

SEA LION ISLAND



The largest
elephant seal
colony in the
Falkland Islands
- and home to three
penguin species



SEA LION ISLAND



The Falkland Islands archipelago lies 280 miles (350 km) to the east of the South American continent. It consists of two large islands, East and West Falkland, and 780 small islands and islets.

SEA LION ISLAND lies 10 miles (17 kms) to the south of mainland East Falkland.

Sea Lion Island is reached by a 40 minute flight from Stanley or Mount Pleasant Complex with the Falkland Islands Government Air Service, or by zodiac beach landings from visiting cruise ships.

About Sea Lion Island

Sea Lion Island, 2,236 acres (905 ha), is owned by the Falkland Islands Development Corporation. For many years it was a sheep farm but due to the decline of the wool market this became uneconomic. It is now the premier wildlife tourism site in the Falkland Islands. The Island has the most southerly British hotel in the world, which is run by Strachan Visik Ltd (Sea Lion Lodge Ltd). For further information:

www.sealionisland.com.

The Sea Lion group also includes Brandy, Whisky, and Sea Lion Easterly islands. These are owned by the Antarctic Research Trust:

www.antarctic-research.de.

The Island is made up of two flat, rocky plateaux joined by a broad

sandy beach. It has large stands of tussock grass around the coastline. With the reduction in grazing, 56 species of flowering plants now thrive here including the endemic vanilla daisy and coastal nassauvia. It is the only known site in the Falklands for the Fuegian Violet. There are no cats or rats to predate on ground nesting birds, which thrive here. It is notable as the most important breeding site for elephant seals in the Falklands.

Its wildlife status is formally recognised under the international Ramsar Convention and it qualifies as an Important Bird Area, a global standard set by BirdLife International.





GENTOO PENGUINS live on Sea Lion Island all year round. The Falkland Islands are one of the most important locations in the world for this species. Two large round eggs are laid from late September. The chicks will be ready to go to sea by the end of March.



ROCKHOPPER PENGUIN
The smallest of the Falkland penguins come here to breed on cliff tops in October. They feed on fish and squid. Their numbers have declined over many years, but these Islands still hold the world's largest breeding population.



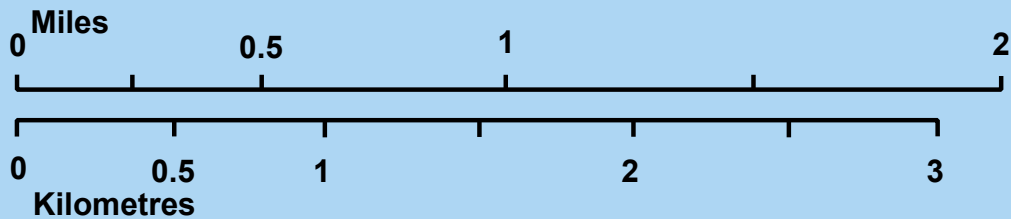
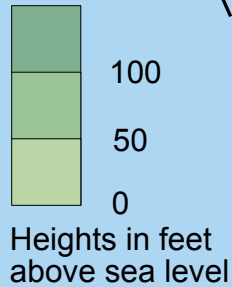
MAGELLANIC PENGUINS are known in the Falklands as the Jackass penguin because of their braying call. They arrive here in September, but have left by April to migrate north as far as Brazil. They breed in underground burrows.



WARNING
Please keep your distance from the southern giant petrel colony

Kelp can be used to deaden the swell for zodiac landings

Sea Lion Island
Hike to Lodge - 1.5 mile (2.3 kms)
Sea Lion Hike - 3.0 mile (4.6 kms)
Rockhopper Hike - 6.0 miles (9.7km)



Elephant Seals and Sea Lions

Sea Lion Island holds 95% of the Falklands **Southern Elephant Seal** population. Two thousand individuals may be found here at the height of their breeding season in October – November. Adult bulls are huge creatures growing up to 15ft (4.5 m) long and weighing up to 3.5 tonnes.

The breeding season begins when the adult bulls arrive in the second week of September. The cows arrive about a week later and form harem groups. About 200 pups are born on Sea Lion Island each year in mid-September. The female feeds her pup on very rich milk for about 23 days during which time the pup will quadruple in weight. The female then mates and leaves for sea again. After moulting, most of the adult bulls will have left by mid-November.

From late November yearlings and non-breeders come ashore to moult, and some animals can be seen here until April. In the winter months most adults stay at sea. They have been known to travel as far away as the Argentine coast.

Sea Lion Island was traditionally the most important site in the Falklands for breeding Southern Sea Lions. Sea lions have suffered steep declines throughout the Falklands – in the 1930s 30,000 pups were born each year in the Islands, compared with only 2,000 in the early 1990s.

On Sea Lion Island they still breed in small numbers around the coast. They sometimes prey on penguins,

Southern sea lions

but their main food is octopus, squid, lobster krill and fish. Be especially alert when walking through tussac grass where these large animals often haul out.



Elephant seal pup

Southern elephant seals



Killer Whales and Dolphins

Because of the deeply shelving coastline, this is one of the best places in the Falklands to see **killer whales**. They hunt penguins and seals at the edge of kelp beds just offshore. They do not harm people. They can travel at up to 35 mph (55kmh). It is one of the most wide-ranging mammals on earth. Killer whales are annual visitors seen here from October to February.

The killer whale is the largest member of the dolphin family. It has distinctive jet-black, brilliant white and grey markings with a huge dorsal fin on the male. They are typically seen in close-knit family groups known as pods. Members of a pod stay together

for life. Two pods of killer whales have been identified off Sea Lion Island. The first consists of three large females, two juveniles and a small calf. The second pod includes two large males with three to four females. You can often see them at very close range, on the seaward side of outcropping rocks.

Peale's dolphins may be seen at any time of year often in groups of three to eight animals. It has a dark face and chin, dark dorsal fin, white 'armpits' and a single greyish white body stripe on each side and is about 8 ft in length. This dolphin is particularly common around the Islands in waters up to 200 ft deep. They can be very acrobatic

Commerson's dolphins are smaller with a rather short stocky body with contrasting black and white appearance. They are known in the Falklands as the puffing pig. They live in well defined territories and come in close to the shore, preferring water less than 100 ft deep, often in sheltered kelp beds. This dolphin is the one you are likely to see if you go on a short boat trip as they often bowride and are fond of swimming alongside or behind vessels.



Commerson's dolphin



Peale's dolphin



Killer whales

Bird Checklist for Sea Lion Island

Sealion Island is especially important for small ground nesting birds that thrive due to the lack of introduced predators. Cobbs wren, unique to the Falklands, and tussacbird are especially common and easy to spot.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> King penguin | <input type="checkbox"/> Striated caracara |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gentoo penguin | <input type="checkbox"/> Peregrine falcon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Macaroni penguin | <input type="checkbox"/> Magellanic oystercatcher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rockhopper penguin | <input type="checkbox"/> Two-banded plover |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magellanic Penguin | <input type="checkbox"/> Rufous-chested dotterel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White tufted grebe | <input type="checkbox"/> White rumped sandpiper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silvery grebe | <input type="checkbox"/> Kelp gull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sooty shearwater | <input type="checkbox"/> Dolphin gull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rock shag | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown hooded gull |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black-crowned night-heron | <input type="checkbox"/> South American tern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kelp goose | <input type="checkbox"/> Short eared owl |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upland goose | <input type="checkbox"/> Dark faced ground-tyrant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ruddy-headed goose | <input type="checkbox"/> Falkland pipit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flightless steamer duck | <input type="checkbox"/> Falkland thrush |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patagonian crested duck | <input type="checkbox"/> Grass wren |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chiloë wigeon | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobb's wren |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speckled teal | <input type="checkbox"/> Long tailed meadowlark |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silvery teal | <input type="checkbox"/> Black throated finch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crested caracara | |



Cobb's wren, unique to the Falklands

Falklands Conservation works to protect the wildlife of the Falkland Islands. To find out more about us and how you can support what we do visit us at the Jetty Visitor Centre, Stanley or visit our website:

www.falklandsconservation.com.

For more information on this site and other areas of outstanding wildlife and scenery we recommend

A Visitor's Guide to the Falkland Islands.

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