wilderness explorer series

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PATAGONIA
Peninsula Valdés

60 GPS coordinates
20 images
1 wildlife map
prices in AR$, US$$, €
35 website links

for:
wildlife photographers
hikers & trekkers
nature lovers
budget travelers

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**PENINSULA VALDES**

**Peninsula Valdes** [42.464835, -64.499203] (Reserva Faunitica Peninsula Valdés) is one of the biggest (360 hectares or 3,625 km², ~70 x 100 km) nature reserve in Argentina (Chubut Province), which is included in the list of World Heritage Sites by UNESCO since 1999 for unique fauna and geology. It is also one of the most visited natural reserves in Argentina, with rising each year annual number of visitors, ~ 300,000 tourists in last years. The peninsula is located on the South America’s shore of the South Atlantic Ocean, at the 42° S latitude, which is farther south than the entire Africa or Australia, and it is on the same parallel as New Zealand. It was named in honor of Antonio Valdés, a Spanish commander in chief of the Royal Navy (1744-1816). The peninsula resembles itself a big mushroom’s cap, standing on the main land with a stem - a narrow isthmus (7-10 km wide) and has mostly flat landscape covered by Patagonian steppe and nee-high bushes, and its seashore is formed by steep white sandstone cliffs (up to 70 m high). What is the peninsula famous for? – no doubt, **wildlife**; it is a paradise for nature lovers and **wildlife photographers** all over the world. You can observe here amazing
animals: sea lions, elephant and fur seals, **Magellanic penguins**, many sea and steppe birds (~181 species), guanacos, Southern Right whales, **orcas** (killer whales), dolphins, rheas, maras, grey fox, armadillo, flamingos, burrowing owls. It is an only place in the world where orcas beach themselves on the shore in order to hunt for sea lion or elephant seal pups. The local pod of killer whales is believed to be one from two, which accidentally, as scientists think, learnt this hunting strategy and is passing now the knowledge from generation to generation through teaching juveniles.

The peninsula is located about 70 km from Puerto Madryn and 130 km from Trelew (the biggest towns in the area) and ~1,300 km from Buenos Aires. The only constant settlement at the peninsula is Puerto Piramides, a small village (~500-700 inhabitants) with hotels, hostels, shops, bars and seafood restaurants and an only on the peninsula gasoline station [🌐-42.571723, -64.282418]. There is also a camping site [🌐-42.572489, -64.280618], scuba diving and snorkeling facilities, whale watching services, mountain biking, fishing, kayaking. At the vast peninsula area, there are a few **Estancias** with sheep, some of them have restaurants and
can offer accommodation and guiding tours. For those who like geology and paleontology, there are a few places worth to visit; for example, three salty pinky-in-color lakes situated up to 42 m below sea level, one of the lowest elevation in Argentina, “Salina Grande” (-42 m below sea level) [🗺️-42.635147, -63.974140], “Salina Chica” (-35 m below sea level) [🗺️-42.638420, -63.848253], “Gran Salitreral” (-4 m below sea level) [🗺️-42.425054, -63.963930] or nearby Punta Lomo you can find fossils of oyster and marine invertebrates (see “Punta Lomo”).
Since the Peninsula Valdes is a Protected Natural Area, there is an entrance fee, which you pay at the administration office (visitors center), a main and only gateway to the peninsula (fee is AR$415, ~US$24, ~€21 for foreigners, twice less for children (6-11 years), no fee for <5 years old kids; for Argentinian people prices are twice less; fee for a car AR$30-50, US$2-3, €2-3, depending on the number of seats in the car). Administration of the reserve has a good website (www.peninsulavaldes.org.ar). There are some rules and restrictions of this Protected Natural Area you have to consider while you travel here: e.g. no hunting, no fishing, no pets (but you can try to negotiate), no open fire, no camping (except in
Puerto Piramides, the only official camping site on the whole peninsula is there), it is not allowed to collect fossils and any elements of the landscape, also, it is not allowed to drive off-road and on the beach, driving must be very cautious in the area, since there are a lot of wild animals, which may suddenly cross the road where you drive (guanacos, birds, snakes), maximum driving speed is 60 km/h. There are no banks on the peninsula, only one ATM from *Banco del Chubut* [GPS: -42.572078, -64.283929] at Puerto Piramides. Administration of the Peninsula Valdes provides daily reports on weather and roads conditions, tide tables, as well as latest killer whale and Southern Right whales witnessing, current states of elephant seal and sea lion colonies, as well as penguins rookeries at the peninsula (this info is collected at this page, use your browser translator from Spanish: [www.peninsulavaldes.org.ar/informe-diario](http://www.peninsulavaldes.org.ar/informe-diario)). This information is the most accurate, since it is provided by the local fauna guardians/rangers on daily basis. At the main entrance, there is a museum and an interpretation center (exhibition), which introduces to visitors natural environment of the Peninsula Valdes, its flora and fauna, ecology and geology, and how nature and its diversity is preserved here;
it is definitely worth to visit. There is nearby a watching tower, from its top you can see two coastlines simultaneously, *Golfo Nuevo* and *Golfo San José*, since it is the narrowest part (~10 km wide) of *Carlos Ameghino* isthmus. There is also a small café, WC and a parking place.
TRAVEL SCENARIOS

FAST & EASY TRAVEL

You take a flight from Buenos Aires to Trelew, e.g. “Aerolineas Argentinas” (www.aerolineas.com.ar), ~2 hours, €130-200 one-way ticket, from the local airport in Buenos Aires, called “Aeroparque Jorge Newbery” (www.aa2000.com.ar) (code: AEP), located in the downtown, center, Palermo neighborhood, [_gps-34.564207,-58.412692]; and Trelew’s airport, named “Almirante Macros Andreas Zar Airport” (code: REL), located ~7 km from the center of the city [gps-43.209479,-65.283778]. Alternatively, you can fly to Puerto Madryn’s airport “El Tehuelche” (code: PMY), ~10 km from the city center, with an airline, called “Andes Lineas Aereas” (www.andesonline.com), ~2 hours, €70-150 one-way ticket [gps-42.755023,-65.100853]. Then, you rent a car (€75-100/day) either at the airport or in the city, and drive RN3 (Ruta Nacional, National Route) north to Puerto Madryn (60 km), where you can buy provision (if you need it). At the same day, you can drive farther north by using RP1 or RN3 for 15 km and then turn east to RP2 and drive 50 km to the Peninsula Valdes administration office to buy a visitor ticket for the reserve,