locations, pristine waters, stunning backdrops and strong runs of fish make the Falkland Islands one of the last great wilderness fishing experiences in the world. Anglers can choose an itinerary of coastal estuaries, deep, isolated rivers and fast running streams.

Brown trout common to northern Europe were introduced to the Falklands more than fifty years ago. This fast growing migratory fish quickly adapted to local conditions and now provides some of the finest fishing around. Fish in excess of 10 pounds are regularly caught each season, with an average catch weight of 5-8 pounds.

It is also likely you will encounter the Falkland mullet if fishing in tidal waters. Displaying similar behaviour to the European species (though unrelated), Falkland mullet follows the tide into the shallows where it can be seen moving, usually with an obvious wake. However Falkland

mullet is a much larger, stronger fish than its European counterpart. Locally it is valued as a game fish, often surprising unsuspecting trout anglers.

The fishing season runs from 1 September to 30 April.

### ➤ **Local Cuisine**

Visitors dining in the Falkland Islands are spoiled for choice with a selection of fresh-locally grown ingredients wrapped up in creative, specialist menus. Much of the produce grown in the Falkland Islands is organic thanks to its unique growing environment.



*Toothfish brochettes – photo: Julie Bellhouse*

Seafood lovers will enjoy world-class local fare including mussels, oysters, scallops, crab, sea trout, Atlantic rock cod (mullet) with the opportunity to taste local delicacies such as Patagonian toothfish and Falklands loligo squid. The Islands are also becoming renowned for their delicate lamb and tender, juicy beef. Dishes are complimented by local vegetables and the unique flavours of the local diddle dee berry and teaberry. Wine lovers need not despair as an impressive selection of international wines is readily available, most notably those from the newly popular vineyards of South America.

During the day, visitors can enjoy a Falkland Islands Smoko (the local term for a tea/coffee break), which usually includes delicious home-cooked cakes and other treats such as scones and local diddle dee berry jam.

### ➤ **Photography and Painting**



*Gypsy Cove*

The epic landscapes and wildlife of the Falklands make it a remarkable destination for any artist and a photographer's paradise. Professional and amateur painters, photographers and film makers come to the Islands year after year, hoping to capture a part of what makes the Falklands unique throughout the world.

The ever-changing light creates an array of spectacular colours and contrasts of yellow and gold, azure and blue, emerald and jade. No two moments are the same in the Falkland Islands and, like the seasons, there is always something special to be encountered.

The wildlife is spectacular and here in the Falkland Islands, photographers build relationships with rare wildlife based on trust and an unspoken promise to never abuse nature's hospitality.

Accommodation scattered across East and West Falklands and the outer islands invites artists to leave the beaten track, experience the real Falklands and taste the local brand of hospitality. Local tour operators and guides can organise itineraries for any length of stay and provide advice on the best sites for your chosen medium.

With nearly two hundred native species of plants, many are to be found on walks and trails around the Islands. Add to this the mountain ranges, stone 'rivers' and a never-ending coastline, and there's something new to discover here for everyone.

### ➤ **Maritime and Military History**

A self-guided walk around Stanley will lead to many discoveries of sunken wrecks and a maritime history that spans back to the seventeenth century.

The Falkland Islands Museum provides an insight into the Islands' past, from those first settlers to the present day. Unusual and fascinating artefacts reveal man's struggle on this remote archipelago as well as the ingenuity to improvise to survive. The Museum is the unwritten version of the book of life about the Falkland Islands and its people. Through its artefacts, photographs and memorabilia, prepare to be taken back on a journey through history and share a moment of living on the edge of the world.



*Falklands Islands Museum*

A battlefield tour of Goose Green, or up Mount Tumbledown, is a moving experience. Led by local people with expert knowledge, you will be guided through strategies of battle and you will glimpse the bravery of servicemen who fought in the conflict of 1982. Many of the local guides can also give their individual account of the conflict by sharing with you their own personal memories of life under occupation.

### ➤ **Golf**



*Stanley Golf Course*

Ruggedly beautiful and challenging, the Falkland Islands offers golfing enthusiasts the opportunity to play on the most southerly course in the world.

Golf has been played for many years in the Falkland Islands, mainly in the capital, Stanley. The course at Stanley situated just five minutes drive from the centre of town and is improving annually, benefitting from investment from enthusiasts. Players will enjoy the distant views of the mountains around Stanley, and the breaks afforded by treeless fairways. The 18-hole course is 4,700 yards in length.

### ➤ **Weddings and Honeymoons**

For the romantic, nature-lover, or those simply seeking a unique location to tie the knot, the Falklands Islands is the place to plan a wedding or travel on honeymoon.

We can promise spectacular scenery and a unique setting for those special photographs of your memorable day. The Falklands' wedding locations are stunning and certainly different. Imagine having black-browed albatross or penguins as spectators.

There are white sandy beaches and turquoise seas to provide a scenic backdrop, or perhaps a wedding standing high above the ocean on a natural rock arch (fondly called 'the Cathedral') will capture your imagination? Or an perhaps idyllic setting with swaying palms and grasses in a beautiful garden on a small, privately owned island will be just what you are looking for to provide the natural frame for those honeymoon photographs. There is also Christ Church Cathedral in Stanley, where you can tie the knot in the world's most southerly cathedral.

Even if you are just visiting for the day whilst on a cruise ship that stops in Stanley, it is still possible to tie the knot in this amazing location. Contact the Tourist Board or your cruise ship operator for more details.

**For further information on the Falklands Islands, please visit [www.falklandislands.com](http://www.falklandislands.com).**

### **Notes for Editors:**

- The Falkland Islands have a raw, unspoilt quality that entices locals and tourists back time and again. Visitors to the Islands are spoilt for choice with more than 227 species of identified birds (including several of the world's largest endangered breeding colonies), as well as whales, dolphins, elephant seals, sea lions, delicate flora and rugged geographical formations.

- The best time to visit the Islands and experience the local culture and wildlife is October to April. The average summer temperature (December to March) is 15° Celsius (59° Fahrenheit) and the Falklands has more sunshine hours and less rainfall than the UK.
- There are over 40 international tour operators offering tailor-made packages and escorted tours to the Falkland Islands. See [www.falklandislands.com](http://www.falklandislands.com) for the latest list.
- Visitors can reach the Falklands on the weekly LAN Airways flight via Chile or the charter flight operated twice weekly from RAF Brize Norton in the UK by the Ministry of Defence.