

Sailing lore allows “Cape Horners” to wear a gold earring in their left ear and spit to windward.

▶ and deep anchorages. Bergy bits, growlers and brash ice infest many bays. South Georgia has extraordinarily rich wildlife and is home to 30m breeding birds, including huge concentrations of wandering albatross, cape and giant petrels, and king and macaroni penguins. Voyages to South Georgia are not for the faint-hearted. Merely getting there involves a 600-nautical-mile, downwind “sleigh-ride” from the Falkland Islands. Expeditions take four to five weeks. Expect to pay, again, around \$14,000 per person.

Nearer the mainland of Chile and Argentina are the uncharted channels and fjords of Tierra del Fuego—the archipelago at the tip of South America. Discovered in 1520 by Magellan, the “Land of Fire” is separated from the mainland by the strait bearing his name. Here you can watch flightless steamer ducks, Andean condors and guanaco (rare llama-like herbivores), and explore the glacier-lined Beagle Channel, made famous by Darwin and Fitzroy.

Alternatively, you can sail round forbidding Cape Horn, renowned for its violent weather, and held in awe by sailors for centuries. Sailing lore allows “Cape Horners” to wear a gold earring in their left ear and spit to windward—normally, a serious breach of nautical etiquette. Tierra del Fuego expeditions depart from Puerto Williams or Ushuaia, and take around two weeks. Prices are about \$5,000 per person.

Victory Adventure Expeditions, a broker based in Puerto Williams, lists around 20 yachts—including Mr Poncet’s

Golden Fleece—which offer charters in the region for \$300-400 per person per day. But plan ahead to get your pick of vessel and destinations. Many voyages are booked far in advance and the most popular fill up quickly.

Hamish and Kate Laird offer charter expeditions aboard *Seal*, their purpose-built, 56-foot aluminium expedition vessel. They start discussing voyages with clients at least a year or more in advance. “We want to know the people we are going to sail with,” says Mrs Laird. While not necessarily adventurers, their clients are usually looking for something off the beaten track. The Lairds, along with other skippers in these parts, will ask you to fill out a medical questionnaire and may veto clients on health grounds.

Accommodating six guests, *Seal* offers expeditions to ▶▶



Opposite page: steel yacht *Pelagic* motors through pancake ice off the Antarctic Peninsula. This page: crew film a humpback whale (below left); anchorage off Dream Island, Antarctic Peninsula (below centre); elephant seals and emperor penguin chick on mother’s feet (below right)

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