



Christmas In Antarctica



17 – 29 December 2019 | *Greg Mortimer*



About Us

Aurora Expeditions embodies the spirit of adventure, travelling to some of the most wild and remote places on our planet. With over 28 years' experience, our small group voyages allow for a truly intimate experience with nature.

Our expeditions push the boundaries with flexible and innovative itineraries, exciting wildlife experiences and fascinating lectures. You'll share your adventure with a group of like-minded souls in a relaxed, casual atmosphere while making the most of every

opportunity for adventure and discovery. Our highly experienced expedition team of naturalists, historians and destination specialists are passionate and knowledgeable – they are the secret to a fulfilling and successful voyage.

Whilst we are dedicated to providing a 'trip of a lifetime', we are also deeply committed to education and preservation of the environment. Our aim is to travel respectfully, creating lifelong ambassadors for the protection of our destinations.



DAY 1 | Wednesday, 18 December 2019

Ushuaia, Beagle Channel

Position: 18:00 hours

Course: 83°

Latitude: 55°31' S

Longitude: 66°12' W

Wind Speed: Calm

Barometer: 991 hPa & steady

Air Temp: 12° C

Sea Temp: 9° C

Finally we were here on the Beagle Channel aboard our sparkling new ice-strengthened vessel. This afternoon at the wharf in Ushuaia, our Expedition Leader John and Deputy Expedition Leader Robyn welcomed us on board, before sending us off to Ian and Jared for a mug shot (complete with drizzle-dazzled hair!)

Once all aboard and our luggage accounted for, John called us into the lecture room to welcome us, talk about the workings of the ship, outline our plans for coming days, and introduce us to the Aurora team. Onboard we total 128 passengers, with many nationalities including Australia, New Zealand, China, the UK and the USA, along with 19 Aurora Expeditions' staff and 84 capable crew from all corners of the globe.

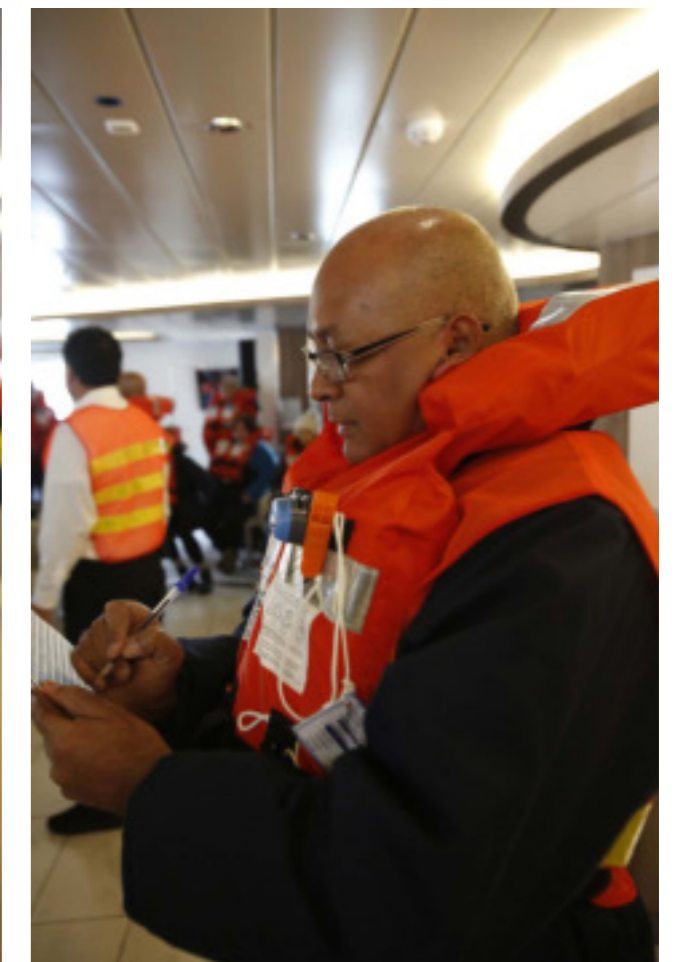
Robyn's announcement over the PA system was our cue to join the lifeboat drill, donning bulky orange lifejackets and gathering at the muster station before making our way from there to our two Polar Class life vessels.

Our Argentinian pilot climbed aboard and at around 1800 we cast off lines and eased away from the wharf. What a feeling! The thriving city of Ushuaia with its snow-capped mountains and bustling town centre gradually receded as we motored eastward along a beautiful, calm Beagle Channel, the water steely with the glorious evening light. The wildlife bonanza was off to a good start with a plethora of seabirds circling the ship as we departed.

On our port side stretched the beech forested slopes of Argentina, while Chile, its mountain ranges dusted with snow, lay on our starboard side. A soft mist shrouded the mountains of the Beagle as we sailed: just exquisite!

Kayaking guides Frank, Michael, Lisa, Russell and Allie met up with their kayaking team for a fit-out session and briefing, while the rest of us congregated around the observation lounge to enjoy our passage through the Beagle Channel. Some kicked back with a drink or two at our comfortable Elephant Island Bar. As the light dimmed we gathered in the dining room for our first delectable dinner together, prepared by the fantastic hotel team. There was plenty of lively conversation as we acquainted ourselves with fellow travellers.

At 2230 our Argentinian pilot disembarked down the rope ladder to his waiting pilot boat, leaving us to strike out on our own into the Drake Passage. Tomorrow we are on our own at sea. Head up to the observation deck and bridge to look out for seabirds large and small, which frequent this productive 1,000-kilometre stretch of ocean. Naturalists Annette and Gary will kick off our educational series with talks on the remarkable seabirds and whales we expect to encounter on our travels towards the great white southern continent, while in the afternoon Nina will share some rollicking tales of the early discovery of Antarctica.



DAY 2 | Thursday, 19 December 2019

Drake Passage

Position: 06:15 hours **Course:** 155°

Latitude: 56° 21'S

Longitude: 65° 23'N

On days at sea like this, we can linger over a fantastic breakfast while watching Albatrosses soar over our wake. Travel time is also well spent on presentations that prepare us for the wonders ahead. Each lecture holds a treasure of information to help us see Antarctica with brighter eyes:

Sea Birds: Gary gave a fine and detailed lecture on seabirds, sharing from his deep wealth of personal experience. Test your knowledge:

- 1) What technique do many Sea birds use (especially Albatrosses) to fly using very little energy?
- 2) Which Small bird dances atop the water to stir up a meal with their feet?
- 3) Which gland to many sea birds use to be able to ingest sea water?
- 4) Name the group of small sea birds you may see behind the ship that have the shape of an "M" across their backs?
- 5) Many Petrels and other tube nosed birds have an unusual defence mechanism, they spew what at their threats?
- 6) This predator, the Skua, likes to prey upon what for their food?

Whales: Annette later shared her knowledge of Cetaceans. Test what you learned:

- 1) What do most whales we may encounter eat?
- 2) With what do they separate their food from the water?
- 3) Can humans eat Krill
- 4) Are Krill commercially fished?
- 5) What toothed Whale might we see?
- 6) What do they eat?
- 7) They hunt their prey using this sound technique
- 8) Humpback Whales each have something as unique as individual fingerprints. This pattern can be found where?
- 9) For what product used around the world were whales hunted for?

Wind Speed: 18 knots

Wind Direction: SW

Barometer: 950 hPa & steady

Air Temp: 4°C

Sea Temp: 7°C

History of Antarctic Exploration with Nina. Quiz yourself:

- 1) Did Francis Drake ever cross the Passage that bears his name?
- 2) Which explorer has a Strait and a Penguin named for him?
- 3) During what year did the Antarctic Continent have its first confirmed sighting?
- 4) Who was the first to Circumnavigate the South Polar Continent?
- 5) Who were the first to work commercially in the waters around Antarctica?
- 6) What is a Privateer (many early explorers were)?

Ian's Tales of filming for the BBC: What common thread and or "issue" may have wound its way through Ian's tales of camping in wild country?

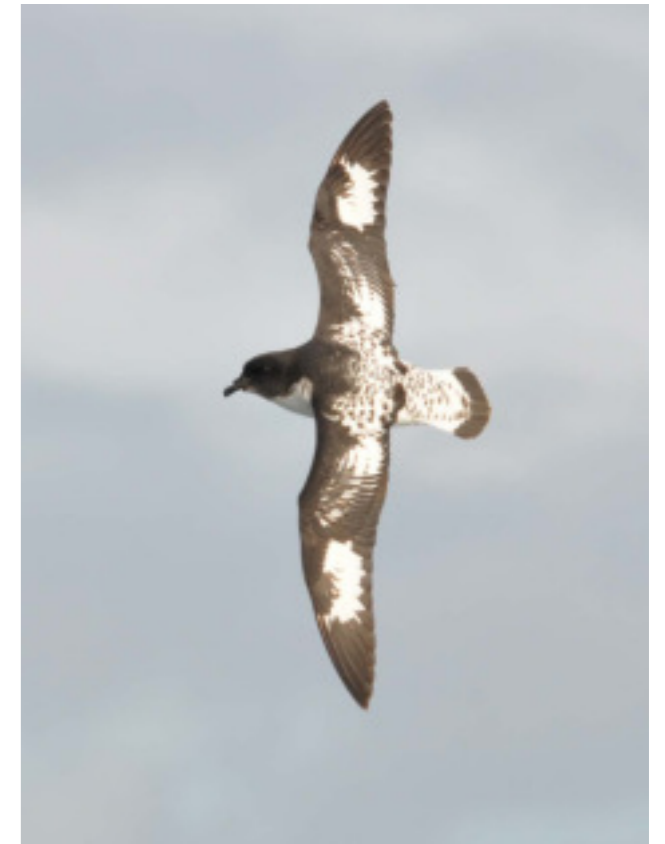
Quiz answers:

Sea Birds: 1) Dynamic Soaring, 2) Wilson's Storm Petrel, 3) Salt Gland, 4) Prions, 5) Oil, 6) Baby Penguins or eggs

Whales: 1) Krill, 2) Baleen, 3) No, it is poisonous to humans, 4) Yes, for fish farming, 5) Orcas 6) Seals and Penguins, 7) Echo location, 8) Underside of their flukes, 9) Whale oil was widely used prior to the use of petro-chemicals.

History of Antarctic Discovery: 1) Never made the crossing that you have, 2) Magellan, 3) 1820, 4) Captain James Cook, 5) Sealers and Whalers 6) Basically a sponsored pirate that were licensed by the country the sent them forth

Ian: Pooh





DAY 3 | Friday, 20th December 2019

Aitch – Barrientos Island

Position: 07:10 hours
Latitude: 61° 02' S
Longitude: 153° 01' W

Course: 153°
Speed: 13.4 knots

Wind Speed: 12 knots
Wind Direction: N

Barometer: 1003 hPa & steady
Air Temp: -2°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

They are extraordinarily like children, these little people of the Antarctic world, either like children, or like old men, full of their own importance and late for dinner, in their black tail-coats and white shirt fronts - and rather portly withal. —Apsley Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World*

The day began with an obvious charge of energy in the air. For over a year we had all been dreaming of ice, penguins, and the lost continent of Terra Australis Incognita. We were ready for any sign of it.

After breakfast we gathered for briefings from Naturalist Gary and Deputy Expedition Leader Robyn on what to do and not to do once on land. After lunch we gathered to hear Expedition Leader John prep us on the afternoon and what to expect to see on Aitcho Barrientos Island. Penguins! Thousands of penguins already, not to mention a few elephant seals, perhaps? Well, it sounded like our first landing in Antarctica was not one to miss; we quickly bundled up and scurried out on the observation deck to watch our arrival.

We had huge cliffs and rock pillars coming straight out of the sea, hundreds of Gentoo Penguins literally flying through the water; whales popping up left, right and centre...and ice! Massive glaciers running into the sea, abruptly ending with one hundred-foot ice cliffs; and islands the size of very large islands! With mountains on them! Minds were blown and we hadn't even left the boat.

At 3 o'clock the fun and games began of getting passengers from ship to shore. Well, the Aurora team have gotten things quite dialled in on this fine vessel in the last two months and made the process today run as smooth as a baby seal's bottom (you can only imagine they're quite smooth...). The kayakers fought some moderate winds up to the east end of the island in no time and, with the rest of the passengers were at last united with the penguins from their dreams.

On shore on the west end of the island people walked among huge Elephant seals and goofy Weddell Seals, all of which did not seem to care one bit about we humans. We also got lucky with our west end landing, being graced with the presence of quite a few Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguins. The east enders went that way in search of penguins and they were not disappointed.

Thousands of Gentoos and Chinstraps littered the beach and land. Nesting Gentoos with their chicks were a tear jerker for some, and the chick-stealing Skuas were a tear jerker for others. One lonesome Adelie Penguin was spotted, some Imperial Cormorants, and a rumour that one kayak group caught glimpse of a Leopard seal. Wildlife was on full throttle and our first trip to shore was a smashing success.

Back on board the energy was at an all-time high with everyone chatting and sharing their experiences and sightings from the day. The Elephant Island Bar was abuzz, while others were up on deck with binoculars. As always dinner was absolutely divine, with a little more noise than usual coming from tables. We are beginning to find our rhythm on this fine vessel, many having already caught the 'polar bug' that entices adventurers to this incredible continent.





DAY 4 | Saturday 21st December 2019

Useful Island

Position: 06:45 hours
Latitude: 64°03'S
Longitude: 61° 06'W

Course: 160°
Speed: 9.8 knots

Wind Speed: 22 knots
Wind Direction: NE

Barometer: 999 hPa & falling
Air Temp: -1°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. — Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

The early bird catches the whale. Everyone who dragged themselves out of our über comfy beds in the wee hours was instantly invited to Whale Fest 2019. At least seven Humpback whales were spotted from the Observation Lounge as we approached Cierva Cove. The Humpbacks' feeding frenzy was beautifully framed by the most amazing morning light shining on surrounding mountains and glaciers. Whales, sunlight and a good cup of coffee is surely quite a magic way to wake up and rub the sleepiness from our eyes and soul.

Cierva Cove was a spectacular morning outing. Behind the ship we spied a large female leopard seal resting on a small bergy bit. What an arresting sight these creatures are with their large reptilian head and gaping jaw. Kayakers and Zodiac cruisers enjoyed it alike. Three different kayak groups set off for an early paddle towards the massive glacier at the back of the bay.

On the way they gained close-up glimpses of a Minke whale (yes, we are still at Whale Fest). One of the most humbling things to hear while on the water is the loud crack of a calving glacier. At Cierva Cove the booms from the glacier gave us a sense of its immense power. We paddled on to enjoy Weddell seals perched up on two small beaches and a small contingent of Gentoo penguins – highlights that made the early morning paddle seem all the more worthwhile.

It is easy to forget to keep up with sunscreen when you are gob-smacked by the beauty of the surroundings, so there was no shortage of sun kissed faces around the ship at lunchtime.

Soon after sitting down to lunch, half the dining room bolted towards the port side to watch a Humpback whale waving and slapping its flipper (Whale Fest 2019: we are still at it!)

An afternoon Zodiac cruise, a landing, and an atmospheric Kayak at Portal Point, the site of our first continental landing, was worth braving the snow for. Adelies on bergy bits were sighted by the Zodiacers. Weddell seals and Gentoos were enjoyed by the paddlers.

Embracing the festive fun-filled season in style, some of the kayakers set up a little photo shoot on their landing site. The creative vision of the orange kayaker inspired the paddlers to make a human Christmas tree in the snow.

Rest well and play hard.



DAY 5 | Sunday, 22nd December 2019

Lemaire Channel, Pleaneau Island, Paradise Harbour

Position: 07.00 hours
Latitude: 64°43' S
Longitude: 62°57' W

Course: At anchor Useful Island

Wind Speed: 16 knots
Wind Direction: NE

Barometer: 984 hPa & falling
Air Temp: -1°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

The wind gods smiled upon us
As we sailed from Portal Point
Low clouds and gentle seas
Met us at our endpoint

Crabeater seals were lounging
Upon the ice-packed snow
We looked at them with wonder
While they gave us quite a show

The wind came up, snow did fall
Our view became obscured
But we took it all in stride
Adventure was assured

When we reached the island
We were all spellbound
By the iceberg city
That sparkled all around

After a hearty breakfast
We all jumped in our boats
Either Zodiacs or kayaks
They certainly could float

Some souls braved the knee-deep climb
Which was a major workout
But in the end the view was worth
Every step and wipeout

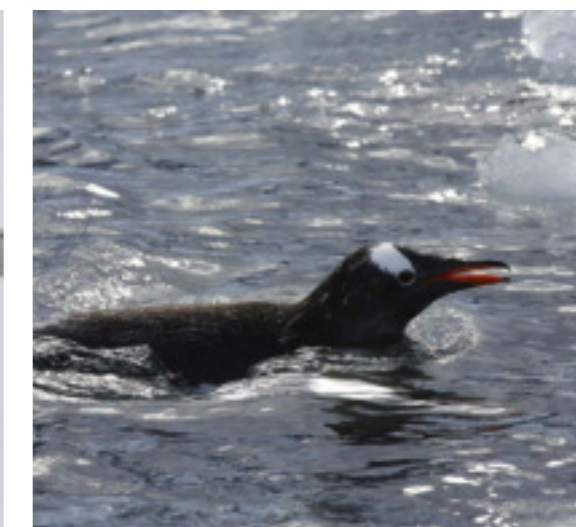
Back to the ship in time for lunch
More food than we could eat
We gobbled up the sweet deserts
To power our next retreat

A barbecue upon the deck
Ended our magical day
With friends we ate and drank
And danced the night away.

We made our way to Useful Island
Where we all surveyed the scene
Lots of Gentoo penguins
And some Skua to be seen

Our naturalists explained again
About the brush-tailed nests
Of rocks and pebbles piled on high
Eggs dry and safe from pests

On the way to Cuverville
Our captain sailed the ship
Expertly by the icebergs
Without a single hit







DAY 6 | Monday, 23rd December 2019

Lemaire Channel, Pleneau Cruise, Cuverville Island

Position: 16:25 hours

Course: 214°

Wind Speed: 5 knots

Barometer: 998 mb & falling

Latitude: 65° 04' S

Speed: 8.6 knots

Wind Direction: E

Air Temp: 0°C

Longitude: 063° 56' W

Sea Temp: 2°C

To dine with a glacier on a sunny day is a glorious thing and makes feasts of meat and wine ridiculous. The glacier eats hills and drinks sunbeams.
— John Muir

The day started with an early wake-up call, encouraging us to enjoy the early morning light as it played upon the amazing Lemaire Channel. This area is otherwise known as Kodak Passage, from the not-so-recent days of film cameras where many rolls of Kodak film were justifiably spent photographing the sheer cliffs and numerous glaciers that often render this narrow channel impassable in the early austral summer. We were accompanied by humpback whales as we passed the southernmost chinstrap breeding colony, before entering the sheltered waters of Pleneau Bay. In the early 1900s Jean Charcot spent two winters in an adjacent bay.

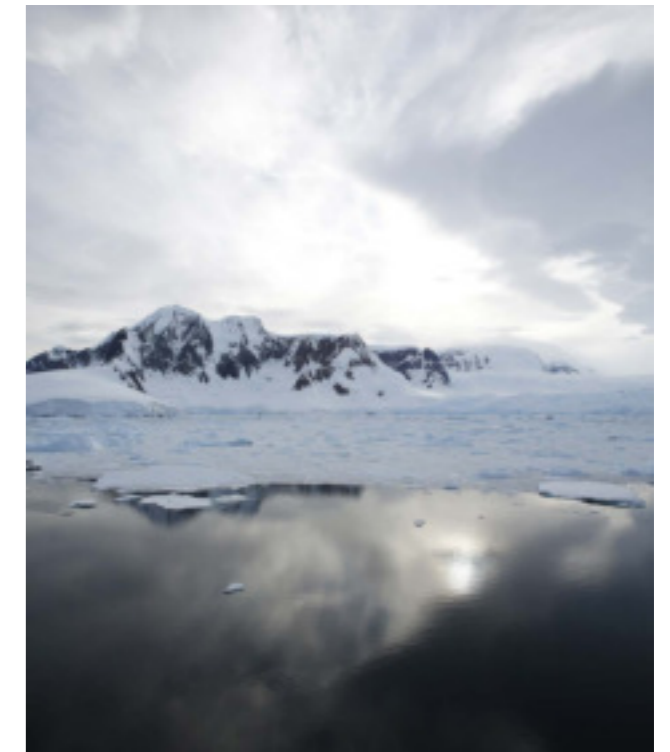
At Pleneau we enjoyed a magical Zodiac cruise, blessed by blue skies and crystal-clear light while exploring the many 'bergy-bits'. We enjoyed Chinstraps and Gentoos before lucking upon several crabeater seals near the mouth of the Bay. Notable birds included Antarctic terns, Wilson's storm petrels, Imperial shags and the ubiquitous Kelp gull.

After a post-tour lunch we headed south to Petermann Island, where we were greeted by three welcoming Minke Whales as we prepared Zodiacs for a shore landing. The Kayakers began an adventurous paddle through the dense brash ice as they took in the porpoising penguins from the intimate setting of their kayaks. On shore Nina told a fun narrative of Charcot's second French Antarctic expedition, revealing the significance of the cairn and the commemorative cross on the hill. On land we took advantage of our last reliable chance

to see and photograph Adelie penguins. Gentoos, sheathbills, shags, terns, south polar skuas and kelp gulls provided other interesting wildlife moments amidst a gorgeous setting of snow-covered peaks. The occasional rumble of calving glaciers across the channel contributed to the increasing brash ice, necessitating an adventure-filled return by zodiac, to the shelter of the ever-comfortable *GM*.

Before supper we had a great recap of the preceding days adventures, with informative talks on Antarctica's three brush-tailed penguin species and the four seal species we had all, by now, had ample opportunity to enjoy. Nina regaled us with the story of Toby the pig, who first accompanied Carl Larsen on his rescue mission of the Swedish explorer Otto Nordenskjold, then with Jean Charcot on two separate Antarctic expeditions, gaining fame as the only pig to ever have completed two Antarctic expeditions...a notable achieving for any pig on the planet.

After dinner we made our way back north towards our morning destination at Neko Harbour on the Antarctic continent. Onboard the good *GM*, Christmas is in the air and everyone on-board is excited to be spending the holiday season in such a unique Antarctic setting.



DAY 7 | Tuesday, 24th December 2019

Neko Harbour, Errera Channel, Gerlache Strait

Position: 07:00 hours

Course: 202°

Wind Speed: Calm

Air Temp: 0°C

Latitude: 64°49' N

Speed: 10 knots

Barometer: 979 hPa & steady

Sea Temp: 2°C

Longitude: 62°35' W

Good morning, good people, came John's quiet call at 7:00 this morning. Meanwhile, our intrepid kayakers were already getting a jump on the day. The ship was well into Andvord Bay, surrounded by the high glaciated peaks of the Peninsula. Once the anchorage for the Neko, a 1930s Norwegian whaling factory ship, Neko Harbour was our landing site for the morning. Conditions were fantastic with calm seas and very little ice around our landing beach. Off we went, to be greeted by a colony of Gentoo penguins and three Weddell seals resting on the beach. Neko promised a good wildlife experience as well as one of the most scenic spots on our trip. Gary led intrepid climbers to the high rocks for a skua's-eye-view of the glacier.

We had a remarkable view of the deep blue chasms in the glacier where it came down to the sea. We waited with anticipation for a giant block to fall, but we had to be satisfied with a few small calvings. Meanwhile down around the colony many of us were enjoying the Gentoo penguin colony as they went about their daily business of tending their eggs. Once up on the top, the quickest way down was the great bum slide! A few managed to sneak in the death-defying slide from high on the slope—including one iPhone, Missing In Action until Jared scoured the slopes. Most enjoyed the slide from lower on the slope, with many sliding multiple times.

Back on board, we motored across Gerlache Strait and into Neumayer Channel, winding our way south around Damoy Point until we eventually turned into Port Lockroy. Originally named Base A as part of the secret Operation Tabarin toward the end of WWII, Port Lockroy began life to watch for German activity in the Peninsula and to support Britain's claim to this sector of Antarctica. After the war, Base A continued as a research station until 1963 when it was abandoned for a new modern station, Faraday, 60 kilometers south.

Port Lockroy fell into ruin until 1996 when it was reconstructed as a museum, post office and shop. What a beautiful setting. Everyone had a chance to inspect the time capsule of the museum, get a feel for what Antarctic life was like back then, admire their artworks on the walls, post a card and partake in a little retail therapy. The visit to Jougla Point was a wildlife extravaganza with the Gentoo colony boasting a few young chicks, a small colony of Antarctic Shags with large chicks, and several Weddell seals.

We were so lucky to hear the weird and wonderful trills, groans, and whistles of a singing Weddell seal. Some even spotted an Isabelline Gentoo penguin—one that has less pigment in its feathers so looks milky-chocolate brown instead of black on its back. We reluctantly returned to our ship, but were honoured to have the Port Lockroy team, Lucy, Lauren, Vicki, and Kit join us for dinner to finish up a fantastic Christmas eve in Antarctica.



DAY 8 | Wednesday, 25th December

Enterprise Island

Position: 08:00 hours
Latitude: 64°32'S
Longitude: 63°56'W
Course: At anchor, Enterprise Island

Wind Speed: 6 knots
Wind Direction: NE

Barometer: 984 hPa & steady
Air Temp: 1°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

This ice is ancient, made of compressed snows that were laid down, high on the mountains above, centuries ago. Its entombed bubbles contain a few molecules of air that were last breathed, perhaps, by Magellan or Vespucci. — David G. Campbell, The Crystal Desert, 1992

Christmas in Antarctica! On this very special morning we awoke to snowflakes falling into the mirror flat seas around the ship. Enterprise Island was waiting for us to explore!

Just as we set off for our Zodiac cruise towards Enterprise Island we spotted Humpback whales a few miles off the ship. The deviation was well worth it, and we spent some truly magical moments in very close proximity of the animals. We admired the three whales breaking through the silver flat ocean surface and then showing their flukes while diving steeply down to feed on patches of Antarctic krill, leaving red traces of tiny crustaceans in the sea around them. With our engines switched off all we could hear was the impressive sounds of whale blows when breaking the surface, taking in their next breath before diving down again.

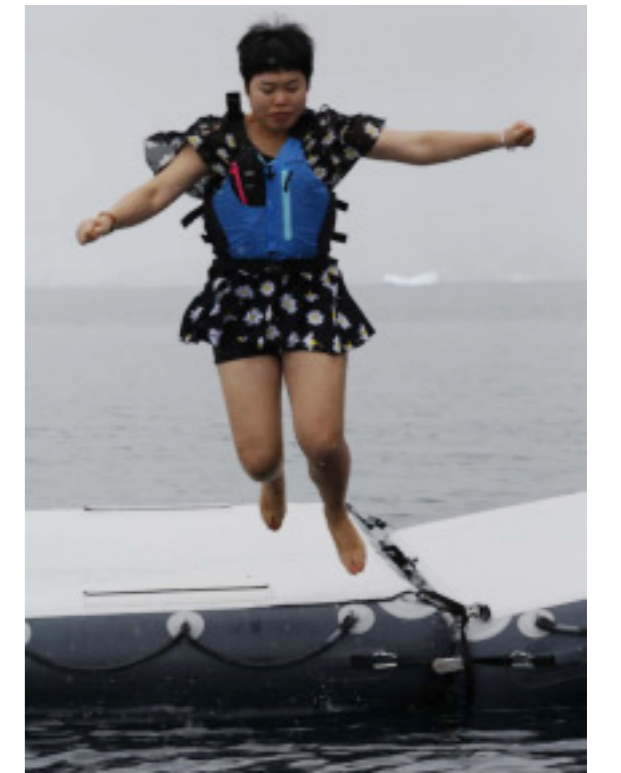
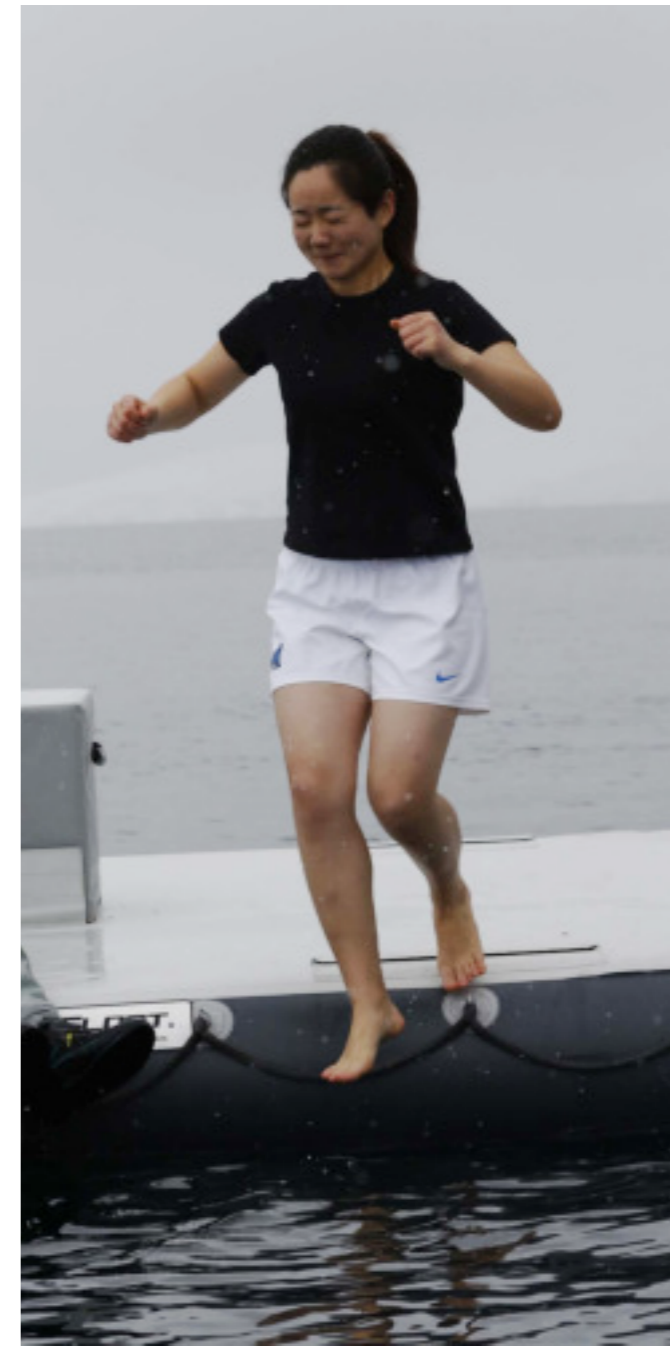
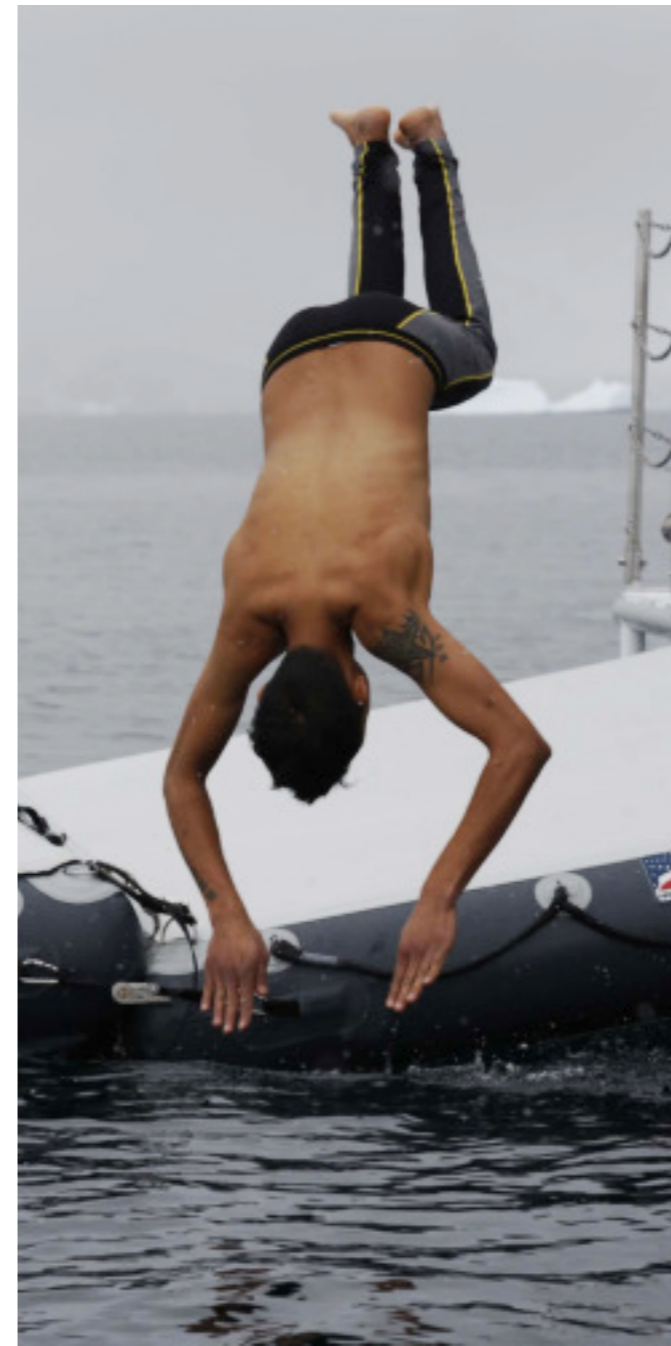
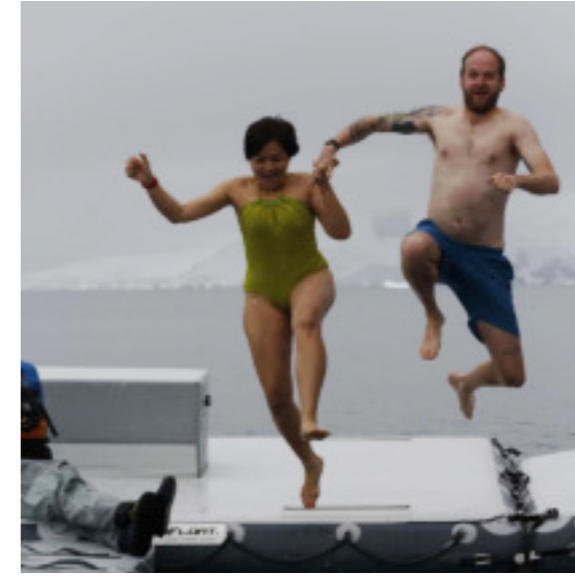
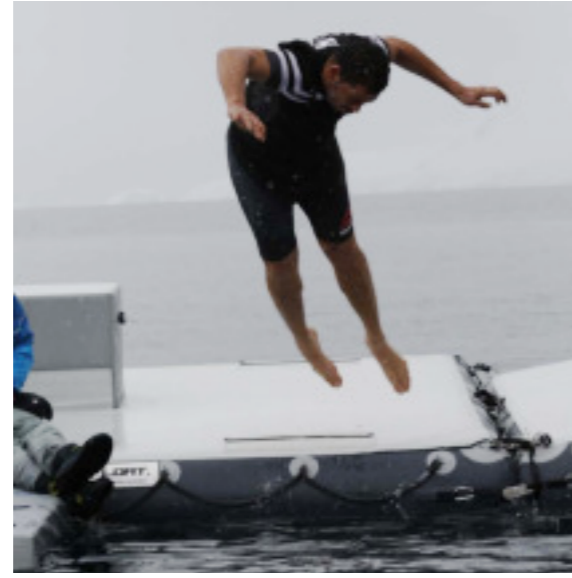
We were lucky enough to witness the spectacular bubble net feeding technique of the humpback whales, where the animals produce a circular net of air bubbles to trap their prey, and then dive up from underneath to engulf it with their huge mouths and filter it through the baleens. At one moment the whales and air bubbles passed underneath our Zodiacs, leaving everyone speechless and with goosebumps. What a Christmas present!

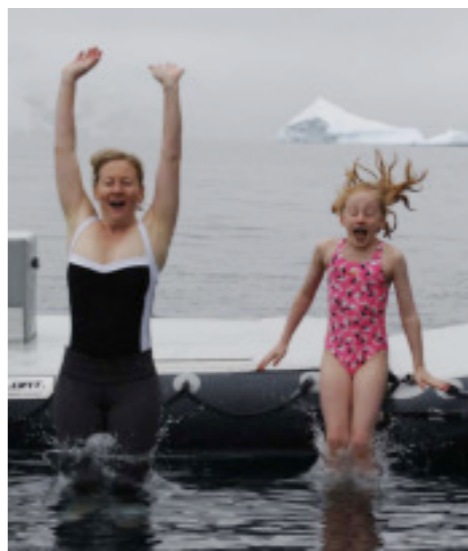
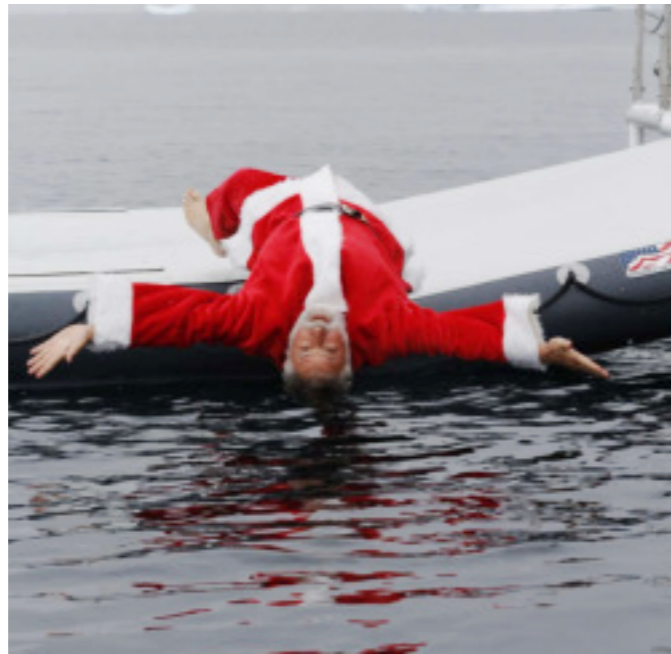
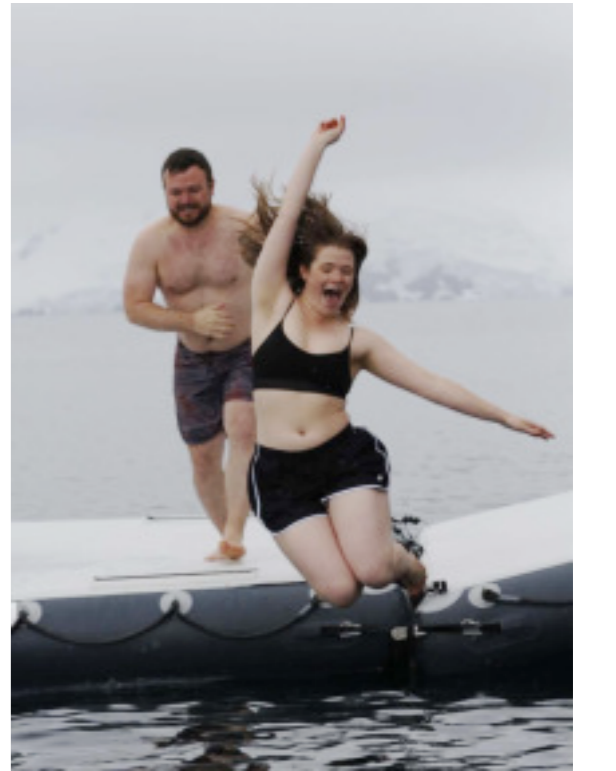
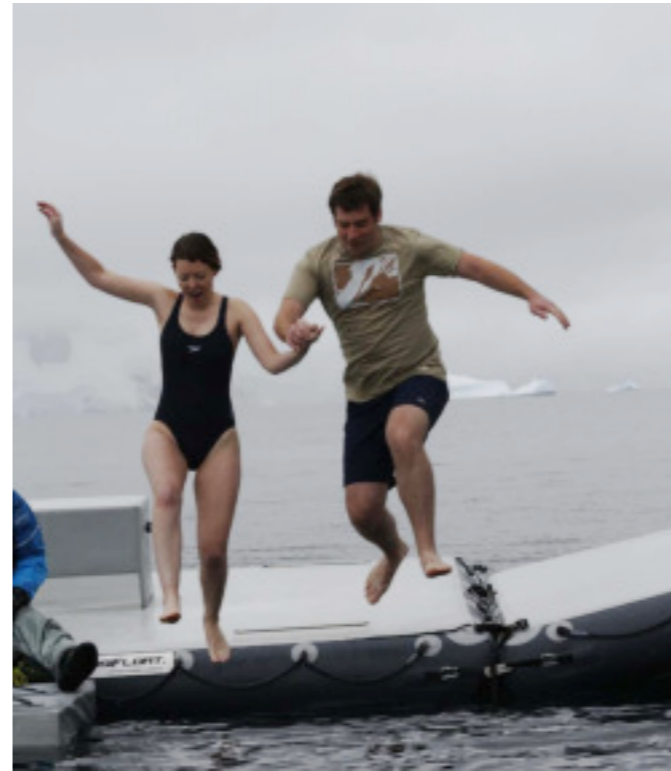
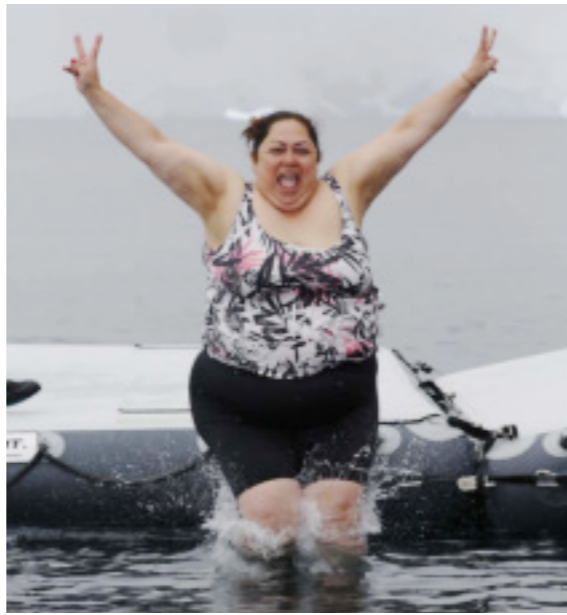
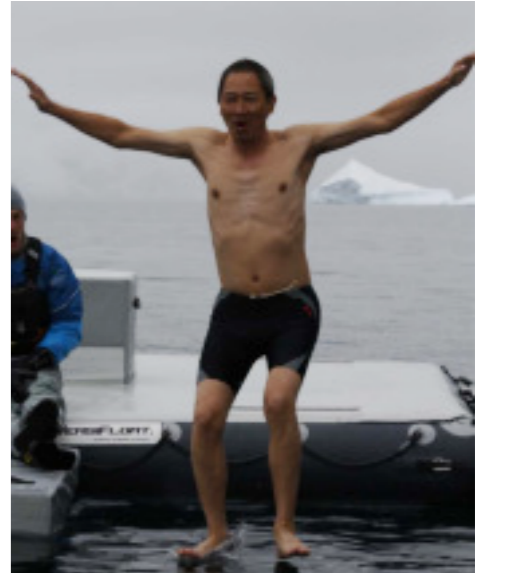
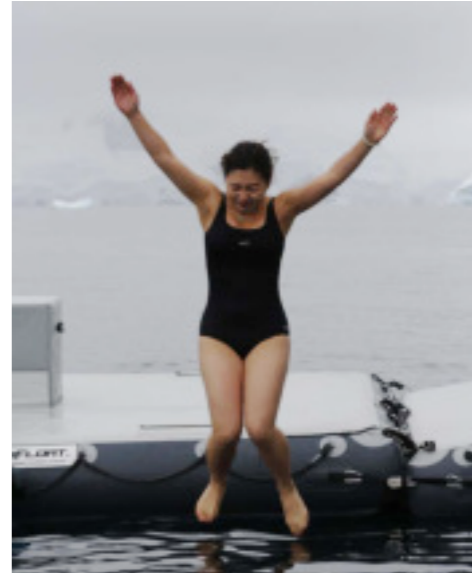
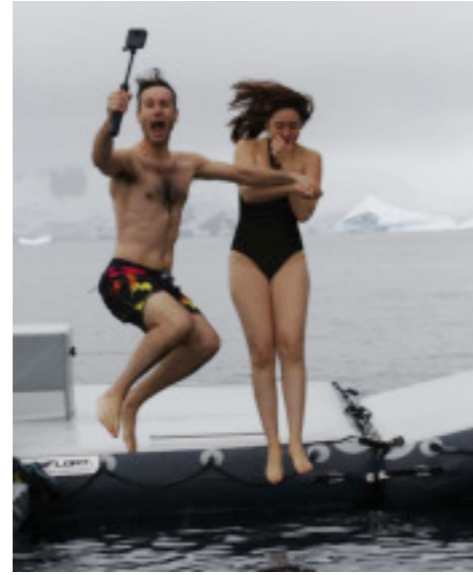
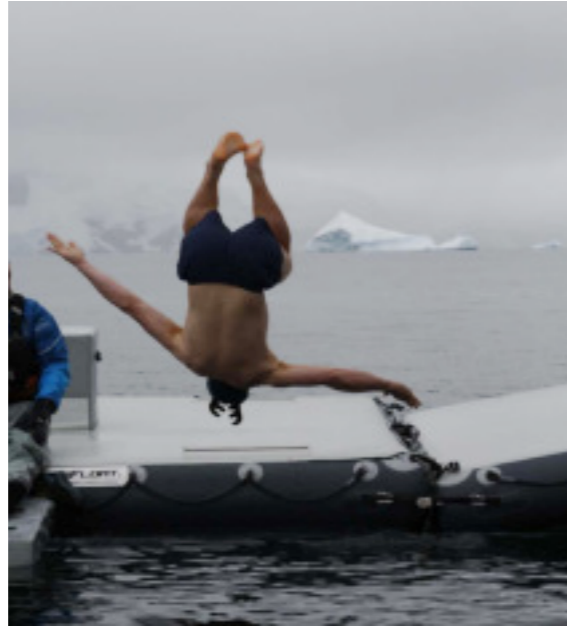
After this spectacular experience we carried on with our Zodiac cruise towards Enterprise Island, where we visited the wreck of the *Guvernøren*. Once a state-of-the-art whaling factory ship from Norway, the *Guvernøren* went up in flames in 1915 while working near Enterprise Island. The captain ran the ship aground to save the lives of the 85 crew, but the 16,615 barrels of whale produce onboard was lost. Nowadays the wreck provides shelter for yachts, and the bottle of Champagne delivered by one of our Zodiacs was certainly appreciated by the yacht moored at the wreck. Blue-eyed shags and Antarctic terns accompanied us during the cruise around the wreck, and beautiful iceberg formations delighted our eyes all along.

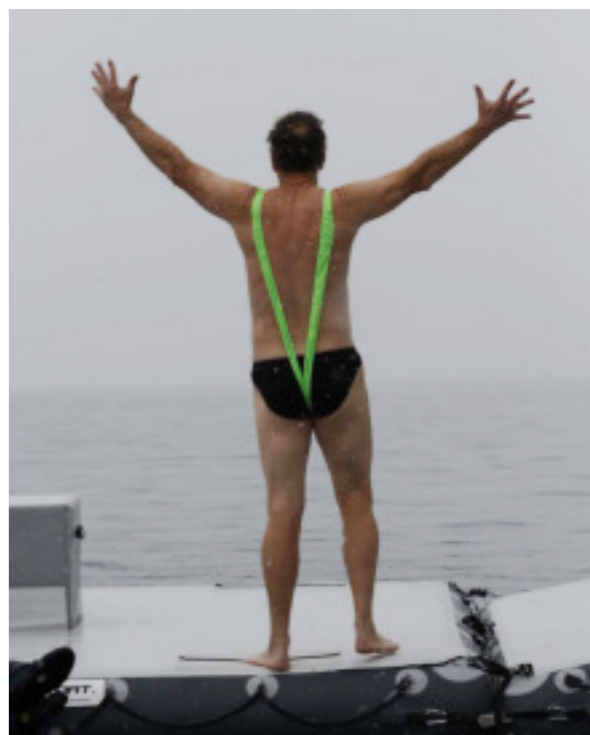
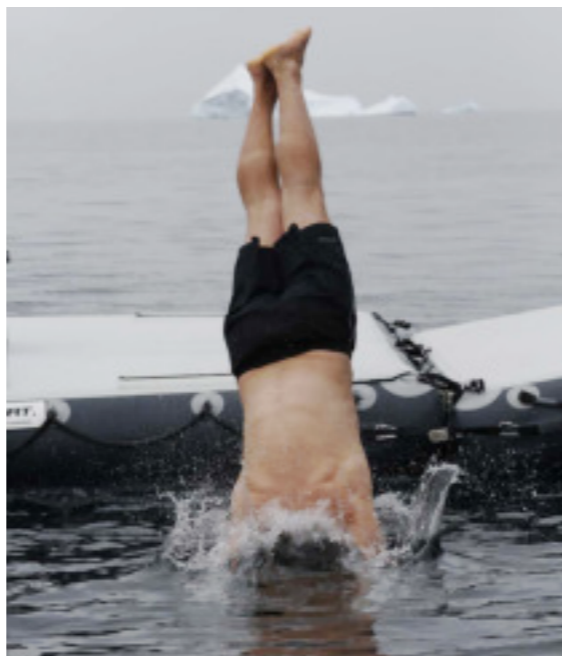
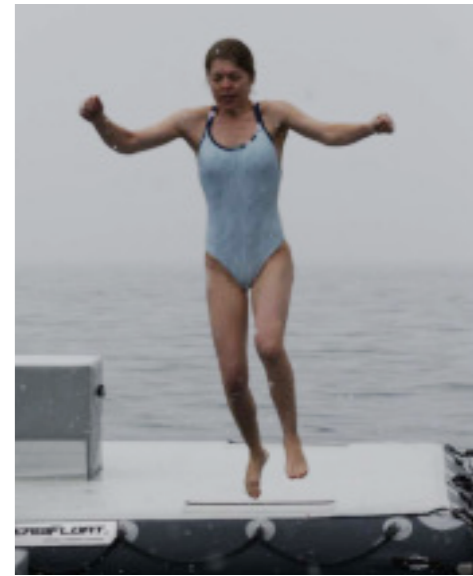
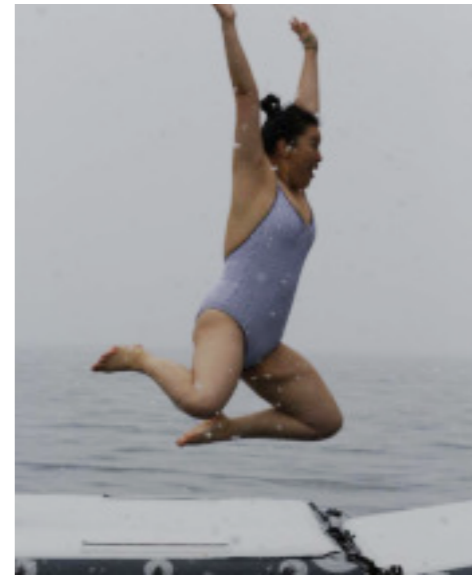
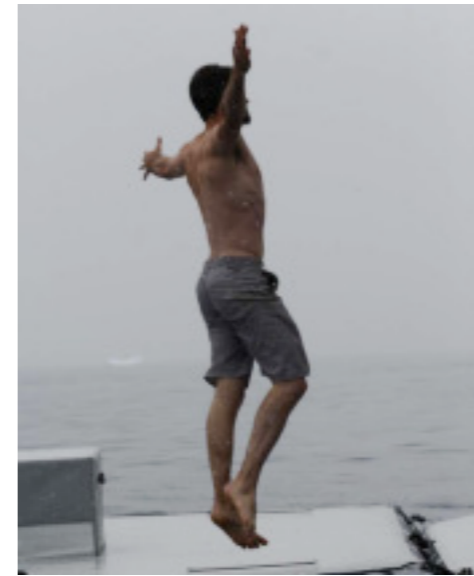
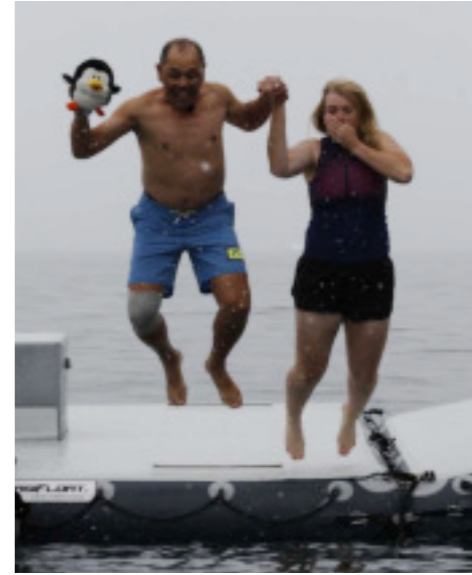
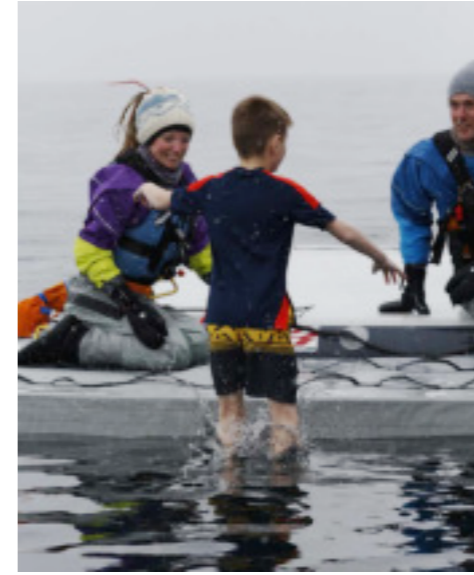
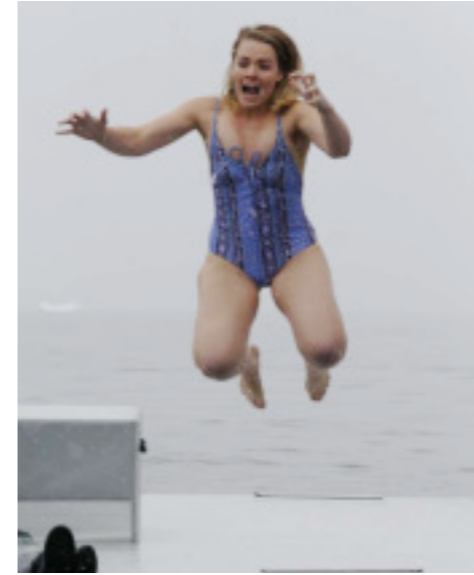
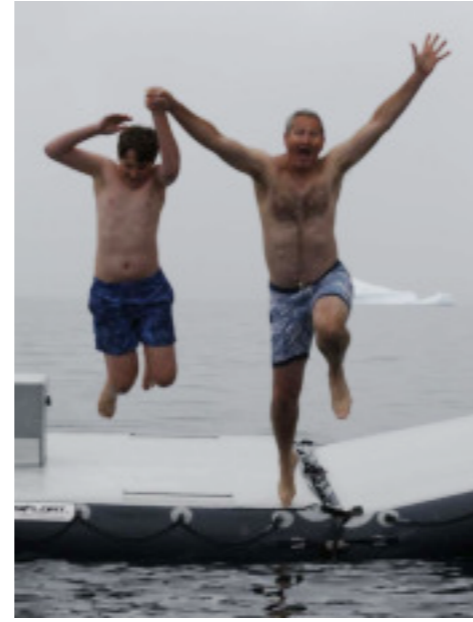
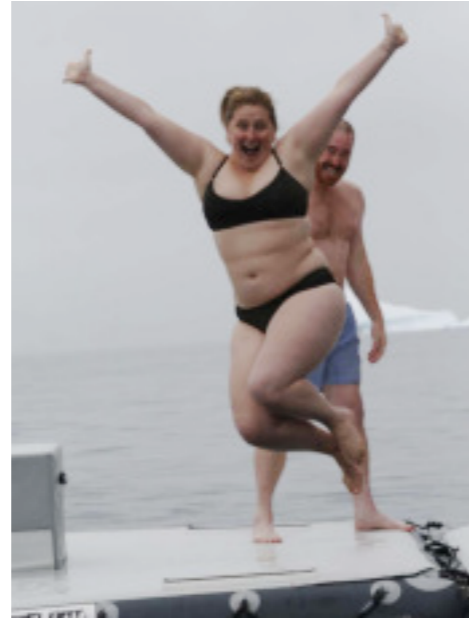
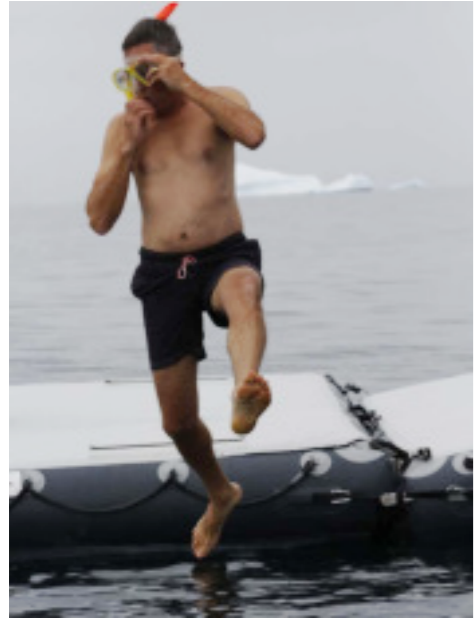
Back aboard for Christmas lunch, the chef and kitchen team offered a delicious feast. A visit by Father Christmas brought us the Secret Santa gifts, many of which went along with the penguin theme. An afternoon documentary by Ian once more took us on a journey to nature.

The day finished with Christmas dinner, where a delicious special menu immersed us into beautiful food compositions and flavours, enriched by inspiring conversations and deepening friendships around the tables. The chocolate dessert buffet in the Elephant Island bar certainly left a long-lasting taste of Christmas as the sun set over the Southern Ocean islands around us.











DAY 9 | Thursday, 26th December 2019

Elephant Point

Position: 06:30 hours **Course:** At anchor, Enterprise Island
Latitude: 62°48'S
Longitude: 60°51'W

Wind Speed: 14.5 knots **Barometer:** 981 hPa & falling
Wind Direction: NE **Air Temp:** -1°C
Sea Temp: 3°C

To anyone who goes to the Antarctic, there is a tremendous appeal, an unparalleled combination of grandeur, beauty, vastness, loneliness, and malevolence — all of which sound terribly melodramatic — but which truly convey the actual feeling of Antarctica. Where else in the world are all of these descriptions really true? — Captain T.L.M. Sunter, ‘The Antarctic Century Newsletter’

Grey skies and spitting rain greeted us as we rode large swells in towards the shore at Elephant Point this morning. Looking out over our intended landing area it was easy to tell we were back in the South Shetland Islands: the craggy rocks remind us of the volcanic activity that shaped the area, while the dirty glaciers result from the strong winds coming in off the open ocean and blowing around the light, volcanic soils that have been slowly eroded over time. The prevalence of snow-free land in the Shetlands is a boon to wildlife, so it was our luck to get ashore despite some “dynamic” conditions at the loading gates and at the beach. The surf onshore called for an alternate Zodiac approach, called a stern landing, and the team brought the boats and guests ashore with everyone adapting well to the conditions. The first treat on land was a huge wallow of elephant seals, snorting, belching, play-fighting, or—impressively—taking a snooze right through it all.

The young weaners were especially cute and photogenic. Our dependable companions on this voyage, the gentoos, were also present—with most watching over one or two chicks. Being further north, these chicks were the most developed we have seen, many standing on their own and waving their flippers around as a start on training their swim muscles.

For a bit of history, the rocky remains of a sealing camp gave a good insight into the hardship conditions the early sealers faced when coming ashore to harvest and process the animals for their oil. Many of us continued on down the beach, a good leg stretch as well as being able to see other gentoo colonies and explore more of the lichens, mosses, and swards of Antarctic hairgrass along the way.

Wind and swell picked up as the afternoon progressed so plans were changed to offer an after dinner zodiac cruise, which made time for an afternoon lecture by Joselyn about the marine ecosystem around Antarctica. During an early dinner we slowly approached Desolation Island for our intended cruise, but as we were informed, the ship, nearing the anchor point, had at one moment touched an uncharted reef.

A briefing was held to assure everyone that the ship was safe with no damage to critical systems, and that we had begun our return to Ushuaia. The intention is to arrive in good time to allow for further inspection to assess the damage to the outer hull and the need for repairs. After a question and answer period, our onboard photographer and videographer Ian hosted a showing of one of the Frozen Planet series to which he contributed his work.

During all of this, on the fringes it seemed that there were packets of sea sickness pills being passed around like candies as the swell continued to rock us back and forth, rolling us on our way north, and home.



DAY 10 | Saturday, 27th December, 2019

Drake Passage

Position: 05:40 hours
Latitude: 60°06'S
Longitude: 61°41'W

Course: 357°
Speed: 15 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots
Wind Direction: NNE

Barometer: 903 hPa & rising
Air Temp: 0°C
Sea Temp: 4°C

A Journey is a person in itself; no two are alike, and all plans, safeguards, policies and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. — John Steinbeck

A sea day across a gentle, sun-spangled Drake Passage. As we push back to our home port the good ship *Greg Mortimer* is cruising at around 14 knots and making excellent time. Earlier today we crossed the Antarctic Convergence and saw an increase in bird life with numerous Wandering Albatross, Black Browed Albatross, Cape Petrels and Prions.

After a brilliant progress update briefing from Robyn and John, much was clarified about the state of the ship after its scrape with an uncharted reef. In the morning Annette gave a brilliant presentation on oceanography followed by a great lecture from Gary called Ice Is Nice. This was a fascinating talk which explained so much about the nature and behaviour of ice and snow. Every single person that attended learned a great deal.

After a fab lunch, Jared gave one of his great talks on nature photography which covered the essentials of equipment and technique to help improve our wildlife pictures. Half an hour later Jared held a bird photography workshop up on the stern deck where we could practice the techniques from his previous lecture.

A superb and tasty afternoon tea comprised dainty little pastries, sandwiches with the crusts cut off and delectable croissants to keep the hunger at bay for a little longer. Then we were plunged into another great presentation from Jos – A Day In The Life Of The US Antarctic Program. Unexpected facts flew in a very revealing 45 minutes.

The Drake Passage has been very kind to us so far on this crossing with gentle seas and very reasonable winds, thanks to our Captain Oleg and his team who have steered the ship around a nasty stormfront.

We will reach the port of Ushuaia in the morning where divers will survey the ship's hull, while we head off for adventures to the local national park, or to explore the bustling township of Ushuaia.



DAY 11 | Sunday 28th December 2019

Ushuaia

Position: At anchor Ushuaia
Latitude: 54° 48' S
Longitude: 68° 18' W

Wind Speed: 16 knots
Wind Direction: NW

Barometer: 997hPa & steady

Air Temp: 13°C
Sea Temp: 7°C

Little do you know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour. — Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque, 1881*

Connecting Antarctica to the rest of the world, our bragging rights doubled as we traversed the Drake passage again for a second time. Navigated by many of the world's most famous explorers, we were now included among the intrepid "elite" who have bequeathed a sense of history and adventure in equal measure.

The Beagle Channel rose to the occasion with a resplendent dawn showcasing dramatic mountain peaks and glaciers under a golden blue sky. Our Chilean pilot manoeuvred into position and came alongside during breakfast. If you were out on deck you might have seen the charming little barge steaming toward the *Greg Mortimer*, its crew taking some happy snaps before delivering our pilot and steaming away towards Tierra Del Fuego.

Before long it was time to learn about our plans for tomorrow's disembarkation. Hilary ran over the logistics for the next 24 hours as we contemplated saying farewell to our floating home.

With a couple of hours up our sleeves, what better time to relocate our luggage and attempt to repack our gear for onward travels. Some of us gathered in the Elephant Island Bar to reminisce with newfound friends.

The 3 Polar group had a presentation in the Lecture Theatre, followed by Nina's lecture on Politics of the Antarctic which was short-lived (the ship lurgy strikes again!) but we all

appreciated the effort and look forward to learning more about this topic in the future. Some of us flocked to the ship shop for our last opportunity to shop before we docked in Ushuaia. Boy, we'll miss Reza!

Our last buffet lunch onboard was well received and we thank our galley team for continuing to provide a delicious range of delectable meal options.

After lunch the library laptops were busy receiving downloads for our fabulous voyage and Ian uploaded the polar plunge shots which we were all desperate to take a copy of.

Soon, Justine announced that we were clear to leave the ship for a free afternoon. Some of us headed into Ushuaia for some fresh southerly air and a spot of shopping. At 14:30 it was National Park Tour time! We jumped on buses with our Rumbo Sur Team for our afternoon of adventure, to enjoy panoramic views of Roca/Acigami Lake, Lapatahia Bay and the Patagonia Andean forest.

Once we were all back onboard, we gathered in the Elephant Island Bar for Captain's Farewell canapes and drinks, the perfect opportunity for us to dress up, reflect on our voyage and toast to the amazing team and ship's crew who made our Antarctic dreams a reality.

With our night free in Ushuaia, a few hit the town, a few hit the hay, and a few enjoyed one final night on the *Greg Mortimer* toasting an unforgettable trip and watching the day draw to a close.

Kayaking Log

By Al Bakker

Kayaking Masters: Frank Witter, Lisa Deziel, Michael Gray, Russell Henry, Allie

Kayakers:

Jack Alscher	Michael Alscher	Tom Alscher
Alex Bard	Ashley Chester	Olivia Chester
Sarah Dow	Deb Frizza	Lyn Holland
James Lukin	Melanie Lukin	Michael Lukin
Josh McMahon	Cressida Mort	Kerry Obrien
Henry O'Neil	Nicholas O'Neil	Sean O'Neil
Anthony Potter	Todd Potter	Lauren Poulosom
Pete Rothbart	Emma Sedgwick	Greg Sedgwick
Jack Sedgwick	Jane Sedgwick	Katie Sedgwick
Mitchell Sedgwick	David Spence	Helen Spence
Jennifer Stevens	Alex Vallings	

The kayak is without comparison the best one-man vessel to be found. —
Fridtjof Nansen

DAY 1: Ushuaia, turnaround day

DAY 2: Drake Passage

Drake Passage on relatively "calm" seas. We enjoyed Gary's lecture on sea birds, Annette's Whale Lecture and Nina's history of Antarctic exploration. Late afternoon brought us Ian's tales from a life of adventure filmmaking.

DAY 3: – Distance: 5 km

At sea all morning. We spotted our first Iceberg right near noon on the way to Aitcho-Barrientos. We arrived to fairly calm seas and 10-15 knots winds and were able to launch 20 paddlers out with all guides for a relatively short shake down paddle with a double landing on both ends of island to see Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguins as well as Weddell, Elephant and a stray Leopard seal. Grand arrival for our first Antarctic paddle.

DAY 4: AM: Ciera Cove – Distance: 8 km

We launched two waves of kayakers this morning under sunny skies with mild winds for a nice tour of icebergs. Part of the group saw a Leopard Seal and we all saw Gentoo Penguins on land and sea.

PM: Portal Point – Distance: 5 km

Our group of hearty kayakers launched from the ship amidst a gorgeous snowfall. We headed toward the shore, paddling among the icebergs. We quickly saw leopard seals and Gentoo penguins. Coasting along the shore, we viewed the glacier before finding a quiet landing, where we were greeted by more seals. A celebration noting our continental landing ensured, followed by a group Christmas tree photo. It was a gorgeous day with calm seas and amazing scenery.

DAY 5: AM: Useful Island – Distance: 6 km

7 am arrival at Useful Island. We had two groups of kayakers that left the GM this morning in two shifts...one just after breakfast and a second wave after the zodiacs launched.

We had a nice visit to a small Gentoo Colony, had a good look at a Weddell seal while another group saw a couple of Crabeater seals on snow.

PM: Cuverville – Distance: 8 km

We had a superb Cuverville Island circumnavigation under sunny skies and calm conditions. The Penguin colonies surrounding the edges were only overshadowed by towering rock and snow in the brilliant sunshine. Calm water reflected back glaciers and rocky shorelines for a spellbound experience.

DAY 6: AM: Pleneau/Booth Island

Due to a short stop, we chose to offer the morning as a Zodiac Cruise to maximize the time through all the icy bits...lucky enough to see a really golden coloured Crabeater seal on an icefloe.

PM: Peterman Island – Distance: 3 km

We launched into brash ice to attempt to paddle to the Adelie colony, but delayed a bit due to the appearance of a curious Minke whale who swam right under our feet on the Marina as we were launching (made 4 passes to see us). One group decided to embrace the challenge a bit to land kayaks on a large sea ice floe and practiced assisted seal launches off to an audience of Gentoo and Adelies who joined us on the floe. It may have been an abbreviated outing due to lack of open water, but great fun was had.

DAY 7: AM: Neko Harbour – Distance: 9 km

Early morning launch... Paddle to some bum sliding, great iceberg paddling, visit to Gentoo colony and a good paddle around the back of an amazing nexus of glaciers. Paddled around to see some Minke Whales and lovely ice sculptures.

PM: Port Lockroy – Distance: 5 km

Kayakers opted out of the whole museum/gift shop portion of the visit and actually went out for a sea ice floe jumping activity and may have only paddled 5 kms, but enjoyed playing with some aging fast ice and a pair of humpbacks joined us as we were getting back on the ship. The PL staff joined us for dinner to share some stories of spending months on the little rock that is Goudier Island.

DAY 8: AM: Elephant Point – Distance: 5 km

After an early paddlers breakfast, kayakers launched in 1-2 meter swell to explore the rock gardens in front of the Gentoo colony beaches that were also nicely decorated with Elephant Seals of various ages. We paddled in past a Gentoo and a Chinstrap in deep conversation about what we were it seemed.

PM: Deception Island

Evening paddle planned, but conditions did not allow for anchorage or excursions. Departed a bit early for the Drake in a bit of a swell.

TOTAL PADDLE OUTINGS: 10 TRIPS

TOTAL DISTANCE PADDLED: 63

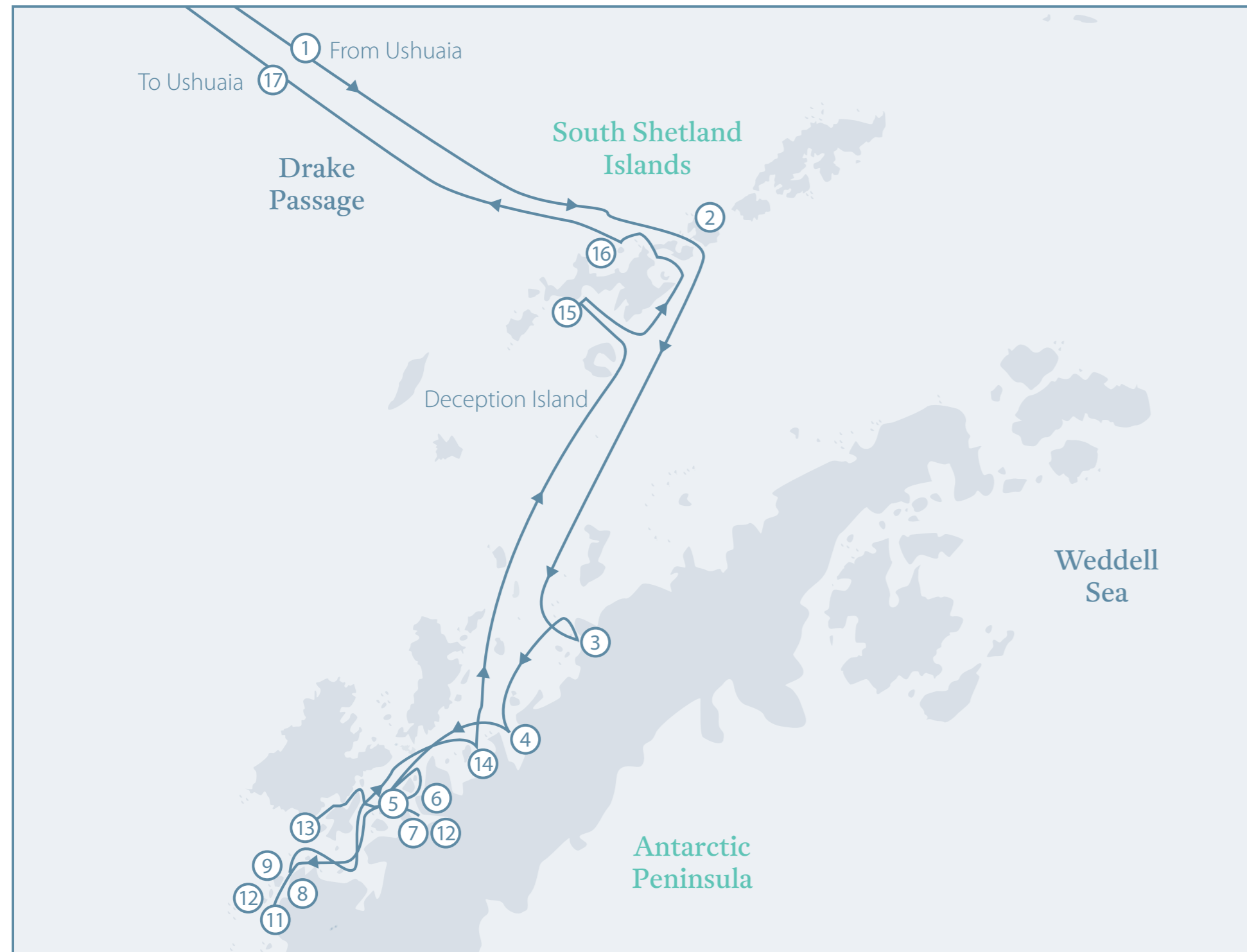




Christmas in Antarctica

17 – 29 December 2019

Southernmost point of voyage: 65°10.55' S, 64° 7.58' W



Destinations

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Ushuaia & Drake Passage | 6. Cuverville Island | 11. Southernmost Point | 16. Desolation Island |
| 2. Barrientos Island | 7. Andvord Bay | 12. Neko Harbor | 17. Drake Passage & Ushuaia |
| 3. Cierva Cove | 8. Lemaire Channel | 13. Port Lockroy & Jougla Point | |
| 4. Portal Point | 9. Pleneau Island/Pointt Charcot | 14. Enterprise Island | |
| 5. Useful Island | 10. Petermann Island | 15. Elephant Pointt (Livingston Island) | |

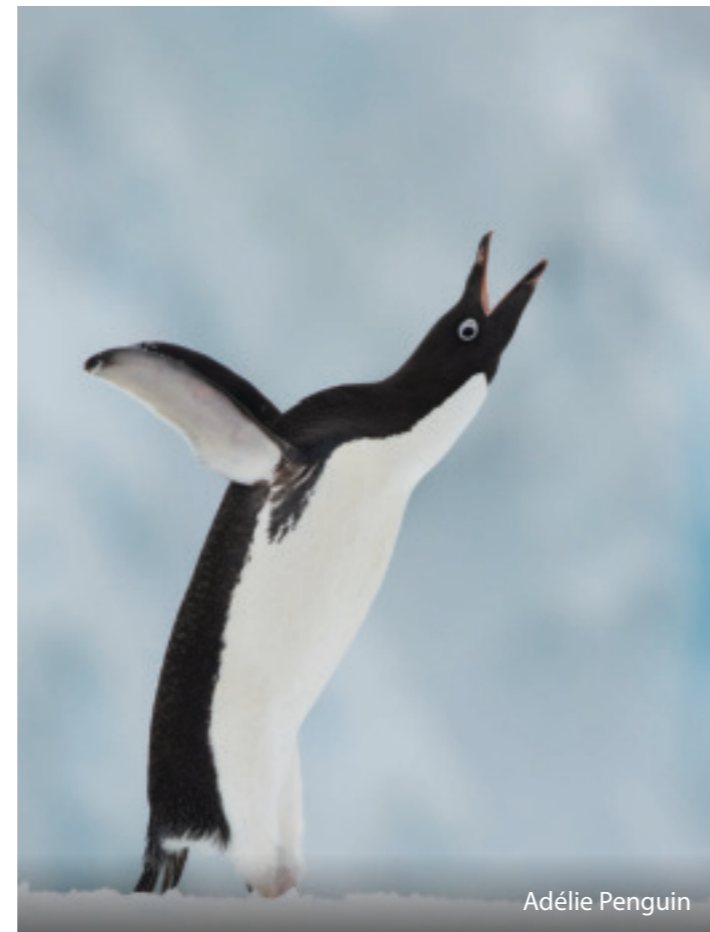


Bird Species Log

Bird Species	December											
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
Magellanic Penguin	X											X
Adelie Penguin			X	X	X	X		X				
Gentoo Penguin			X	X	X	X	X		X			
Chinstrap Penguin			X	X	X	X		X	X			
Wandering Albatross		X									X	
Southern Royal Albatross		X										
Black-browed Albatross	X	X	X						X	X	X	
Light-mantled Albatross						X						
Northern Giant Petrel											X	X
Southern Giant Petrel	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Cape Petrel		X	X	X					X			
Snow Petrel				X		X						
Southern Fulmar		X	X				X	X	X			
Blue Petrel		X										
Antarctic Prion						X						
White-chinned Petrel		X	X									
Sooty Shearwater												X
Wilson's Storm-petrel		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		
Antarctic Cormorant		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Imperial Cormorant	X											X
White-faced Sheathbill					X	X	X					
Chilean Skua	X											X
Brown Skua		X	X						X			
South Polar Skua				X	X	X	X	X				
Kelp Gull	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Dolphin Gull	X											X
Antarctic Tern	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
South American Tern	X											X
Prion Sp.		X	X				X					
Chimango Caracara												X
Flightless Steamer Duck												X



Gentoo Penguin



Adélie Penguin

Bird Species Log

Bird Species	December											
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
Austral Parakeet												X
Black-Chinned Siskin												X
Austral Thrush												X
Ashy-Headed Goose												X
Upland Goose												X
House Wren												X

Mammals Log

Mammals Species	December											
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
Antarctic Fur Seal												X
Southern Elephant Seal			X		X				X			
Crabeater Seal				X		X						
Weddell Seal			X	X	X	X	X					
Leopard Seal			X	X		X						
Fin Whale		X										
Humpback Whale		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Antarctic Minke Whale			X	X		X	X					
Orca			X	X								



Weddell Seal



Elephant Seals



Humpback Whales



Expeditioners

Abbie Cheng	Chrissie Hart	Glen Russell	Jeannette Luther	Maree Papworth	Pia Parker	Valerie Large
Alex Vallings	Claudia Rodriguez	Glenda Lawrence	Jen Hong	Maria Souflas	Qijian Tan	Viv Allanson
Alex Bard	Courtney Kuhl	Greg Papworth	Jennifer Stevens	Max Lukin	Qizhi Su	Wei Li
Amy White	Cressida Mort	Greg Sedgwick	Jianyi Xiao	Mel Lukin	Ranjit Das	Weidong Chen
Anya Schlesener	Daniel Riddle	Harry Alscher	Jinsheng Wang	Meredith Morefield	Ray Fabish	Wenguang He
Ashley Chester	David Spence	Helen MacDonald	John Rodstrom	Michael Jackson	Robert Pickard	Wenping Yang
Barbara Tanabe	David Dean	Helen Spence	Josh McMahon	Michael Alscher	Robert Blackwell	William Hart
Barbara Powley	David Cosgrove	Henry O'Neil	June Kuhl	Mike Lukin	Rohan Crouch	Xiaoyuan Yuan
Beixing Dai	Deb Frizza	Heping Huang	Katie Steventon	Min Shu	Ronghui Yu	Yan Liu
Ben Jackson	Don Langford	Hong Rao	Kerry Brien	Minguan Liang	Rui Su	Yanxu Zhang
Beth Buckles	Elgan Potter	Hui Liu	Kerry Rodstrom	Mitch Sedgwick	Sarah Dow	Yinfa Zhao
Bryn Potter	Elizabeth Mason-Morgan	Huijun Li	Lauren Poulosom	Nick O'Neil	Sean O'Neil	Ying Wang
Cameron Hunter	Emma Fletcher	Huixian Feng	Les Brooks	Nick Thompson	Shelly Kennedy	Yongli Lin
Cara Sheppard	Finty Hunter	Jacinta Bradshaw	Lex Schlesener	Nicki Haynes	Snigdha Gupta	Yu Sun
Carrol Langford	Fiona Potter	Jack Sedgwick	Li Sun	Nina Blackwell	Sophie Lukin	Yun Zhou
Charlotte Rice	Fiona McLeod	James Lukin	Lulu Xiao	Olivia Chester	Ted Bradshaw	Zhaoxi Yuan
Ching-han Huang	Gail Russell	Jane Sedgwick	Lyn Holland	Paul Steel	Todd Potter	Zhenyu Li
Chris Lounds	Gavin Kuhl	Jasper O'Neil	MAC Cosgrove	Pete Rothbart	Tom Alscher	Zhong Chen

Expedition Team

Expedition Leader:	John Kirkwood	Photography Guide:	Ian McCarthy
Deputy Expedition Leader:	Robyn Mundy	Expedition Doctor:	Suzanne Knapp
Assistant Expedition Leader:	Hilary Gibson	Cultural Host:	Darwin Zhenhuan Zhang
Naturalist:	Annette Scheffer	Zodiac Master:	Sergei Khyunku
Naturalist:	Jared Hobbs	Mudroom/Shopkeeper:	Reza Rusooly
Expedition Guide & Lecturer:	Gary Miller		
Expedition Guide & Lecturer:	Nina Gallo		
Kayaking Master:	Michael Gray		
Kayaking Guide:	Frank Witter		
Kayaking Guide:	Lisa Deziel		
Kayaking Guide:	Russell Henry		
Kayaking Guide:	Allie		

Greg Mortimer Crew

Master	Oleg Klaptenko	Hotel Controller	Franz Wusits
Chief Officer	Oleg Kapko	Receptionist	Mary Sarah Baldovino
Second Officer	Vishal Sharma	Receptionist	Mary Jane Lacerna
Deck Cadet	Lovelyn Yray	Head Stateroom	Irene Abania
Safety Officer	Lukasz Zuterek	Spa Manager	Grace Tembo
Bosun	Duglas Garay	Able Seaman	Samuel Ricafort
Ship Nurse	Sydney Grove	Able Seaman	Junar Gorecho
Chief Engineer	Dimitar Vasilev	Able Seaman	Leo Marzan
First Engineer	Ruslan Rotar	Able Seaman	Bobby Payumo
Hotel Director	Franz Wusits	Able Seaman	Khenette Verzosa
Chief Purser	Jane Saladaga	Able Seaman	Mickey Ledonio
Executive Chef	Przemyslaw Wisniewski	Ordinary Seaman	Alfredo Murillo
Sous Chef	Allan Estoque		

Ship's log written by members of the Expedition Team & compiled by Hilary Gibson

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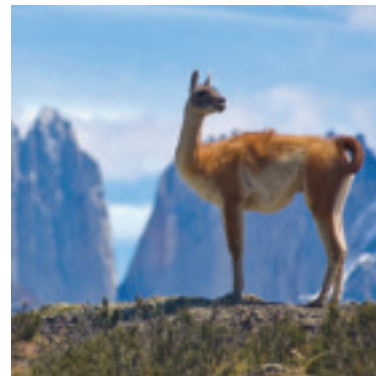
The Arctic

Polar bears roam pack ice for seals, walrus and whales. Deep fjords and towering icebergs meet colourful tundra and fossil-rich plains.



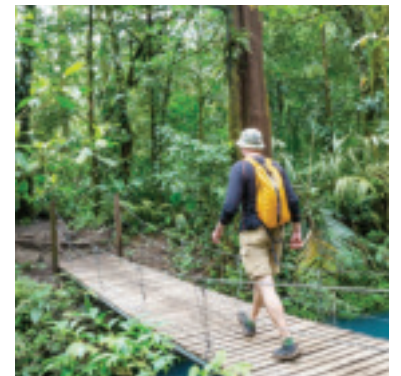
Scotland

Abandoned castles, exquisite abbeys, stone age villages and haunting Neolithic relics. Breeding seals and Europe's largest seabird colonies.



Patagonia & Chile

Wild and isolated, Patagonia's wind-swept plains and glaciated peaks are the ultimate playground for intrepid travellers.



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Filled with remote national parks and biological reserves brimming with colourful wildlife. Traverse the Panama Canal on a guaranteed daylight crossing.

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