

Wild Antarctica

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 2-11 March 2023





Frei Station, King George Island

DAY 1 | Thursday 2nd March 2023

Position at 2300 on 2nd March

Latitude: 62°12.4'S

Longitude: 058°52.7'W

Course: 131°

Speed: 3 knots

Wind Speed: NW 4

Barometer: 989 hpa

Air Temp: -1°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

After some uncertainty whether the flight would leave Punta Arenas for King George Island, you can imagine the joy from everyone on board and as the plane touched down at King George Island, bringing many of our expedition party to Antarctica for the very first time.

King George Island, located in the South Shetland Islands, is referred to by some as the unofficial capital of the Antarctic, due to the numerous research stations located there. This typically windy island is composed almost entirely of igneous rocks, a reminder that this place was once one of powerful volcanic activity. In the early 19th century, King George Island, and indeed the wider Shetland Islands, were bustling with activity due to the highly lucrative sealing industry. Seal pelts were prized in many parts of the world and as a result of this rising industry, the seals of Antarctica were hunted to near extinction, eventually sending the industry into ruin. Luckily, our seal friends are incredibly resilient and their numbers are once again plentiful in this magical part of the world.

After disembarking from the plane, we were greeted by the merry faces of the first of many members of the Expedition Team, we would eventually meet this evening. The E-Team seemed equally as thrilled to see us as we were to see them, and the good vibes were running high as we boarded buses that escorted us down to the beach. After reaching the beach, donning our muck boots and learning how to put on our life jackets (not as simple as it looks), we boarded Zodiacs for our premiere Zodiac cruise over to the majestic ship that is the *Greg Mortimer*.

How delighted the crew were to welcome everyone aboard! Entering the beautifully decorated halls of the *Greg Mortimer* for the first time, we were greeted by our photographer, Renato, who took our happy snaps before sending us on our way to check in, drop off our bags and head to the restaurant for a delicious buffet served by many friendly faces. Afterwards, we made our way into the Lecture Theatre to receive a warm welcome

and humorous briefing from our Expedition Leader, Daniel. Before we could retire for the evening, it was first necessary to complete a mandatory safety drill, which also enabled our captain to lift the anchor, set sail and travel through the night en route to The Antarctic Sound. There was some swell throughout the night and many of us were rocked to sleep by the swaying of the ship, led into dreams of what exciting adventures the following days would bring.



The Antarctic Sound/Paulet Island

DAY 2 | Friday 3rd March 2023

Position at 0600 on 3rd March

Latitude: 63°06,9'S

Longitude: 057°11,8'W

Course: 145°

Speed: 10.7 knots

Wind Speed: ENE 3

Barometer: 990 hpa

Air Temp: -4°C

Antarctica. You know, that giant continent at the bottom of the earth that's ruled by penguins and seals.

—C.B. Cook, Twinepathy

What a glorious sight it was when we woke up with the Antarctic continent as our backdrop this morning. We were in The Antarctic Sound (named for the ship, The Antarctic which was crushed in the ice in 1903 – but more on that later) off the very tip of the Antarctic continent.

It was a morning of preparations as we were briefed on all the safety, environmental and wildlife-watching rules that are required before we set foot on Antarctica. Antarctica has yet to experience avian flu and the thousands of bird deaths that it causes, so the rules are strict to minimise the risk of this deadly virus spreading amongst Antarctic wildlife.

In the afternoon, we arrived at Paulet Island, where the crew of The Antarctic spent the winter of 1903 after their ship was crushed 25 miles away. The captain, Carl Eric Larson, and his crew of 17 men survived the sinking of the ship and marched across the ice towing a small boat with supplies to Paulet Island. There, they built a stone hut and survived the winter on their supplies and whatever penguins and seals they could find. Sadly, Wenneger, one of the crewmen, died over winter due to a pre-existing heart condition, but all others survived until their rescue the following summer.

After lunch, we launched our kayakers into the mist, confident that they would find their way back to the ship using GPS and compass.



The Naze/Devil Island

DAY 3 | Saturday 4th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 4th March

Latitude: 63°56,2'S

Longitude: 057°13,9'W

Course: 269°

Speed: 4.4 knots

Ice is the dominant environmental factor of the Antarctic shallow-water marine communities. Not only does it abrade the ocean floor, scraping away benthic organisms and mixing layers of sediment, it also affects salinity, temperature, currents, and the amount of light that penetrates the sea.

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

The warm morning sun, the beginning of a bluebird day, and Dan's dulcet tones waking us from our slumber; slightly earlier than anticipated, but certainly worth it. We were treated to the sight of an awe-inspiring tabular iceberg of the Weddell Sea, stretching for a mile long. We stood on the upper deck and balconies of the starboard side of the ship, taking in the enormity and grandeur of the berg, our captain navigating so expertly close that it almost felt like you could step across at one point. It was an incredible start to what was most certainly a memorable day.

The weather remained glorious as we began our morning outing to 'The Naze' on the northern coast of James Ross Island. On board the Zodiacs, we ventured through the shallow waters of Hurst Bay, arriving ashore where remnant shards of icebergs scattered the beach. With snow underfoot, we explored the narrow isthmus, taking in all the sights and sounds. We were in the land of dinosaurs, and with Paul's expert knowledge instilled, many of us were taking the chance to explore and find fossils along the way.

The truly intrepid folk headed off for the long walk and made our way up to the top of the peak at the northerly tip of The Naze, our efforts rewarded by a spectacular view; even clear enough to see all the way to Seymour Island on the horizon. It was such a beautiful place to explore, and amazing to imagine that dinosaurs once roamed the very land we were stepping on, millions of years ago.

We then sailed across a glass calm sea toward Devil Island, where we spent the afternoon. We were greeted on the beach by some Antarctic fur seals, and the last few moulting adelia penguins of the colony.

It was a short, pleasant walk amongst the ice to chat with Paul about the geology of the island, learning about the volcanic intrusions that towered above. Up the hill we were rewarded with another stunning view, the sunlight streaking through the clouds, casting a beautiful light on the bay and bergs below. Looking out from the hillside was akin to admiring a painting; for many of us, it didn't seem real.

Wind Speed: S 2

Barometer: 1000 hpa

Air Temp: -4°C



Brown Bluff/Gourdin Island

DAY 4 | Sunday 5th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 5th March

Latitude: 63°30,4'S

Longitude: 056°39,0'W

Course: 282°

Speed: 8 knots

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

—Apsley Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World*

Today we awoke to yet another fantastic sunny morning, surrounded by icebergs and calm seas. The morning began with a visit to the spectacular Brown Bluff, with its beautiful volcanic cliffs and a covering of fresh snow. Our landing was somewhat sporty, with a few waves coming through and a bit of adrenaline hopping off the Zodiac and racing up the beach before the waves caught up to us.

We stepped ashore onto the Antarctic mainland for the first time and were greeted by a beautiful colony of gentoo penguins, some wandering along the shoreline, others swimming in the shallows. To the keen eye there was also the odd adelic penguin interspersed amongst the group.

For some of us, it was a great chance to hike up towards the glacier and take in a great view of the glacier face and the bay it is pouring into. For others, it was a chance to just stroll around and watch the animals go about their day. We were giving way to penguins waddling by from all directions, whilst also watching fur seals chasing each other around the beach. By the end of the outing, the wind had picked up slightly and a few of us got to experience a cold Antarctic splash as we got back into the Zodiacs along the wavy shoreline.

We cruised away from Brown Bluff, leaving the Weddell Sea behind us but taking with us all the fantastic experiences that we got to enjoy during our few days in this truly Antarctic frontier. We progressed through the Antarctic sound, rounding the Northeastern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, and continued on to Gourdin Island. By the afternoon, the wind had picked up to a fresh 25 knot breeze, but that didn't dampen our spirits for adventure. A wet and windy Zodiac ride brought us into the fantastic landing site at Gourdin Island and it did not disappoint. Chinstrap, gentoo and adelic penguins were covering the island, whilst Antarctic fur seals and Weddell seals covered the beaches and lower reaches.

Those who had signed up for the longer walk, climbed to the top of the island and enjoyed a wonderful view south towards the Antarctic Peninsula. Whilst the snorkellers that didn't end up going snorkelling got to experience the rawer side of nature, witnessing a leopard seal predate upon a young penguin and the ensuing

Wind Speed: NW 4

Barometer: 1006 hpa

Air Temp: -3°C

feast provided to the giant petrels and storm petrels picking away at the leftover scraps.

Safe to say we really did get to experience a wildlife packed afternoon, that is hard to beat! We rounded off a fantastic day by sailing into the sunset and towards the Western side of the Antarctic Peninsula. Now we are entering whale country, so keep your eyes peeled everyone!



Mikkelsen Harbour/Sprightly Island

DAY 5 | Monday 6th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 6th March

Latitude: 63°50,8'S

Longitude: 060°29,8'W

Course: 200°

Speed: 9.8 knots

Tumble and rumble, and grumble and snort,
Like a whale to starboard, a whale to port;
Tumble and rumble, and grumble and snort,
and the steamer steams thro' the sea, love!

—Sydney Thompson Dobell

Well, what a day huh? It was a pretty special afternoon - it's not often you get to go somewhere none of the guides have ever been to. The sheer magnitude of the glacier faces, and the calmness of the surrounding waters was just something else.

Not only all the nature, we were also treated to some beautiful meals from the hospitality team and some fascinating recaps by our old hands Paul and John. Paul once again got us excited about 'dead things', as he says "as long as we are 100% sure things are very dead" they're right up his alley. John gave us 'Penguin 101' and also showed us how the impacts of climate change are causing population decline in some of our feathered friends.

It just got better as the wonderful Reba pulled out her ukulele and got us together for a good old-fashioned jam in the Elephant Island Bar. I guess practicing the twist and shout coming into the mudroom all week has really refined our dance moves! A special highlight was Pascal's performance - I am sure you can agree our Hotel Director is a superstar.

The atmosphere before recap said it all. Seeing as it is all of you expeditioners who have made it so special (thanks for bringing the weather!) I thought I would share a few quotes collected throughout the day:

"We are so sad, so so so sad today is over, it was just magnificent"

"You couldn't ever put on a brochure how it feels to be paddling through ice like this"

"Super clear water and lovely little forests of algae and shellfish, and how great is it to pretend you're a seal"

"Stunned silence"

"Shoutout to Bia and Reba for creating an incredible atmosphere on the Zodiac, we didn't even want to land"

Wind Speed: E 4

Barometer: 1007 hpa

Air Temp: -2°C

"I am super jealous; I wish I was a snork"

"I cannot describe today, I am just in awe"

"Oh my gosh, AHHHHH, this place is amazing, I am loving myself sick in this beautiful atmosphere"



The Graham Passage/Portal Point

DAY 6 | Tuesday 7th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 7th March

Latitude: 64°22,8'S

Longitude: 061°52,3'W

Course: 200°

Speed: 4.3 knots

To have a huge, friendly whale willingly approach your boat and look you straight in the eye is without doubt one of the most extraordinary experiences on the planet.

—Mark Carwardine

The *Greg Mortimer* slowly made its way through the Gerlache straight in the early hours of the morning as the sun reluctantly came over the horizon. The Gerlache strait is a rather famous body of water on the western side of the peninsula and is named in honour of the man who discovered it, Belgium explorer Adrien De Gerlache. On their journey maps are drawn and names immortalised. One of the largest islands is named after the man who disappeared in the waves during the expedition – Wienckeøya.

Now the area is best known for its protection from the tumultuous Southern Ocean, to the west and the abundance of whales in the area. In fact, the strait has a cruising speed limit of 10 knots as to avoid ship strikes of these gentle giants.

After a delicious breakfast we streamed down to the mudroom for the morning outing. Reba and Sam greeted us with the usual smiles and good tunes playing on the radio. The location of our morning activities was the Grahme Passage. This small channel between an island and the mainland lends itself quite nicely to Zodiac cruising rather than a landing.

Towering Glaciers rise from the water to the craggy peaks above. The glaciers constantly calve into the passage leaving it filled with both icebergs and a large amount of brash ice. The ice was not the highlight this morning though as humpbacks were spotted mid cruise. All Zodiacs deviated from any previous plan and headed over to see the show of the trip.

Two Humpbacks fed in the passage and putting on quite the show. The main behavior that was exhibited was lung feeding. As the whales take in as much krill as they can they rise to the surface mouth partly agape with water spilling from the sides. Right at the end of the operation one of these lovely specimens came alongside the *Greg Mortimer* and appeared to almost kiss the ship. Those lucky enough to witness this could see the silhouette of the whale and its pectoral fins spread wide.

Our afternoon consisted of a continental landing at Portal Point. This provided us a wonderful opportunity to walk up onto a glacier and explore this other worldly landscape. While looking down from above and into Charlotte

Wind Speed: NE 2

Barometer: 1001 hpa

Air Temp: -2°C

Bay some of us got to see an iceberg break apart. As one big chunk fell off and nearly disintegrated the berg began to roll over on itself kicking off large waves into the bay. The sheer power of such an event is something to behold.

On this day dinner became something more eventful than usual. A BBQ was put out on Deck 8 and the crew were all hands-on deck to pull it off. An amazing array of options was laid out before us and we enjoyed our outdoor BBQ tremendously. It's not every day you have dinner with icebergs to the left and to the right along with whales cruising past.



Danco Island/Fournier Island

DAY 7 | Wednesday 8th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 8th March

Latitude: 64°37,6'S

Longitude: 062°37,9'W

Course: 088°

Speed: 5.4 knots

Wind Speed: NE 5

Barometer: 1003 hpa

Air Temp: -4°C

If you see those pretty things
that nature likes to show
Remember all those seals that sing
And leave them there to grow.

—Stephen Cosgrove

This morning we awoke above iceberg-filled seas in a literal winter-wonderland, receiving a bird's eye view of a bubble-net feeding humpback! Many of us made our way up to the Observation Deck to find the decks of the *Greg Mortimer* still wearing last night's frost, as were the glacier blanketed mountains, which had clearly received a fresh dusting, and who's peaks were shrouded by high gray clouds. We were easing southbound from the Gerlache Strait, entering the Errera Channel. A spectacular monolith of rock, named Zeiss Needle, was passing by our portside. As Cuverville Island passed by our starboard, calm water and a slight break in the grayness appeared ahead, revealing yet another inviting island with a snow-dome sitting serenely below steep mountains and ice rivers. This protected pocket was to be our next destination, Danco Island. At 64°44'S, 62°37'W, Danco Island is the furthest south our expedition would reach.

By the time Zodiacs hit the landing beach, the sun was breaking through the clouds and the wind had settled. This channel is notorious for intense, gravitational gales known as katabatic, but we were blessed with a gorgeous calm ambience. A smattering of mostly indifferent gentoo penguins welcomed us ashore, giving us an opportunity to observe up close a creche of plump, downy chicks. Many intrepid hikers made the climb to rocky ridgelines and enjoyed spectacular panoramic views, and an ambitious few ventured all the way up to a snowy, bald summit. Others contoured along the lower, snowy slopes to the rocky northern promontory where a British science hut once sat. Leopard seals were spotted patrolling the icy shoreline.

Once back onboard the ship, we were pleasantly surprised to discover that a polar plunge awaited us! With robes donned, an impressive turnout of carpe-diemites anxiously queue up to touch down, rinse and repeat. Spectators cheered on from the upper decks, the sun shined, and a sense of apotheosis hung in the air.

With whales passing by our windows, we made the comparatively long, early afternoon transit towards our last stop. Fournier Bay sits in a bubble of protection, blocked from the looming Southern Sea by two large islands: Brabant and Anvers. Here, our prescient Expedition Leader engineered and manifested our briefest but arguably



Polar Plunge

DAY 7 | Wednesday 8th March 2023







At Sea

DAY 8 | Thursday 9th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 9th March

Latitude: 62°19,3'S

Course: 350°

Wind Speed: NNW 4

Air Temp: -4°C

Longitude: 063°50,5'W

Speed: 10.4 knots

Barometer: 1006 hpa

The land was gone, all but a little streak, away off on the edge of the water, and down under us was just ocean, ocean, ocean – millions of miles of it, heaving and pitching and squirming, and white sprays blowing from the wave-tops,and we had the sky and the ocean to ourselves, and the roomiest place I ever did see and the lonest.

—Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad

We were granted the opportunity for a sleep-in this morning, which a couple of us were very happy about after a turbulent night of rocking and rolling through the Drake Passage. Although the wonderful X-Bow technology of our ship makes the ride a lot smoother, it was not the calmest of nights. No Drake Lake for us, instead our captain navigated through 4+ meters of swell that prevented some of us from sleeping and caused sea-sickness in others. As a result, breakfast was slow and calm.

Thankfully, the captain managed to position the ship at a better angle towards the waves and the anti sea-sickness medication started to work its magic for most of us, resulting in a bit more hustle and bustle on deck later in the morning. We could not have asked for better timing because even though we were at sea, it was a day packed with activities. John enlightened us about the wonderful adaptations of some of the seabirds that spend most of their lives soaring the rough waters of the Southern Ocean. We learned how to identify the seabirds of The Drake Passage, and not long after the lecture we had the opportunity put all of our new knowledge into practice as black-browed albatrosses soared in dynamic flight right past the ship. After following Renato's photography advice offered in his lecture, we now also know how to capture these amazing birds in an award winning image.

As we continued to head North, many of us were feeling like real scientists while we were out on deck studying the clouds for our Citizen Science cloud survey, whilst others made their way to Deck 7 for a tour of the bridge. During the tour, our captain explained about the build of the ship, how he navigates through open waters, that the ships stabilisers do not flap like the wings of a snow petrel, and how the ship does not have a steering wheel, but just a teeny-tiny joystick to steer with.

After all this excitement we needed to relax a little bit and what better way to do so than with an enticing spread of sweet treats for afternoon tea, including chocolate cake, profiteroles, choc-topped coconut macaroons, and chocolate rice crispy slice. There was a palpable tranquility on board by this stage, as we looked back on our

voyage and spent time with our new friends and fellow expeditioners. As our expedition leader Daniel pointed out in his evening briefing, without even realising it, we had passed a latitude of 60 degrees South and officially left Antarctica.

Rich with experiences and memories that will hold a special place in our hearts forever, we shared dinner in good company while cruising further North with the sun setting in a spectacular array of colours.

At Sea

DAY 9 | Friday 10th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 10th March

Latitude: 57°27,6'S

Course: 004°

Wind Speed: NW 5

Air Temp: 2°C

Longitude: 063°01,6'W

Speed: 13 knots

Barometer: 1001 hpa

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

Upon waking, we were greeted once again by the rocking of our ship – calming for some, unsettlingly turbulent for others. With a decent sleep in under our belts, we slowly made our way to Deck 5 to convene for yet another hearty breakfast served by the joyful restaurant crew. After breakfast, it was time for Pat's 'Life Aquatic' lecture where we learned all about marine mammals' physiological adaptations to a life at sea. Next up on the agenda in the Lecture Theatre was our special guest, Paul, with a very graphic demonstration for his lecture entitled 'Finding a Dinosaur Inside a Chicken: How We Know Birds Are Living Dinosaurs', which involved an entire roast chicken teamed with his classic Australian way of explaining very complex things to us all in mostly layman's terms.

After our final lunch together, we met in the Lecture Theatre once again to learn about 'The Endurance' with Jeff, our historian. Our afternoon was filled with live cooking (and eating) of scrumptious crepe suzettes in the Elephant Island bar, a group seabird survey with John and co, and many moments of reminiscing with our newfound friends, a lot of whom had become like family over the course of the past 9 days.

Our evening kicked off with a heartfelt farewell gathering with our captain, Vadim, and his crew. Our beloved expedition team then took to the stage to give thanks to the wonderful group of expeditioners who had not only managed to show up for the voyage (despite all the hurdles), but who had brought with them sunshine and immense energy that uplifted the entire expedition experience to a whole new level.

Our final dinner was shared with bittersweet feelings, which were only intensified by Renato's spectacular photo

slideshow that showcased many of the awe-inspiring moments we had been reminiscing about earlier in the afternoon. It seemed impossible that we managed to have all of the incredible experienced in such a short amount of time, and no one could believe it was coming to an end so soon. After many of us received our well-deserved t-shirt for braving the chill of the polar plunge just two days before, the day was rounded off by many a clinking of glasses toasting to an unbelievable experience and the beautiful musical stylings of Reba in the bar – a performance never to be missed.

Ushuaia, Argentina

DAY 10 | Saturday 11th March 2023

Position at 0600 on 11th March

Latitude: 54°51'1" S

Longitude: 068°05'4"W

Course: 289°

Speed: 10 knots

Wind Speed: NE 2

Barometer: 1004 hpa

Air Temp: 3°C

The entire Aurora Team thanks you for joining us on this adventure, and we hope to see you on the high seas again! A BIG thank you to everyone onboard who shared their enthusiasm, knowledge, stories and adventurous spirit!



Poetry

—Luzanne Ralph

We all set out our spirits high with great anticipation.
We'd come from all across the globe for Antarctic exploration.
We had signed up to travel south as far as we could go,
but the weather god's had different plans and the pilots they said "no!"

We waited for a new flight plan . . . again they answered, "no!"
we rode a rollercoaster before hearing we could go.
When finally, we got the word, we scrambled to the plane,
hoping that the weather held and our flight was not in vain.

They gave a 50/50 chance of landing on the isle,
But we emerged from in the clouds and landed there in style.
The wheels touched down, we breathed a sigh and all let out a cheer.
The real adventure could begin, now we were finally here.

Greg Mortimer became our home, her crew our family,
as we set out together to explore both land and sea.
The snorkellers and the kayakers, long walkers and the rest,
would each day don their layers and put thermals to the test

Some came alone, some came with friends but soon new friendships
grew.
We shared our meals and every day we shared adventure new
We'd head down to the mudroom to add some extra gear,
then excitedly we'd wait in line to be given the 'all clear'.

A Zodiac would be assigned and we'd set off to see,
what a magical adventure this white continent could be.
We travelled round the islands within the Weddell Sea
Then round the Antarctic Peninsula through unique geology

The air was fresh and cool most days, sometimes the sun shone through
but every day was different and filled with something new.
The continent pristine and white, the mountains an imposing sight.
The glaciers cracked, the birds took flight, the waters clear, the icebergs
bright.

Brash ice, growlers and 'bergie bits', an iceberg floating by.
Each different in its size and shape, some bluer than the sky.
The marks of their creation displayed for us to see.
The story of each iceberg crafted wonderfully.

The penguins, seals and whales turned up to thrill us as they played.
We're grateful that though we appeared so many of them stayed.
They didn't seem to mind that we had crashed their remote places,
and we all tried to be careful to respect their special spaces.

Brown Bluff and Danco Island, Spritely Point, the Weddell Sea.
The Nave and Vega Island, Mikkelson Harbour on day three.
Graham Passage, Portal Point, Paulet, the Devil and Dundee.
Each location an adventure in a land that's wild and free.

We did our best to capture the majesty we saw
We smiled and snapped our cameras then turned and snapped some
more
From selfies to the group shots, to scenes both far and near
Everywhere we'd point the lens a new shot would appear.

But sometimes we would have to sit and simply let it be,
a memory locked inside our heart for only us to see.
We goggled at the wonderous sights, amazed at what we saw,
and then we'd all return to base, awe struck and wanting more.

Reba would sing us back on-board, we'd do the twist and shout,
to make sure that our boots were clean and any bugs washed out.
Our guides were always careful to tread lightly on this land,
enlightening and enriching expeditions they had planned.

We'd gather in the theatre at the end of every day,
to listen to Dan's briefings and let experts have their say.
We learnt about our impact on this fragile continent,
and how our thoughtless actions were not inconsequent.

We applauded all the plungers, who dive into the sea,
and enjoyed a snowy BBQ, out on the deck for tea.
The crazy fun filled moments with Pascal and all his team,
and our friendly dinning waiter, living out his singing dream.

Now to the captain, thank you, your skill beyond compare,
for getting close and personal to opportunities found there.
The giant tabular ice berg - a highlight of the trip,
and encounters with the wildlife, like the whale that kissed the ship.

When finally, our time was up you couldn't take a break.
You turned the bow towards the north to face the dreaded Drake.
While some of us were partying on and others lying low,
you had a firm hand on the wheel to ride the rodeo.

We're grateful for the memories made on our X-Bow ship,
and for Aurora's cast and crew encountered on our trip.
Your conservation focus and respectful exploration
provided an experience exceeding expectation.

We've travelled in the footsteps of those who'd gone before
like Ross and Scott and Shackleton, Nordenskjold and more.
An experience like no other we were privileged to share
And we'll be sure to spread the word for others to take care

Although it is all over now, you've stirred a change inside
We'll always be earths champions, ambassadors with pride
This planet needs Antarctica the role it plays is key,
in giving earth it's balance and supporting you and me.

—Lindsey Reed

A mythological lion ponders about life.

His majestic body, a translucent turquoise glow

Leans against a cushion of ice

Created by eras of fallen snow.

What is his fate? A sudden, booming explode?

Or will wind and waves slowly erode

His tremendous icy stature,

Decomposing him back to Mother Nature?

—Tim Reed

[Southern Ocean](#)

Slate grey peaks

Choppy surface sloshing by

Occasional white quiffs

Sudden churn and wind blown spray

Hidden power lurking sly

[Brash](#)

Slipping by crushed commuter

Fragmentation of a larger thing

Gleaming patchwork

Hiss pop cracking

Gentle lapping sings

[The Top](#)

All beneath my feet

White castles all around

Filling my eyes

White speckled water

No sound

Tame Antarctica

—John Buck

Paula stands stage centre with Sandy lying face up next to her, his eyes closed and snoring quietly. Percy enters stage right and walks towards Paula.

Percy: Good morning

Paula: Morning. You're new around here, aren't you?

Percy: Yes, recently moved in

Paula: I'm Paula. Did you sleep ok?

Percy: Not so bad. You?

Paula: Yeah, good thanks. (She looks down at Sandy) How about you Sandy? I said, how about you? Incredible! I don't think I've ever seen him awake!

Percy: Funny, but I always wake up just before our early morning call.

Paula: Yeah, me too. Any minute now I guess...wait for it...

Voice over intercom: Good morning, good morning everyone! It's a beautiful day down here in Antarctica, yeah? We've got a great day lined up for you today, OK? And the good news is that, although their migration from Punta Arenas was delayed by a couple of days, several species arrived last night and we should get our first sightings of them anytime now, yeah? So keep your eyes peeled, OK?

Paula: And here they come, right on cue. Notice how the first species to come ashore can be identified by their all-red plumage? Highly territorial

too, of course. They mark out their territory with small orange flags and woe betide any of the later arriving species, such as the blue and grey coloured ones, if they stray outside of this!

Percy: How often do you see them here?

Paula: The red ones come every few weeks, but the blue-grey ones only visit once before returning North, never to be seen again.

Percy: Wait! I think I recognise that red one over there! The one with a distinctive crest like a dragon.

Paula: Yes, he's a regular visitor. It's a male who fulfils a special role within the overall group. Each evening he helps them all fall asleep by talking about fossils.

Percy: Look, there's another group coming ashore. They seem to have a thick red and black plumage and webbed feet.

Paula: Ah yes. This is a much less evolved species called snorks. Interestingly, they have an incredibly short incubation period. Mamma snork comes here every few weeks, each time with a new brood, and teaches them to swim underwater.

Percy: So these snorks are immature?

Paula: Oh yes, very immature. You'll see them climbing onto the ice pretending to be seals and making a terrible racket. They also consume more alcohol than all the other species put together.

Percy: What about that species over there? Some have green markings and others orange.

Paula: The green ones are generally males and the orange female but both sexes exhibit a small orange skirt. Homo Sapien Kayakus. Highly

amphibious but antagonistic towards the snorks. They communicate with each other by waving paddles in the air.

Percy: I believe they sometimes mate for life?

Paula: That's actually a misconception. We usually find that when a breeding pair first paddle together they return home and get divorced.

Percy: There are lots of other species landing now. Are these the Blue-Greys you mentioned before?

Paula: Yes, the most common species of this migration but they can be broken into two types. The first type is fitter and they cover long distances, always choosing to make it to higher ground as soon as they come ashore. But they are noisy and wave their arms around a lot. The second type is quieter and generally just mill around on the beach. I love to tease them...you want to join in?

Percy: What do you mean?

Paula: Wait until one of them stops to take a photograph of us then start moving towards them. Look, there's a female approaching us. Let's do it to her.

A female visitor enters stage left and approaches Paula and Percy

Percy: You mean move towards her now?

Paula: No, wait until she takes her gloves off and finishes setting up her camera...wait for it. Now! Go, go, go!

They move towards the female visitor who then backs away.

Paula: You see? She has to move away from us! IAATO regulations! Now move back again, wait until she moves forward and repeat!

Percy: Haha! what fun!

Paula: They fall for it every time. Suckers! Wait a minute...O! You over there! Stop sitting down! Don't you know that's prohibited?

Percy: Why's that?

Paula: IAATO biosecurity protocols again. None of them bother studying this before they migrate here. It's very disappointing.

Percy: They all seem to be leaving now. I guess it's their feeding time?

Paula: Yes, they return to their floating raft and seek protection inside.

Percy: But why are some of them jumping off the back of the raft? Surely that's dangerous without wearing outer plumage?

Paula: Ah, I've seen this behaviour before, but only occasionally. I think it helps self-regulate the population.

Percy: And do they always feed outside on the raft? It's snowing and very cold so they must be uncomfortable.

Paula: That's crazy! This is very abnormal behaviour! They're eating cold food outside pretending to enjoy themselves. Clearly, they are a less intelligent species than we first thought.

Percy: What are those younger ones doing now? It's very late. Shouldn't they be sleeping?

Paula: After feeding, some of the younger ones drink heavily and then immerse themselves in a hot plunge pool together. I think it might be sexually motivated but I'm not sure.

Percy: I suppose that's another day over for these species?

Paula: Yes. But you'll see them repeat this day after day for a week or so before they migrate back North.

Percy: What a strange life they lead.

Paula: Yes, very curious. I doubt we'll ever fully understand them.

Percy: Fancy a spot of fishing?

Paula: Great ideal! I've just got a new coat I'd like to try out.

Percy: Want to come with us Sandy?

Percy looks down at Sandy who is still asleep. He makes a loud snoring noise

Paula: I guess that's a no then. Lazy bastard.

Percy: After you...

Paula: No, I insist, after you.

Paula and Percy exit slowly stage left

Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Tim, Eduardo, Matt and Peter

Number of Paddlers: 21

Total Paddle Outings: 6

Kayakers:			Paddlers:
Alastair Taylor	Claudia Barzen	Heather Cunningham	Saadia Bukhari
Keith Muir	Sabrina Mih	Jimmy Dude	Vaishali Agarwala
Vimty Harchowal Muir	Helen Gallegher	Peter Bruce	Elizabeth Donley
Peter Barzen (Don Pedro)	Allison Wong	Sharon Ryan	Troy Daff
	Tor Sannum	Robert Fox	Brendan Hutchinson
	Onni Vosdoganes	Catherine Drury Fox	

3rd March 2023, Paulet Island. Distance - 2 km

First day on the water. We took the time to practice strokes and get to know the kayaks. Also we went through the signals and after a short briefing we paddled for a short time cause it was very foggy and the coastline was quite exposed.

4th March 2023, The Naze. Distance - 5.25 km

Beautiful morning, first windy, then the weather calmed out.

We had the long group, no landing, first went around the Naze and back again. We saw a few seals, and paddled in the clear and shallow waters, like a mirror. We paddled in between some cool shaped icebergs and growlers. We saw one small growler collapse, and then paddled all the week back to the ship

4th March 2023, Devil's Island. Distance - 7.4 km

Beautiful conditions meandering amongst icebergs and growlers; Adelie penguins, skua, and fur seals on shore; LEOPARD SEAL on ice!!!

5th March 2023, Brown Bluff. Distance - 4.7 km

We started kayaking from the ship towards the coastline where we explored little coves and observed the wildlife. Easy wind conditions but had to be very aware from the coastline due to very shallow areas and big boulders that produce waves once in a while.

6th March 2023, Mikkelsen Harbour. Distance - 9.26 km

Sporty downwinder from the ship; observed some Antarctic terns feeding on a "bait ball"; orange lichen on cliffs with fur seals and a weddell lounging and several giant petrels of different colorations; cruised wide of sleeper rocks to spy on a gentoo hang out; found a sweet pocket cave for photos and a curious weddell seal; splashy Zodiac ride back!



7th March 2023, Grahamm Passage. Distance - 4.24 km

The morning was calm, and after so many days and greats kayaks session was hard to imagine what else we could add to our trip. When everyone was in their kayaks Elo offer the chance to enjoy a Chill out session connecting with nature and from the deep of our souls call the whales... we paddle observing amazing glaciers and few seals, and after 20 min in the water we saw far away in the distance some whales flukes. Everybody was happy and excited with the idea, we start paddling a bit faster to riche the zone where they were feeding and soon we had few humpback whales feeding very close to us.



Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guide: Liz MacNeil, Ella Knobloch, Stas Zakharov

Number of Snorkels: 12

Total Outings: 6

Snorkellers:

Craig Howson
Holly Tharp
Chad Avenell
Haley Landis

Robyn Zurfluh
John Buck
Gary Freed
Eileen Freed

Nolan Bear
Anita Sapre
Joris van Rýswýk
Denise Santos

4th March, The Naze – Shakedown Snorkel

Wowee what a morning! The sun was shining, and water was glassy. We headed for a landing to start off and then landed at the end of the spit to do our shakedown snorkel. Before we had even started briefing, we saw a *Glyptonotus antarcticus* – a giant isopod – on the shoreline. Once we had worked out how to get all the various bits of gear on, we jumped in for our first experience. There were lots of laughs as we floated around and got used to the buoyancy of our suit. On our way swimming out to the boat we saw another isopod underwater, as well as various algae and limpets. It was a great first time, and it got us excited for our next snorkel session.

4th March, Devil Island – Iceberg Snorkel

A calm day with a majestic view of Devil Island. After the landing, we cruised around to find a cool bergy bit to snorkel around. The visibility was great, and we were able to witness the enormous amount of ice mass underwater, which was an amazing experience all around.

5th March, Brown Bluff – Brash Snorkel

There's a saying that goes – "Put some adults in the water with some brash ice and they'll be like children again..." And boy is this one true! The weather was turned on again for our morning excursion, and it was perfect to have a wander on shore amongst penguins. For our snorkel, we found a fun line of brash to cruise along and play amongst. We saw some ctenophores and salps and a lot of brash rodeoing!

6th March, Sprightly Island – Algae & Ice Snorkel

Into exploration mode! Following the 'blue weather' this afternoon involved cruising and area new to all of us. The sun was out, and it was a calm, peaceful spot to weave in between icebergs. The landing itself had an epic view of the glacier face and we saw so many Weddell seals. Our snorkel took place around Sprightly Island. The visibility was crystal clear and there was an abundance of algae. We had a lot of fun playing on and around the growlers and we even took a huge piece of clear ice back for the bar. It was a magical afternoon all round.

7th March, The Graham Passage – Starfish Snorkel

A quiet and misty morning in the Graham Passage. Our Zodiac cruise, the self-proclaimed 'educational' Zodiac, wove its way through the brash ice to take in the stunning glacial scenery. We were lucky enough to have a humpback whale cruise past us as we made our way to our snorkel site. In the water near some beautiful rock faces, Team Snork saw a whole range of starfish and salps amongst the algae. Everyone was so absorbed by the environment that no-one even felt cold! Very cool.

7th March, Portal Point – Seals

This afternoon we started with a swelly ride over to the landing site which turned into a glassy little landing once we tucked around the corner. What a treat! We popped in for a 'teabag' snorkel and some of us were lucky enough to see a fur seal in the water. We were stoked to be in our drysuits on the way back as it was rather splashy.

8th March, Fournier Bay

Our final team Zodiac cruise. Although we weren't snorkelling, we all headed out together for one final activity. After manifesting all week to see a big calving event, we were in the perfect spot as a large chunk of ice calved off the glacier face. What a way to end a great week.



Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	March										
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Gentoo Penguin	•			•		•	•				
Chinstrap Penguin	•		•	•	•						
Adelie Penguin		•	•	•							
Wandering Albatross					•		•			•	
Royal Albatross										•	
Black-browed Albatross				•	•					•	•
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross										•	
Giant Petrel (Northern or Southern)		•		•	•	•					•
Snow Petrel		•	•	•							
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern)				•	•		•				
Prion sp. (probably Antarctic)											•
White-chinned Petrel									•	•	
Sooty Shearwater										•	•
Wilson's Storm-petrel			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Black-bellied Storm-petrel				•							
Imperial Cormorant (blue-eyed)											•
Cormorant sp. (unidentified)		•		•	•	•	•				
American Sheathbill (Snowy)		•	•	•							
Chilean Skua											•
Brown Skua	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				
South Polar Skua											
Kelp Gull			•	•	•	•					•
Antarctic Tern			•	•	•	•	•				
South American Tern											•
Dolphin Gull											•
Soft-plumaged Petrel			•								
Turkey Vulture											•

Mammal Species	March										
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Antarctic Fur Seal		•	•	•	•	•	•				
Southern Elephant Seal		•	•								
Crabeater Seal						•	•				
Weddell Seal		•		•	•		•				
Leopard Seal			•	•			•				
Fin Whale			•								
Humpback Whale				•	•	•	•				
Southern Right Whale			•								
Unidentified Whale		•		•							
Hourglass Dolphin								•	•		



Wild Antarctica
2 – 11 March 2023
 Total distance travelled:
 1360 Nautical Miles



1. Frei Station, King George Island
2. Paulet Island, Weddell Sea
3. The Naze, Weddell Sea
4. Devil Island, Weddell Sea
5. Brown Bluff, Antarctica
6. Gourdin Island
7. Mikkelsen Harbour, D'Hainaut Island
8. Sprightly Island (Exploration Mode)
9. Graham Passage, Antarctica
10. Portal Point & Charlotte Bay (BBQ!)
11. Danco Island (Polar Plunge!)
12. Fournier Bay, Anvers Island

Southernmost point:
 64°41'.10 S, 062°35'.50W





Expeditioners:

Vaishali Agarwala

Chad Avenell

Adie Avenell

Abby Bangser

Christopher Barrie

Maxine Barrie

Claudia Barzen

Peter Barzen

Nolan Bear

James Beckland

Janne Bonnett

Allan Braun

Jennifer Brewster

Darin Brewster

Peter Briggs

John Buck

Julie Buck

Saadia Bukhari

Sien Liang Cheng

Wayne Cherry

Lai Fun Chong

Heather Cunningham

Troy Daff

Kathryn Darby

Betsy Donley

Helen Douglas

Barclay Douglas

Catherine Drury

Nardus Erasmus

Leanna Feinleib

Laura Feinleib

Rick Feinleib

Robert Fox

Susi Francescon

Gary Freed

Eileen Freed

Helen Gallagher

Rachel Goldstein

Karalise Goodwin

Travis Graham

Patti Graves-Wesolosky

Vimty Harchowal-Muir

Owain Hegarty

Becky Hinkle

Craig Howson

Brendan Hutchinson

Sunita Ishri

Barbara Kahn Moller

David Killoran

Gai Killoran

Joyce Krichman

William Lai

Eileen Lai

Jim Lamborn

Haley Landis

Jennifer Macleod

Lynnette McDougall

Sabrina Mih

Karsten Moeller

Alex Moller

Beatrice Moller

Cecilia Mossi

Keith Muir

Chris Noel

Valeria Otero Faus

Colleen Petre

Charron Plumer

Suzanne Ralph

Michael Ralph

Erica Redhead

Lindsey Reed

Tim Reed

Lois Rubin

Sharon Ryan

Erik Sannum

Denise Santos

Madhuri Sapre

Anita Sapre

James Stanfield

Ruby Stanfield

Alastair Taylor

Nannette Tehan

Holly Tharp

Joris van Rijswijk

Onni Vosdoganes

Kitty Vroomen

Joanna Watson

Joan Watson

Elizabeth Wheeler

Laurie Wheeler

Betty Wheeler

Julie Williams

Paul Willis

Allison Wong

Michele Yonson

Peter Yonson

Robyn Zurfluh

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Daniel Stavert
Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells
Onboard Expedition Manager (in training): Samantha Deer
Historian: Jeff Nagal
Oceanographer/Citizen Science Coordinator: Bia Figueiredo
Naturalist: John Kirkwood
Naturalist: Hannah Cowley
Marine Biologist: Pat Horgan
Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Elo Berrier
Sea Kayak Guide: Pete Clarke
Sea Kayak Guide: Tim Vanhoutteghem
Sea Kayak Guide: Matt Barnes
Sea Kayak Guide: Eduardo Larranga
Lead Snorkel Guide: Liz MacNeil
Snorkel Guide: Ella Knobloch
Snorkel Guide: Stas Zakharov
Expedition Medic: Linda Steutel
E-Team Photography Guide: Renato Granieri
Zodiac Master: Serghei Hincu
Onboard Expedition Manager/Shopkeeper: Reba Minett

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Vadym Tavrovetsky
Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi
Safety Officer: Alexandru Chiriac
Bosun: Giovanni Dela Torre
Deck Cadet: Goncalo Alexandra Saraiva Aniceto Costa
Ship Doctor: Gloria Saraiva Aniceto Costa
Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze
Chief Engineer: Sergiy Melnyk
Hotel Director: Pascal Joubin
Chief Purser: Willie Lirio
Executive Chef: Ronwaldo Reyes
Executive Chef: Edgar Mangliano
Head Waiter: Allan Liscaro
IT Officer: Yury Kovyrshin
Receptionist: Sean Akbar
Receptionist: Jona Ecija
Head Stateroom: Roniel Garcia
Able Seaman: Bobby Payumo
Able Seaman: Muhammad Karier
Able Seaman: Tim Kitson
Able Seaman: Joel Noble
Able Seaman: Andrii Mezentsev

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Lindsey Reed
Suzanne Ralph





