Falkland Islands Circumnavigation

– A South Atlantic bird & wildlife spectacle
Falkland Islands

There is no other groups of islands in the entire Atlantic Ocean which allows fairly easy access to such a diversity of spectacular bird species under such a mild climate and with such a variety of marine mammals thrown in.

The Falkland Islands are known to most people today more for their recent political history than their natural history. And even to many nature lovers, the Falklands are often seen as secondary compared to the neighbouring Antarctica and South Georgia. This voyage aims to set the record straight: The Falkland Islands are worth every minute of a two-week circumnavigation, and they will provide us with a long string of wonderful encounters with penguins (4-5 species), albatrosses, cormorants, ducks and geese, raptors, shore birds, song birds and more – as well as seals and sea lions, whales and dolphins. We will see a variety of the islands’ unique landscapes of rolling hills, stone runs, rugged shorelines, pristine white beaches and lush giant kelp beds. We will see the endemic bird species and several near-endemic ones as well, and we intend to visit the southern hemisphere’s largest albatross colony on Steeple Jason. There will be time enough to allow for prolonged visits to the most magnificent of the sites during the best of the weather conditions. The group will be small enough to allow for great flexibility and individual attention.
Tour Description

**Dates:** December 3 - 17, 2016.

**Group size:** Minimum 8, maximum 11.

**Transportation:** 26.5-meter motor vessel “Hans Hansson” & Zodiac.

**Accommodation:** 5 twin cabins (2 with private facilities, 3 with shared) & 1 single (shared).

**Guides:** One Expedition Leader & 1 Assistant Guide.

**Price:** US$ 9.500,- (private) & US$ 8.500 (shared). Single supplement (in a twin cabin) +80%.

**Payment schedule:** 10% upon booking, further 40% by May 1st 2016, remaining 50% by Sep 15th 2016. If you decide to pay the full amount at once, a $150,- discount applies.

**Exclusions:** Any pre- or post-cruise land or travel arrangements (apart from above transfers), private travel insurance (mandatory), landing fee for Steeple Jason (approx. US$ 200,-), laundry service (you may do it yourself on board), alcoholic beverages, gratuities, items of a personal nature.

**Inclusions:**
- Transfer December 3 Mount Pleasant airport to ship
- Accommodation on board December 3-17
- A circumnavigation of the Falkland Islands
- All ship related costs (fuel, oil, water, port fees, provisions, etc.)
- All landings to view/photograph wildlife and scenery
- Landing fees (except for Steeple Jason, see below)
- Guiding and lecturing while on board
- Tea & coffee & soft drinks / juices on board
- Served dinner December 3
- 2 served meals & self-service breakfast daily December 4-16
- Self-service breakfast December 17
- Transfer ship to Mount Pleasant airport December 17
- Complimentary NozoMojo species list
- Magnificent scenery and wonderful wildlife encounters
- Great company, safe and friendly travel, a trip of a lifetime

Please note that the crew / boat is so small that some assistance with such basics as keeping the boat tidy, laying tables, cleaning cups etc. will be expected of guests. The cabins will be your private space for the duration of the voyage, however your guides will be happy to assist you, if you wish, with some basic house-keeping a few times over the two weeks. A good spirit of camaraderie will ensure that everyone helps out and ensures that everyone gets the help they need.
What to expect

- Good sightings and excellent photographic opportunities of just about all of the regularly breeding and summertime occurring birds of the Falkland Islands, including the endemic Flightless Steamer Duck and Cobb’s Wren, and the near-endemic Striated Caracara and Blackish Cinclodes.
- Close-up experiences of (large) colonies of King, Gentoo, Rockhopper and Magellanic Penguins, Black-browed Albatross (including the World’s largest colony) and King/Imperial Shag/Cormorant. Most of the species will have young in the nests!
- Several opportunities to see and photograph South American Sea Lion, South American Fur Seal and Southern Elephant Seal (the World’s largest pinniped).
- Great encounters with a range of cetaceans, including the charming Commerson’s Dolphin and the larger, agile Peale’s Dolphin, both endemic to the waters around southern South America. Other special species that are very likely are Sel Whale and Orca.
- Weather of a mostly temperate and variable nature. Daytime temperatures should average 12-15C/54-59F, while night-time temperatures can drop to about 5C/41F. Winds can be anything, from flat calm to high, but the islands do for the most part offer some lee if the sea is up. The Falkland climate is relatively dry, the western-more islands being the driest (but also the windiest).
- Long days and early nights, beginning at dawn or soon after and continuing until after sunset, with near constant wildlife and wilderness opportunities of an ever changing nature. Occasionally we may be underway in the morning with an opportunity to sleep in if you wish.
- Many, varied and extended shore excursions on a wide range of islands offering a host of different wildlife viewing opportunities.
- An informal but highly professional atmosphere.
- Close contact with friends you haven’t met yet.
Rough itinerary:

December 3: Arrival and complimentary transfer from Mount Pleasant Airport to the vessel for departure from Port Stanley.

December 4 to 16: A circumnavigation of the Falkland Islands, probably clock-wise (but if the winds should be adverse or forecast to be, we might head counter-clock-wise around), visiting such islands as: Sea Lion, George, Barren, Weddell, Beaver, New, Steeple Jason, Carcass, Saunder's (The Neck), and Pebble. Volunteer Point will probably be the last stop before the vessel heads for Port Stanley for the last night on board.

December 17: After breakfast, transfer from Port Stanley to airport.
Sea Lion Island: This highlight may be our first stop. After landing on a sandy beach, we shall enjoy the luxury of easy walking to some of the many wildlife viewing opportunities of the island. There are colonies of three species of penguin here, and much other birdlife. Sea Lion Island is also a stronghold for Southern Elephant Seal in the Falklands, there are also South American Sea Lions, and it is one of the best places in the archipelago to see Orca.

George and Barren Islands: Among the highlights on these southern islands is the fact that they are free of cats, rats and mice – therefore the birdlife flourishes. Also sea lions and elephant seals abound.

Weddell and Beaver Islands: Now we are far west, and these large islands offer beautiful sand beaches and easy access to Gentoo and Magellanic Penguin colonies. We may have an opportunity perhaps to hike up Mt. Weddell for the views from there. Weddell Island also hosts a wealth of flowering plants.

New Island: Another highlight. There is outstanding scenery and amazing concentrations of wildlife here (with more than 40 species of breeding birds) to last us at least a whole day. Among specialties are breeding South American Fur Seals, Peale's Dolphins and some King Penguins.
Steeple Jason: Remote, isolated, exposed – and extraordinary. We have permission to land at Steeple Jason. Conditions allowing, we shall try, and we shall give it time enough, so that if we cannot land immediately when we arrive, perhaps we can try a bit later. It will be worth it. Most of the people who visit the Falkland Islands only dream of visiting Steeple Jason, but it is not on many itineraries. The scenery is outstanding. The island hosts the largest colony of Black-browed Albatross in the World. And the number of other birds is impressive too, not least the giant petrels, the caracaras and the skuas.

Carcass Island: Named after an 18th century vessel, this island in many ways is the opposite of Steeple Jason. It is gentle, calm and un-dramatic. It is home to Commerson’s and Peale’s Dolphins offshore, and almost all the variety of passerines on shore that the Falklands can offer – including a healthy population of Cobb’s Wren. Here we will also see Southern Crested Caracara, we usually see Flying Steamer Duck, and we have a good chance to pick up some other birds that are often difficult to find. Finishing our visit with a high-tea session with the owners Rob & Lorraine McGill is a cultural highlight not to be missed.

Saunders Island, the Neck: There are some concentrations of wildlife that are so overwhelming, that a few hours is no-where near enough to take it all in. We probably felt that way on New Island and Steeple Jason, and such is the experience also at the Neck on Saunier’s Island. Among the highlights here will be the cormorant / shag colony, mixed with large numbers of Rockhopper Penguins, and the easy access also to breeding Black-browed Albatrosses. We will not want to leave again.
**Pebble Island:** This island in the north central part of the Falklands hosts numerous waterfowl, sea lions haul out on the beaches, and there is a chance that we may find Macaroni Penguin breeding here – along with all the other bird species. We are also still likely to see dolphins offshore.

**Volunteer Point:** Whether we head clock-wise or counter-clock-wise around the islands, we will begin and end with a highlight. If Volunteer Point is our last stop, it is not the least. Here we find the largest colony of King Penguins in the entire island group, and along the beautiful beach and shores we will enjoy numerous other breeding birds, flowering plants and perhaps more views of sea lions and dolphins.

All of the above is weather dependant, tentative and changeable. The goal will be to maximize the opportunity to see and photograph as great a diversity of Falkland wildlife and scenery as possible, with extra focus on the grandest of wildlife concentrations. Weather permitting (and encouraging), some of the main sites may be allotted more time and some of the smaller sites may be skipped.
Booking and inquiry:
NozoMojo@gmail.com