

## Follow An Island Parish to the Falklands

As the BBC2 documentary series returns to the Southern Hemisphere, two seasoned islanders explain why you should look past this far-flung archipelago's chequered history.



By Claire Webb  
Radio Times

"Holiday" isn't the first word that springs to mind when you think of the Falklands, but anyone with a soft spot for the BBC2 series *An Island Parish* – which returns to the Southern Hemisphere this week – will have been captivated by its rugged beaches and spectacular wildlife.

Two stars of the show, Richard Hines and Hattie Kilmartin, tell us why they fell in love with this remote corner of the Southern Hemisphere, and why adventurous travellers should sample their

archipelago's many charms. Hattie runs the Sea Cabbage Cafe with her husband Kevin, while Richard recently retired to the UK following a seven-year stint as the Falkands' vicar.

### **How did you end up in the Falklands?**

Richard: My wife Jen and I had made what for us was a courageous decision, effectively to sell up and leave all in UK behind us, and commit ourselves to serve a small and quite close-knit island community. How would we fit in? Would we cope? What would we do if it all went wrong? But that sense of being at home quickly grew and we soon began to take the island community to heart.

Hattie: I grew up in the Cumbria. After university I discovered that cooking was a great way of seeing remote parts of the world – I cooked in Outer Mongolia on horseback treks, in northern Russia in fishing camps, and 19 years ago I came to the Falklands to cook in a wildlife and fishing lodge for six months. I am still here! I settled at Bluff Cove with my husband nine years ago, and we have an eight-year-old son, Toby. I love the rugged beauty of the Falklands and the pioneering way of life. If you want something done, you have to get on and do it yourself.

### **Did anything surprise you upon arrival?**

Richard: I hadn't grasped that the island community is quite diverse: in addition to born and bred eighth generation islanders and UK-born residents, there are also significant Chilean and St Helena populations, together with numerous other nationalities. And so from that angle alone, it really is an interesting place to live.

### **Where's your favourite spot on the islands?**

Richard: Gypsy Cove was the first place we saw a Magellanic penguin and also the first place we saw a southern fur seal. It was the first place we saw a brilliant white sandy beach (we now know here are countless such in the Falkland Islands) and the first place from which we were able to look back and see the small town of Stanley from a bit of a distance – and realise that that was where we now lived!

Hattie: Bluff Cove Lagoon, which is on our farm and where we take cruise ship passengers on tours – it is a beautiful, remote, long white beach with a lagoon teeming with wildlife, particularly penguins, which are always entertaining to watch.

### **Any other favourite haunts?**

Hattie: Port Howard on West Falkland – the farm settlement where I use to live – had excellent fishing. Carcass Island is my favourite of the smaller islands, though they all have spectacular wildlife.

Richard: We grew fond of several of the bigger outlying islands – Pebble Island and Bleaker Island were favourites. And I was especially fond of sheep-farming settlements like Hill Cove, Goose Green and Port Stephens.

### **When's your favourite time of year?**

Hattie: I have two – the main wildlife breeding season in November/December, when penguin chicks hatch and the camp (our word for countryside) is covered in Pale Maidens, our delicately scented national flower. And the height of summer in February, when the young Gentoo penguins have fledged and are down on the beach practising their swimming in the surf.

Richard: Carol singing in Fox Bay at Christmas (summertime) was a special treat each year, as was a flying visit to anywhere on a "blue and gold" day during winter – when the sky is intensely blue and all else sparkles and looks its best.

### **The Gentoos make several cameos in the second series of An Island Parish. What other wildlife can be seen on the islands?**

Hattie: I have been lucky enough to have spotted whales, elephant seals, sea lions, fur seals, dolphins and four other types of wonderfully characterful penguins. Living on the farm, I see many bird species daily. We have a pair of nesting Crested Cara Caras (Caranchos) that keep us very entertained, especially as a pair of south American Terns regularly turn up just to dive-bomb the Caranchos and annoy them as much as possible!

### **In the first episode of the new series, we see you cooking all sorts of local delicacies Hattie – what's your favourite?**

Hattie: Cold-smoked Upland Goose breast – I marinade them in a mixture of spices, sugar and salt for 24 hours and then smoke them with diddle dee [bittersweet red berries]. I like to serve it thinly sliced with some homemade bread, diddle-dee relish and salad leaves.

Richard: My wife and I were both very fond of diddle-dee jam on bread or jelly with lamb, and teaberry buns. We always enjoyed

young roast lamb at Christmas time, and we were always glad of the chance to eat gorgeously rich toothfish, which comes mostly from the South Georgia region, about 850 miles away.

### **Is there anything you'd recommend visitors try?**

Richard: I suppose I should suggest that all visitors try a penguin egg – but, although I ate cakes made with the eggs, I never myself actually ate a penguin egg on its own. When you cook them the 'white' remains clear, and some say they taste fishy.

Hattie: I love to cook local delicacies like Falkland sea trout, Loligo squid, snow crab and our farm-belted Galloway beef and Perendale mutton. We also now have reindeer on the islands, which originally came from South Georgia.

### **What else should be on tourists' to-do list?**

Hattie: Travel on our wonderful red islander planes to some of the smaller islands to view our amazing wildlife. Also to farm communities on West Falkland to try out the sea trout fishing. Meet as many local people as possible to find out about our pioneering way of life and our history and visit the excellent new Historic Dockyard Museum in Stanley. Take time to see Stanley – the size of a small village yet our centre of government, controlling the country's services, infrastructure and politics.

### **Would you recommend the Falklands as a place to live?**

Richard: We enjoyed living there, but we are well aware that not every one would or did feel comfortable there, chiefly because of the remoteness and the challenges of living within a small and tight-knit community.

Hattie: It's not for the faint-hearted. It's a long way from the UK and without many of the luxuries taken for granted elsewhere – but you are very much in touch with nature, you learn to be self-sufficient and to appreciate natural beauty and it is very safe. It's a wonderful place to bring up children.

### **Richard, what do you miss most about life in the Southern Hemisphere?**

Richard: I miss a certain sense of isolation. Paradoxically, that part of the world always felt homely to me and it came with vast open spaces and both uninhabited landscapes and broad seascapes that stretched into the distance. All very good for the soul.