

Tango, Tempranillo & tottery penguins



Jane Wilson enjoys a bucket-list South American voyage from Argentina to Chile



Their eyes locked, her skirt swirled and the swarthy *milonguero* pulled his partner into an embrace rivalling anything you've seen on *Strictly Come Dancing*.

This is Buenos Aires, birthplace of tango, and I marvelled at many a stunning street-corner dance display during my pre-cruise stay in the Argentine capital. Other highlights here included a bus tour of the city, a visit to Eva Perón's grave and a tour of the Teatro Colón opera house... all before indulging in a delicious steak paired with an excellent – and reasonably priced – local Tempranillo.

It was the perfect start to my 14-day South America Passage cruise on Holland America Line's Oosterdam, a mid-sized ship (with capacity for 1,964 passengers) oozing traditional charm. The continent has always been on my bucket list, and the beauty of this voyage is the fact that it takes in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, yet means unpacking only once!

On board, Holland America's first-rate service was delivered by the smiley 800-strong crew of the striking Oosterdam, in which a resplendent glass globe hangs at the centre of a luxurious golden atrium. Individual staterooms – many with balconies from which to enjoy the meditative sounds of the sea – feature more calming decor.

The food in The Dining Room and the Lido Market was excellent (don't miss the Seafood Boil dinner, served once a week), and two 'Specialty' restaurants – Pinnacle Grill for steak and Canaletto for Italian – can be booked for a supplement (£36 and £23, respectively).

As enticing as the on-board attractions were (including your own stash of wine behind the bar, with optional upgrades to a Sommelier Package from Cellar No 1

(around £99 for four bottles), I couldn't wait to explore the remaining six destinations on our itinerary, starting with Montevideo, Uruguay's capital. We walked around Ciudad Vieja, its oldest neighbourhood, and visited the Carnival Museum, where vividly adorned performers conveyed the significance of this 40-day annual event – the longest carnival celebration in the world.

Next was the Falkland Islands, where I gained a fascinating insight into the 1982 conflict at the Historic Dockyard Museum in Port Stanley and enjoyed fish and chips at Groovy's on Philomel Street. A 10-minute drive away (£30pp return if you share a taxi), gentoo penguins in their tuxedo-like coats waddled around the blustery shore of Yorke Bay.

Back on board, another scenic highlight was sailing through Glacier Alley in southern Chile, an awe-inspiring maze of inlets, islands and narrow waterways stretching along the Beagle Channel in Tierra del Fuego.

As well as enjoying the views from my veranda, on sea days I joined a 'digital tech' tutorial, which helped me improve my iPhone photos, and a Spanish course (*hola!*). Other guests enjoyed tango classes, poker, bingo and ping-pong or a singalong with talented pianist Sydney.

Fancy some pampering? The Greenhouse Spa has a thermal suite and 10 treatment rooms where you can enjoy massages and facials, get your teeth whitened or have your posture analysed.

But the largest crowds flocked to the destination talks by the knowledgeable cruise director, who would outline the fascinating history of each port of call.

On the last evening, as we sailed towards San Antonio, I witnessed the sun kiss goodnight to the ocean and said my own farewells to all the wonderful places I'd explored, thankful for my iPhone full of (newly expert) photos to remember them by.



GET THERE: Holland America Line (hollandamerica.com) offers a 14-day South America Passage voyage on Oosterdam from £2,569pp including the 'Have It All' drinks package with two Specialty Dining meals, tips and shore excursion credit of £200 (flights excluded). Departs 5 March 2025.

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★ **SAN ANTONIO, CHILE**
This port serves Chile's capital, Santiago (right), 70 miles away. Consider spending an extra day post-cruise enjoying its Spanish colonial charm.



★ **BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA**
There's so much to see in the Argentine capital – from the grave of Eva Perón in Recoleta Cemetery to Teatro Colón, the impressive opera house. Don't miss Caminito, a street museum in La Boca, or the century-old Palermo Rose Garden (planted with 18,000 roses).



★ **MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY**
Uruguay's capital has a fascinating old town – walk along the pedestrianised Sarandí Street for art galleries, crafts, music shows and a flea market. You can also visit pretty Colonia del Sacramento, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, two hours away.



★ **PORT STANLEY, FALKLAND ISLANDS**
Wander the atmospheric streets of the Falklands' capital, with their familiar pillar-box-red phone booths and postboxes, take a Falklands Battlefield Tour or pay a visit to the colonies of playful gentoo and Magellanic penguins at Bertha's Beach, Yorke Bay and Gypsy Cove.

★ **USHUAIA, ARGENTINA**
Ride a vintage train to the 'end of the world' (Ushuaia claims to be the world's southernmost city, although Chileans argue it's Puerto Williams on Navarino Island), tuck into giant king crabs after a culinary masterclass in Puerto Almanza, or join a coach trip to the Garibaldi Pass in Tierra del Fuego for an incredible view of Lake Escondido.



★ **PUNTA ARENAS, CHILE**
Sitting on Chile's southern tip, Punta Arenas is a centre for adventure, whether it's kayaking the Strait of Magellan or trekking through the Patagonian woods. If you prefer, you could visit a working farm, then tuck into some asado – barbecued meat – or seafood at a local restaurant.

★ **PUERTO MONTT, CHILE**
This is the capital of the Los Lagos region and close to Puerto Varas, the City of Roses, overlooking Lake Llanquihue. Take an exhilarating rafting trip down the mighty Petrohué river or go fly fishing on the Maullín river, 13 miles away. □

