



AUSTRALIS®
CAPE HORN & PATAGONIA



Round Trip Route

Darwin's Route from Punta Arenas

Punta Arenas - Ushuaia - Punta Arenas

7 nights | M/V Stella Australis

From
US\$ 2,366
on double basis
ALL INCLUSIVE

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Map



- Day ①: Punta Arenas
- Day ②: Ainsworth Bay – Tuckers Islets
- Day ③: Pía Glacier – Glacier Alley*
- Day ④: Cape Horn – Wulaia Bay
- Day ⑤: Ushuaia
- Day ⑥: Cape Horn – Wulaia Bay
- Day ⑦: De Agostini Sound and Águila Glacier
- Day ⑧: Magdalena Island** – Punta Arenas

* Not an excursion

** In September and April this excursion is replaced by a ride on Zodiac boat to Marta Island to observe South American Sea Lions.



Day 1: Punta Arenas

Check in at the Australis pier at 1385 O'Higgins Street (Arturo Prat Port) in Punta Arenas between 13:00 and 17:00 (1-5 PM) on the day of your cruise departure. Board the MV Stella Australis at 18:00 (6 PM). After a welcoming toast and introduction of captain and crew, the ship departs for one of the remotest corners of planet Earth. During the night we cross the Strait of Magellan and enter the labyrinth of channels that define the southern extreme of Patagonian. The twinkling lights of Punta Arenas gradually fade into the distance as we enter the Whiteside Canal between Darwin Island and Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego.

Day 2: Ainsworth Bay & Tuckers Islets

By dawn Stella Australis is sailing up Admiralty Sound (Seno Almirantazgo), a spectacular offshoot of the Strait of Magellan that stretches nearly halfway across Tierra del Fuego. The snowcapped peaks of Karukinka Natural Park stretch along the north side of the sound, while the south shore is defined by the deep fjords and broad bays of Alberto de Agostini National Park. We go ashore at Ainsworth Bay, which harbors copious bird life and a colony of southern elephant seals which can sometimes be spotted from the Zodiacs. Two guided excursions are available: one is along the edge of a stream, peat bog and beaver habitat to a waterfall-and-moss-covered rock face tucked deep inside a pristine sub-polar forest; the other is a more strenuous hike along the crest of a glacial moraine. Both afford views of Marinelli Glacier and the Darwin Mountains.

Leaving Ainsworth Bay behind, we sail west along the sound to the Tucker Islets. After lunch, we board the Zodiacs again for a close-up view of the Magellan penguins that inhabit the tiny islands. More than 4,000 penguins use Tucker as a place to nest, give birth and nurture their chicks. Many other bird species also frequent the area including king and rock cormorants, oystercatchers, Chilean skuas, kelp geese, dolphin gulls, eagles and even the occasional Andean condor. In September and April -- when the penguins live elsewhere -- this excursion is replaced by a short walk to a glacier at nearby Brookes Bay.

Day 3: Pia Glacier & Glacier Alley

Overnight we sail around the western end of Tierra del Fuego via the very narrow Gabriel Channel, Magdalena Channel and Cockburn Channel. After rounding the remote Brecknock Peninsula, Stella Australis tacks eastward and enters the Beagle Channel again. By morning we are entering Pia Fjord and boarding the Zodiacs for a shore excursion to Pia Glacier. After disembarking we take a short hike to gain a panoramic view of the spectacular glacier, which extends from the mountain-tops down to the sea or a longer much more difficult walk up a lateral moraine of the old Pia Glacier.

No one knows for certain how the hulking mass of snow and ice got its feminine moniker, but one theory says it was named for Princess Maria Pia of Savoy (1847-1911), daughter of the Italian king.

Back onboard Stella Australis, we continue east along the Beagle Channel through an area called Glacier Alley. Living up to its name, the passage features a number of impressive tidewater glaciers flowing down from the Darwin Mountains and Darwin Ice Sheet on the north shore. Most of them named after European countries -- Holland, Italy, Germany, Spain and France.

Day 4: Cape Horn - Wulaia Bay

During the early morning we sail down the narrow Murray Channel between Navarino and Hoste islands and drop anchor at historic Wulaia Bay. Australis is the only cruise ship company with permission from Chilean authorities to navigate the Murray Channel to Cape Horn, and because of its exclusive concession the only travel company allowed to land passengers at Wulaia Bay.



Wulaia Bay is one of the few places in the archipelago where the human history is just as compelling as the natural environment. Originally the site of one of the region's largest Yámana aboriginal settlements, the bay was described by Charles Darwin and sketched by Captain FitzRoy in the 1830s during their voyages on the HMS Beagle. This area is also renowned for the mesmerizing beauty and dramatic geography. After a visit to the small Australis-sponsored museum in the old radio station -- which is especially strong on the Yámana people and European missionaries in the area -- passengers have a choice of three hikes (of increasing degrees of difficulty) that ascend the heavily wooded mountain behind the bay. On all of these you will be strolling through an enchanted Magellan forest of lengas, coigües, canelos, Ñirres ferns, and other endemic fauna to reach a panoramic viewpoint overlooking the bay. Before leaving Wulaia Bay, drop something into the wooden mail barrel inside the museum – letters or postcards meant to be hand delivered by future travelers – an ancient mariner tradition revived by Australis.

In the afternoon we cruise across Nassau Bay into the remote archipelago that includes Cape Horn National Park. Weather and sea conditions permitting, we shall go ashore on the windswept island that harbors legendary Cape Horn (Cabo de Hornos). Discovered in 1616 by a Dutch maritime expedition -- and named after the town of Hoorn in West Friesland -- Cape Horn is a sheer 425-meter (1,394-foot) high rocky promontory overlooking the turbulent waters of the Drake Passage. For many years it was the only navigation route between the Pacific and Atlantic, and was often referred to as the "End of the Earth." The park was declared a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2005. The Chilean navy maintains a permanent lighthouse on the island, staffed by a lightkeeper and his family, as well as the tiny Stella Maris Chapel and modern Cape Horn Monument.

Day 5: Ushuaia

The following morning we sail into Argentine waters and dock in Ushuaia, the world's southernmost city. Disembarkation is scheduled at 8 AM. You have almost a full day to explore Ushuaia, founded in 1884 and one of the original points of contact between the indigenous Yámana and European cultures. Its name derives from the Yámana word for 'penetrating bay' and it's surrounded by the southernmost Andes peaks. With around 65,000 inhabitants, Ushuaia is the second largest city in Tierra del Fuego (after Rio Grande). Among its highlights is the Prison at the End of the World, a former penitentiary that is now a maritime museum, Antarctic collection and memorial to those once incarcerated there. The city is also good for shopping (especially locally made chocolate) or hanging out in its many cafes.

Passengers are required to reboard Stella Australis at 17:30 (5:30 PM). After a welcoming toast and introduction of captain and crew, the ship departs for more adventures in Tierra del Fuego. During the night we traverse the Beagle Channel, cross back into Chilean territorial waters, and turn into the narrow Murray Channel between Navarino and Hoste islands.

Day 6: Cape Horn - Wulaia Bay

By early morning, Stella Australis is once again cruising across Nassau Bay to Cape Horn. Our itinerary day repeats the shore landings and other activities from Day 4. However, second landings at some of the more iconic spots along the route can sometimes be more rewarding than the first time around and give you more time to explore each place in depth. At Cape Horn you have a second chance to visit the Stella Maris Chapel, chat with the lighthouse keeper and his family, or photograph the unusual sub-polar flora that covers the heights. At Wulaia Bay, explore the museum in much more depth, strike out on a longer walk than last time, bird watch along the shore, or sort through the mail barrel to see if anyone lives close to your own home. This second approach also increases your chances of landing on Cape Horn Island.

NOTE: The excursions described in the itineraries can usually be carried out without any problems. Nevertheless, the shipowner holds the right to alter, change or skip certain portions of the itinerary without prior notice, whether motivated by the passengers' well-being and safety, by the appropriate protection of the environment, or in case of any extraordinary event, unforeseeable circumstance or force majeure. For this reason, departures or arrival may be subject to change. Furthermore, sighting of birds and other species cannot be guaranteed as their exact location is variable by nature.

Day 7: De Agostini Sound and Águila Glacier

After nightfall we reenter the Beagle Channel and sail westward along the southern edge of Tierra del Fuego into watery wonderland protected within the confines of Alberto de Agostini National Park. Rounding the Brecknock Peninsula as the western extreme of Tierra del Fuego, Stella Australis is for a brief time exposed to the open Pacific. We then navigate a zigzag route through the Cockburn Channel, Magdalena Channel and Keats Fjord to reach scenic De Agostini Sound.

Named after an Italian Salesian priest who worked among the region's indigenous people during the first half of the 20th century, De Agostini Sound is flanked by numerous glaciers and sheer saw-toothed peaks reminiscent of Torres del Paine. Our shore excursion this morning is Águila ("Eagle") Glacier, which hovers above a placid glacial lagoon surrounded by primeval forest. After a Zodiac landing on the beach, passengers hike around the edge of the lagoon to a spot near the base of the frozen facade. Condors can sometimes be seen winging high above, but there is always abundant bird life around the lagoon. This landing provides the perfect opportunity to experience the beauty of Patagonia's sub-Antarctic rainforest and to see how the power of nature has molded the spectacular landscape.

Day 8: Magdalena Island – Punta Arenas

After an overnight cruise through Magdalena Channel and back into the Strait of Magellan, we anchor off Magdalena Island, which lies about halfway between Tierra del Fuego and the Chilean mainland. Crowned by a distinctive lighthouse, the island used to be an essential source of supplies for navigators and explorers and is inhabited by an immense colony of Magellanic penguins. At the break of dawn, weather permitting, we go ashore and hike a path that leads through thousands of penguins to a small museum lodged inside the vintage 1902 lighthouse. Many other bird species are also found on the island. In September and April -- when the penguins dwell elsewhere -- this excursion is replaced by a ride aboard Zodiacs to Marta Island to observe South American sea lions.

After a short cruise south along the strait, disembarkation at Punta Arenas is scheduled for around 11:30 AM.

IMPORTANT: The itinerary on the seven-night Punta Arenas-Ushuaia-Punta Arenas cruise repeats excursions on days four and six (landing on Cape Horn and Wulaia Bay).



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During the cruise there will be interesting presentations on the wildlife, history and geography of this legendary region given by the Mare Australis and Via Australis Expedition Group. The presentations will take place both on board (with audio-visual support) and on land.

Discovering Tierra del Fuego

Presentation on the famous navigators and naturalists who explored Tierra Del Fuego between the 16th and 19th centuries, and in doing so came across a number of different indigenous groups. The presentation examines how the British visitors Phillip Parker King, Pringle Stokes, Charles Darwin, and Sir Francis Drake, the Dutchmen Wilhem Schouten and Jacob LeMaire, the French explorer Bouganville, and the Spaniards Ferdinand Magellan, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa and the Nodal brothers, interacted with the Patagones (Aónikenk), Ona (Selk'nam), Yámana (Yaghan), Alacalufes (Kawéskar) and Haush (Manekenk).

Navigation Route

It is the first lecture that is given to passengers and its objective is to present the region and Patagonia to the world, showing where we are and where we will be going day-to-day on our cruise, places we will visit, climate, suggested clothes for excursions, possible sightings etc...

Cape Horn

This lecture reveals the reason why Cape Horn (Cabo de Hornos) is such a legendary geographic feature. In addition to various aspects of the cape's natural and human history, the presentation includes precise instructions for landing at Cape Horn (weather and water permitting).

Strait of Magellan

Historical review of the great navigators and explorers who dared to sail in the southern seas, analyzing contemporary factors during the Age of Exploration that prompted these audacious maritime expeditions and how the results of their discoveries changed the maps of the world. The lecture is based upon historic maps and navigation charts from ancient Greece through the 20th century, as well as the exploits of Marco Polo, Bartolomé Dias, Christopher Columbus, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, Ferdinand Magellan, Sir Francis Drake and those who followed them in discovering the planet's most important ocean passages.

Glaciology in Patagonia

More than any other earth force, glaciation shaped the spectacular landscapes of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. This lecture and slideshow details the natural process that created the glaciers, ice fields, moraines and U-shaped valleys that we observe from the ship and during shore excursions. While explaining glacier origin, forms, colors and former/current conditions, the presentation also delivers an important message about caring for the environment and our planet.

NOTE: The presentations described in the itineraries can normally be, and are frequently, carried out. Without prejudice to the aforesaid, the shipowner reserve the right to reschedule shorten or alter all or part of itineraries and/or excursions without previous notice.

Informative Progress

Detailed information on next day activities, with maps of the route and pictures we pretend to inform the passengers of activities for the following day.

Magellanic Penguins

Prior to visiting their colony, learn everything you always wanted to know about Magellanic penguins including facts about their migration cycle, nest construction, reproduction, nutrition and how they nurture their chicks. Around 60,000 pairs nest of Magdalena Island between October and March. They nest in burrows, taking turns incubating the eggs, raising the chicks and venturing into the frigid water for food.

Patagonia from Ice to Flowers

This presentation details the evolution of local flora after the last Ice Age, which covered more than 60% of Patagonia. It also discusses some of the more important trees, shrubs, flowers and plants that inhabit Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego today.



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