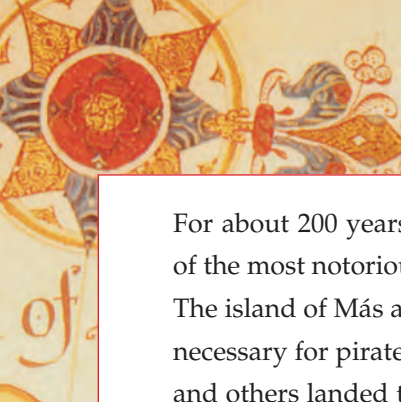


Isla Más a Tierra: Robinson Crusoe Island

Daniel Defoe was probably inspired by Captain Woodes Rogers's *A Cruising Voyage around the World*, the book that described the adventures of the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk, who in 1704 asked to be left on the desert island of Más a Tierra, one of the Juan Fernández Islands, after a quarrel with the captain of his ship. He lived on the island until 1709, when Captain Rogers and his crew rescued him. Isla Más a Tierra (which in Spanish means 'the island nearer to land') is also known as 'Isla Robinson Crusoe' or 'Robinson Crusoe Island'. 160 kilometres to the west is the Isla Más Afuera ('the island farther out to sea' in Spanish), which is also known as 'Isla Alejandro Selkirk' or 'Alexander Selkirk Island'.

The Juan Fernández Islands are located 674 kilometres west of Chile, surrounded by the tempestuous Pacific Ocean. They were discovered in 1574 by the Spanish navigator Don Juan Fernández.

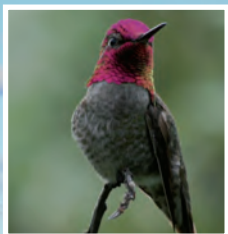




For about 200 years the archipelago ¹ was the favourite hiding place of the most notorious pirates of the time.

The island of Más a Tierra had plenty of fresh water and timber, both necessary for pirate ships. The terrible French pirate Jacob L’Hermitte and others landed their ships in the bay called Puerto Francés on the north-east side of the island, while English ships used Puerto Inglés. Recently discovered maps and documents of the 18th century tell us that in 1715 the Spanish captain Juan Ubilla hid an extraordinary treasure of Inca gold, worth about ten billion dollars, on the island.

1. **archipelago** : group of small islands.



Isla Más a Tierra, seen from the southeast. The bird is the Juan Fernández Firecrown Hummingbird.



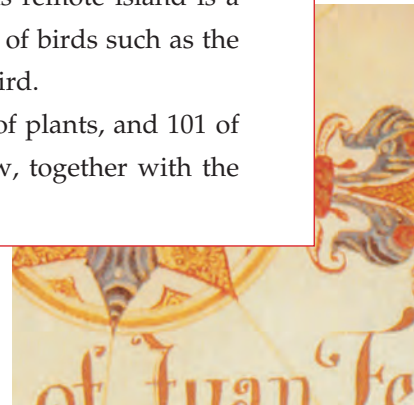
Residents of Isla Más a Tierra wait at **Bahía del Cumberland** for the arrival of supplies and mail from a ship.

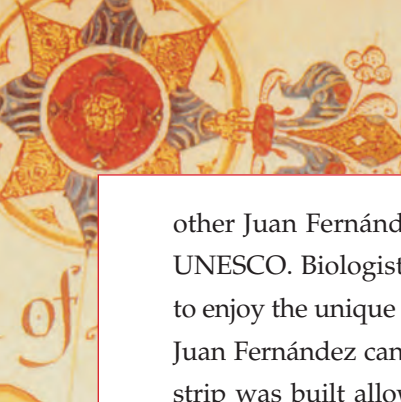
When Spain had had enough of the pirates, it decided to defend the island by building seven forts and installing powerful cannons. During the second half of the 1700s the pirates had disappeared and the forts were abandoned.

This splendid island has undergone very few changes since the 1700s. Today it belongs to Chile and there is a population of about 500 Spanish-speaking people, most of whom live in the village of San Juan Bautista, around Bahía Cumberland, and earn their living fishing for lobster and fish.

Isla Más a Tierra is covered with cliffs of volcanic rock, steep mountains, lush tropical forests and moors. This remote island is a paradise for the Pacific sea lion and rare species of birds such as the Juan Fernández Firecrown, a kind of humming bird.

Robinson Crusoe Island is home to 140 species of plants, and 101 of these grow nowhere else in the world. It is now, together with the





other Juan Fernández Islands, a Biosphere Nature Reserve set up by UNESCO. Biologists and nature lovers from all over the world come to enjoy the unique plants and animals found here.

Juan Fernández can be reached by plane or by boat. In 1967 a landing strip was built allowing small planes to land. In 1993 the first phone line was installed, which improved communication with the rest of the world. The best way to move about on the island is on foot or by boat. Tourism is very important for the Juan Fernández Islands. Some of the attractions on Isla Más a Tierra are:

- the Casa de la Cultura Alfredo de Rodt y Biblioteca Daniel Defoe, which is open from Monday to Friday (free admission);
- the cave where Selkirk lived before building two huts;
- Mirador de Selkirk, one of the highest points on the island, where Selkirk used to go to look for approaching vessels;
- the remnants of the 18th-century Spanish fort, Santa Barbara, with seven original cannons;
- San Juan Bautista, the peaceful little town on the island whose economy is based on lobster fishing; it has a population of about 600, several boats, a few cars and Internet via satellite.

1 Comprehension check

Use the words and expressions below to say or write sentences about what you have read.

'the island nearer to land' Juan Fernandez Jacob l'Hermite
Inca gold forts and canons San Juan Bautista landscape
birds, animals and plants tourist sights