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Sea Lion Lodge Reopens after Renovations **– *World-class wildlife viewing in the Falklands***

Travellers looking for a first-class wildlife and wilderness experience should look no further than the newly upgraded Sea Lion Lodge, located on the most southerly inhabited island in the Falklands archipelago.

Home to over 47 species of birds, including three species of penguins, and an estimated 70 species of flowering plants, it's no wonder that Sea Lion Island is a prime destination for wildlife viewing, and those with a love of the great outdoors. In response to a growing demand by consumers for unspoilt, exclusive, off-the-beaten-track destinations, the owners of the 12-bed Sea Lion Lodge have recently completed a series of renovations and refurbishments. The upgraded accommodation provides a superb facility from which to admire the flora, fauna, sealife and birdlife of the island.

THE LODGE IS A PURPOSE BUILT BUILDING AND WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC IN 1986 – IT WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED BY LORD SHACKLETON IN JANUARY 1988. THE LODGE WAS A FLAT PACK BUILDING BROUGHT IN BY HELICOPTER IN CONTAINERS.

THE OLD FARM HOUSE WHICH IS THE STAFF HOUSE WAS THE ORIGINAL SHANTY BUILT FROM SHIP TIMBER – BUT HAS BEEN ADDED TO OVER THE YEARS TO MAKE A BUNGALOW.

Built from an old sailing shipwreck, the British vessel *Viscount*, which wrecked here in 1892, the lodge building was originally used as a farmhouse but has been extensively refurbished to provide visitors with comfortable accommodation. Affording spectacular views of the South Atlantic with

nothing but water in between guests and Antarctica, it's the only tourist accommodation on this tiny island (five miles long and just over a mile wide).

The Falkland Islands offer visitors a chance to observe an astonishing diversity of wildlife at a particularly close distance. **FROM LATE SEPTEMBER to APRIL** on Sea Lion Island, the three penguin species will be incubating and hatching their eggs, making it a magical time to visit. Pods of killer whales in pursuit of elephant seals, breeding colonies of southern sea lions, as well as internationally endangered striated caracara, Antarctic skuas, southern giant petrels, and a host of passerines. No wonder Sea Lion Island is a haven for wildlife watching and photographers alike, as no other island offers such great guaranteed viewing opportunities.

One of only a handful of sites in the world where it is possible to witness the feeding interaction between killer whales and elephant seal weanlings, the Island is being used for a BBC production called *LIFE*, which follows from the hugely popular *Planet Earth* and *Blue Planet series*.

Following the decline of sheep farming and subsequent removal of sheep from the island, native grasses have recovered and one fifth of the island is now covered by beautiful tussock, which provides a perfect habitat for all the wildlife and fauna which make up this island.

Commenting on the upgraded facilities, FITB General Manager, Jake Downing said, "Today's travellers are looking for ever more unique and breathtaking destinations and want to discover authentic experiences in untrodden, unspoilt locations. The Falkland Islands, and Sea Lion Island in particular, cater to the demands of these travellers, but the exclusivity of the South Atlantic means that they will remain one of nature's best kept secrets."

Access to the Island is via a forty minute flight from Stanley followed by a two minute walk from a purpose-built airstrip!

Call to action –

For further information on the Falklands Islands, please visit www.falklandislands.com and www.falklands.gov.fk. Media enquiries should be directed to Suzanne Holiday and Katie Liddell at Keene Public Affairs on 0207 839 2140 or falklandstourism@keenepa.co.uk. Photography can be downloaded from www.falklands.gov.fk/gallery.

Notes for editors:

- The Falkland Islands have a raw, unspoilt quality that entices locals and tourists back time and again. Visitors to the Islands are spoilt for choice with more than 227 species of identified birds

(including several of the world's largest endangered breeding colonies), as well as whales, dolphins, elephant seals, sea lions, delicate flora and rugged geographical formations.

- The best time to visit the Islands and experience the local culture and wildlife is October to April. The average summer temperature (December to March) is 15° Celsius (59° Fahrenheit) and the Falklands has more sunshine hours than the UK.
- There are over 40 international tour operators offering tailor-made packages and escorted tours to the Falkland Islands. See www.falklandislands.com for the latest list.
- Visitors can reach the Falklands on the weekly LAN flight from Chile or the charter flight operated from RAF Brize Norton in the UK by the Ministry of Defence twice weekly.