



Falkland Islands Event Highlights for 2011

One of the last untouched wildlife wonders of the world with a rich history and a warm welcome, the Falkland Islands offer plenty to keep visitors and locals entertained. There's always something taking place – from amazing animal encounters to quirky events – to ensure a hearty slice of island life, whenever you choose to visit.

January & February – Newborns for the New Year: The Islands' wildlife wonders are at their peak during the warmer weather from December to February, a fantastic time for nature lovers and photographers. With the New Year comes the hatching of many of the Islands' penguin species. Sea lion pups may also be spotted, suckling from their mothers. Head to the outlying islands - Sea Lion, Carcass, Saunders and Pebble - to marvel at the new life.

Foraging gentoo penguin parents are all a flurry in February as they have their work cut out feeding the huge chick 'crèches', while Magellanic penguin chicks will leave their burrows for the first time.

February 26 – March 1 - Camp Sports Week: This colourful Falklands festival celebrates everything about the glorious countryside – known locally as 'Camp' originating from the Spanish word 'campo', or countryside. Marking the traditional end of the sheep shearing season, the Islanders unwind with big family get-togethers and a host of events including sheep shearing, dog trials, horse racing and barbeques.

March 20 - On your marks for the world's most southerly marathon: Forget London and New York, for a real challenge don your running shoes for what is widely regarded as one of the most challenging marathon courses due to the elements. The Standard Chartered Bank Stanley Marathon, now in its sixth year, is officially the world's most southerly AIMS-certified marathon. The course takes in fantastic views around the Island's capital, Stanley, all in a good cause as proceeds go to Seeing is Believing, the bank's charity for visually impaired people.

June 14 - Liberation Day Parade: This year is the 29th anniversary of the end of the Argentine occupation of the Falkland Islands in 1982. Islanders gather at the Liberation Monument and Christchurch Cathedral to mark the occasion with a thanksgiving service, followed by a military parade around Stanley.

June 18 (tbc) - On the count of three...take a mid-winter swim: Not for the fainthearted, the Saturday before mid-winter's day (midsummer in the Northern hemisphere), plucky residents take to the chilly Atlantic waters to raise money for charity. Those not participating in the dip can enjoy mulled wine and bonfires on the beach at Surf Bay, just east of Stanley.

August 14 - Falklands Day: This public holiday marks the first recorded sighting of the Falkland Islands by English sea captain John Davis in 1592.

September 12-13 - Check out the local arts and crafts: From homespun wool to rugs and jewellery, this is the perfect opportunity to browse local treasures as crafty folk compete in 15 categories at the Falkland Island Community School in Stanley.

September - Black-browed albatross and elephant seals return: Known locally as 'mollymawks', the black-browed albatross begin arriving in the Falkland Islands this month to breed. Their return is heralded by their nosy bray and fanned tail courting displays. The largest of seal species, the elephant seal, also arrive in September.

September 1 - Gone fishing - Trout fishing season officially opens: Whether casting out into the crystal blue waters of the ocean, or enjoying the rivers and treeless banks, the strong runs of fish on the Falklands will surprise many a keen fisherman. The combination of plentiful fish and the pristine conditions of the waterways, practically untouched by man, make for a real angler's paradise. September to October is the best time to catch brown trout and sea trout, which can reach up to 10 pounds.

September 30 - Take your partners for the Falklands Conservation Charity Ball: This black-tie affair raises much-needed funds for conserving the wildlife heritage of the Falklands, serving up a fabulous evening of fizz, food, friends and frenzied dancing.

November 28 - Charity Fire Engine Pull: This fun family day sees the Falklands' Fire and Rescue Service race to beat the clock over 1.7 miles with a 14-ton fire engine in tow. Other event highlights include two teams competing in a hose relay.

December - Egg hatching: December is one of the most exciting months in the Falklands with Magellanic penguins and black-browed albatross among the varied species whose eggs hatch this month. Killer whales can also be spotted circling the shore of Sea Lion Island as elephant and sea lion pups take their first steps.

December 8 - Battle Day Parade: This national holiday commemorates the second major naval engagement of the First World War when a small British fleet destroyed the German South Atlantic Squadron. The 1914 Memorial, constructed on a headland west of Government House, is the focus for a service and RAF fly by. The day concludes with a well-attended, colourful parade.

December 26-28 - They're off - Stanley Sports Association Race Meeting: Stanley thunders to the sound of hooves with the annual Boxing Day race meeting. A Christmas horse race has been held at Stanley race course since 1912. Expect to see top class locally and internationally bred horses battling it out as well as side events from the more traditional gymkhana to bull riding.

For further information on the Falklands Islands, please visit www.falklandislands.com. Media enquiries should be directed to Suzanne Holiday and Tryph Greenwood on 020 7839 2140 or falklandstourism@keenepa.co.uk

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 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.