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**Filmmakers Capture Life on Falkland Islands**
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Photography by Jamie Gallant and Vern Cummins

Head south! Well, 51° south to be precise, to visit the Falklands Islands! In the 6-part documentary web series *51° South*, 2 young filmmakers — 33-year-old Vern Cummins from Dartford, Kent, UK, and 23-year-old Jamie Gallant from Cape Cod, MA — showcase the life on these remote Islands, located east of the southernmost tip of Argentina.

Using the beautiful landscape and wildlife as their backdrop, Vern and Jamie offer us a glimpse of life on the Islands by featuring a variety of residents, including Steve, a taxidermist; Samantha, a private in the Falkland Islands Defense Force; and Charlie, the keeper at the Cape Pembroke Lighthouse.

Some history buffs may recall that the Islands are well-known as the location for the 2-month Falklands War in 1982, but Vern and Jamie's mission is to show the rich, low-key culture that exists today — and why the Falklands should be added to their list of must-see destinations.

We decided to talk to the off-the-beaten-track filmmakers about their docu-series, the Falkland Islands and their love of travel.

**Travel Channel:** Of all the locations in the world, why did you decide to do a documentary about the Falkland Islands?

**Jamie Gallant:** "Well, I first had the opportunity to visit the Falkland Islands in early winter of 2011, it was a dream come true for me. The 2-week scheduled journey around the Islands turned into 3 when a gale stranded me for a handful of days on Saunders Island, in the northwest portion of the archipelago. I missed the 1 flight that left the islands that week; so I did what anyone else in my position would do — I went to the pub. The friendly clinks of glasses quickly cemented my love for this extraordinary country and its people. Once back in my adopted city of Chicago, I immediately got together with Vern, who felt it would simply be a disservice not to investigate further, and *51° South* was born."

**Travel Channel:** Did you know each other before filming *51° South*? How did you meet?

**Vern Cummins:** "Yes. Jamie and I met while studying at university in Chicago. We graduated with a concentration in documentary together, one of the smallest departments at one of the largest film schools in the United States. Jamie and I have always shared a common aesthetic and approach to storytelling and this has resulted in many collaborations between us over the years."

**Travel Channel:** How would you describe the culture on the Islands?

**Jamie:** "I've never traveled some place where being an American was such an exciting novelty! That was quite something. The problem with the Falklands from our perspective was that the arguments always seemed to go over the heads of the people who actually called the Islands home. I think that is an underlying frustration with them. So, I remember being amazed by just how open and willing the people were to share their stories and experiences with Vern and me as complete strangers. As documentary filmmakers and photographers, it was such a gem of an experience. We take a lot of pride in the trust they've bestowed on us. What we uncovered and hopefully what people take away from watching *51° South* is that the culture of the Falklands is not some simple, rough, bitter existence, but rather a truly remarkable, independent and beautifully diverse people."

**Travel Channel:** What are some must-see sights or places a tourist should explore when visiting the Falkland Islands?

**Vern:** "The Falklands consist of East and West Falkland, as well as hundreds of smaller surrounding islands. The capital, Port Stanley, sits on the east island and is the usual jumping off point for most tourists. The wonderful thing about Stanley is you can pretty much navigate it on foot in a day. The iconic whalebone arch adjacent to Christ Church Cathedral makes for a great photo opportunity. I also recommend stopping in for a pint at the Victory Pub."

"The locals are incredibly friendly, and as is the case with small communities, extremely knowledgeable on those off-the-beaten-path hotspots. One such hidden gem is a short drive up to Moody Brook that provides a wonderful view of Stanley Harbor. The Islands are of course known for their abundance of wildlife, Gypsy Cove is a day trip outside Stanley and great place to see Magellanic penguins strolling along the shore."

"If you have more time I strongly suggest heading over to the West Island. Jamie and I spent a breathtaking day filming amongst rockhopper penguins, turkey vultures and sea lions at White Rock, Port Howard. The best way to reach the West Island is to take an 8-seater [Falkland Islands Government Air Service](#) (FIGAS) flight. The view at 800 feet crossing the Falkland Sound is worth the trip alone. If you don't believe us then watch our [episode on FIGAS pilot Troy Bowles!](#)"

**Travel Channel:** What were some things you learned about the Islands that most people probably don't know?

Vern: "The wildlife and landscape is much lauded, and rightly so, but it is also a stargazer's paradise. Because of minimal light pollution the sky literally lights up at night and is a great place to view the Southern Cross. If you plan on taking a smartphone or tablet I strongly recommended loading a star-spotting app to help you pick out the lesser-known constellations."

**Jamie:** "I'd have to say the differences between "lamb," "mutton" and the elusive "hogget."

**Travel Channel:** Your documentary showcases several residents who live on the Islands. Who do you think was the most colorful or memorable person you met and why?

**Vern:** "That's a difficult one because each character has their own uniqueness and quality about them. Charlie Mackenzie, the lighthouse keeper of Cape Pembroke certainly stands out as a wonderfully endearing man who still holds a passion for the lighthouse 30 years on. He is the quintessential salty dog of the ocean."

**Jamie:** "One thing we have found is that in the Falklands, everyone seems to have a story worth telling, and sometimes the quirkiest or the most incredible ones come from those you least expect."

**Travel Channel:** Because the Falkland Islands are somewhat off the beaten path, how do you get to and from the Islands?

**Jamie:** "From the US, it's usually around a 48-hour journey — including the layovers, by air. Pick your departure city and fly to Santiago, Chile. (You'll usually have a connection in between.) We recommend spending a day or a few in Santiago: It's beautiful, safe and full of fresh, colorful fruits and vegetables. From Santiago you then fly down to [Patagonia's Punta Arenas](#), before catching your final connection to [RAF Mount Pleasant](#). This is the only commercial flight for the entire week servicing the Islands, so plan accordingly! Finally, it's a 45-minute or so drive along a winding dirt road through dramatic landscapes into Port Stanley."

**Travel Channel:** What is the most important message or point you think people should get after watching *51° South*? Why should people care?

**Vern:** "The islanders live in a very remote part of the world against the backdrop of much political rhetoric over sovereignty (between Great Britain and Argentina). Inevitably when this happens, the first voice to be lost is of those who inhabit the land. Our series was a way of giving back to the community a voice that is seldom heard on a global stage."

**Jamie:** "We live in a world that is essentially growing smaller every day. The Falklands in fact may have the largest number of Facebook users per capita of any country in the world. But the fact that places exist in this world that are still difficult to get to, have minimal roads and where children fly in to the [annual May Ball](#) via bush plane is a truly beautiful thing worth preserving!"

**Travel Channel:** Do you have plans to return to the Falkland Islands?

**Vern:** "Yes, very much so. *51° South* was always planned as an ongoing series and we hope to be back in March to film another set of portraits for series 2. There were so many interesting islanders and their stories to tell that our [first series](#) is just the tip of the iceberg. The response from our global viewers has been phenomenal! Jamie and I have always said if people want to see more then we will do more."

**Travel Channel:** Do you have plans to visit other off-the-beaten-path destinations? If so, where and why?

**Jamie:** "Since my childhood I've been fond of maps, and while sprawled out over them, I was always most curious about the places charted along its fringes. As long as *hic sunt dracones* exist we'll be determined to seek them out and document them. Plus, we hear [Svalbard](#) is lovely in July."

**Travel Channel:** Other than the Falkland Islands, what are your favorite vacation destinations? Why?

**Vern:** "I'm not really a sit-by-the-pool type of person, I need to get out there and explore, whether it is in a remote destination or bustling city. Climbing Mount Emei in China lives long in the memory for its stunning views across the Sichuan region. I recently got back from Bruges, a beautifully preserved city, and those Belgians certainly know how to brew a beer."

**Jamie:** "I've been very fortunate to be able to travel all over the world for both work and play, but I don't think anything compares to the pleasure I get from driving across the US from east to west with my father. We've done these long, often haphazard adventures since I was 12, and there is something truly special about taking your time and seeing the country the old-fashioned way. I also get a certain kick out of stopping in rural towns or places where people then ask later, "Why the hell did you go there?" The [Corn Palace](#) in Mitchell, South Dakota, comes to mind."

**Travel Channel:** What are some must-have items that tourists should pack before heading to the Islands?

**Vern:** "A raincoat, a good pair of walking shoes and sunscreen. The "4 seasons in 1 day" term definitely applies to the Falklands, sometimes even in an hour! Aside from the occasional shower, a good raincoat will help shield you from the buffering winds. The Falklands aren't a relax-and-take-a-good-book destination, you have to get out there and live it, and that can mean plenty of walking — and at times over less than easy terrain. Your feet will thank you for a good pair of shoes or boots. Also remember to take a little sunscreen, it seems contrary to ground conditions but it can be deceptive due to the thin ozone layer down there. Jamie and I would get rather rosy in the cheeks after a long day's shoot."

**Travel Channel:** Complete this sentence: "I travel to ..."

**Vern:** "I travel to inspire myself to go further, but also make me appreciate where I came from."

**Jamie:** "I travel to interact, enjoy, learn and educate."

**Visit the [51° South website for more information about the documentary series, Vern Cummins and Jamie Gallant.](#)**

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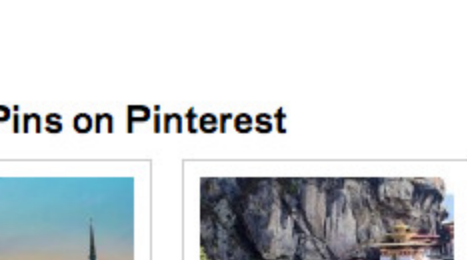
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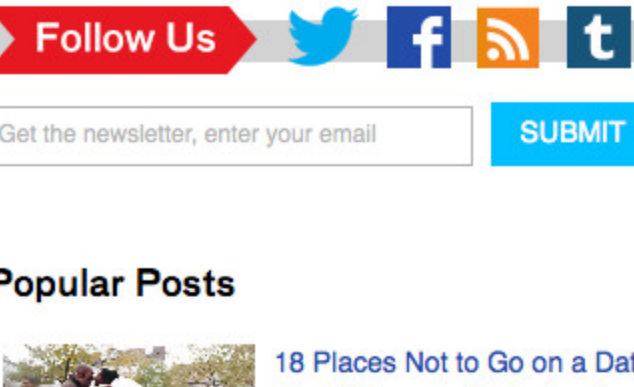
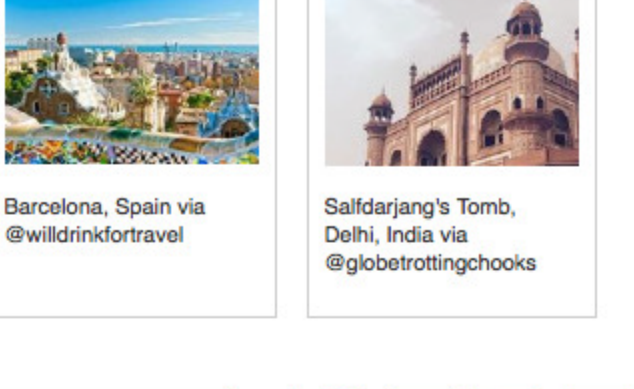
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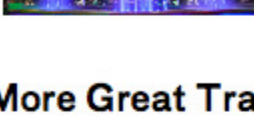
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