

# Tour Report

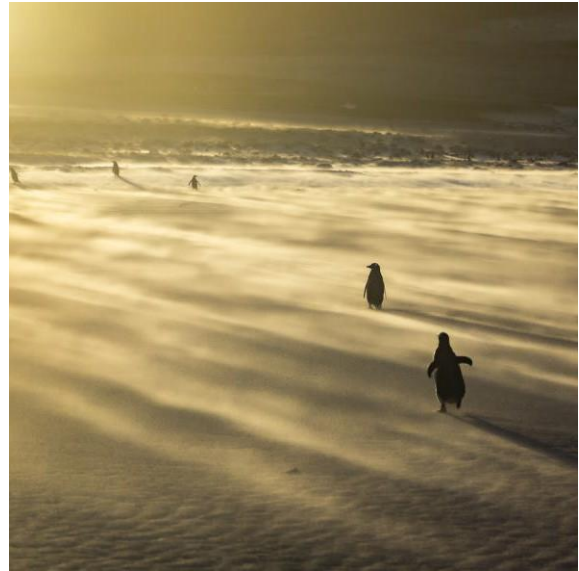
## Falklands Wildlife Photography

6 – 24 November 2025

Gentoo penguin



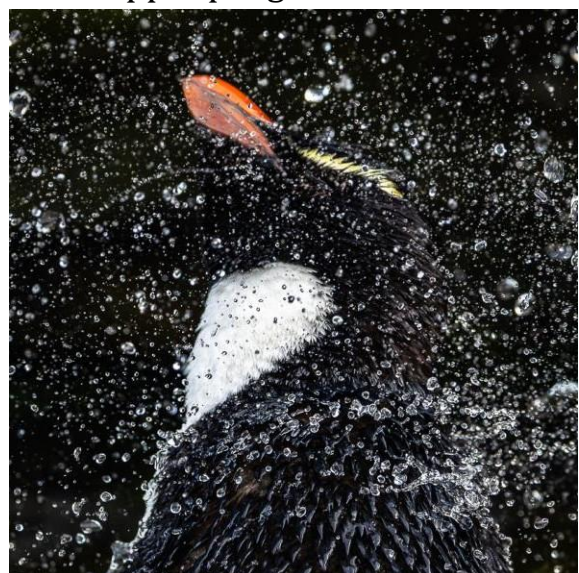
Gentoo penguin



Black-browed albatross



Rockhopper penguin



Compiled by Kevin Morgans

**Thursday 6 November 2025**

**Day 1:**

London Heathrow

Once we were through airport security, we regrouped at the departure gate for our first introductions. Part of the group was already in Chile, ready for our arrival, full of excitement for the adventure ahead. The other part of the group boarded the plane and settled in for the fourteen-and-a-half-hour overnight flight from London Heathrow to Santiago, Chile.

**Friday 7 November 2025**

**Day 2:**

Arrival: Singular Hotel, Santiago, Chile

We touched down in Santiago mid-morning, collected our bags, and met our driver, who was waiting at the arrivals gate. With the van loaded full of heavy kit bags, we set off for our hotel. Driving into Santiago gave the group their first glimpse of South America—vibrant, colourful, and incredibly welcoming.

After checking in, we took a short walk into a lively part of the city packed with restaurants and bars. We found a lovely spot with shaded outdoor seating and enjoyed our first meal together—a big, hearty lunch that was very much needed after such a long journey. Afterwards, most of us retreated to our blissfully air-conditioned rooms before regrouping later for dinner, when we met the rest of the group. This was also the moment we sampled our first cool jug of sangria—perfect in the heat (though I'm not entirely convinced everyone enjoyed it quite as much as I did).

**Saturday 8 November 2025**

**Day 3:**

Travel: Santiago → Punta Arenas → Falklands

We met sleepily in the hotel lobby at 4 a.m. for our early transfer back to the airport, ready for a long day of travel to the Falklands. The first leg—Santiago to Punta Arenas—took around three and a half hours, with many of us catching up on some much-needed sleep.

After a lengthy stopover in Punta Arenas, we boarded again for what we thought would be our final flight. Instead, due to an airline admin error, we enjoyed an unexpected three-hour wait on the tarmac before finally setting off for the Falklands.

Landing in the Falklands is always an experience—after all, it's not every day you touch down on a military base. Once we'd collected our bags and cleared immigration, we had our first glimpse of the Falklands during the one-hour transfer to Stanley. Because of the delay, it was a late arrival, so it was straight to dinner and the famous Baked Alaska. After that, it was time for bed, ready for our early FIGAS flight to Bleaker Island the following morning.

**Sunday 9 November 2025**

**Day 4:**

Bleaker Island

After our short FIGAS flight, we touched down on Bleaker Island and were greeted with our first proper glimpse of Falklands wildlife. Even on the short drive to the lodge, penguins dotted the landscape, giving everyone that little burst of excitement that only comes from finally being out in the field.

Once settled, we headed straight out to explore, beginning with a visit to the Rockhopper colony. It didn't take long before we spotted a leucistic cormorant—an unexpected highlight and a lovely surprise for the

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group. While watching the Rockhoppers bickering and hopping around the cliffs, we were treated to something even rarer: the island's sole macaroni penguin tucked in among them, sporting its unmistakable yellow crest. A real standout moment for everyone.

From there, we continued across to Sandy Bay Beach. The wind was fierce, and the sand was flying, but the dramatic conditions made for some fantastic photographic opportunities. Despite being a bit sandblasted, spirits were high, and cameras were clicking nonstop.

We returned to the lodge with enough time to unwind before dinner. That evening, over a warm meal, we traded first impressions, shared photos from the day, and laughed about the wild Falklands weather. It was the perfect end to an exciting first full day on Bleaker.

## Monday 10 November 2025

### Day 5:

Bleaker Island

We met for breakfast at 8 a.m., fuelled up for the day ahead, and then set out for a short walk to spend time with the sea lions. It turned into a fantastic encounter—an impressive male hauled out on the grass alongside a relaxed female, giving us a rare and intimate opportunity to photograph them in such an open setting. The morning sun was already strong, and a few of us quickly realised just how powerful the Falklands UV can be... some more than others, ha!

After our time with the sea lions, we headed back to the accommodation for lunch, only to be greeted once again by one of Bleaker's more memorable features: the ever-growing Imperial cormorant colony. The sheer size of it still amazes everyone, and we laughed about how you now practically have to drive *through* the colony to get anywhere. Smelly? Very. Impressive? Absolutely.

Following a bit of downtime, we enjoyed another hearty dinner at the lodge before heading out for a sunset shoot on Sandy Bay Beach. The gentoo penguins were moving through the warm evening light, giving us some lovely photographic opportunities. Unfortunately, clouds drifted in just as the sky looked ready to explode with colour, but even without a showy sunset, it was a peaceful and rewarding way to round off the day.

## Thursday 13 November 2025

### Day 6:

Bleaker Island → Saunders Island

We were up bright and early for a 4:30 a.m. sunrise shoot, only to find the island completely shrouded in fog. With the visibility down and the light diffused to nothing, the sunrise didn't quite materialise—but the moody atmosphere and wild conditions brought their own drama. The fog played havoc with the day's flight schedule, and the wind whipped the ocean into a frenzy, waves crashing hard against the cormorant colony below.

Afterwards, we headed back for breakfast before spending some time photographing locally. The conditions shifted beautifully, and we enjoyed mirror-calm water with ducks drifting across the surface. Back at the cliffs, the Rockhoppers, the leucistic cormorant, and the island's lone macaroni penguin all made another appearance, giving us a final chance to capture them before departing Bleaker.

Eventually, the first group managed to board their flight to Saunders. A few hours later—after a slightly worrying wait as the fog thickened—the rest of us were finally cleared to travel too. The relief was palpable when our plane lifted off the runway.

Upon arrival on Saunders, we were whisked straight off to The Rookery, where we were greeted by our first

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Black-browed albatrosses circling overhead and headed straight for the “Rockhopper shower”—a classic Saunders experience. After settling in, we all pitched in to help prepare a hearty home-cooked meal. We gathered around the dinner table, sharing stories from the day, feeling instantly at home.

### **Wednesday 14 November 2025**

**Day 7:**  
Saunders

The morning began with an incredible encounter near the settlement, where a group of giant petrels allowed us some unforgettable close-up photography. These prehistoric-looking birds are remarkable to watch in action—their sheer size and commanding presence never fail to impress, and seeing several together added a real sense of wild energy to the morning.

We then spent the full day at The Neck, experiencing the full spectrum of Falklands conditions—sun, wind, rain—all adding drama and variety to our images. Albatross circled gracefully overhead, while returning gentoos filled the skies and beaches, giving endless opportunities to capture movement and personality. One of the true highlights came at the end of the day. Strong winds sculpted the sand into incredible textures and patterns, and as the gentoos returned from their fishing grounds, the low setting sun backlit the scene perfectly. Watching the birds arrive in such dramatic light, framed against the sculpted sand, was nothing short of magical—one of the most memorable moments of the trip. And, as if the day wasn’t already full of excitement, Commerson’s dolphins put on a spectacular show in the surf, darting through the waves with their trademark energy and grace.

A day of dynamic weather, unforgettable wildlife encounters, and stunning light—truly one of the highlights of the Falklands experience.

### **Thursday 15 November 2025**

**Day 8:**  
Saunders / Pebble

We started the day with a short morning flight to Pebble Island, just a quick 10-minute hop from Saunders. On arrival, we were warmly welcomed by Ricky, who looks after the settlement, shown to our rooms, and enjoyed a quick lunch before heading out in the Land Rovers to explore the island.

The drive along Elephant Beach, an impressive four miles long and the longest beach in the Falklands, was simply stunning. We searched for the elusive black-necked swans, and while they remained shy, we enjoyed fantastic views of a white-tufted grebe nesting at the edge of a pond, as well as elegant silvery grebes weaving among the reeds. Every corner of the landscape seemed to offer something special.

We returned to the settlement in time for a hearty three-course meal and an early night, ready for a full day of exploration on Pebble Island the following day.

### **Friday 16 November 2025**

**Day 9:**  
Pebble

Following breakfast, we set out on a full-day tour of Pebble Island in two Land Rovers. Pebble is well known for its links to the Falklands War, and as we made our way toward the penguin colonies, we paused at several pieces of wartime wreckage scattered across the landscape. Hearing the stories behind each site added a powerful layer of history to the day and reminded us of the island’s deeper past beneath its peaceful surface.

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Our first major wildlife stop was Stinker Beach, named after its colony of nesting giant petrels. It proved to be a fantastic location, with strong winds once again working in our favour. Gentoos battled the swell as they returned from the sea, while steamer ducks rode the waves with their usual determination. The combination of wild weather and busy birdlife made for dynamic and exciting photography.

We continued to the largest rockhopper colony in the Falklands, an impressive sight to see. After a long day of exploring, we made one final stop at another remote beach where nature showed its rawest side. Here, gulls were picking off goose chicks one by one—a difficult scene to watch, but an honest reminder of the reality of life in the wild.

We returned to the settlement tired but content, welcomed back with a home-cooked meal and the chance to rest after a full day discovering Pebble Island.

## **Sunday 17 November 2025**

### **Day 10:**

Pebble/Sealion

After an early morning flight to Sea Lion Island via Stanley, we touched down on what is widely considered one of the true highlights of the Falklands—a wildlife paradise in every sense. Upon arrival, we were welcomed by Micky, who gave us a warm introduction to the island and a quick briefing on what to expect during our stay.

The temperature shift was immediate and dramatic. Only days earlier, we were getting sunburnt on Bleaker, and now we were stepping out into sub-zero winds, a reminder of just how changeable the Falklands can be.

We headed out for a gentle walk to orientate ourselves, taking in the raw beauty of the island. It didn't take long before we had our first close encounters with the huge bull elephant seals, sprawled across the beaches in all their impressive, snorting glory.

From there, we made our way to North Beach to watch the returning gentoos and were treated to our first thrilling glimpse of a patrolling pod of killer whales cruising just offshore—an unforgettable moment for everyone and a sign of the excitement Sea Lion Island is famous for.

As the cloud rolled in and temperatures dropped even further, we made our way back to the lodge for a hearty meal and a well-earned warm-up after a chilly but exhilarating introduction to Sea Lion.

## **Sunday 18 November 2025**

### **Day 11:**

Sealion

WOW—what a day. Our first full day on Sea Lion Island turned out to be one of the absolute highlights of the entire trip.

We were out well before sunrise, making our way to the famous Orca Pool, and we couldn't believe our luck. *Puma*, the well-known female orca who has mastered the technique of hunting elephant seal pups at high tide, was there with her pod, actively hunting. We didn't witness a kill, but seeing killer whales working so close to the shoreline, in such shallow water, was an experience none of us will ever forget.

After breakfast, the excitement continued. We headed to the rockhopper colony, where strong winds had whipped up an epic swell. Enormous waves crashed into the cliffs as the rockhoppers attempted to return home, leaping and scrambling in their determined way. The power, chaos, and grit of the scene made it easily one of the most exhilarating shoots of the trip. These little penguins never cease to amaze me with

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their toughness.

By late afternoon, we found ourselves back on North Beach, and once again the wind worked in our favour. Gentoos returned from the sea in incredible numbers, forming beautiful lines across the sand as they pushed through the surf and marched inland—a perfect way to round off the day's photography.

We finally headed back to the lodge for a hot meal and a chance to warm up after an action-packed, unforgettable day on Sea Lion Island.

## **Monday 18 November 2025**

### **Day 12:**

Sealion

The day began with an unexpected twist—but before any of that unfolded, we decided to head back to the Orca Pool for another look. To our delight, the orcas were once again patrolling the shallows, hunting with precision and purpose. Watching them glide through the narrow channels so close to shore was every bit as thrilling as the day before, and it felt like such a privilege to have a second morning with these incredible predators.

We returned to the lodge afterwards with our bags packed and ready for an early flight to Carcass Island. But as the morning went on, our departure time kept getting pushed back. Eventually, we learned the reason: during work at Stanley Airport, an unexploded landmine from the Falklands War had been discovered. With safety the priority, all flights were grounded for the day.

An unexpected delay—yes—but an extra day on Sea Lion Island is never a bad thing.

With the change of plans, we headed out once more to the rockhopper colony. The winds had eased significantly, making things feel much calmer compared to the wild spectacle of the previous day. Still, the colony never disappoints. On the drive there, we were treated to a beautiful photographic moment: a pair of silvery grebes, with a tiny chick riding snugly on its mother's back—a gentle, intimate scene and a lovely contrast to the drama of orca hunts and crashing waves.

Despite the altered schedule, it turned into a bonus day filled with memorable moments and relaxed wildlife watching—another reminder that in the Falklands, flexibility often leads to unexpected rewards.

## **Thursday 19 November 2025**

### **Day 13:**

Sealion/Carcass

After our unexpected but very welcome extra day on Sea Lion, we were finally on our way to Carcass Island—arguably the most beautiful island in the entire Falklands. Once everyone had arrived, we settled into our accommodation, enjoyed a much-needed cup of tea, and then headed straight out to explore.

Our first stop was the stunning Leopard Beach, a long stretch of white sand framed by turquoise water and rolling dunes. The beach was alive with wildlife: gentoos coming and going from the surf, a charismatic crested caracara patrolling the shoreline, and one super-aggro male steamer duck who instantly became one of the unexpected stars of the trip. His attitude, confidence, and sheer determination had everyone laughing—an absolute legend.

A perfect introduction to Carcass Island and a reminder of why this place sits so high on many visitors' favourites lists.

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**Wednesday 20 November 2025**

**Day 14:**

Carcass Island

After breakfast, we hopped into the vehicle and headed down to the south end of the island to spend the morning with the largest colony of elephant seals we'd encountered on the trip. We had a few hours to wander the beach at our own pace, working the seals from different angles and enjoying plenty of time to slow down and really take in the behaviour of these giants.

Walking through the tussock grass is always an interesting experience—you need to keep your wits about you. Despite their size, elephant seals can hide remarkably well in those long, rustling tunnels of grass, and you never quite know where one might pop up. It made for a fantastic, immersive morning and some great close encounters.

After lunch, we headed back to Leopard Beach, and once again our now-famous super-aggro steamer duck was waiting for us. He was in full form, chasing absolutely everything in sight. I think this little guy captured our attention even more than the penguins—such a character, with that hilarious submarine-style approach as he stalked his “victims.” One of the true personalities of the trip!

Another brilliant day on Carcass Island, full of wildlife, laughs, and unforgettable moments.

**Thursday 21 November 2025**

**Day 15:**

Carcass Island/Stanley

Sadly, this was our final morning on Carcass Island. After breakfast, rather than sitting around the accommodation, we made the most of our remaining time by heading back to the elephant seals with a packed lunch. It was a perfect farewell—calm, unhurried, and filled with those last special moments spent with these incredible animals. And, fittingly, it was also the first blue skies and sunshine we'd seen in a while... just as we were preparing to leave!

Arriving back in Stanley felt a little surreal after so long in the remote outer islands. Suddenly, there were buildings, people, and phone signal again (well, at least free WiFi)—civilisation! A few of the group (myself included, of course) couldn't resist popping into the shop to pick up a bottle of the famous Falklands gin before we returned to the hotel.

Then it was time for the evening highlight: dinner and the legendary baked Alaska. Honestly, that dessert alone is enough reason to keep returning to the Falklands—it never disappoints.

We headed to bed early, ready for our final big adventure the following day: Volunteer Point.

**Friday 22 November 2025**

**Day 16:**

Volunteer Point

Volunteer Point marked the last photographic adventure of the trip, and what a way to finish. Our drivers met us at the hotel reception at 8 am, and we set off on the roughly two-and-a-half-hour journey to the point. About half of it was on tarmac, but the final stretch took us across some of the wildest off-road terrain you can imagine. With the wet spring leaving the ground saturated and slippery, it was tricky to navigate, and I still have no idea how our drivers manage to find their way across this unmarked landscape—but somehow, they got us safely to Volunteer Point.

Once there, the vast king penguin colony immediately stole the show. We spent a fantastic four hours

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wandering among penguins of all ages, from fluffy chicks and awkward juveniles to the regal adults, each with their striking orange-and-black markings. It's an assault on the senses—the calls, the movement, the sheer numbers—and it can feel a bit overwhelming trying to take it all in. Every corner offered a new photographic opportunity, and the experience of being surrounded by so much life in such an iconic setting was unforgettable.

A fitting finale to a trip packed with wildlife, landscapes, and those magical moments that only the Falklands can deliver.

### **Saturday 23 November 2025**

#### **Day 17:**

Travel: Falklands → Santiago

Today marked the beginning of a long travel day. Our bus was waiting outside the hotel at 8:30 a.m., but not before we said our goodbyes to a member of the group who was staying on in the Falklands. We then made the one-hour transfer to RAF Mount Pleasant for our flight back to Santiago, once again via Punta Arenas. On arrival, we were greeted by a long queue at the military base, and—unsurprisingly—some of us were more successful than others when it came to navigating their security checks. Eventually, we all regrouped on the other side, and after a few hours' wait, we boarded our plane back to Santiago, Chile.

### **Sunday 24 November 2025**

#### **Day 18:**

Travel: Santiago → Heathrow

With an afternoon flight back to Heathrow, there was no need to rush. After breakfast, we took a short walk to the international terminal and said our goodbyes to another member of the group before beginning our long journey back to civilisation.

### **Monday 25 November 2025**

#### **Day 19:**

London Heathrow

We touched down at London Heathrow at 6 a.m., collected our bags, exchanged our final goodbyes, and headed off on our separate journeys home. Sadly, this marked the end of an unforgettable trip.

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