

South Georgia & Antarctic Odyssey

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 27 Dec 2022 – 16 Jan 2023





Ushuaia, Argentina

DAY 1 | Wednesday 28 December 2022

Position at 0500 on 28 Dec

Latitude: 54°48.6'S

Longitude: 068°16.8'W

Course: Docked

Speed: Docked

Wind Speed: SW 2

Barometer: 1015

Air Temp: 5°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Here we are in the stunning town of Ushuaia, “el fin del mundo”, the end of the world.

Our expedition started with a comfortable ride on the catamaran, towards the *Greg Mortimer*.

This is a unique trip, our Expedition Leader being *Greg Mortimer* himself – Mountaineer and founder of Aurora Expeditions (self-described as “Greg - the bloke, not the ship”).

Our expeditioners were met onboard by the Aurora team and had their photos taken for our “photoboard” to help us learn each other’s names.

Drinks and a buffet awaited us in the Elephant Island Bar, then our hotel team helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and settle into our “home away from home”. It had been a long couple of days of travelling, and many of us probably wanted to crawl into the comfort of our beds, but there was no time to rest just yet!

After a welcome briefing from Greg and a quick intro from Dr Anzor and Hotel Director Ulises, Rosie gave us some handy hints about life onboard.

Then the all-important safety drill. The sound of the ship’s horn signalled us to don bulky orange lifejackets and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed our crew up to Deck 7 where the polar class life vessels are kept (they can hold 136 people each, for 5 days).

With the safety drill completed, we were cleared to begin our journey. We gathered outside to watch the *Greg Mortimer* cast off her lines and pull away from the dock, at last on our way to the Falklands!

So, we’d had our last glimpse of town life, knowing that from now on we are more likely to see a colony of penguins than a crowd of people.

After having completed some domestic chores, such as setting up internet, labelling water bottles and thermal mugs, we made our way to the dining room to enjoy a delicious dinner, prepared by our talented galley team and served by our smiley and welcoming waiting staff.

The last task was a jacket swap, so that we can cope with whatever weather the Southern Ocean decides to throw at us.

Together we total 94 passengers (35 Australians, 29 Americans, 5 Canadians, 17 from the UK, 4 New Zealanders, 2 South Africans, and 2 Spanish) along with 79 crew from all around the globe.

Our 23-strong Expedition Team have a variety of specialities including polar exploration, mountaineering, geology, oceanography, history, marine biology, ornithology, photography, anthropology, kayaking and snorkelling.

After the many hours of travel to reach the *Greg Mortimer* it’s time to kick back, breathe in the sea air, and get excited for the next 20 days of adventure!



At sea

DAY 2 | Friday 29 December 2022

Position at 0700 on 29 Dec

Latitude: 54°12.4'S

Longitude: 063°23.0'W

Course: 060°

Speed: 11.8 knots

Wind Speed: W 6

Barometer: 1002

Air Temp: 5°C

The demand of science, that no part of the globe shall remain untouched by the hand of investigation was the force that drew our little band to the land of the farthest south.

—Otto Nordenskjöld

Our first morning on board the *Greg Mortimer* began with the dulcet tones of Greg's trademark 'Good Morning Good People' wake-up call, telling us we had made good progress overnight. A reasonable roll and a tail wind had sped us on our passage from Ushuaia across the South Atlantic towards the Islas Malvinas/Falklands Islands. After our first sampling of the many delights of the breakfast buffet, we were into the preparations for our expedition.

First up Greg ran us through the mandatory IAATO briefing, required before we could venture off the ship. Key points included mindful behaviour around wildlife, and the strict bio-security protocols. The latter are especially important at the moment, to avoid the spread into Antarctic and sub-Antarctic bird populations of avian flu, which this year has devastated many bird populations in the Arctic and peri-Arctic. After IAATO, we jumped down to the mudroom to try on the Muck Boots and life jackets, ready for our first outing in Stanley. Alex and the kayak team introduced the strong contingent of kayakers to the gear they will be using to get out on the water, while Andrew, Patrick and Hannah took the snorkellers through their equipment and protocols.

The afternoon saw us continuing to roll across the ocean, in bright warm sunshine with a brisk 30 knot breeze adding texture and colour to the deep blue-green of the South Atlantic. It was a delight to spend time on deck this brilliant afternoon. Black-browed albatross and cape petrels were prominent amongst the many species that wheeled around the ship. Mid-afternoon Ben's lecture on the history of the Malvinas/Falklands examined the intriguing possibility that the so-called 'Canoe Indians' from the Beagle Channel may have been the first people to discover and inhabit the archipelago. This may be the only explanation for the presence there of 'warrah' - the fox or wolf like canid, closely related to canids of the Americas - that Europeans found when the English mariner John Strong made the first European landing in 1690, on the shores of a body of water that he named Falkland Sound, after the Treasurer who financed the expedition. A century or so later a group of French utopians arrived from St Malo, and established a short-lived community. The people in this community were thereafter called the Malouines after their point-of-origin, and this term was later adapted to give the place its Spanish name Malvinas.

In the evening we were invited to the Captain's Cocktails, at which Captain Vadym gave a most entertaining and warm welcome and introduction of himself and many of his key officers. The 23 Aurora Expedition Team members arrayed out the front presented quite a blue-shirted phalanx, not to mention a talented and multi-national one, with members from places as far flung from each other as Argentina, Australia, France, Norway, Canada, the US, Scotland, Belgium, Peru, Iceland and New Zealand. Another glorious a la carte dinner saw us off to bed, keenly anticipating a day exploring the quirky delight that is Stanley.



Stanley, Falkland Islands

DAY 3 | Friday 30 December 2022

Position at 0700 30 Dec

Latitude: 51°40'3" S

Longitude: 057°49'6" W

Course: 218°

Speed: 7.3 knots

Wind Speed: W 6/7

Barometer: 1007

Air Temp: 7°C

I now belong to the higher cult of mortals, for I have seen the albatross.

—Robert Cushman Murphy

Early morning wake-up with a smooth call from our dear expedition leader Greg: we are approaching Stanley, the capital of Falklands Islands.

Despite a strong head wind, many of us are outside enjoying the beautiful lights on the gentle hills surrounding us.

Everybody gathers inside to warm up with a delicious breakfast. Today, since the ship is not alongside the pier, but staying out at sea on anchor, it is our first landing with the Zodiacs. We discover what is going to become our routine : getting dressed up, putting the life jacket on, getting in and out of the Zodiacs.

As a welcome committee, some commerson's dolphins and a group of south-american sea lions where chilling on the pier.

The first group of expeditioners went with Adrian for a photography-focused walk around Stanley.

The second one with Adrien (Ade), Vic and Hans to look for the birds following the coastal walk. We saw rock shags, giant petrels, dolphins and kelps gulls, crested duck and the emblematic Falklands steamer duck - this flightless duck endemic of the archipelago.

Then it is time to enjoy some time in the city, a surprising immersion into England at the other side of the world, with cars driving on the left side of the road, its tidy gardens and the famous red phone boxes.

While some of us are visiting the shops and museums, others are going to Gypsy Cove in order to watch the magellanic penguins and their young.

On the other side of the bay, we also enjoyed the gentoo penguin colonies and a small group of king penguins quietly moulting on the beach.

It is always a strange sighting to observe penguins on a white sandy beach near turquoise water.

All afternoon, heavy clouds are building up until some heavy showers finally got everybody back on board. Once dried and warm, we all gather for the daily recap in the lecture room. At that very moment, we had the amazing surprise to see thousands of sooty shearwaters taking off and circling around the ship.

During the first recap of our trip, Marion presents us the different Citizen Science programs we are going to be leading during the voyage.

Adrian gave us information about how we can share our pictures on the computer in the library and how to participate in the slideshow at the end of the voyage.

Ade showed us to how to correctly use binoculars which will be very useful in the coming weeks.

Then Hannah gave us more insights into the life of the various sea lions. And finally, Greg presented us the program for tomorrow.

The ship lifted anchor and headed for South Georgia which we should reach in two and a bit days depending on weather conditions.



At Sea

DAY 4 | Saturday 31 December 2022

Position at 0700 31 Dec

Latitude: 52°06'25"S

Longitude: 054°01'8"W

Course: 101°

Speed: 10.1 knots

Wind Speed: SW 7

Barometer: 1005

Air Temp: 6°C

Birds have it better than we do, in Many ways, and here are three, with wings they fly by day and night, and never have a cancelled flight, with feathers they have clothes that always fit, in styles that never change a bit, and what we envy most, I'd say, with bills they never have to pay.

—Anonymous

Today started slowly with a later wake-up call from our Expedition Leader Greg, announcing breakfast and fair weather. I think most of us must of us smiled at that news, as we were dreading the stormy weather that was announced a few days prior.

After breakfast we started with a quick walk around the ship for some, having a peek at which birds were following us this morning. Wandering albatross, storm petrels, giant petrels, white chinned petrels, prions, the very first gadfly petrels and some real close ups of black-browed albatross, some flying by only five metres from the stern of the ship, so that we could see every single detail with the naked eye. Such a treat!

These albatrosses truly don't get enough credit. Flying tens of thousands of kilometres per year, only stopping to breed or briefly feed on the water. To watch them soar in the howling winds, so effortlessly, flirting with the waves with their wingtip is almost poetic.

And to know that we are only getting started, since the number and diversity of albatross will only increase as we get closer and closer to South Georgia, is beyond exciting!

The rest of the morning was spent with hoovers, brushes, tweezers and magnifying glasses in a buzzing theatre. Everyone came by to clean their gear, backpacks, tripods, walking poles ... anything that will go out in South Georgia needs to be squeaky clean. So every grain of sand, mud or seed needs to be removed to ensure we can't introduce any invasive species or foreign organisms. All the Muck Boots got scrubbed clean, every grain of sand

got pried out of the boots with the use of paperclips. Needless to say we were happy to be done with tasks that require such intense attention to detail. But it is all worth it when we get to protect one of these wild, remote places. Because that is the whole lesson, right?

We are attracted to these wild places because they are pristine, because they are 'untouched', and we want to take that all in, see it all. And that, undoubtedly, comes with a responsibility to keep it that way.

The old 'leave it better than you found it' certainly is applicable here.

In the afternoon we had a real treat from Ade, who told us all about the fascinating world of birds.

He particularly helped us with useful tips on how to ID birds. Telling us about the different groups, specific body or flight details and a fun quiz at the end to help it all become more familiar. And what a great way to end the lecture and put it all into practice with a 30-minute Citizen Science session on the outer deck identifying and counting the number of different species we could see flying around the ship.

Now time to ring in the New Year with a glass of bubbly, some fun bar trivia with Liz and Erin, about everything and anything that happened in 2022 and a good night's sleep on the gently rolling Southern Seas.



At Sea

DAY 5 | Sunday 1 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 1 Jan

Latitude: 52°54'9" S

Longitude: 047°17'2" W

Course: 101°

Speed: 11.7 knots

Wind Speed: N 6

Barometer: 1021

Air Temp: 3°C

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, the furrow followed free: we were the first that ever burst into that silent sea.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Waking up on the morning of 01 January 2023 feels different than any other New Year's Day. Last night we crossed the date line that holds so much significance to us humans - for many the line between the past and the future. Yet it seems so irrelevant to the vast ocean around us as we sail through it on our way to South Georgia. At the same time, the Scotia Sea does feel somewhat different. We finally lost the protection of the land, and as the wind shifts around we become exposed to the forces of nature. The ship swings in the building swell and the hull starts to sing with every bigger wave hitting us on the port side, becoming a morning wake-up call for many.

Since we left Stanley in the Falklands two days ago, we haven't seen land. As far as the sight reaches there is only seawater. But what might seem like an empty space at least at the first glance, is in fact full of life and in perpetual motion.

The cloud chasers come on deck to identify different types of clouds, not discouraged by strong gusts reaching nearly 50 knots. Their input will help NASA collect data about the weather and the climate, and it so happens they are one of only two units in the Southern Ocean to do so today.

The space between the sky and the water is where the bird watchers place their interest. The beautiful ballet of prions in the morning is followed by wondering albatrosses leading us through the sea. In some myths the albatross was believed to bring good luck to seafarers who spotted it. They also symbolise freedom, wanderlust and hope, values rather fitting when stepping into the New Year on our journey through the ocean.

As the day progresses, we look, we listen, we learn. Who would've thought that margarine used to be made out of whale oil? Or how far fur seal pelts had to travel before they found a new owner? As we immerse ourselves in the history of South Georgia there is a strong feeling of growing anticipation. What will we find at our first landing? How do we navigate through one of the biggest natural wonders in the world?

As we continue our journey through the Scotia Sea, we can never know what we'll find among the winds, the spray and the white horses. The ocean is Neptune's dancefloor, and we are not the ones in the lead. Like a dance,



Right Whale Bay

DAY 6 | Monday 2 January 2022

Position at 0700 on 2 Jan

Latitude: 53°42'1"S

Longitude: 040°01'2"W

Course: 101°

Speed: 11.1 knots

Wind Speed: W 5

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: 2°C

Here is scenery which, on a crystal clear day, must hold its own with any in the world. We gaze and drink it in; there is a hush as we who have not seen it before stand in a group and watch it unfold.

—Sir Alister Harder, *Great Waters*, 1967. On South Georgia.

The year is young, and we were ready for our first landing in the wild outdoors! Having passed Shag Rocks (in Spanish called *Islas Aurora*!) during the night, we were closing in on the beautiful South Georgia islands. In the morning, during a leisurely breakfast, we were looking out at some impressive fog surrounding the ship, typical for windless periods in this region of the world and lending the voyage a suitably dramatic backdrop.

Mid-morning, ornithologist Ade gave us an excellent overview of penguins, including a detailed description of the amazing adaptations that allow them to survive and even thrive in this most hostile of environments. Following this, some of us helped Marion and Hans to collect data for the Citizen Science project on cloud observations.

A couple of hours after lunch, our Expedition Leader Greg announced that we had arrived in South Georgia. A look out the window showed stark mountains, atmospheric fog and thousands of moving dots in the water and along the shoreline: the natives were out in full force! The impressive soundscape could be heard from the ship – there was honking, braying and vocalising.

After scouting the landing site, our Expedition Team took us ashore, the Zodiacs accompanied by curious seals and porpoising groups of king penguins. Can you say “mindboggling sensory overload”? We found ourselves surrounded by a plethora of animals: Antarctic fur seals were jostling with each other and from time to time bluff-charging at us. Pups were lounging in the sand, looking ridiculously cute and attempting to growl like their parents. King penguins waddled over to inspect the visitors. A few solitary gentoo penguins were marching along the shoreline. An elephant seal was sleeping amongst the fur seals. The Antarctic chickens, also known as snowy sheathbills, were hopping around. Giant petrels were scattered throughout, as well as opportunistic skuas who were eyeing the pups or stretching their wings. It was wonderful, exhilarating mayhem...and yet peaceful and harmonious at the same time.

We made our way through a stream, following our guides who took us to a king penguin colony of several hundred adult birds in various stages of moulting. Amongst them were almost-finished juveniles with, in some instances, quite daring hairstyles. We were free to roam, always keeping our distance from the animals where possible. The smells, sights and sounds were overwhelming.

An occasional look back out to sea showed us that our ship had been swallowed by dense fog and was invisible from the shore. Quickly, our attention was occupied again by the happenings on shore: there was so much to take in that it sometimes felt surreal. We took our time exploring this piece of wild South Georgia, guided and sometimes guarded by our Expedition Team who fended off the occasional over-enthusiastic fur seal.

After an extensive visit to this beautiful bay, we returned to the ship full of impressions. Over a delicious dinner, we compared photos and feelings: what a day! We will not forget our first landing anytime soon.



Salisbury Plain | Grytviken

DAY 7 | Tuesday 3 January 2023

Position at 0600 on 3 Jan

Latitude: 54°03'2" S

Longitude: 037°19'4"W

Course: Anchor

Speed: Anchor

Wind Speed: ENE 1

Barometer: 1000

Air Temp: 4°C

What the ice gets, the ice keeps.

—Shackleton to Worsley and Wild in July 1915 as the *Endurance* was beset by the ice of the Weddell Sea.

We cry twice in South Georgia: when we arrive, and when we leave. We're not ready to leave yet, but this perfect day isn't going to help us be strong when that day comes! It was one of those busy days where you're not sure what your morning was like and you can't remember what you had for breakfast either. On Day 7 of our journey, it made complete sense as we skipped breakfast to embrace our second day in South Georgia in Salisbury Bay.

We were ready by 6:30 in the morning to head out, full of energy and driven by an ambitious plan for the day: landing, quick brunch, biosecurity and visit in Grytviken.

We set foot in Salisbury Plain by 7am where we discovered a vast area of level ground (the largest in South Georgia) interrupted by a large moraine. As the day brightened in the morning, Grace Glacier began to show itself. The landscape was surreal. This vast expanse of grassy glacial outwash plains was home to king penguins, hundreds of them everywhere. Many were moulting, which explains their high concentration at the streams as they are a source of water (normally taken from food, but penguins don't eat while moulting) and refreshment. Therefore, not so easy to pass! But we did our best, bumping into some not-so-friendly fur seals from time to time. We reached the main colony where we saw the chicks (vintage 2022) for the first time! Some of these brown, fluffy balls had not yet moulted, and it created a black, white and brown patchwork as far as the eye could see.

Brunch time then passed in a blur of anxiety as we had little time to once again clean our equipment for the biosafety inspection. Indeed, this morning in Salisbury Bay not only brought us joy, but also lots of mud and sand. Everything had to be cleaned up by 2pm for our arrival in Grytviken.

When we arrived at Grytviken, the sun was shining and the landscape was absolutely delightful. So it's hard to imagine the horrors that took place here, nor the smell of this former whaling station. Instead, we wandered in an enchanting place between (almost friendly) fur seals, sleeping elephant seals and a few king penguins that didn't seem to notice our presence. We were also warmly welcomed by the human inhabitants of the place. Some of us bought souvenirs at the shop, others sent postcards while many strolled through the museum.

By this end of the afternoon, Ben gave us a moving and enlightening speech about the life of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his incredible team-mates. On 4th January 1922, the *Quest* arrived in Grytviken, led by Sir Shackleton. He suddenly died the next day of a heart attack. Almost 101 years later, to the day, we toasted this heroic Antarctic explorer with whisky: a sip for us, and a little thrown on his grave out of respect.

Our fun-filled day closed with a nice dinner and a gentle rocking of the ship as we sailed towards Fortuna Bay.



Fortuna Bay | Stromness – Shackleton Walk

DAY 8 | Wednesday 04 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 04 Jan

Latitude: 54°04'1" S

Longitude: 036°44'9" W

Course: 288°

Speed: 6.4 knots

Wind Speed: W 7

Barometer: 998

Air Temp: 2°C

Visually and emotionally, the island of South Georgia overwhelms. At first glance, it resembles the far South Atlantic branch of Dr Doolittle's fantastic zoo: a profusion of captivating animals that quickly transforms even the most discriminating observer into a raving anthropomorphic.

—Ron Naveen, Wild Ice

We woke up at the beautiful and solitary Fortuna Bay and saw through the windows an incredible landscape on a sunny, but windy day.

The bay was named after the *Fortuna*, one of the ships of the Norwegian–Argentine whaling expedition under Carl Anton Larsen which participated in establishing the first permanent whaling station at Grytviken in 1904–5. Larsen (1860-1924) was a Norwegian-born whaler and Antarctic explorer who made important contributions to the exploration of Antarctica.

After breakfast and during the morning, we visited the small and well-protected bay and returned to the vessel to have lunch and then prepare for the famous Shackleton walk.

The walk is the last part of the journey that Shackleton and two of his men did on 20 May, 1916. This is a 6 kilometres hike from Fortuna Bay to Stromness Bay. The group of enthusiastic and happy hikers gathered at a beach at the south-eastern end of the bay and set out into the wilderness. The hike up from the beach was very steep, up through the tussock grass; all the while keeping a very keen eye out for any territorial Antarctic fur seals. Then onto a dry exposed valley where we saw traces of glacial activity. Also, we had the opportunity to (temporarily) say goodbye to our ship that was heading to Stromness Bay without us, where she would pick us up.

We made our way to Crean Lake where we regrouped for a brief, but well-earned rest, giving us time to enjoy the vast and panoramic views down the valley. Then we continued walking up to the highest point, 300 metres above sea level. The next part of the hike was probably the most challenging, even though it was downhill. It was a festuca grassland with a lot of loose scree all the way to the base. The landscape of the riverbed was quite different to what we had just traversed, more arid and also flat.

We followed the edge of the river which flowed between banks covered with green moss. There were more



fur seals here and some king and gentoo penguins enjoying the sunny day. When our ship came into view, we knew we had made it to Stromness Bay, a coastline covered with noisy fur seals and penguins. Stromness was an active whaling station until 1931 before finally being abandoned in 1961. The site of the whaling station itself is no longer accessible because of the dangerous state of the rusty old buildings and machinery. It was here that Shackleton and his men recovered from their journey before moving to Grytviken where they started arranging the rescue of the men stranded on Elephant Island.

Once we had made it down to Stromness Bay, we were greeted by the rest of the Expedition Team and guests. What an honor it was to be able to walk in the footsteps of the legendary Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Godthul | St. Andrews

DAY 9 | Thursday 05 January 2023

Position at 0600 on 5 January

Latitude: 54°14'5" S

Longitude: 036°14'6" W

Course: 124°

Speed: 6.4 knots

Wind Speed: NW 6

Barometer: 995

Air Temp: 2°C

With its coating of mud, urine and faeces, there are few things dead that smell as bad as a moulting elephant seal alive.

—The Sierra Club Handbook of Seals and Sirenians

As I stared out from the ship to the rising full moon generously donating its light to a resting ocean, my aching legs from the days' Shackleton Walk from Fortuna Bay to Stromness were no match for my excitement at the planned activities for tomorrow.

Morning quickly came and I awoke to the ship entering Godthul Harbour, quite possibly my favourite destination along the South Georgia coastline, and the previous night's excitement was quickly justified. A small and protected circular harbour, its waters welcomed us with their calmness as the sun shone in a clear blue sky overhead.

As we anchored in the middle, the cry from the seals and penguins lining the small accessible parts of the shore were music to our ears. Scanning the inside of the harbour, I wondered what we would find on our escapades along the rock and tussock covered cliffs that lined this cold water oasis.

Climbing through tussock covered hills, exchanging greetings with territorial fur seals along the way, we reached the lake nestled in the cradle of the rocky mountains behind it. Pintail ducks and petrels flew overhead as we weaved our way to the gentoo penguin colony that overlooks the entirety of the harbour. If I could build a house here, this is the spot I would build it and alas the penguins are of the same mindset for their temporary breeding and nursery homes.

Weaving my way back down to the landing site, which was to the right of the whaling remnants and whale bones, I noticed the kayakers and snorkel teams enjoying the clear waters of the harbour. Picturesque barely describes this place formed millions of years ago.

As we departed through the headland and back out into open ocean, I closed my eyes and recollected the sights and feelings that Godthul had brought me once again. I savoured them, and then promptly stored them away in my memory. I can't wear them out, for they will have to last until I am lucky enough to visit here again.

Memories were interrupted however, as we sailed toward St Andrews Bay, as we passed humpback whales and a pod of orca on our starboard side. As fleeting as the visit was, it's always fantastic to witness their travels.



St. Andrews, a colony of hundreds of thousands of king penguins, flanked by elephant seal populations and an odour reaching offshore that is very distinct. Once ashore, a casual stroll is enough to be awe-inspired by the sheer number of adult and moulting penguins. Surrounded by retreating glaciers, with storm clouds threatening from above, the moodiness of the weather doesn't detract from the privilege of being in this wondrous place.

Forty-knot winds accompanied by sleet and snow put a halt to the landing, but its uniqueness had already been imprinted in the minds of all that walked the shores.



Gold Harbour | Cooper Bay

DAY 10 | Friday 06 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 06 Jan

Latitude: 54°37'8" S

Longitude: 035°52.5" W

Course: 272°

Speed: 6 knots

Wind Speed: N 4

Barometer: 1013

Air Temp: 3°C

For speed and efficiency of travel, give me Amundsen; for scientific discovery, give me Scott; but when all hope is lost get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton

—Sir Edmund Hillary

Another spectacular morning! With sunshine and turquoise seas like these, it's easy to forget that we are in the throes of the wild Southern Ocean, over one thousand kilometres away from permanently inhabited civilization. We've all been diligent with sunscreen use, so no one is looking like a tomato, despite the near-tropical vacation we have all been enjoying in South Georgia.

This morning we had a landing at the epic Gold Harbour: a site characterized by the natural amphitheatre of ice that encircles the western aspect of the shore. The Bertrab Glacier, though experiencing rapid and significant retreat, is a dramatic backdrop to the thousands of penguins and seals that return year after year to this special place. There was plenty to see on shore. Many king penguins had eggs tucked in their brood pouches, with the occasional gentoo waddling past, too. The beach was littered with weaners, their enormous eyes peering around, looking for anything that could substitute a mother. Light-mantled sooty albatrosses, skuas, and southern giant petrels soared overhead. There were some more unusual sightings, too: a lone chinstrap penguin, as well as a leopard seal!

We then continued our journey, experiencing some formidable winds as we approach the southernmost point of South Georgia. With gusts up to 60 knots, there were still many brave people out on the observation deck to watch humpback whales feeding off the bow of the ship. The prospect of landing in such conditions were looking tenuous at best, but Greg's spirit of adventure came through, and we ended up finding a small slice of beach to set up camp amidst the gentoo penguins, one lone king penguin, and of course, many territorial fur seals. Once landed, we forged a path through steep mounds of tussock to catch a glimpse of macaroni penguins for the first time. These compact little creatures evoke a sentiment from polar explorer Apsley Cherry-Garrard: "penguins are 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". We were able to view them both from land and then again by Zodiac cruise – the winds calmed, so the ride back to the ship was glorious, albeit less adventurous!

Our last day in South Georgia ended with a ship cruise through the majestic Drygalski fjord. Here, we see the landscape change from the lush, green island that we have known over the past three days, to a stark, icy, and



At Sea

DAY 11 | Saturday 07 January 2023

Position at 0500 on 07 Jan

Latitude: 56°08'9" S

Longitude: 038°42'7" W

Course: 232°

Speed: 12.5 knots

Wind Speed: NW5

Barometer: 1017

Air Temp: 2°C

Its turreted top was no doubt once its bottom, the iceberg having turned over as the equilibrium of its mass shifted, melt drop by melt drop, calorie by calorie. It is striated blue and white: ice and air.

—David G. Campbell, *The Crystal Desert*, 1992

After a bumpy start to the night's passage away from South Georgia, we awoke to a much calmer sea state, not far off what we like to refer to as the 'Drake Lake'. For many of us, it was a morning to have a sleep-in and a slow start after an epic four and a half days at South Georgia. And what a perfect opportunity it was to reflect on the incredible experience we had on one of the most spectacular islands in the world.

We achieved so many things in the time we spent there: we braved landings through the surf onto rugged shores; we stood amongst hundreds of thousands of king penguins; we weaved our way around growling Antarctic fur seals; we hiked in the footsteps of Sir Ernest Shackleton; and we marveled at glaciers pouring off the mountains and into the sea. I think I can speak for all of us in saying that these last few days are something that we will never forget for the rest of our lives.

As the day progressed, we had a fascinating lecture from our naturalist Leo about his experiences as a scientist in Antarctica. The things that he has seen and done on the frozen continent are enough to leave any of us in awe.

For some of us, it was a good chance to take part in the cloud and Ebird surveys that occurred throughout the day. Being on a ship in such remote places, we are given such a great opportunity to help fill in the gaps for these locations that scientists simply cannot get to.

In the afternoon, it was time to listen to Ade talk about the mighty albatross and its fascinating biology. To see the mighty albatross in flight, gliding so effortlessly is something integral to any trip to the Southern Ocean. The albatross is a bird that has enchanted mariners for centuries and still enchants us nowadays. It has featured in some of the great literary classics such as Samuel Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Here is a small passage from *Moby Dick* that describes the enchantment that the albatross evokes:

"I remember the first albatross I ever saw. It was during a prolonged gale, in waters hard upon the Antarctic seas. From my forenoon watch below, I ascended to the overclouded deck; and there, dashed upon the main hatches, I saw a regal, feathery thing of unspotted whiteness, and with a hooked, Roman bill sublime. At intervals, it arched

forth its vast archangel wings, as if to embrace some holy ark. Wondrous flutterings and throbbings shook it. Though bodily unharmed, it uttered cries, as some king's ghost in supernatural distress. Through its inexpressible, strange eyes, methought I peeped to secrets which took hold of God."

As the sun set on the Scotia Sea, we concluded our restful day at sea and continued our advance towards Antarctica



At Sea

DAY 12 | Sunday 08 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 8 Jan

Latitude: 58°39'6" S

Longitude: 045°25'2"W

Course: 220°

Speed: 11.7 knots

Wind Speed: NE 3

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 4°C

There are many other beautiful sea-birds, but the most beautiful of all are the snowy petrels, which approach nearer to the fairies than anything else on earth.

—Aspley Cherry-Garrard

This morning dawned to a misty, grey, overcast day as we made our way towards the Antarctic Peninsula. This was the start of our second sea day after departing the amazing sights of South Georgia. About 7.15am we received word of one of our first iceberg sighting, a large tabular iceberg majestically appearing out of the misty morning haze, affording great photo opportunities. Our Naturalist Ade was out and about doing sea bird observations and had a good sighting of whales quite close to the ship. At 11am we had a lecture about ice, excellently explained by Bettina, one of our experts on the Expedition Team.

Thankfully the mist cleared and good visibility was available while we enjoyed lunch under a grey brightening sky. Marion was out on deck shortly after lunch carrying out her cloud observation survey for the Citizen Science projects. Around about 1pm we had a good gathering of cape petrels and along the starboard side of the ship, gracefully gliding the wind with ease, their beautiful wing patterns on display.

At 2pm bridge tours commenced, giving anyone who wished a chance to go and view how things are run by the officers and deck crew of the ship. Ade was as usual out on deck where they had spotted black browed albatross, prions and white chinned petrels. At 3.40pm we were treated to Vic's excellent lecture on Whales: How to Identify them and their Communications, followed by a chance to relax with afternoon tea.

As the afternoon progressed, sailing smoothly along at 6pm re-cap and briefing was given by Isabelle, Andrea and Greg, covering the X-BOW® of the ship, Elephant Island and Point Wild history and our upcoming plans for the next day.

A delicious dinner was served at 7pm by our fantastic restaurant team followed by a bar raffle held in the Elephant Island Bar, giving a chance to relax and have some fun, whilst enjoying an evening drink with fellow travellers and friends. Sailing onward steadily towards our first destination under a bright evening sky towards Antarctica.



At Sea | Point Wild

DAY 13 | Monday 09 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 9 Jan

Latitude: 60°38'3" S

Longitude: 052°47'5"W

Course: 245°

Speed: 11 knots

Wind Speed: NNW 6

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 0°C

POINT WILD

The hut grows more grimy every day. Everything is sooty black. We have arrived at the limit where further increments from the smoking stove, blubber lamps, and cooking gear are unnoticed. It is at least comforting to feel that we can become no filthier...from time to time we have a spring cleaning, but a fresh supply of flooring materials is not always available, as all the shingle is frozen up and buried by deep drifts. Such is our Home Sweet Home.

—a crew member writing about living conditions at their Elephant Island camp

We awoke to another morning at sea, the gentle rock and roll of the Southern Ocean slipping under the hull and Greg's dulcet tone awakening us from our slumber. We were roused with the notion that we were floating on a sea of milk, with the fog encircling the ship, and our view out to the world beyond limited by the dense, low-lying cloud.

Ah, mornings at sea, aren't they wonderful? It's a slower pace, a chance to roll back over and sleep another 20 minutes, to sit in the library and get lost in a book, whilst occasionally glancing up and instead getting lost watching an albatross soar amongst the mighty waves. Perhaps for your morning at sea you head out on the deck and participate in a Citizen Science survey or hit the treadmill and work off all those desserts in the gym; when you think about it, there are endless ways to spend a morning at sea.

Between now and our arrival back to Ushuaia, we should have only two more sea-filled mornings (if the weather is on our side). When these days come, I highly encourage you to carve out some time to sit with yourself, no phone, no distractions and reflect on the days and experiences of this incredible voyage we are on. We have and will continue to experience so much on this journey. As the days of South Georgia all melt together, so too will those of our time on the Antarctic Peninsula. But each and every moment of these days is so special, so unique and we are of a privileged few who have encountered such wonder, such beauty and incredible phenomena of our natural world. From our first glimpse of South Georgia in all its glory at Right Whale Bay, to sailing down the breathtaking Drygalski fjord, there were countless amazing, thought-provoking experiences in between that were felt by us all...It is undeniably important that we each take the time to reflect and note the significance of these precious, small moments, including the time spent at sea, that makes this amazing expedition a whole...

Of course, that includes today, we were incredibly fortunate to explore by Zodiac the coastline of the rugged and unforgiving Elephant Island at Point Wild. A place where 22 of Shackleton's men overwintered in 1916, surviving treacherous Antarctic gales and storm fronts, led by the courageous Frank Wild, who is now the point's namesake. Gazing upon the narrow, rocky shoreline where a bust of Wild has been erected, we had the opportunity today to cast our minds back, trying to imagine surviving through such a harrowing experience. Their survival story is one of endurance, and although the ship did not survive, it surely was aptly named for the men on board.

May our days ahead exploring the Antarctic Peninsula be filled with an equal sense of wonder and awe as the days that lie behind us, for what a remarkable experience to begin the year of 2023.



Brown Bluff | Paulet Island

DAY 14 | Tuesday 10 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 10 Jan

Latitude: 63°20'8" S

Longitude: 056°52'5"W

Course: 171°

Speed: 7 knots

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

Tossed and turned in Bransfield Strait by 70 knots of wind during the night we finally turned east and found calmer waters in Antarctica Sound by the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. Black outcrops of rock festooned the huge undulating glaciers except where they were throwing their bluish-white faces directly into the sea. A bit of blue sky and 1 degree Celsius warned us to dress warmly for the first landing of the day at Brown Bluff setting foot on continental Antarctica for the first time.

Brown Bluff may sound ordinary when so many places are named after famous polar explorers and their feats. It soon became evident that the place was nothing but ordinary as thousands of adélie penguins mixed in with some gentoo engulfed us as soon as we got ashore. There was a lot of commotion. Up and down the beach, in the water, on icebergs, on every hillside, the elegantly dressed adélies showed off their tux-like black and white plumage as they were commuting from one end of the shore to the other for no obvious reason. As opposed to the adults, the chicks looked like big dark brown puffballs, cute but far from the sharp attire of the parents. The gentoos with their white earmuffs seemed more tranquil, their young looking positively adorable in fluffy dark grey overcoats, white bellies and dark half masks. No matter what type of offspring they seemed pretty hungry and would chase adults around, parents or not, to get fed.

The cherry on top was the very rare sight of the elusive snow petrel nesting on one of the hillsides above all the penguin hustle and bustle. In a little cave, three adults and a chick were laying quietly on little ledges and didn't take any notice of us visiting them. As our brief encounter with this fascinating place came to an end the sun shone brightly from a blue sky and glimmered in the bergy bits that littered the shoreline like blue and white gems left by the tide.

After a delicious lunch the view from Deck 8 spoiled us with porpoising penguins and masses of fabulous icebergs in a myriad of shapes, one looking exactly like a frigate with a reindeer on top (more than one of us saw this).

Wind Speed: SW 7

Barometer: 992

Air Temp: 1°C

Our afternoon's delight was Paulet Island. The volcanic island was named after Lord George Paulet from the British Royal Navy by James Clark Ross who led an expedition here in 1839-1843. Later on in 1903, during the Swedish Antarctic Expedition led by Otto Nordenskiöld, a hut was built as a shelter for his shipwrecked men. The remains of the hut were still there to be seen together with approximately 100,000 pairs of breeding adélie penguins. An incredible amount of life materialised around us as we walked up from the beach to the hut and it just went on as some of us hiked up to a saddle and became gobsmacked by the view of even more shoreline, lakes, and hills adorned with penguins. Down by the sea again we saw our first weddell seals having an afternoon nap undisturbed by the cacophonous sound of the birds and the crashing waves. Going back to the landing site by the beach was evidently impossible and thus saturated by everything penguin we were picked up by our ever trusty Zodiacs and whisked off to the ship.



Lindblad Cove | Whale Watching Gerlache Strait

DAY 15 | Wednesday 11 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 11 Jan

Latitude: 63°35'6" S

Longitude: 059°26'6" W

Course: 211°

Speed: 10.90 knots

Wind Speed: W 5

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: -1°C

We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure.

There is no end to the adventures we can have, if only we seek them with our eyes open.

—Jawaharlal Nehru

It was nice to wake up and see calm seas for the first time in many days. It was an amazing Antarctic setting as we sailed into Charcot Bay and down into Lindblad Cove. There is nothing quite like being in a place filled with giant icebergs, glacier walls, and tons of brash ice to cruise and paddle through. It can feel like you are on a different planet! Being immersed in all that ice can really make you feel small and the sights and sounds of the ice moving all around you is just spectacular. One of the Zodiacs spotted a leopard seal on the ice and boats raced all the way across to the bay to get a sighting. Even some of the kayakers were lucky enough to find one. Your first leopard seal sighting is pretty great. Just seeing the size of them is cool, but they also have this Joker-like evil grin on their faces at all times. Then around noon we headed out into the Orleans Strait sailing further south to find a beautiful setting for the BBQ. Luckily we were slowed down by some feeding humpback whales. It was a bit foggy as we arrived at the southern end of Trinity Island and near Spert Island, but it did not deter anyone from having a blast outside. Everyone was enjoying the fresh air and good food and warm drinks, but the party really got started once our Hotel Manager, Ulises, started a conga line with cups on his head. Once the dancing started it did not stop and continued late into the evening with many of the guests and all of the expedition team showing off their best and worst dance moves. Even the Captain was out there for a bit throwing shapes.

We ended a truly great Antarctica day by continuing to sail south into the Gerlache Strait with a beautiful sunset to finish off a really fun day.



Cuverville Island | Port Lockroy/Jougla Point

DAY 16 | Thursday 12 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 12 Jan

Latitude: 64°34'8" S

Longitude: 062°32'6" W

Course: 220°

Speed: 6.3 knots

Wind Speed: NNE 8

Barometer: 1007

Air Temp: 0°C

He was thoughtful and grave – but the orders he gave
Were enough to bewilder the crew.
When he said ‘Steer to starboard,
But keep her head larboard,’
What on earth was the helmsman to do?

—Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*, 1883

“Good morning, good people!” Breakfast is at 7am, it’s a bit blustery out, and we’re headed towards Cuverville Island to spend the morning with the gentoos.

Arriving at anchor, the conditions were a bit ‘sporty’, snow was pelting our drivers in the face (one of the reasons we all bring goggles), and the Zodiac drive was promised to be wet. Obviously, kayaking and snorkelling were cancelled. As we loaded from the marina to brave the windy and wet conditions, we cruised through the iceberg graveyard, towards the landing site, on Cuverville Island. As the wind died down, the snow picked up, and the icebergs started emerging from the fog. Taking in the scenery, we knew we were in Antarctica. Being inspired by the beauty, Jorge and Beatriz exchanged snow balls (thanks William and Henry), and Greg blessed their marriage. With a crowd of expeditioners and staff in attendance, well wishes and congratulations were shared with the newlywed couple as cheers echoed off the island — a truly memorable experience for us all.

A three-hour transit to Port Lockroy and Jougla Point, many expeditioners found themselves taking power naps, playing games, editing photos, writing postcards, and enjoying the foggy scenery. As the winds started to die down, we knew we were arriving in the protection of Port Lockroy tucked deep within the Neumayer Channel. Arriving on the tiny island base, we were excited to meet the Lockroy team and raid the gift shop. Unsure of when they would actually arrive, many of us sent postcards from the most southern post office in the world. Transferring to Jougla Point, we walked around snapping photos of the penguins and the scattered whale bones reminded us of the bloody whaling history of the Antarctic.

The snorkellers were skunked by a leopard seal, while the kayakers were finally able to get out paddling in the channel, and a surprise radio call made for a whale of a time! Three humpbacks feeding along the glacier face made the best place to watch from a kayak. Lunging, fluking, and experiencing the whales from eye level was

in the words of Jackson, “unreal”. The snorkellers also got an amazing show... being more portable under their motor-powered Zodiacs, they were able to easily manoeuvre themselves and the shutters were firing.

As the last Zodiac time came around, the winds started picking up and lifting the clouds from the peaks revealing the towering cliffs that had been surrounding us the entire time. With the sun making an appearance and the *Greg Mortimer* making a turn hard to port, we filled the outer decks and soaked in the beauty and scenery of the Antarctic!

An Antarctic Haiku by Liz MacNeil

Oh Antarctica!

A sensory overload

Ice, penguins, and smells!



At Sea

DAY 17 | Friday 13 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 13 Jan

Latitude: 62°25'1"S

Longitude: 063°51'9"W

Course: 351°

Speed: 13.9 knots

Wind Speed: SW 3

Barometer: 990

Air Temp: -1°C

The cold, dry climate and dust-free air of Antarctica mean that there is a complete lack of haze. In such conditions, as many explorers have discovered to their cost, distant objects seem close and mirages are common.

—John May, *The Greenpeace Book of Antarctica*, 1988

As the clock ticked over past midnight, we were treated to our last view of Antarctica, as the Melchior Islands dropped below the horizon and we headed out into the Drake Passage. As we slept, rocked by the cradle of the Drake in a moderate swell, we passed on our starboard beam the South Shetland Islands, so when we were roused from our slumbers by Greg's dulcet tones, we found ourselves in the middle of the Drake Passage. The reputation of this fearsome body of water as home to the roughest seas on the planet in part derives from the fact that it is a choke-point where the Southern Ocean has to squeeze itself into the narrow (550 kilometre wide) constriction between two mighty continents Antarctica and South America. It is also much shallower than the depths of the Southern Ocean around which it flows. Shifting a massive 120 million tonnes per second - is twice the volume of the Gulf Stream, or one hundred times the total of all the world's rivers - it is no wonder that things can get pretty hectic on the Drake.

We are lucky then, that the ocean is relatively benign as we begin our day. Many spent the morning processing photos, no doubt considering their contributions to the slide show, as there was a veritable queue in the Library for access to the slide-show computer. Mid-morning Ben took us through 'The Speed Dating History of the Antarctic Peninsula', beginning with the first landing by a sealing party in 1821. We followed the trials and tribulations of the members of the Gerlache Expedition, who became the first people to spend a winter in Antarctica, when their ship, the Belgica was 'beset' (stuck fast in the ice) for over a year, 1898-99. Ben told us about the extent of the whaling industry on the Peninsula in the early decades of the twentieth century, and how the tensions between Britain and Argentina led to Operation Tabarin, which saw the establishment in 1944 of permanent British bases on the Antarctic Peninsula, such as the one at Port Lockroy that we had visited as our last landing in Antarctica.

In the afternoon Marion showed us some dramatic ocean and ice scenes from research work that she has done as an oceanographer over many years. Her next research adventure will be on the Polar Pod, an aquatic 'space station' that is going to be drifting around the Southern Ocean on the Antarctic Circumpolar Current for two to

three years, seeking to do research that increases our knowledge of what is going on in the southern polar ocean. In the evening there was an auction to raise money to support the incredibly important conservation, restoration and preservation work done by the South Georgia Heritage Trust. The auction raised a very useful GBP 3,295. As we went to bed, there was a discernible up tick in the tempo of the sea, a harbinger of the more challenging weather forecast for our exit from the Drake on the morrow.



At Sea

DAY 18 | Saturday 14 January 2023

Position at 0700 on 14 Jan

Latitude: 57°19'5" S

Longitude: 065°34'2"W

Course: 343°

Speed: 11.5 knots

Wind Speed: SW 8

Barometer: 1008

Air Temp: 2°C

Only the most careful planning ... and endless patience in working out the tiniest details of equipment, will ensure a fortunate outcome.

—Roald Amundsen, *The Amundsen Photographs*, edited by Roland Huntford, 1987

Not the calmest night. Definitely not a Drake Lake, and almost a Drake Shake! We have been navigating through waves of six metres high all night. The ship has been moving quite a lot preventing some to sleep, causing sea-sickness in others. The result is a slow and calm breakfast. Not everybody shows up and the weather outside is a quite agitated ocean under a low cloudy sky. Looking by the windows, the main difference is the amount and diversity of birds. While yesterday was a very quiet day we can now see some wandering albatross along with some black-browed or grey-headed albatrosses, and also some storm petrels, white-chinned petrels and prions. We have obviously crossed the convergence and are now navigating in more favourable waters for seabirds.

During the morning, Ade is presenting the paintings and sketches he has been doing during this voyage and holds a painting demonstration from a field sketch of a snow petrel on its nest that he did in Brown Bluff.

It is then time to attend Ben's lecture to finally get the answer to this question: why is the Drake passage called the Drake passage? Through the stories of explorers as famous as Magellan, the history of the rough seas of the southern tip of South America is unravelled. At the end, we have the chance to discover the images of one of the last sailing tall ships, a gorgeous ship with three masts and tens of sails, through clips shots in 1929. Absolutely stunning footages of those seamen constantly working on the sails, the 350 ropes without being washed out by the huge waves flooding the deck!

It is time for lunch with still some of our passengers staying in their cabins. The sea is still moving the ship quite a lot.

At 2.30pm, Andrea presented with an unusual and very interesting topic, Psychology in Antarctica: How living in remote corners of this continent is affecting our mind? Living for months in a row with the few same people, in a tiny station or base camp, surrounded by an almost lifeless environment where no one can survive on their own. We had the chance to hear the stories of Leo working on seals in Antarctica, of Marion circumnavigating Antarctica for three months and Greg ascending Everest. And they all have been affected to a different degree and for a different duration by their amazing experiences.

After that, the kayakers gathered in the theatre for an end-of-voyage celebration talking about their best memories and sharing their beautiful paddling sessions. Meanwhile, the snorkellers were in the observation lounge, doing the same: going through the most memorable pictures of their trip.

The last lecture of the day was with Pat, going into the details of the whale's physiology when it comes to their adaptations to deep diving. A world like no other for those mammals whose ancestors were terrestrial and finally went back to the sea and can reach the amazing depth of 3000 metres, like the cuvier's beaked whale.

We now can see the coast of South America. Soon we will be at the entrance of the Beagle Channel to pick up the pilot that will lead us to Ushuaia. But meanwhile, it is time for our last recap: Marion and the becoming of dead whales in the ocean (always in her own funny way); Alex who went around the theatre asking everyone to tell their best memories of Antarctica, a beautiful way to remind us how exceptional and moving this trip has been; Pat summarising all the penguin species we have seen during our trip including the incognito penguin auction and the two dorky new year penguins. Some words from our captain to explain to us what to expect this evening and finally Greg and Rosie explained our plan for tomorrow.

As we approach the entrance of the channel, hundreds of sooty shearwaters with some great shearwaters circle around the ship.

Once the pilot climbs on board, we go full speed to Ushuaia.



Ushuaia

DAY 19 | Sunday 15 January

Position at 0700 on 15 Jan

Latitude: 54°48'6" S

Longitude: 068°16'7" W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: ENE 1

Barometer: 1015

Air Temp: 10°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

Ushuaia is the local Yamana name for a bay facing west. Today it is the capital of the island Tierra del Fuego and its 90,000 inhabitants come from all over Argentina and abroad. High living costs and cold weather don't deter Argentinians, the main attraction here is the opportunity to live a quiet and safe life.

The adventurous menu of the day offered us a choice of two half day excursions. One was a visit by bus to Tierra del Fuego National Park and the other a trip with a catamaran to Los Lobos Islands. Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego, as it is rightly named, was established in 1960 and covers 68,909 hectares in the south-eastern region of the island along the border with Chile.

The first stop was at the beautiful Ensenada Bay with a view of Isla Redonda the island emerald green backdropped by the blue Chilean mountains. The famous post office on stilts there was unfortunately closed due to being Sunday however we got to stretch our legs along the shoreline inhaling the sweet scents from trees and flowers for the first time since we left Stanley. The next stop was the park's visitor centre. Here we had time to absorb knowledge about this unique part of the world through an exhibition rich in information about the flora, fauna, geology, and history of the indigenous inhabitants that once thrived here.

After a stop by Lapataia Bay we were treated to a little walk enjoying the Lenga and Nire beech forest festooned by mosses and mistletoe. The path took us to up to a view point over the lovely Lapataia Bay and ended by the "El fin del mundo" sign where the national road number three stops and you cannot go further south by land. Better get your shoelaces tightened because from here it is 3,079 kilometres to Buenos Aires and 17,848 kilometres to Alaska!

The catamaran outing to Los Lobos Islands treated us to numerous spectacular sights of birds and sea mammals. From the boat we watched a large imperial cormorant colony and a short walk on one of the islands treated us to amazing vegetation and a flock of four black-faced ibis. Back on the boat a couple of friendly sei whales were spotted very close by on the Chilean side of the Beagle Channel as well as sea lions in abundance on a tiny island could be observed as we passed by. Then a huge surprise, three Andean condors swooped from the sky on to a sea lion carcass! Surely the gem of the trip. Our guide had a last surprise for us as a glass of water was put out and a curious blackish cinclode came to drink right out of the glass.



All back onboard the *Greg Mortimer* a delicious lunch awaited us and shortly afterwards, we were all summoned to Deck 7 aft for the obligatory group picture with the Beagle Channel delivering the scenic setting. The afternoon brought an opportunity to go ashore to explore Ushuaia and to do some shopping or perhaps visit the infamous old military prison from 1902.

At the Captain's Farewell Party all the crew not on duty, the officers, and the captain himself greeted us expressing their delight in sharing the voyage with us. The Expedition Leader Greg Mortimer reminded us of how positive energy inherently rubs off among people and that this mechanism certainly fertilized the wonderful vitality and connection between the crew, the E-Team, the expeditioners, and the adventures on the voyage. The evening closed off with a brilliant slide show exhibiting all the great photos submitted and once again reminded us of the abundance of memories created by all of us together.



Ushuaia

DAY 20 | Monday 16 January

Position at 0700 on 16 January

Latitude: 54°40'56"S

Longitude: 068°16'17"W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: SW 5

Barometer: 1013

Air Temp: 5°C

Disembarkation day.

The entire Aurora Team thanks you for joining us on this adventure, and we hope to see you on the high seas again!



Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Alex Chavanne, Brooke Greene, Anula Joachim, Erin Scott and Liz MacNeil

Number of Paddlers: 21

Total Paddle Outings: 6

Paddlers:	Glenn Potts	Katherine Gosling	Paul Herd
Beatriz Sanchez Lomba	Hedy Kindler	Kathryn Lawrence	Susan Pitts
Cheryl Winkler	Jackson Court	Mark Lawrence	Suzanne Cook
Christopher Peryer	Janet Abernethy	Lydia Osgood	Tessa Court
Gareth Jones	Jorge Martin Gistau	Margaret Schneider	
George Nelson	Katherine Cook	Pamela Flory	

Day 6 PM: Right Whale Bay

As we sailed along the northern tip of South Georgia, the thick fog that had enveloped the ship for the last day broke, and the magnificent, glaciated mountains of South Georgia revealed themselves. The ship anchored in Right Whale Bay, and everyone in the kayak team mustered themselves in dry suits for the first trip out. Getting off the ship into the kayaks proved to be a lively experience today, but it was good practice for the days to come in South Georgia where one often must work just a little bit harder to get off the ship. Both groups paddled into the encroaching fog and as the sounds of the ship died away, a cacophony of screams and barks could be heard from shore. Both groups paddled quite close to shore and for the first time had fur seals approaching and playing amongst our boats. It was a short paddle, as everyone also wanted to reacquire themselves with the land after crossing the Southern Ocean. A great first taste of the wonderful wildlife of this area.

Day 8 PM: Fortuna

While the majority of paddlers went hiking from Stromness to Fortuna, following in the footsteps of Ernest Shackleton, several paddlers stayed onboard and arrived in a calm(er) Fortuna Bay for a paddle. Lush green cliffs rose from the water and the low light at the end of the day illuminated the turquoise water as Liz paddled downwind, covering 3 kilometres in 15 minutes. A golden hour paddle took the small team around a group of islands with fur seals playing amongst the kelp. When they had their fill, a Zodiac retrieved the paddlers for an easy ride upwind back to the ship before dinner.

Day 10 AM Gold Harbor

It's no wonder that this morning's anchorage is called Gold Harbour. It's one of our favourite places in South Georgia, and today did not disappoint. With a backdrop of the hanging glacier behind the beach, our paddlers disembarked in turquoise water and set off in different directions. One group headed out among the skerries to the north, watching sooty albatross wheel in the sky above them, then turned and made their way back along a beach smothered in elephant seals and king penguins. A raucous and wild sight. The other group joined up with the first as both groups paddled into the lagoon behind the beach. The hanging glacier calved and sent ice tumbling hundreds of feet down the rock cliffs, and we marvelled at the sight above and around us. All back to the ship with a quick stop for some along the way, and onto our last landing on these wild islands.

Day 15 AM: Lindblad Cove

Today was a perfect Antarctic day. It was similar to what we think of when we think of the White Continent. The ship drifted amongst the brash ice in a colosseum of ice pillars and cliffs as most of the paddlers got out into the water. For the first time on the trip, the sea was like glass, and getting off the ship and into our kayaks wasn't a sporting affair. The two groups of paddlers went off in different directions, with the longer and faster group heading deep into the bay through many bands of thick brash ice, past slowly bobbing icebergs. The other group took off and spent time admiring towering icebergs and spending a few moments with their eyes closed, listening to the sounds of the ice. A magical day.

Day 16 PM: Port Lockroy

We sailed out of the windy Gerlache into the Neumeyer Channel and the wind gradually dropped. The kayakers eagerly took off out among the small islands and rocks surrounding Port Lockroy. Finishing a tour of the bay the kayakers were fortunate enough to spot several whales and spent a delightful time observing these enormous animals from our small craft. The second group soon caught up after a radio call, and what turned out to be our last paddle of the trip ended with whale watching set against a background of heavily glaciated mountains. A fantastic way to wrap up a trip that, while windy, offered some spectacular trips out.





Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guide: Andrew Palma, Hannah Cowley & Patrick Horgan

Number of Snorkels: 12 Total Outings: 7

Snorkellers:	Rory Willis	Lynne Tonti
Michael Skacej	Juliette Willis	Michael Kennedy
Lloyd Freckelton	Andy Martin	James Castleden
Diane Henry	Jennifer Martin	
Richard Willis	Tallie Davel	

28th Dec – 1st Jan: At Sea ~ Stanley, Falkland Islands ~ At Sea

Our first five days on board the ship were spent preparing ourselves for the adventure that lay before us. We had a great stop off in the Port of Stanley, the capital of the Falkland, and a few days at sea. We used this time for the snorkel team to meet one another and learn more about the extra adventurous experiences they were in for, during their trip of a lifetime to South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. With everyone geared up and familiar with their dry suits, the whole group was getting super excited for the possibility of our first snorkel at South Georgia in the coming days.

2nd January 2023, PM: Right Whale Bay, South Georgia

By mid-afternoon, the clouds had parted and revealed the rugged majesty that is South Georgia. The jagged, snow-capped mountain peaks framed the bay, as a steady fog rolled in and shrouded the island in mystery once again. All kitted up and ready to go, the snorkellers headed ashore and wandered amongst the king and gentoo penguins, Antarctic fur seals and elephant seals that call Right Whale Bay home, while giant petrels and skuas circled looking for their next meal.

After the landing, everyone boarded the Zodiacs again and we headed off to get our shake-down snorkel happening. Not far from a high cliff with seals stretched along its shore, we snorkelled along the edge of a kelp fringe, making sure all equipment fitted properly and everyone remained toasty and dry. The whole group managed the first snorkel so well, and whilst the visibility wasn't the best, due to glacial run-off, we still had some great close passes by some fur seals, with a few masks getting a kiss!

4th January 2023, AM: Fortuna Bay, South Georgia

What an amazing bay to venture out and explore! Blessed with sunshine, we admired the steep mountains all around and headed across the bay for a bumpy ride to the landing site, where we were greeted once again by hordes of Antarctic fur seals. Bulls and pups littered the beach, while many females were likely out to sea feeding. The snorkel team headed off to explore the glacial flat and marvel at the spectacle that is this incredible sub-Antarctic wilderness.

Upon returning to the beach, we loaded into the Zodiacs once again and found a beautiful kelp fringe to explore. The curiosity got the better of the wildlife on this snorkel and many of the team were met by giant petrels checking them out at close range, as well as king penguins and fur seals. We are yet to find the clear waters of the island, but we all made the most of the snorkel with the wildlife interactions on the surface. What a morning!

5th January 2023, AM: Godthul, South Georgia

We awoke to yet another sunny, beautiful day and were very pleased to see the waters around the ship looking nice and clear and great for a snorkel. We began with an adventurous hike up a steep, tussock-covered slope, dodging hidden Antarctic fur seals and sweating it out in our drysuits to get up high to a beautiful gentoo penguin colony. It is amazing to think that these little gentoos make the same hike regularly to get to and from their colony.

We regrouped at the beach, eager to enter the water and cool off after our hike. We snorkelled by a beautiful kelp forest with nice clear water and found our way through the kelp to the rocky shore and had amazing encounters with Antarctic fur seals, where they forgot the aggression they show on land and instead showed an amazing degree of curiosity, checking us out and even rubbing up against us from time to time. It was hard to get out of the water from this snorkel! All of the action definitely made us forget that we were in waters of only a few degrees Celsius.

6th January 2023, PM: Coopers Bay, South Georgia

The ship steamed into a very windy Coopers Bay, blowing at 60 knots! With an abundance of wildlife all around, our fingers were crossed for a landing to happen and for a great snorkel session to follow. It wasn't long until we were getting into the Zodiac in some exhilarating conditions and steaming into shore. We hiked up above a beautiful macaroni penguin colony and ticked off yet another species of penguin for the trip.

After seeing the penguins from above, we followed up this experience with a snorkel in the waters right near the base of the colony, in a lovely little bay full of action. We had more encounters with curious Antarctic fur seals, whilst watching penguins jump on and off the rocks and swim by on their way to the shore. We also had some more cheeky giant petrels come and say hi and try yet again to steal some of our gloves. One of the most memorable moments of this snorkel was when Mike was filming some penguins on the rocks, completely unaware that the giant petrel was behind him, trying to have a peck of his suit! James caught a fantastic photo of this encounter that we'll never forget. We finished our snorkel with a lovely short Zodiac cruise around cliffs and gorges on this beautiful shore, and were graced with light winds to finish up the day.

10th January 2023, AM: Brown Bluff, Antarctica

This morning was time for our first continental landing on Antarctic mainland soil! We headed into the beach, weaving our way through beached icebergs and landed amongst traffic lines of adelic penguins, making their way along the beach. A steep walk up the ridge graced us with the beautiful sight of snow petrels sitting on their nests with chicks, something that was truly beautiful and very Antarctic!

Then it was time for our first snorkel with ice. With sunny skies once again, we jumped in the water near some beautiful icebergs, marvelling at their many shades of blue and white both above and under the surface. After a short while, some small growlers floated their way over to us and it was time to have a bit of fun climbing on these oversized ice cubes. Everyone was having a blast and the atmosphere was truly like that of playful excited children, experiencing something unique for the first time. Diane even managed to stand up on a block of ice for a short bit of time. Another growler floated by with a perfect 'lounger' carved out of it for everyone to sit on. What an amazing experience and something that truly reflects what Antarctic snorkelling is about.

10th January 2023, PM: Paulet Island

The afternoon saw us landing on yet another mind-blowing island, with thousands upon thousands of adelic penguins in all directions. There were parents and chicks all around, and we got to enjoy watching the antics of the chicks chasing the parents around for food. A beautiful hike around the moraine gave us a great view of the island and ended on a beach with resting Weddell seals.

We got picked up from the beach and headed over to our snorkel location. The wind was up and conditions were a little more extreme compared to the morning. We jumped in around a beautiful flat iceberg with plenty of adelic penguins and one chinstrap penguin on top. Around us in the water, plenty of penguins were swimming by, porpoising their way along the surface. Afterwards, we swam in towards the beach and played in the surge near the shore, whilst looking at more penguins and Weddell seals on land, and just soaking in the fact that we were snorkelling in Antarctica.

12th January 2023, PM: Port Lockroy & Jougla Point, Antarctica

In the afternoon we arrived at Port Lockroy and landed on the island, walking past gentoo penguins on rocky nests underneath the huts on the island. For some of us, it was time to send a postcard home at this extremely remote outpost of the British postal service. After enjoying the island, we boarded the Zodiacs to head to our snorkel site. Unfortunately, the appearance of a feisty leopard seal meant that we were unable to get in the water, but in some ways, it was a blessing in disguise. Shortly afterwards, the kayak team called us over to let us know that there were feeding whales in the vicinity. And what followed was a spectacular whale-watching session with two feeding humpback whales in front of a beautiful glacial shoreline. We saw plenty of head lunges and tail flukes and listened to the powerful blows of the whales breathing. An experience that we will all remember!







Bird Sightings

Bird Species	28 December 2022 – 16 January 2023																			
	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Gentoo Penguin			•			•	•	•	•	•				•		•				
Chinstrap Penguin										•		•								
Adelie Penguin														•	•					
Macaroni Penguin						•				•										
Magellanic Penguin	•		•																	•
Wandering Albatross		•	•																	
Royal Albatross	•	•																		
Black-browed Albatross	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•		•					•	•		
Grey-headed Albatross						•												•		
Light-mantled Albatross										•										
Giant Petrel	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•				•						
Cape Petrel						•		•		•		•	•	•	•					
Snow Petrel										•	•			•						
Antarctic/Southern Fulmar														•						
Blue Petrel						•					•						•			
Prion		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•				•			
White-chinned Petrel		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•			
Sooty Shearwater	•	•	•														•			
Wilson's Storm-Petrel		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•			
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel				•	•							•	•							
Imperial Cormorant	•		•			•	•	•	•	•					•	•				
Snowy Sheathbill							•		•	•				•						
Chilean Skua	•																			
Skua sp. (Brown or South Polar)				•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•			•				
Kelp Gull	•		•			•	•		•	•				•	•	•				•
Antarctic Tern					•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•				
South American Tern	•		•																	•



Bird Species	28 December 2022 – 16 January 2023																			
	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Dolphin Gull	•		•																	•
Great Shearwater																		•		
Rock Shag	•		•																	•
Turkey Vulture																				•
Falkland Steamer Duck																				•
House Sparrow																				•
Upland Goose																				•
Magellanic Oystercatcher																				•
Crested Duck																				•
Grey-backed Storm-Petrel														•						
South-Georgia Pintail															•	•	•	•	•	
South-Georgia Pipit															•	•	•	•	•	
Andan Condor																				•
Blackish Cinclode																				•
Black-faced Ibis																				•
Kelp Goose																				•





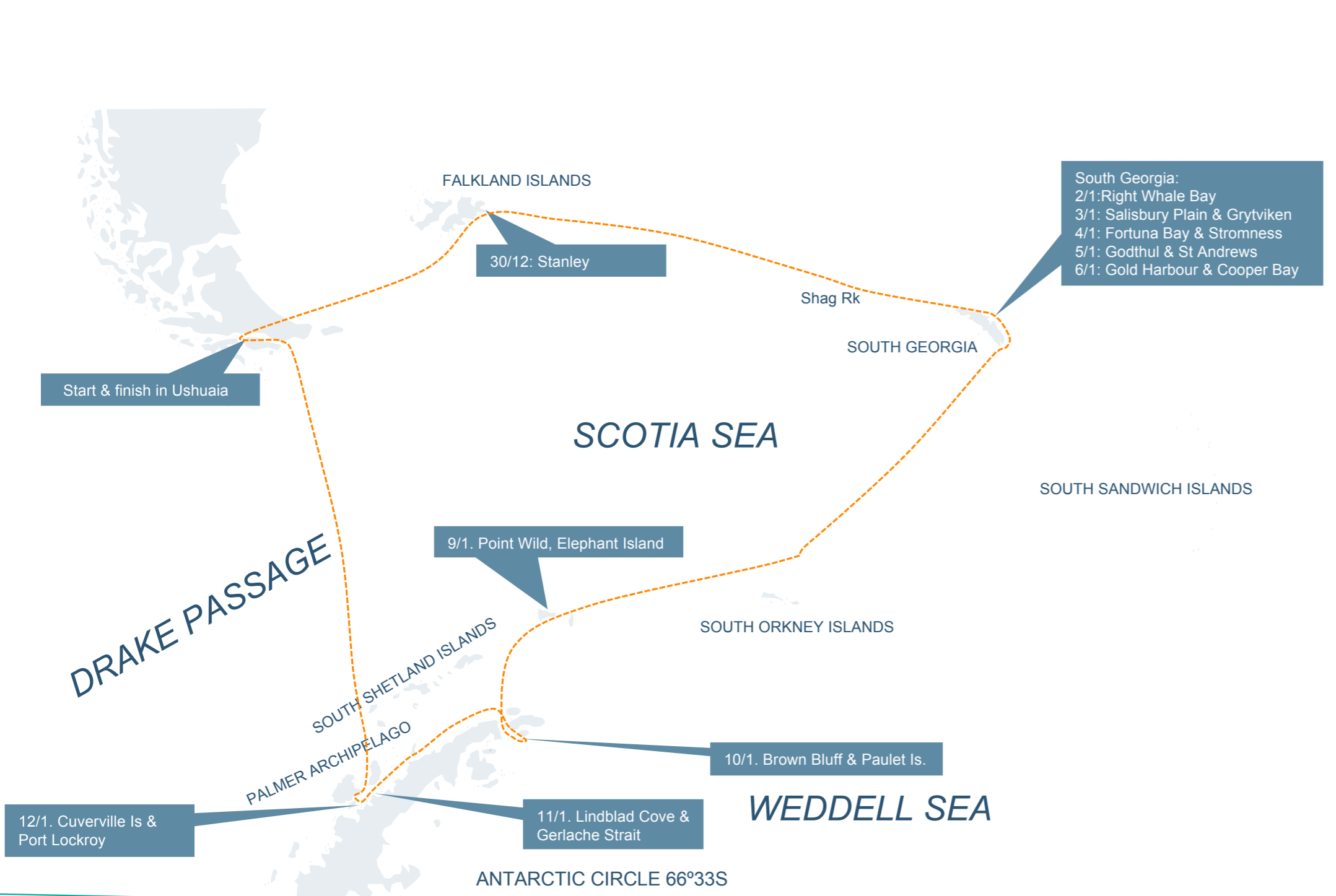
Mammal Sightings

Mammal Species	28 December 2022 – 16 January 2023																			
	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Antarctic Fur Seal					•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•							
Southern Elephant Seal						•	•	•	•	•			•							
Weddell Seal														•					•	
Leopard Seal										•					•				•	
Minke Whale					•															•
Sei Whale					•						•									
Sei/Fin Whale					•															
Humpback Whale									•	•									•	
Orca									•											
Dusky Dolphin		•																		
Peale's Dolphin		•	•																	
South American Fur Seal		•																		
Commerson's Dolphin																				•
South American Sea Lion																				•



An ode to Tussock Grass!
LIZ CASTLEDEN

The joy of walking through tussock grass
is really just a pain in the arse!
Climbing, climbing, seals beware!
We can't see you or know you're there!
Holes too deep or then too high
Plays havoc with my aging thigh!
Slippery, sliding down we come
Mostly sideways, then on our bums!
Not the nicest ^{of} places to be
But oh! Such views over the sea
Colonies of penguins make it all worthwhile
Despite my ungainly style!





Expeditioners:

Janet Abernethy

Doris Barnard

John Barrett

Deirdre Brown

Anthony Castleden

Elizabeth Castleden

Olivia Castleden

James Castleden

Suzanne Cook

Katherine Cook

Peter Court

Tessa Court

Jackson Court

Tallie Davel

Karen de Willimoff

Steve Denovan

Rupert Edwards

Annalise Elliott

Rosalyn Facey

Pamela Flory

Lloyd Freckelton

Ian Freckelton

Stephen Goddard

Kathie Gosling

Amit Gupta

Suman Gupta

Caroline Hayle

Michael Hayle

Aparna Hegde

Arthur Hellman

Diane Henry

Mary Lynne Henry

Paul Herd

Robert Herrmann

Mark Hickman

Philip Holloway

Julie Holloway

Carolyn Hyde

Tim Hyde

Chris Inward

Louise Inward

Yifu Jiang

Gareth Jones

Mike Kennedy

Bailey Kessing

Hedy Kindler

Duncan Lamb

Mark Lawrence

Kathryn Lawrence

Joe Lewit

Jan Li

Jan Martenson

Andy Martin

Jennifer Martin

Jorge Martin Gistau

Johnston McIndoe

Henry Meyer

Drew Meyer

William Meyer

Edith Meyer

Trish Molloy

Jacq Moth

George Nelson

Barbara Neuberg

Philip Osgood

Lydia Osgood

Ivett Papista

Chris Peryer

Susan Pitts

Glenn Potts

Ron Rouwenhorst

Fran Rouwenhorst

Beatriz Sanchez Lomba

Peggy Schneider

Christopher Sharples

Gayna Sharples

Annette Skacej

Michael Skacej

Robin Spry

Garry Spry

Jiaqi Tao

Henry Tennant

Leonard Thompson

Carol Thompson

Lynne Tonti

Manon Tremblay

Alan Van Norman

Kimberly Van Norman

David Weisser

Linda Weisser

Richard Willis

Juliette Willis

Rory Willis

Cheryl Winkler

Ning Zhu

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Greg Mortimer

Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Assistant Expedition Leader Trainee: Andrea Herbert

Onboard Expedition Manager: Rosie Leaney

Historian: Ben Maddison

Marine Biologist: Vicky Moens

Ornithologist: Adrien Brun

Oceanographer/Citizen Science: Marion Fourquez

Naturalist: Leo Soilbelzon

Special Guest: Bettina Ovgard

Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Alex Chavanne

Sea Kayak Guide: Erin Scot

Sea Kayak Guide: Anula Jochym

Sea Kayak Guide: Brooke Greene

Sea Kayak Guide: Liz MacNeil

Snorkel Guide: Andrew Palma

Snorkel Guide: Hannah Cowley

Snorkel Guide: Pat Hogan

Expedition Guide: Hans Bruning

Expedition Medic: Scot Thompson

Photography Guide: Adrian Wlodarczyk

Zodiac Master: Sergei Hincu

Mudroom/Shopkeeper: Gabriel Hernandez

Expedition Assistant: Anne Oeyasaeter

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Vadym Tavrovetsky

Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi

Safety Officer: Alexandru Chiriac

Bosun: Giovanni Dela Torre

Deck Cadet: Miguel Delgado

Deck Cadet: Goncalo Alexandra Saraiva Aniceto Costa

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

Chief Engineer: Dimitar Vasilev

Hotel Director: Ulises Cantillo

Chief Purser: Willie Lirio

Executive Chef: Ron Reyes

Head Waiter: Allan Liscaro

IT Officer: Ihor Yesmieniev

Receptionist: Jeremiah Castillo

Receptionist: Pirma Pakpahan

Able Seaman: Muhammad Karier

Able Seaman: Ramanda Vitrian

Able Seaman: Hardik Rao

Able Seaman: Ajay Fnu

Able Seaman: Andrii Mezentsev

Able Seaman: John Noble

Artwork thanks to:

Jorge Martin Gistau

Photography thanks to:

Adrian Wlodarczyk





