

NOTES

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PORT EXPLORER

# Puerto Madryn

ARGENTINA

**GENERAL INFORMATION** Puerto Madryn is located on the Atlantic coast of Argentina’s famous region of Patagonia. The city looks out over the protected Nuevo Gulf with the Valdes Peninsula to the north and Punta Ninfas to the south.

Puerto Madryn was founded in the mid 1800s and named in honor of Sir Thomas Duncombe Love Jones-Parry, the Baron of Madryn, northwest Wales in the United Kingdom. One might think that is quite a stretch, from western Wales to coastal Patagonia, but we will make the interesting connection a little later.

Puerto Madryn is a relatively new city. After all, it was only ten thousand years ago that the first humans made it to this harsh and forbidding part of the South American continent. Very few of them stayed around. Compared with the dinosaurs that roamed this area of Patagonia as far back as 250 million years ago, there has not even been a tick on the geologic time clock since the establishing of Puerto Madryn.

But there has been enough time for Puerto Madryn to develop and grow. Currently the city has a population close to 60,000. The city has a large aluminum industry that is served by its deep water port. It is the port that has enabled cruise lines to help make Puerto Madryn into a center for tourism as visitors come from around the world to marvel at the natural wonders of Argentina’s Patagonian coast.

**HISTORY** In the mid 1800s the government of Argentina had a challenge on its hands. To the northeast, 6,000 nautical miles across the Atlantic, a small group of Welsh men and women were facing a cultural challenge of their own. Argentina, had laid claim to a vast amount of land in Patagonia ... but had no one to settle it. The Welshmen were disheartened by the fact that the English language and culture was rapidly encroaching upon their ancient and long cherished way of life. In hopes of maintaining their language and traditions a small group of men, women and children accepted an Argentine promise of land and cultural independence in exchange for the Welsh promise of loyalty.

In late May of 1865 an old run down and beaten up clipper ship was tied to the Liverpool docks. It had been built over a decade earlier to transport tea from China. So as not to offend the women that were soon to board, the ship’s provocative sea-nymph figurehead had been removed. Few if any of the settlers had ever been beyond their own village. As all immigrants who, over the centuries, left their homes and everything they had ever known to sail to a new world about which they knew nothing at all...they must have been very brave and more that a little frightened. These were cobblers and miners, housewives and their sisters, blacksmiths, bakers and babies and three God-fearing preachers...apparently there was not a farmer among them.

Five children and one newborn would not survive the voyage. The parents of the infant chose to bury their child at sea. The parents of the children chose to wait. After two harrowing months upon the ocean, the Captain having denied them the fresh air and sunlight of the main deck,

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History continued

just before sunrise on July 27, 1865 the small ship sailed into Golfo Nuevo on Argentina's Patagonian coast. The 153 intrepid Welsh settlers, most under the age of 30, were welcomed ashore by two representatives of the government of Argentina together with Lewis Jones and Edwyn Roberts, two distinguished fellow countrymen who had come ahead to make arrangements. They had some tools, a couple of hastily built shacks, a few barnyard animals and little else. Life would be very hard in the early years.

The very next day, on the morning of July 28, 1865, the Welsh settlers gathered on the beach and held a church service. It was bitter sweet. As they laid their five children to rest so far from their home they gave thanks for the safe crossing and the opportunity to begin a life in Argentina's Patagonia. They would name their new home for their Welsh baron, Puerto Madryn.

#### POINTS OF INTEREST

**1 The Tehuelche Monument** sets atop a hill that overlooks the city and the bay. The statue is dedicated to the indigenous Tehuelche people who were helpful to the first settlers and with whom there was a friendly and co-operative relationship.

**2 The Puerto Madryn Ecocenter** is a scientific, educational and environmental research facility that is dedicated to the study and preservation of Patagonia's rich oceanographic ecosystem.

**3 The Oceanographic and Natural Sciences Museum** is located in a beautiful neo-classical house that was built by one of Puerto Madryn's early settlers. The museum explains the town's history, its close relationship with the sea and the contribution that the Welsh immigrants made to this area of Patagonia.

#### Beyond Puerto Madryn

**4 The Valdes Peninsula** is northeast of Puerto Madryn on the other side of Golfo Nuevo. The famous peninsula is home to sea birds, seals and a large colony of sea elephants. These massive creatures are amazing with mature bull elephants measuring up to twenty feet long and weighing over 3 tons ... yet they are a mere morsel for the 30 foot, 10 ton killer whales that are often seen hunting in the area.

**5 El Doradillo Beach** is just a few miles north of Puerto Madryn. This area is famous for being what can best be described as a nursery for female "southern right" whales and their calves. This is one of the few places where the whales can be seen close to shore. On a hill overlooking the beach is a small scientific research station where marine biologists track and log the whale population.

**6 The Paleontology Museum** is located a few miles south of Puerto Madryn in the small town of Trelew. The museum is dedicated to the Italian geologist Egidio Feruglio who spent many years studying and exploring Patagonia. The museum houses an impressive display of ancient dinosaur fossils that have been discovered throughout the region.

**7 Gaiman** is a quaint town on the Chubut River south of Puerto Madryn. The town is a great example of the architectural style and design of the early colonial settlements. There are a number of the famous Tea Houses here.

**8 Punta Tombo** is south of Puerto Madryn. This area is home to one of the largest Magellan Penguin colonies in South America. Estimates of the number of penguins are upward of 2 million.

**9 The Punta Loma Reserve** is about 15 miles south of Puerto Madryn. This ruggedly beautiful area is home to a large colony of sea lions and sea birds.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS** To make the most of your visit to Puerto Madryn and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure, Shore Excursion TV Channel or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, guests are advised to take with them only the items they need and to secure any valuables. Clouds and rain often move in quickly. It is suggested that guests dress in layers and bring a waterproof jacket.

**LOCAL CUSTOMS** Bargaining: Prices are generally fixed.

Tipping: A 10% tip is customary at restaurants.

Local Cuisine: *Welsh Cake* has a great reputation. It can be positively compared to a premium gourmet fruit cake. It is often served at tea time. *Leg of Lamb* is coated with a mixture of salt and pepper, parsley, paprika, ground chili, and a combination of cream and Roquefort cheese then wrapped with bacon and roasted.

Local drink: *Welsh Tea* is served in the classic old tea houses. *Yerba Mate* is Argentina's national drink. It is a strong herbal tea. Wine has been grown in Argentina for over 400 years and today the country is the 5th largest producer in the world. Little has been exported over the years due to mediocre quality and the fact that the Argentineans consume most of it themselves. Over the past decade or so, some of the best wineries (large and small) have greatly improved their vintage and consequently

expanded their export markets. Today many of Argentina's best wines are highly sought after and greatly appreciated.

**SHOPPING FACILITIES** The main shopping area is in the center of town.

**LOCAL CURRENCY** Argentina's currency is the peso (ARS). Several banks have ATMs and will accept traveler's checks for a fee. A few shops accept U.S. dollars and euros. Major credit cards are widely accepted but traveler's checks rarely are.

**POST OFFICE & TELEPHONE FACILITIES** The National Post Office is located at 239 Gobernador Maiz. A postal representative also picks up mail from the ship when in port.

Dial the following access numbers to use a personal calling card:

AT&T: 0800.555.4288

MCI: 0800.555.1002

Sprint: 0800.555.1003

**TRANSPORTATION** Car rentals and taxis are available

**TOURIST INFORMATION** The Tourist Information Center is located at 223 Julio A. Roca Avenue.

**USEFUL WORDS & PHRASES** The Welsh language is still spoken by many of the descendants of the first settlers. Teachers from Wales come to Patagonia on annually sponsored trips to keep the linguistic lamps burning. Welsh is an ancient "Brythonic" language, meaning that it is close to the original language believed to have been spoken throughout much of Britain long before the arrival of the Romans in the 50s BC.

Yes - Ie

No - Dim

Hello - Shwmae

Good Bye - Hwyl

Thank-you - Diolch

You're welcome - Croeso

Wales for ever! - Cymru am byth!