

Southern Ocean



The southern parts of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans form the fifth ocean of the world, the Southern Ocean. It surrounds Antarctica and isolates it geographically, biologically and climatically from the rest of the world.

Many people are anxious about crossing the Southern Ocean, but it must be done in order to reach Antarctica. Certainly the weather can be stormy. With no landmasses to impede the low-pressure systems that ceaselessly circle Antarctica in a clockwise direction, the westerly winds can reach great speeds – and the seas can get very rough.

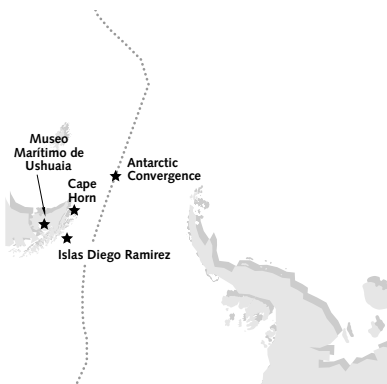
The more than 90% of Antarctic cruises that visit the Antarctic Peninsula sail from Ushuaia, Argentina and across the Drake Passage, 1000km of ocean between South America and Antarctica. The crossing is generally accomplished in two days – sometimes faster, sometimes slower. Smooth seas are known as the ‘Drake Lake’; their opposite is called the ‘Drake Shake,’ also referred to as ‘paying the Drake Tax.’ Once your ship is in the calm waters of the South Shetlands or the Peninsula, nearly all uncomfortable motion ceases.

The very infrequent voyages to Antarctica from Australia, New Zealand or South Africa require a longer voyage, meaning a greater chance of experiencing heavy weather. But there’s also more time for bird-watching, stargazing and possibly seeing the aurora australis.

Crossing the Southern Ocean confers a psychological benefit to your Antarctic journey, for it makes manifest the continent’s remoteness and isolation. The passage provides time to prepare for Antarctica, to look forward to it. Antarctica is not attained by a homogenized plane ride: instead, it is unveiled gradually. En route, you’ll experience the open sea circumscribing the horizon, then your first amazing iceberg, then many icebergs, then an island. Finally, the snow-capped peaks of Antarctica itself shimmer ahead on the horizon.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Catch sight of your Antarctic ship tied up alongside the pier in **Ushuaia** (p166)
- Admire the craftsmanship of handmade Antarctic ship models at the **Museo Marítimo de Ushuaia** (p168)
- Stand on the fabled headland where the Atlantic and Pacific meet, **Cape Horn** (p171)
- Visit the lonely staff members of the Chilean weather station at **Islas Diego Ramirez** (p172)
- Cross the **Antarctic Convergence** (p174), the oceanographic boundary separating Antarctica from the rest of the world



USHUAIA

☎ 02901 / pop 58,000

Nearly 90% of all Antarctic tourists depart from Ushuaia in Argentina, thanks to the city's fortunate location almost directly across the 1000km-wide Drake Passage from the Antarctic Peninsula.

History

During the past 25 years, Ushuaia (the name is pronounced 'oosh-wya' and means 'bay penetrating to the west') has expanded rapidly from a small village into a city of almost 60,000 people. Growth is due only partly to the massive influx of Antarctic tourists: this region of Tierra del Fuego attracts visitors on its own, too.

For more than three centuries, this area's climate and terrain discouraged European settlement, yet indigenous people considered it a land of plenty. The Yámana Indians, now very few in number, built the fires that inspired Europeans to call the region Tierra del Fuego, or Land of Fire. In 1520 when Magellan passed through the strait that now bears his name, neither he nor any other European explorer had much interest in the land or its people. Consequently, the Ona (or Selk'nam), Haush, Yámana (or Yahgan) and Alacaluf peoples who lived in the area faced no immediate competition for their lands and resources.

Beginning in the 1850s, Europeans attempted to catechize the Fuegians. Thomas Bridges, who learned to speak Yámana (which he called Yahgan) at Keppel Island (p205) and later compiled a 30,000-word dictionary of that language, became one of the first settlers at Ushuaia. His son Lucas Bridges, born at Ushuaia in 1874, left a fascinating memoir of his experiences among the Yámana and Ona titled *The Uttermost Part of the Earth* (1948).

By 1885 Argentina had installed a territorial governor, and in 1904 Ushuaia became Tierra del Fuego's capital. Despite minor gold and lumber booms, the town was for many years primarily a penal settlement for both political prisoners and common criminals. Sheep farming brought great wealth to some individuals and families, and is still Tierra del Fuego's economic backbone. Since 1950 Ushuaia has been an important naval base supporting Argentine claims to Antarctica.

Orientation

The southernmost city in the world, Ushuaia is located in a dramatic setting beneath the

jagged peaks of the Montes Martial, which rise from sea level to more than 1300m and are topped by Monte Olivia (1318m), an easily recognized sharp pinnacle east of town. Ushuaia has no central plaza. Most hotels and visitor services are on or within a few blocks of San Martín, the principal commercial street, one block north of Maipú, which runs along the recently redeveloped waterfront. North of San Martín, streets rise steeply, giving good views of the Beagle Channel.

Information

BOOKSTORES

Boutique del Libro (☎ 432117; www.antartidaypatagonia.com.ar; 25 de Mayo 62) A short walk from the port, this bookstore has one of the most comprehensive selections of Antarctic books, maps and videos anywhere in the world – nearly all in English, plus many books about Ushuaia and Tierra del Fuego, in several languages.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital Regional (☎ 423200; cnr Maipú & 12 de Octubre)

MONEY

Most shops and restaurants accept US dollars, although it's wise to confirm this before doing business. Several banks on Maipú and San Martín have ATMs.

POST

Post office (cnr San Martín & Godoy; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

TELEPHONE & INTERNET ACCESS

There are several call centers located along San Martín. Internet access costs about AR\$3 per hour.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Instituto Fueguino de Turismo (Infuetur; ☎ 421423; www.tierradelfuego.org.ar; Maipú 505; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun) On the ground floor of Hotel Albatros.

Municipal tourist office (☎ 432000/1; www.tierradelfuego.org.ar/ushuaia; San Martín 674; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun) Very helpful, with a message board and detailed information on lodging, activities and transport in Spanish, English, French, Portuguese, German and Italian. The staff speaks English, French, Hebrew, Italian and Portuguese.

National Parks office (Administración de Parques Nacionales; ☎ 421315; San Martín 1395; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

USHUAIA

INFORMATION	
Boutique del Libro.....	1 C4
Hospital Regional.....	2 A5
Instituto Fueguino de Turismo (Infuetur).....	3 C4
Municipal Tourist Office.....	4 C4
National Parks Office.....	5 B4
Oficina Antártica.....	6 C4
Post Office.....	7 D3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Boat Tours.....	8 D4
Casa Beban.....	9 A5
Club Andino Ushuaia.....	10 C4
Compañía de Guías de Patagonia.....	11 C3
Iglesia de la Merced.....	12 C4
Legislatura Provincial.....	13 D4
Museo del Fin del Mundo.....	14 D3
Museo Marítimo de Ushuaia.....	15 D3
Museo Yámana.....	16 D3
Parque Yatana.....	17 C3
Turismo de Campo.....	18 C4
Ushuaia Turismo.....	19 C3
SLEEPING	
Antarctica Hostel.....	20 D3
Casa de Familia Zaprucki.....	21 D3
Casa de Tere B&B.....	22 D2
Freestyle.....	23 C3
Galeazzi-Basily B&B.....	24 C2
Hostal del Bosque.....	25 C3

Hostal Malvinas.....	26 C3
Hostel Cruz del Sur.....	27 C3
Macondo.....	28 B4
Mil 810.....	29 C3
Posada Fin del Mundo.....	30 C2
Pueblo Viejo.....	31 D3
Torre al Sur Hostel.....	32 B4
Yakush.....	33 B4
EATING	
Bar Ideal.....	34 D3
Bodegón Fueguino.....	35 C4
El Turco.....	36 B4
Kaupé.....	37 C3
La Cantina Fuegina de Freddy.....	38 D3
La Estancia.....	39 D3
La Rueda.....	40 D3
Lomitos Martinica.....	41 D3
Lupita's.....	42 C3
María Lola Restó.....	43 B4
Moustachio.....	44 D3
Ramos Generales.....	45 C4
Tante Sara.....	46 C4
Tía Elvira.....	47 D3
Volver.....	48 D3
DRINKING	
Dreamland.....	49 C3
Dublin Irish Pub.....	50 C4
Galway Irish Bar.....	51 C3
Saint Christopher Resto-Bar.....	52 C4
ENTERTAINMENT	
Cinema Packewaia.....	(see 15)
TRANSPORT	
Localiza.....	53 B4

0 600 m
0 0.4 miles

To Familia Piatti B&B (1.5km)

To Los Cormoranes (150m)

To Airport (4km); Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego (12km)

To Cabañas Aldea Nevada (2km); Las Hayas (2.5km); Cumbres del Martial (7km); Glaciar Martial (7km)

Tourist Wharf

Bahía Encerrada

Bahía Ushuaia

Lp

Oficina Antártica – Instituto Fueguino de Turismo

The Antarctic unit of the Tierra del Fuego government tourist office is across from the gateway to the tourist pier. The friendly staff sells postcards and provides information on Antarctic trips. There's a modest display of artifacts from the Hope Bay party of Nordenskjöld's ill-fated 1901 expedition. The Oficina is open daily when Antarctic tour ships are in port.

Sights

MUSEO DEL FIN DEL MUNDO

Facing the harbor, this **museum** (☎ 421863; tierra.delfuego.org.ar/museo; Maipú 175-79; admission AR\$15; 🕒 9am-8pm Nov-Apr, 12pm-7pm Mon-Sat May-Oct) was built in 1903 for the territorial governor Manuel Fernández Valdés, and then was a branch of the Banco de la Nación until 1978.

It has exhibits on Fuegian natural history, aboriginal life and the early penal colonies (complete with a photographic rogues' gallery), plus replicas of an early general store and bank. Overhead in the main hall is the magnificent carved figurehead from *Duchess of Albany*, wrecked on the southeastern coast of Tierra del Fuego in 1893 and still visible there today.

MUSEO YÁMANA

A small gem, the wonderful **Museo Yámana** (☎ 422874; Rivadavia 56; admission AR\$10; 🕒 10am-8pm) features meticulously crafted exhibits (well-labeled in Spanish and English) on the Fuegian peoples who lived in the area before European settlement nearly wiped them out. The 2500 Yámana on Isla Navarino in 1860 were reduced to just 300 by 1893, and today the last Yámana lives with her mixed-race descendants in Puerto Williams, Chile across the Beagle Channel and east of Ushuaia.

MUSEO MARÍTIMO DE USHUAIA

The excellent **Museo Marítimo de Ushuaia** (☎ 437481; admission adult/student AR\$35/20; 🕒 9am-8pm) is within the military base, El Presidio, at the eastern end of town. Use the entrance at Yaganes and Gobernador Paz rather than the base entrance at Yaganes and San Martín. Closed as a penal institution in 1947, the building once held as many as 800 inmates in 380 cells designed to hold a single prisoner each. Some displays, which highlight local history and convict life, are in the grim-looking former cells. Antarctic exhibits include stuffed penguins, a fur-seal pelt, and photos that have Antarctic historical interest. Some artifacts from the Nordenskjöld expedition's huts on Snow Hill Island (p278) and at Hope Bay are on display in several of the cells. Antarctic fossils from Snow Hill and Seymour (p276) islands are also on view.

Perhaps the best collection of Antarctic ship models anywhere in the world is displayed throughout the museum. Among the dozens of examples are Amundsen's *Fram*; Scott's *Discovery*; Shackleton's *Endurance*; De Gerlache's *Belgica*; Charcot's *Le Français* and *Pourquoi-Pas?*; Nordenskjöld's *Antarctic*; Argentina's *Uruguay* (which rescued Nordenskjöld in 1903 and also relieved Bruce in 1904); and Argentina's *Bahía Paraíso* (wrecked in Antarctica in 1989, causing a massive fuel spill). Informative pamphlets in

English about the ship models are available at the entry desk.

On the 2nd floor is an exhibition of stamps and postcards from Antarctica, Tierra del Fuego and Ushuaia, and a gift shop.

PARQUE YATANA

Part art project, part urban refuge, **Parque Yatana** (Fundación Cultiva; ☎ 425212; cnr Magallanes & 25 de Mayo; admission free; 🕒 2:30-8pm Tue-Sat) is a city block of lenga forest preserved from the encroaching development by one determined family. After checking in, guests can walk the forest paths.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The tourist office distributes a free map with information on many of the city's historic houses. At Maipú 465, **Legislatura Provincial** (Provincial Legislature; 1894) was the governor's official residence. The century-old **Iglesia de la Merced** (San Martín & Don Bosco) was built with convict labor. **Casa Beban** (cnr Malvinas Argentinas & Pluschow; admission free; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 4-8pm Sat & Sun) on the waterfront was built in 1911 using parts ordered from Sweden; it sometimes hosts art exhibitions.

Activities

HIKING

The mountain range behind Ushuaia, with its lakes and rivers, is a hiker's high. However, many trails are poorly marked or unmarked.

The **Club Andino Ushuaia** (☎ 422335; www.clubandinoushuaia.com.ar in Spanish; Juana Fadul 50; 🕒 10am-12:30pm & 2-9:30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) sells a map and bilingual trekking, mountaineering and mountain-biking guidebook with maps and plenty of trail description. Unguided trekkers are strongly encouraged to register with the Club or the municipal tourist office (p166) before leaving – and check in upon return. In an emergency, contact the **Civil Guard** (☎ 103, 22108).

Glacier Martial

A hearty hike from downtown leads up to Glacier Martial, with fantastic panoramas of Ushuaia and the Beagle Channel; in fact, the views may be more impressive than the glacier. Catch a taxi up the hill for AR\$20, or if you're up for an all-day hike, follow San Martín west and keep ascending as it zigzags (there are many hiker shortcuts) to the ski run 7km northwest of town. At this point