



Antarctic Explorer



26 January – 4 February 2020 | *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 | Sunday 26 January 2020

Frei Station, King George Island

Position: 05:10 hours
Latitude: 62°13.84'S
Longitude: 058°51.06'W

Course: 327.9°
Speed: 5.9 knots

Wind Speed: 10.1 knots
Wind Direction: NE

Barometer: 994 MB & steady
Air Temp: 1° C
Sea Temp: 2° C

Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true. — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our dreams and plans of visiting Antarctica culminated today and finally, here we are on the *Greg Mortimer*. Oh, what a feeling! Until you are on board the ship, you are never totally guaranteed you're going to make it. So many things have to line up – you have to stay healthy enough to travel (even more significant than usual, given the recent outbreak of the Wuhan coronavirus in China, where many of our passengers have joined the ship from), then you have to make the journey from home to Punta Arenas without significant delays, the ship has to be ready and waiting at the other end, and then the weather in both Punta Arenas AND King George Island has to be suitable for flights to take off and land in a certain weather window. And we have all heard about the weather in Antarctica - it's not known for being clement. After a week of cancelled flights, we got very lucky. The clouds lifted, the wind dropped, and the sun even shone for a brief moment!

After our two-hour flight from Punta Arenas we landed post-lunch and were transferred to the waiting Zodiacs which whisked us across the bumpy seas to the *Greg Mortimer* where we rapidly met several of the crew and expedition team including the sailors who helped us from the Zodiac to the back deck, Photo Liz who took our happy snaps for the ID board, Reza who signed us onto the ship and later sorted out our new blue and grey Aurora jackets,

Doctors Rachel and Mauricio who were screening for fever, Alasdair and Pete who ensured our muck-boots were the right size and showed us to our mud-room lockers, the reception staff who gave us the keys to our comfortable new cabins where we were reunited with our bags, and then finally and happily, the food and beverage staff. It was starting to feel like we had come home, whilst at the same time beginning an intrepid expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula aboard a magnificent, almost futuristic ship, still in her maiden season.

There is a lot of necessary information that must be taken in on a trip like this, so we soon adjourned to the lecture theatre for the welcome briefing where we were given an idea of what lay ahead by Ashley, our expedition leader, and introduced to the expedition team who have many years of Antarctic experience between them, all of which was translated into Mandarin by James for those who required it. We also practiced the mandatory lifeboat drill which went very smoothly.

Finally it was dinner time – the first of many delicious meals and an opportunity to get to know our fellow travellers a bit better – and then bed time. Worn out after a busy day, we fell asleep to the motion of the ocean, dreaming of all that lies ahead...



DAY 2 | Monday 27 January 2020

Whaler's Bay, Deception Island

Position: 05:16 hours

Course: 253.6°

Wind Speed: 4.4 knots

Barometer: 999 MB & steady

Latitude: 62°49.00'S

Speed: 5.5 knotst

Wind Direction: NE

Air Temp: 4° C

Longitude: 060°19.03'W

Sea Temp: 3° C

A first walk in any new country is one of the things which makes life on this planet worth being grateful for. —Charles William Beebe

We peeped out our portholes (or balcony windows) this first morning in Antarctica and were greeted by an atmospheric scene. Huntress Glacier cascaded down into False Bay where we anchored for the morning.

Ready and rearing to go, we first had to business to attend to. We gathered in the lecture theatre where expedition leader Ashley, with assistance from her expedition team, illustrated the do's and don'ts of Antarctic etiquette. Upon a passenger approaching too closely, 'penguin' Laura was scared off her nest and 'skua' Alex swooped in for a tasty penguin chick treat. Our stylish kayak guides, Russell, Danny and John walked the lecture theatre catwalk and modelled the various layers of clothing we will need to wear in Antarctica to keep warm.

Zzzzzooooom, whoosh! Soon the soft purr of vacuums emanated from the lecture theatre as we complied with the bio-security component of our morning and de-seeded the gear we will use on our landings.

With eager anticipation we enjoyed a tasty lunch before our very first landing in Antarctica. The moody weather continued to build as we sailed along the edge of Deception Island, an

active volcano. This caldera-shaped island is one of the two volcanoes in the world that you can enter by ship, and this was our plan for the afternoon. Our excellent captain expertly navigated through the narrow entrance called Neptune's Bellows.

A wet and splashy Zodiac ride dropped us on the beach of Whaler's Bay. This monochrome vista has a chilling history from the whaling days from 1910 to 1931. Hundreds of whales were brought on land here and rendered into blubber, a lucrative, yet devastating industry. The island also has a recent history of erupting! The last large eruption happened in 1970.

On land we wandered the shore. Some followed Chris and Ashley on a hike up to windy Neptune's Window where, on a clear day, one can see across the Bransfield Strait to the Antarctic mainland. Others explored the remnants of the old whaling station, rusted tankers towering above at tilted angles.

After a wet and woolly ride back to the *Greg Mortimer* we happily dried off and made our way to the bar to warm up with a drop and meet new friends. A lovely Day One onboard... what next is in store for us?





DAY 3 | Tuesday 28 January 2020

Portal Point; Cuverville Island

Position: 05:18 hours

Course: 211.4°

Wind Speed: 22.4 knots

Barometer: 900 MB & steady

Latitude: 64°16.14'S

Speed: 6.8 knots

Wind Direction: NE

Air Temp: 4°C

Longitude: 061°36.55'W

Sea Temp: 3°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

As we arrived at Portal Point, the icebergs grounded in the harbour shone azure blue-green, providing a splash of colour against a canvas of black, white and grey. Humpback whales fed amongst the bergs, lounging and occasionally diving so close that we could see and hear their blows from the ship.

The kayakers set off to explore the local area and a handful of others set off on a 'Citizen Science' project to document the diversity and abundance of local plankton.

The rest of us landed in Zodiacs on a low granite promontory. For most it was our first time to step onto the Antarctic continent. We climbed up a shallow snow slope, past a lone gentoo penguin, past some Weddell seals and a handful of Antarctic fur seals, and up to a viewpoint overlooking the protected harbour. The Recluse Hut was built here in the 1950's, used during the exploration of the Antarctic Peninsula then dismantled and rebuilt at a museum on the Falkland Islands; only the foundations remain.

We returned to the ship wet but happy.

After lunch, Alexander (Wato) delivered a wonderful lecture on the diversity & ecology of penguins.

Meanwhile the ship sailed south down the Gerlache Strait to Cuverville Island, an island peak set against the dramatic mountain ranges and icefalls of Ronge Island and the

mainland behind it. After driving around some grounded bergs in fantastic shapes and colours, we landed on a cobbled beach at the northern end of the island, our noses assailed by the guano of an estimated 60,000 pairs of breeding gentoo penguins. We went off to explore the hillside or to simply sit quietly and watch the comings and goings. Some of the penguins hopped and walked several hundred feet up the mountainside to their colonies, demonstrating superb balance on their sturdy feet.

The kayakers and some of the Zodiacs had memorably close encounters with some curious younger whales coming over to investigate the boats.

The wind had risen sharply by the time we returned to ship, with choppy conditions in the Zodiacs. We were glad of a hot shower and celebratory cocktail in the bar, followed by a recap. Pete regaled us with a historical narrative about the incredible Sir Wally Hubert who traversed the Antarctic peninsula by dog sled. Alasdair spoke about the nine lives of Sir Hubert Wilkins, who flew the first aerial surveys of the Peninsula after building an airstrip at Deception Island, and Alex gave us an introduction to the birds of Antarctica.

After dinner, Pete and Isabel presented a double-act lecture on 'Whales of Antarctica' and 'Whale Communication'. Did you know that a blue whale's call can be 50% louder than a pneumatic drill, can carry for over 1000km, and is becoming lower in frequency as the years go by?

All in all, a huge and wonderful day!





DAY 4 | Wednesday 29 January 2020

Port Lockroy; Vernadsky Station

Position: 05:17 hours
Latitude: 64°54.67'S
Longitude: 063°39.67'W

Course: 131.1°
Speed: 5.7 knots

Wind Speed: 18.2 knots
Wind Direction: ENE

Barometer: 986 MB & steady
Air Temp: 4°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

*The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around;
 It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
 Like noises in a swound!*
 —Samuel Taylor Coleridge, from 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

Today was a jam-packed day, a day full of Antarctic culture. After a bright and early breakfast we welcomed aboard some Port Lockroy locals to brief us about our visit to this little British outpost, a former British Antarctic Survey base turned museum and post office. After a wild ride to shore in the windy conditions, we skirted our way across the rocks and past some gentoo chicks and into the cosy museum. It was very interesting to see how the base staff lived in previous years, recipes for sautéed penguin, wool jackets and mittens, Antarctic-themed Monopoly and portraits of the young Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, the latter of whom visited all of the British bases in his younger days. The tills were kept busy as we spent up big, with many cries of 'but it's a donation for a good cause!', and the ink wells ran dry as many a postcard was stamped! Some of us were amazed to see a skua attack a sheathbill in the air, and drag it to the ground (slapping Liz in the face en route!) where it proceeded to drown it in the ocean and pluck it to reach the tasty treats inside! We also visited Jougla Point around the corner from Port Lockroy where we spent some lovely moments with the gentoo penguins. The chicks were much larger than those we saw at Cuverville, most likely due to the ice and snow retreating quicker at Port Lockroy enabling the penguins to come

in and breed earlier. A leucistic penguin was also spotted, a much paler, washed-out version of the typical black and white birds.

After lunch we navigated through the Lemaire Channel which stunned us with its dramatic ice capped peaks, glaciers and icebergs. Dozens of crabeater seals were hauled out on the ice flows, escaping the wild weather out at sea. A couple of minke whales were also spied amongst the brash ice. On the other side of the Lemaire, Vernadsky appeared from behind the icebergs, a former British base purchased by the Ukrainians for a pound! The wintering team were incredibly welcoming, showing us through their base, explaining their work and letting us taste their home-made vodka. The base was very cosy, with a curved timber bar, pool table, photos of the wintering teams past and present, artworks on the walls and the enticing smell of baking bread drifting around the base. We had our first taste of blue sky and sunshine and could finally see the tops of the surrounding mountains, so we made the most of the conditions, Zodiac cruising around the icebergs and getting up close and personal with the crabeater seals (hopefully staying upwind from the smell...). The party mood continued with a BBQ feast and even some dancing out on the back deck in the sunshine, joined by the Ukrainian team members.



DAY 5 | Thursday 30 January 2020

Torgersen Island; Neko Harbour

Position: 05:17 hours
Latitude: 64°52.47'S
Longitude: 063°46.77'W

Course: 303.6°
Speed: 3.4 knots

Wind Speed: 26 knots
Wind Direction: NE

Barometer: 984 MB & steady
Air Temp: 0°C
Sea Temp: 3°C

Antarctica is a separate world. One can feel its presence in the approaches, sailing south from more temperate climes. Standing on deck, one may follow the reeling albatross, feel the drop in temperature, the bite of the wind and the motion of the waves. Yet it is the presence of ice, from the first occasional fragments, escalating in shape, form, and frequency, and finally dominating all else, that brings assurance of arrival in Antarctica. —Mark Jones, Wild Ice: Antarctic Journeys, 1990

Under dappled early morning skies, we anchored in steel grey waters off Torgersen Island. Sunlight slipped through the clouds painting the icy landscape with glistening highlights. Glaciers tumbling to the ocean were a backdrop to a small archipelago of low rocky islands before us.

These islands are a significant rookery for Adélie Penguins. Excited, we boarded our Zodiacs to head out exploring. Amongst the rocky island slopes we saw many penguin nesting sites filled with adolescents and their caring parents. We learned about the impact of climate change on these rookeries where scientists have observed recent dramatic interruption to the breeding cycle.

As we cruised the rocky foreshores in our Zodiacs we chanced upon elephant seals hauled out on shingly beaches, kelp gulls keeping watch from rocky perches and the ever present skuas casting about overhead. Our Zodiacs pushed through brash ice to find crabeater and occasional leopard seals basking in the sunlight on ice floes.

Soon it was time to return to the ship and enjoy a delicious lunch as we headed northwards. During the ship's cruise some of us learned how to make dumplings in the dining room, and some listened to Rachel's informative lecture on the British Graham Land Expedition.

And many of us just relaxed and rested, watching the exquisite mountainous scenery of Andvord Bay pass by our windows.

Before we knew it, our Expedition Team were inviting us to join a late afternoon outing. We found ourselves in a watery amphitheatre, surrounded by dramatic glaciers, towering mountain peaks with ice cliffs clinging to dramatic dark rock faces. Neko Harbour was filled with floating icebergs and the water was calm and inviting. We cruised in the Zodiacs and scrambled up icy penguin-filled slopes to a viewpoint to catch a breathtaking view of the harbour.

At our feet we saw the kayakers exploring the bay. They looked tiny as they wound their way amongst the bergs on the search for whales. Even our ship anchored against the glacial wall below seemed dwarfed by the scale of the plunging icefalls. We watched as the Zodiacs cruised the tranquil waters of the bay exploring an icy maze. We could hear the crack and rumble of the glaciers calving, sending new icebergs tumbling into the water.

Back on the ship Alasdair and Rachel shared insights from the day in our recap in the lecture room. Our wonderful day was capped off watching stunning Antarctic vistas slip past the dining room windows on an evening ship cruise back up Andvord Bay.

Later in the evening those of us who managed to stay awake were entertained by packs of feeding orca whales and blowing humpbacks as we cruised through the Gerlache straight.

Truly a day to remember with penguins lining rocky shorelines, seals sunning on rocky beaches and icebergs, breathtaking icefalls plunging to an ice filled bay and an evening of delightful Antarctic Peninsula scenery.



DAY 6 | Friday 31 January 2020

Graham Passage; Mikkelsen Harbour

Position: 05:13 hours

Course: 83.5°

Wind Speed: 6.1 knots

Barometer: 993 MB & steady

Latitude: 64°26.36'S

Speed: 4.2 knots

Wind Direction: NE

Air Temp: 1°C

Longitude: 63°52.16'W

All the world loves a penguin: I think it is because in many respects they are like ourselves, and in some respects what we should like to be. Had we but half their physical courage, none could stand against us. Had we a hundredth part of their maternal instinct we should have to kill our children by the thousand. Their little bodies are so full of curiosity that they have no room for fear. They like mountaineering, and joy-riding on ice floes: they even like to drill.
—Apsley Cherry Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World*

We received a gentle wake up from Russell and some wise words from Winnie the Pooh this morning, as we opened our curtains to a lingering and moody fog surrounding the *Greg Mortimer*.

During the night we had travelled the Gerlache Strait and arrived at the entrance of the Graham Passage in front of Bluff Island. The fog was still clinging low to the waterline as we ate breakfast and prepared to head out into the Zodiacs and kayaks. As the fog started to lift, the kayakers were the first to hit the water. Paddling directly for the entrance of the channel, being dwarfed by the huge ice cliffs from multiple glaciers, meeting the water from all sides; the kayaks bright colours contrasting the selective palate of the Antarctic Peninsula. Next, the Zodiac cruises departed and before long several humpback whales greeted us all. Their gentle and playful shallow dives kept us captivated, while the *Greg Mortimer* slowly herded us through the channel from behind.

The cracking and crumbling of the glaciers around us framed several stunning icebergs towards the exit of the channel. One in particular became a fast favourite. An ice window, carved by nature's hand, had us all carefully positioning ourselves for the perfect photo. Some able to frame our ship and use the tips from Photo Liz's lecture to practice the technique of scale in our photos.

The afternoons adventure was bookmarked yet again by the thick and moody fog. We travelled to D'Hainaut Island, nestled in the side of Mikkelsen Harbour. Gentoo penguins and Antarctic fur seals greeted all visitors to the island, while the kayakers blew out the cobwebs and conquered some sporty conditions, circumnavigating the island.

As we start to head further north, Antarctica is reminding us of how wild and untamed she is. A strong weather forecast means we are going to make the most of our time in the South Shetland islands tomorrow morning, before it closes in. What a way to end the first month of 2020.





DAY 7 | Saturday 1 February 2020

Half Moon Island; Drake Passage

Position: 05:15 hours	Course: 28.8°	Wind Speed: 24.1 knots	Barometer: 996 MB & steady
Latitude: 62°46.93'S	Speed: 7.2 knots	Wind Direction: NNE	Air Temp: 1°C
Longitude: 59°56.05'W			Sea Temp: 2°C

There is only one short link in the food chain between a diatom and a one-hundred-ton blue whale – between one cell and the largest of all animals – and that link is the Antarctic krill. —David G. Campbell, The Crystal Desert, 1992

We were now back in the South Shetland Islands where our adventures had begun. Alas, this was also to be our last day of activities off the ship, but in compensation, Half Moon Island held out the opportunity to see our third species of brush-tailed penguin, the chinstrap. First though, our trusty Zodiacs had to negotiate a pebbly beach washed by a short surge.

Expedition Team members – a couple dressed in waders – expertly spun the boats as they came to shore and we scrambled off safely. The usual drill of a briefing and lifejackets dropped in the bins and we were off to explore. Small colonies of chinstrap and gentoo penguins graced the flanks of rocky stacks behind the beach, while kelp gulls, skuas and Antarctic terns captured our attention in the air. A number of penguins were moulting, standing passively near their colonies or down on the beach, getting ready to go to sea once their old feathers were gone and the new, perfectly oiled and waterproof ones, had come through.

Over a low saddle there was a gentle beach to explore and an occasional Antarctic fur seal to meet. The kayakers made the most of this spot for their landing, and their green and red dry-suits stood out in vibrant contrast to the sombre greys of the overcast morning.

Towards the end of the landing it began to snow lightly – the perfect preparation for our day's next activity. Yes, that's right, there had been an outbreak of insanity aboard the *Greg Mortimer*, and it was time for the Antarctic Swim Squad to convene! Back on board, and clad in not very much at all, forty hardy – or some might unkindly say, 'mentally challenged' – souls among the passengers and crew rose to the occasion. They plunged and jumped and flopped from the kayaking pontoon into the icy 2° Celsius waters off Half Moon Island.

The sauna was crowded with plungers in the aftermath of this expedition tradition. With warming coffee and hot chocolate downed, and long hot showers enjoyed, it was time for the *Greg Mortimer* to point her distinctive X-bow north for Ushuaia. It seemed that the timing of our northward bound passage was good and we headed off with hardly a languid roll.

Our sea-time entertainment program began after lunch with Chris enlightening us about the six species of seal that call the Antarctic region home, while Alexander helped us through the finer points of seabird identification. Among the albatrosses, the graceful monarchs of southern skies, who would have thought that you could tell a shy albatross from the rest by its 'hairy' armpit?

A lively evening recap had, and the usual delicious dining room fare enjoyed, it was time to settle back and reflect on our days of Antarctic wonder.







DAY 8 | Sunday 2 February 2020

Drake Passage

Position: 05:17 hours
Latitude: 59°21.06'S
Longitude: 62°47.81'W

Course: 333.1°
Speed: 13.2 knots

Wind Speed: 27.1 knots
Wind Direction: NNE

Barometer: 986 MB & increasing
Air Temp: 7°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. —T.S. Eliot

Waking up to a pun-filled good morning from Photo Liz, we set off to have a 'sea'sational day on the ocean. Since the seas had calmed and breakfast started at a luxurious 8 o'clock it allowed people a sleep-in and a relaxed morning to soak up The Drake.

And what a glorious day it was! Not only had the temperature risen about 10 degrees but the sun was out! And there were albatross!! People either spent the morning on deck bird-watching, coffee drinking, lounging in bed with loved ones, playing cards, and spending some serious chill time after a busy week and a half on the Antarctic Peninsula. Sea days are those lazy Sunday mornings where you can kick back, hang out in your housecoat, and truly have a moment's rest. I imagine Winnie the Pooh would have loved sea days.

"Don't underestimate the value of doing nothing, or just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering." - Winnie the Pooh

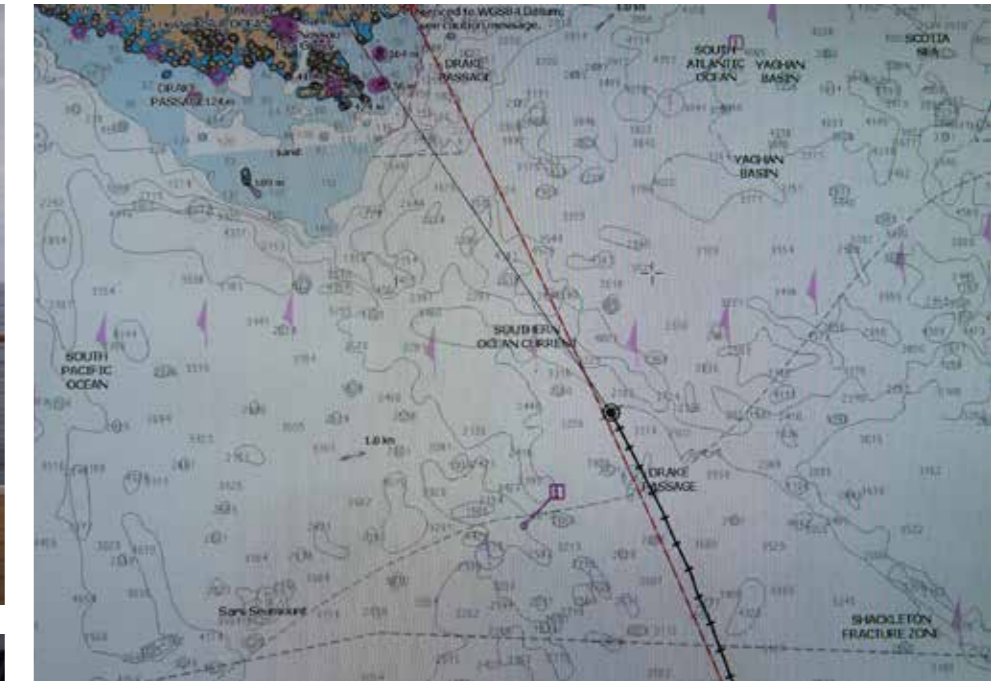
In the late morning Alasdair filled everyone's imagination with the exciting tale of Shackleton and his men's death-defying escape from Antarctica. He put our week into perfect perspective as to how amazing it's been and how easy we had it compared to the hardened men of the ill-fated Endurance expedition. Inspiring to think how far the human body can go before it actually drops.

"What could be more important than a little something to eat?" - Winnie the Pooh

Lunch was brunch for some, breakfast for others, but with the seas picking up in size not all tables were utilized. Still, it was lovely as always and people that were there were buzzing with social activity (or maybe too much coffee...).

The afternoon was filled with presentations and bridge tours. First was Russell's talk on his kayak trip from the mouth of the Amazon delta to Miami. He filled people's minds with inspiring tales of crossing large oceans in tiny kayaks and surviving in the bug and mud-filled northeast section of South America. After this was the old film that told the story of a team of tough sailors that sailed around Cape Horn in the 1920's. Another great adventure story told in a rather light-hearted manner. Throughout the afternoon some people had the treat of being taken on a bridge tour and shown what's really going on with this state-of-the-art ship of ours. There was quite the cheery atmosphere in the Elephant Island bar with people sipping drinks, chatting with their new-found friends, and someone even tinkling the ivories!

Buffet dinner meant people could come and go as they pleased. Once again it was noticeable that not everyone was feeling 100 percent on this crossing, by the number of empty seats. All in all, the full day at sea on the Drake flew by for most as a blessing and not a burden, for it was a chance to relax with old friends and new ones.





DAY 9 | Monday 3 February 2020

Drake Passage; Beagle Channel

Position: 05:17 hours

Course: 329.1°

Wind Speed: 19.1 knots

Barometer: 997 MB & increasing

Latitude: 55°42.96'S

Speed: 13.2 knots

Wind Direction: NNE

Air Temp: 8°C

Longitude: 65°44.60'W

Sea Temp: 6°C

We made good progress overnight, and so it was relatively early in the day that the cry of “land ho” echoed throughout the ship. For those who were not on deck gazing longingly southwards in quiet reverie and contemplation, it was a busy day of presentations, bridge tours, exchanging of photographs and packing.

The calm and narrow waterway of the Beagle Channel gave us a lovely opportunity to spot some new species including Magellanic penguins, Chilean skuas and South American terns. We were thrilled to also have a pod of Peale’s dolphins swimming speedily along with the ship.

The greatly anticipated voyage slideshow put together by Photo Liz was a rollicking success, with tears, laughter, and a good helping of “oohs and aahs”. It was extraordinary to look

back on all the things we had seen and done over the past nine days. We then gathered once more (this time in our finery) for Captains’ Farewell drinks. With champagne in hand, we were able to make a hearty toast to our voyage, our trusty ship, Captain Joachim and his officers and crew. Expedition Leader Ashley brought out her team for a final hurrah, and in return we were able to thank her for her fine leadership.

We gathered with our new friends and fellow expeditioners for a final dinner, distracted only by the breathtaking sunset palette of oranges and pinks that painted the skies outside. A fitting explosion of sunset hues to mark the sunset of our very special Antarctic adventure.



DAY 10 | Tuesday 4 February 2020

Ushuaia, Argentina

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

Antarctica left a restless longing in my heart beckoning towards an incomprehensible perfection forever beyond the reach of mortal man. Its overwhelming beauty touches one so deeply that it is like a wound.
—Edwin Mickleburgh, Beyond the Frozen Sea

This morning we woke after a peaceful slumber at wharf in Ushuaia after our pleasant crossing of the Drake Passage on our good ship *Greg Mortimer*. It has been an amazing voyage.

Aurora Expeditions send out a big thank you to you all for your great humour, infectious enthusiasm and smiling faces. It was a pleasure having you all on board and being able to share some of the pleasures that the icy south has to offer. May your memories live long and bright.



Kayaking Log

By Alex Chavanne

Kayaking Masters: Alex Chavanne, Russell Henry, Danny O'Farrell, Tory Stewart, John Weir

Total Distance Paddled: 60 km

Kayakers:

David Gardner	Sue Gardner	Gordon Kearley
Herma Buttner	Leanne Molenaar	Carl John Molenaar
Craig Ley	Ian Hogbin	Suzanne Hogbin
Rik Jones	Rupert Kirkwood	Rebecca Kirkwood
Peter Orpin	Bronwyn Leonard	Fiona McKenzie
Bruno Brenninkmeijer	Sebastian Trouncer	Elizabeth Trouncer
Geoffrey McAnalen	Thomas Aitkenhead	Tim Bowman
Carolyn Bowman	Carolyn Wiseman	Justin Ewin

DAY 2: PM – Whalers Bay – Distance: 6 km

After a fortunate weather window in which all the guests were able to fly in on time, we spent a morning in the lee of Livingston Island getting briefed and kitted out with our gear. We then made the short transit south to Deception Island, an active volcano with a flooded caldera. The ship sailed in, and anchored at Whaler's Bay, a former scientific base, whaling station, and launching-off point for early explorers of the region. We thought it looked like a good chance to make our first paddle, and make sure everything was in working order, work out the kinks, and get to know our guides and paddling partners. Everyone got out this morning in two groups and made a big circuit of the bay to where the ship had come in, and amid small bouncy waves and a bit of wind saw our first penguins and fur seals. Rounding back, we paddled along a steaming black volcanic sand beach to return to the ship, just in time because the wind picked up and before we were out of our dry suits it was blowing over 25 knots. A successful first day.

DAY 3: AM – Portal Point – Distance: 7 km

Our anchorage this morning was at the continental landing of Portal Point. It was too rough to get off the ship, but inshore it looked much better, so we decided to take the kayaks by Zodiac to a protected bay, then get in them from there. The plan worked well, and nearly all of the paddlers got out despite a bit of wind and a healthy soaking of rain. Once on the water, the paddle was scenic and pleasant as we made our way along glacial faces with hanging seracs to a continental landing. A first for many, and seventh continent for some. Back in the boats, we continued through a maze of large icebergs, until we reached open water once again and paddled through big rolling swell back to a protected bay to be picked up.

PM: Cuverville Island – Distance: 8 km

The day's forecast called for little wind, yet when we arrived at our afternoon's anchorage of Cuverville Island, the wind was gusting close to 30 knots. The call was made that a paddle was possible, yet it was probably not for everyone, and a single pair came out with us this afternoon. The paddle from ship to shore was bumpy, but we encountered a trio of curious humpbacks which spent several minutes observing us close to the surface. Several paddlers were being watched so closely that they came away with whale-breath-

misted glasses. We continued once the whales left and encountered a strong current running along the side of the island. Past penguin colonies, we found the backside of the island calm, and enjoyed several minutes of peaceful paddling before heading in to make a landing. After a brief landing, we rounded the point, back into a 20 knot headwind and paddled hard back to the ship to wrap up the day.

DAY 4: AM: Port Lockroy – Cancelled, 38 kt gusts and sustained 20+ kt winds.

PM: Vernadsky Station – Distance: 8 km

Everyone was eager to paddle, and everyone got out this evening after a very windy morning, and what a fine evening it was. Everyone paddled through a little bit of sea swell to get in amongst the small islands surrounding Vernadsky station, and then, with mirror calm waters, we slowly wove through the maze of islands. Crabearer seals were in abundance, and one ice flow we got our picture in front of had over forty seals on it. Continuing on, we paddled through narrow passages past Wordie Hut, and then on past the base. Finally, we tucked in to a small passage filled with slowly bobbing, small, deep blue icebergs before emerging in the sun and paddling back to the ship for the barbecue.

DAY 5: AM: Torgersen Island – Distance: 5 km

This morning we found calm conditions again at our landing site just off Anvers Island. Near the American Palmer base, we got out for a paddle amongst a number of small islands, all of which are specially managed areas for wildlife. There was a shipwreck here a number of years ago, and the resultant oil spill caused the number of penguins nesting here to plummet, but nevertheless, we saw Adélie penguins en masse, before checking out several elephant seals. Making a big loop, the groups went out to spend a little time in the brash ice that had come off a nearby glacier, before heading back for a long transit to the next paddling opportunity.

PM: Neko Harbor – Distance: 6 km

The sun peeking through high purple-black clouds was reflected off the mirror calm water for our paddle in Neko Harbor this afternoon. We spent two hours gliding through the water with only the prehistoric sounds of glaciers rumbling and whales breathing. It was sublime, and the best it can get in Antarctica.

DAY 6: AM – Graham Passage – Distance: 9 km

With plans still being made as we got on the water due to changing weather conditions, the paddlers decided to make their own plans. Graham Passage is a narrow stretch of water between the Peninsula and Bluff Island, and the surrounding cliffs are covered with the most beautiful crevassed glaciers. Blue light seemed to steam out of the cracks as we paddled into a fog bank that was just clinging to the tops of the glaciers. As we paddled into the mouth of the passage, the fog seemed to roll away in front of us revealing more stunning mountain scenery. Whales were seen in the bay, and they dove repeatedly, moving quickly, evidently feeding and not interested in our number of kayaks. We continued on towards a lovely berg that had a tremendous hole in it, and then made a short landing on a sandy beach to stretch our legs before heading back to the ship to wrap up a lovely one-way paddle.

PM – Mikkelsen Harbor – Distance: 4 km

This afternoon's paddle was in stark contrast to the morning's calm conditions. A cold wind was blowing through the bay, and still a large, hardy group of paddlers got out on the water to see what would come of it. It was a scenic and active paddle, with great glacial walls surrounding us. One group made a short landing on the island full of gentoo penguins, while the other charged around and made a big loop of the bay before heading back to the ship with chilly ears.

DAY 7: AM: Half Moon Island – Distance: 7km – long, 5km – short

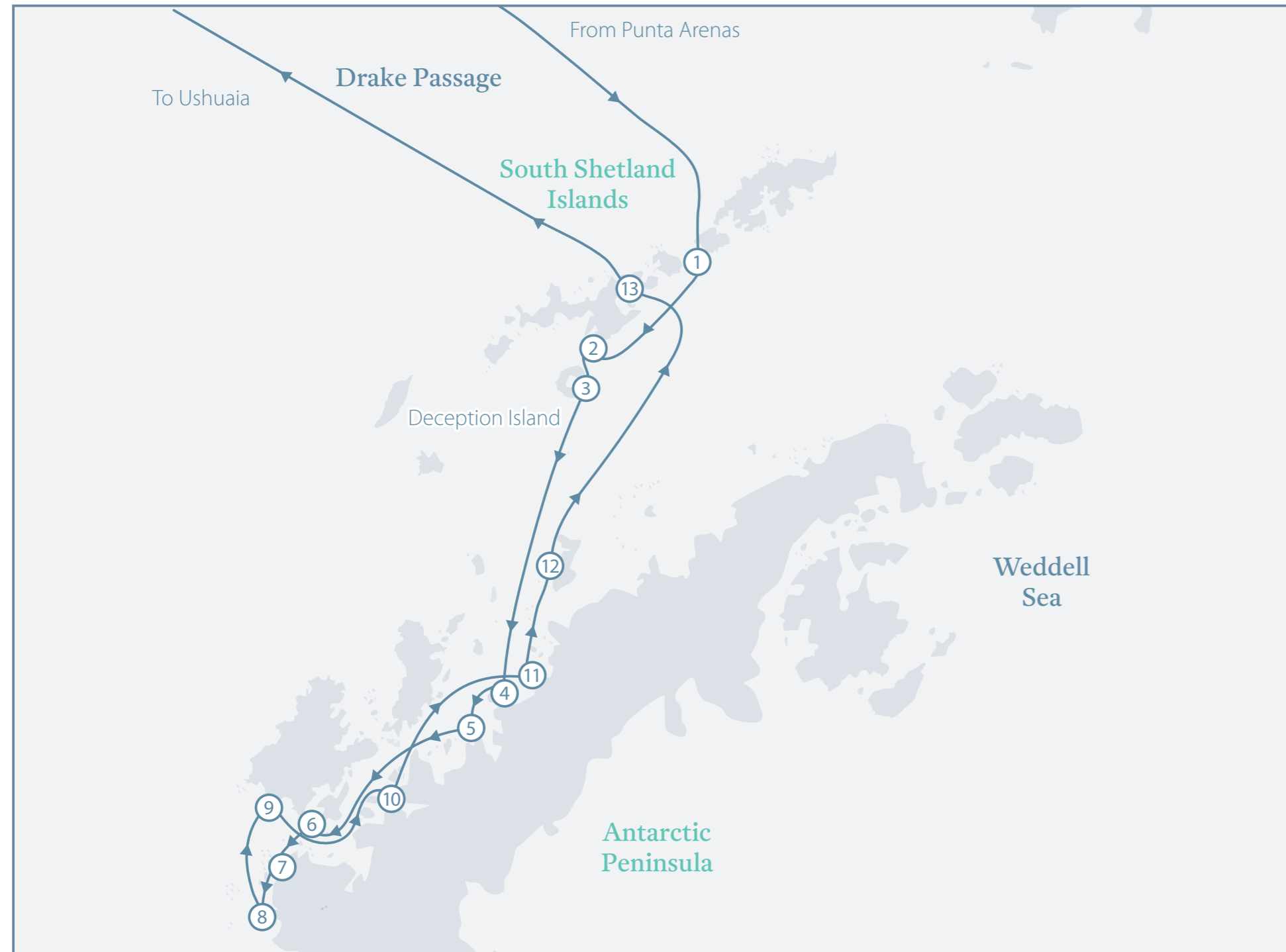
It was a bittersweet paddle this morning, as it was our last together on this trip. The keen paddlers took off first and circumnavigated the island, making a short landing on a protected beach to watch chinstrap penguins, fur seals and engagement photos. The shorter paddles took off to paddle around and sometimes through narrow rock passages that were lively today because of the swell rolling in from the Southern Ocean. We made landings as well and spent a last few minutes with the Antarctic natives before we took off in our boats back to the ship. It was a lovely last paddle, and good to see how everyone had come together in the group. All the spray skirts were successfully attached without assistance, and we all looked like we knew what we were doing. Hopefully the week here has inspired a few of us to get kayaks at home and keep up a highly accessible and enjoyable sport. We did well.



Antarctic Explorer

26 January – 4 February 2020 | Distance Travelled: 1,238 nautical miles (2,292 kilometres)

Southernmost point of voyage: 65°14' 91 S



Destinations

01. Frei Base, King George Island
02. Huntress Glacier
03. Whaler's Bay, Deception Island
04. Portal Point

05. Cuverville Island
06. Jougla Point/Port Lockroy
07. Lemaire Channel
08. Vernadsky Station, Argentine Islands

09. Torgersen Island
10. Neko Harbour
11. Graham Passage
12. D'Hainaut Island, Mikkelson Harbour

13. Half Moon Island





Bird Species Log

Bird Species	January - February									
	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4
Gentoo Penguin		x	x	x	x	x	x			
Chinstrap Penguin		x	x				x			
Adelie Penguin				x	x					
Magellanic Penguin									x	
Wandering Albatross								x	x	
Southern Royal Albatross								x	x	
Black-browed Albatross								x	x	
Southern Giant Petrel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Cape Petrel		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Snow Petrel					x					
Antarctic Fulmar							x			
Blue Petrel								x		
Prion sp. (probably mostly Antarctic)								x		
White-chinned Petrel								x		
Sooty Shearwater									x	
Wilson's Storm-petrel		x	x	x	x	x	x			
Imperial Cormorant (blue-eyed)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Rock Cormorant										x
Snowy Sheathbill	x		x	x	x	x	x			
Chilean Skua										x
Brown Skua	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		
South Polar Skua					x					
Kelp Gull	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Antarctic Tern	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
South American Tern									x	
Dolphin Gull										x



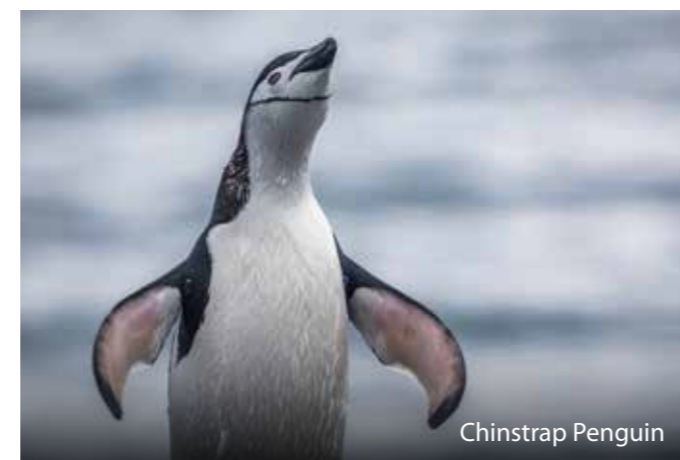
Gentoo Penguins



Black-browed Albatross



Adelie Penguin



Chinstrap Penguin

Mammal Species Log

Mammal Species	January - February									
	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4
Antarctic Fur Seal		x	x		x	x	x			
Southern Elephant Seal					x					
Crabeater Seal				x						
Weddell Seal			x			x	x			
Leopard Seal						x				
Minke Whale				x	x		x			
Sei Whale									x	
Humpback Whale			x	x	x	x	x			
Orca		x			x					
Peales Dolphin									x	
Dusky Dolphin										x



Orca



Fur Seal



Crabeater Seal



Humpback Whale



Elephant Seal



Expeditioners

Tom Aitkenhead	Heung Fai Chu	Sue Hogbin	Zhenyu Li	Luann Munoa	Zhuqing Shen	Stella Wong
Belinda Baccarini	Annette Culf	Jieping Hu	Shiyong Li	Jim Munoa	Shaoling Shen	Wein Wu
Jane Bell	Rob Culf	Yuan Hu	Jia Liao	Duane Neill	Ke Shi	Wenjing Xia
Ross Bell	Lesley Diver	Karen Irvine	Molin Lin	Wilson Ng	Kathy Sims	Benlan Xin
Tim Bowman	Xiaoyan Dong	Elina Ishikawa	Yuhe Lin	Cindy Nguyen	Caitlin Sims	Ying Xu
Carolyn Bowman	Justin Ewin	Takaya Ishikawa	Ying Liu	Siyuan Ning	Jianjun Song	John Yu
Bruno Brenninkmeijer	Meihua Fan	Shelly Jenkins	Zheng Liu	Haoran Ning	Cathy Stringer	Dorothy Yuen
Bill Buckle	Mingjian Feng	Jing Jin	Henry Lo	Hongzhi Ning	Ling Tan	Jiawei Zhang
Jane Buckle	Brett Fickler	Lynn Jones	Aixing Lu	Charmaine Oliver	Shiqiao Tan	Huichun Zhang
Herma Buttner	David Gardner	Rik Jones	Shimin Mao	Chuck Oliver	Xiaohong Tang	Haixu Zhao
Vivienne Cannings	Sioux Gardner	Don Kearley	Stacey Marlow	Pete Orpin	Sebastian Trouncer	Tong Zhao
Bryan Cannings	Loretta Gillespie	Rupert Kirkwood	Geoff McAnalen	Sharon Paull	Libby Trouncer	Bi Hui Zhong
Edward Chang	John Gillespie	Becky Kirkwood	John McCrea	Monika Pawel	Peg Waldron	Zhibo Zhou
Stella Chang	Louise Gillett	Charlene Koegel	Peter Mckellar	Lingxiang Peng	Xinyu Wang	
Naiyin Chen	Deirdre Ginns	Nancy Leadbeatter	Fiona McKenzie	Kexuan Qin	Jichang Wang	
Xianping Chen	Gloria Guo	Bronwen Leonard	Leanne Molenaar	Sue Reilly	Zhaoran Wang	
Huan Chen	Yanli Guo	Simone Ley	Carl Molenaar	Bill Reilly	Carolyn Wiseman	
Rita Cheng	Chih Hsiang Ho	Craig Ley	Qizheng Mu	Swan Ren	Mark Wittholz	
Sharon Ching	Ian Hogbin	Jane Li	Peter Mui	Nancy Schmitt	Lucy Wittholz	

Expedition Team

Expedition Leader:	Ashely Perrin	Kayaking Guide:	Danny O'Farrell
Deputy Expedition Leader:	Dr Liz Pope	Kayaking Guide:	Tory Stewart
Assistant Expedition Leader:	Elena Wimberger	Photography Guide:	Liz Gifford
Expedition Coordinator:	Justine Bornholdt	Expedition Guide:	Isabelle Howells
Naturalist/Whale Expert:	Dr Pete Gill	Cultural Host/Expedition Guide:	James Peng
Naturalist/Ecologist:	Dr Laura Williams	Expedition Doctor:	Dr Rachel Hawker
Naturalist:	Chris Todd	Expedition Doctor:	Dr Sophie Plowman
Naturalist:	Dr Alexander Watson	Zodiac Master:	Sergei Khyunku
Historian:	Alasdair McGregor	Mudroom/Shopkeeper:	Reza Rusooly
Kayaking Master:	Alex Chavanne		
Kayaking Guide:	Russell Henry		
Kayaking Guide:	John Weir		

Greg Mortimer Crew

Master	Joachim Saterskog	Sous Chef	Allan Estoque
Chief Officer	Oleg Kapko	Hotel Controller	Rohmat Nurhidayat
Second Officer	Andrei Valeahu	Receptionist	Mary Sarah Baldovino
Deck Cadet	Genadi Hristov	Receptionist	Mary Jane Lacerna
Safety Officer	Lukasz Zuterek	Head Stateroom Attendant	Irene Abania
Bosun	Duglas Garay	Spa Manager	Grace Tembo
Ship Doctor	Mauricio Usme	Able Seaman	Khennette Verzova
Chief Engineer	Marinko Hrabar	Able Seaman	Samuel Ricafort
First Engineer	Warlito Verzosa	Able Seaman	Junar Gorecho
IT Officer	Michael Reyes	Able Seaman	Leo Marzan
Hotel Director	Franz Wusits	Able Seaman	Bobby Payumo
F&B Service Manager	Miguel Cabanillas	Able Seaman	Mickey Ledonio
Head Bartender	Vishal Nunkoo	Ordinary Seaman	Anatoli Kornichuk
Chief Purser	Jane Saladaga	Ordinary Seaman	Alfredo Murillo
Executive Chef	Przemyslaw Wisniewski		

Ship's log written by Expedition Team members & compiled by Elena Wimberger



Paper made from 100% recycled material.

Explore our unique itineraries to these amazing destinations...



Adventure With Us

Intimate, educational, small group voyages to some of the world's wildest and most remote destinations, aboard quality expedition vessels.



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.



Costa Rica & Panama

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

Our other destinations include: Iceland, Ireland, Sweden and Norway