

Ross Sea Odyssey

Dunedin, New Zealand, Oceania

Day 1 Arrive Dunedin

Arrive in Dunedin, where you will be met by a representative of Aurora Expeditions and transferred with your fellow expeditioners to your assigned pre-voyage hotel. If you are already in Dunedin, we ask you to make your way to your hotel. This afternoon, visit the Aurora Expeditions hospitality desk in the lobby to collect your luggage tags. Please clearly label the tags with your name and ship cabin number. Our team will confirm details regarding your embarkation day, answer any questions and provide you with information on where to dine or purchase last minute items. That evening, enjoy light refreshments as you meet your fellow expeditioners at a Welcome Reception and Pre-Embarkation Briefing. Afterwards, enjoy your evening in New Zealand's southernmost city. You may like to indulge in a meal at one of Dunedin's fine restaurants, or perhaps enjoy a leisurely stroll along the picturesque Otago harbour. Assigned accommodation: Scenic Hotel Dunedin City.



Day 2 Embarkation

This morning, enjoy breakfast and check-out. Please ensure your cabin luggage is fitted with cabin tags clearly labelled with your name and cabin number. By 11.00 am, take your cabin luggage to hotel reception, prior to, or at check-out. Your luggage will be stored and transferred directly to the port for clearance, to be placed in your cabin ahead of your arrival on board. Please keep any valuables or personal items with you throughout the day. Your morning is at leisure to explore Dunedin. Settle into your cabin, where each detail was designed with your comfort in mind. This luxurious

vessel is yours to explore! As we throw the lines and set sail, join your expedition team on deck before tucking into a delicious dinner, and toast to the voyage ahead.

Day 3 At Sea

On an expedition such as this, the journey is as significant as the destination. Sea days are a wonderful opportunity to relax, meet your fellow travellers and learn about the history, environment and local wildlife in this fascinating corner of the globe. As you acclimatise to life on board, your expedition team is available to answer any questions you may have and offer pro-tips on photography and birdwatching. With decades of collective experience in the region, they love to share their expertise and enthusiasm with fellow travellers. Join them in the lecture room for entertaining talks and presentations to enrich your understanding of the wildlife, landscapes and historic sites we hope to encounter. You may like to pamper yourself with a sauna, a visit to the Wellness Centre, or work out at the onboard gym. While away the hours spotting seabirds on deck, curl up with a book in our well-equipped polar library, or chat with your fellow expeditioners at the bar.

Days 4-6 New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands

First visited by Māori navigators centuries ago, these islands are of great significance to Ngāi Tahu, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand's South Island. Their natural beauty and astonishing biodiversity have now been recognised globally, but few have had the privilege to visit these far-flung shores, which are now yours to explore. Auckland Islands (Maungahuka / Motu Maha) Born of fire, scoured by ancient glaciers and shaped by the fierce hand of the Southern Ocean, there is an exquisite ruggedness to this group of weather-worn islands. This apparent bleakness belies the extraordinary abundance of life that thrives here. Roughly half of the world's yellow-eyed penguins (hoiho), most of the world's white-capped mollymawks, and the entire population of Auckland Islands wandering albatross find shelter on these shores. Embrace the spirit of exploration as your expedition team designs your voyage from day to day, bringing decades of experience to selecting ideal sites based on the prevailing conditions and wildlife opportunities. Some places we may visit include: Sandy Bay Sandy Bay is home to a breeding colony of rare New Zealand (Hooker's) sea lions and an enchanting rātā forest where yellow-

eyed penguins (hoiho) make their nests. Carnley Harbour, Erlangen Clearing Carnley Harbour offers superb Zodiac cruising through a landscape rich in human history. In 1864, five men became stranded here after their schooner, the Grafton, was wrecked, putting a sudden end to their sealing and tin prospecting ambitions. We hope to see the skeletal remnants of the Grafton, and the moss-covered remains of the Epigwaith Hut, where they sheltered for 20 months. Victoria Passage Victoria Passage is a lively channel separating Auckland Island from the mountainous Adams Island to the south. We may Zodiac cruise these scenic waters, watching for sooty shearwaters, penguins and sea-lions frolicking in the pure waters. Campbell Island (Motu Ihupuku) Wind and weather permitting, we will Zodiac cruise sheltered harbours and coves in search of Campbell Island snipes and teals, yellow-eyed penguins (hoiho), and New Zealand (Hooker's) sea lions (whakahao). We hope to land at Beeman Cove, Perseverance Harbour, where an old meteorological station stands vigil on the windswept shoreline. Follow a boardwalk through tussock and upland tundra, then enter an otherworldly landscape where large-leaved megaherbs abound. Wonder at the Ross Lily, Campbell Island Daisy and Campbell Island carrot, whose brilliant flowers would look more at home in the tropics than these southern climes. Continue towards the nesting grounds of majestic southern royal albatross, whose wingspans can exceed three metres (10 feet). It is truly humbling to be in the presence of these great wanderers of the southern seas. Find a spot to quietly observe these marvellous birds as they go about their daily duties, undisturbed by their human visitors.

Days 7-10 At Sea

As Campbell Island slips over the horizon, keep watch for Campbell, Salvins and white-capped albatross, which may follow the ship to bid us farewell as we continue south. Close observers may notice a subtle change in the character of the sea as we cross the Antarctic Convergence. Beyond this belt where the waters of the north and south mix, the sea surface temperature drops by about 4°C (39°F), signalling our entry into the Antarctic. This transition zone is known for its nutrient-rich waters, so keep watch for porpoising penguins, flocks of fluttering Antarctic petrels, or perhaps the more solitary snow petrel. You're not far from the Antarctic Circle, so your first iceberg can't be far away! Sea days are a great opportunity for some R & R as you digest your subantarctic experiences and prepare for the next phase of your voyage. Relax and unwind your way, perhaps meeting newfound friends at the bar, treating yourself to a sauna, or editing some images in the comfort of your cabin. And join your

expedition team in the lecture room for presentations on the charismatic wildlife and extraordinary adventures that took place along the epic Antarctic coastline you are about to experience.

Days 11-17 Victoria Land Coast and the Ross Sea

It's almost impossible to describe the feeling of arriving in this storied, ice-bound sector of Antarctica. Stepping outside and taking a deep breath of some of the most fresh, crisp air on earth is an experience to cherish forever. The Ross Sea region is a globally significant wildlife sanctuary. Its nutrient-rich waters support an astonishing array of uniquely adapted Antarctic species, including Ross Sea orcas, Antarctic petrels and South Pacific Weddell seals. It is also home to Antarctica's largest Adélie penguin colony, and many of the largest emperor penguin colonies. The unique biodiversity of the Ross Sea has been protected within the world's largest marine protected area since 2016. The human heritage of the Ross Sea coast is equally impressive. Since James Clark Ross discovered the region in 1841, countless expeditions have built base camps on scattered ice-free slivers of land, using them as staging posts for bold forays across the polar plateau. Many of them departed in a hurry, leaving artefacts, scientific equipment and sometimes entire huts behind. Today these sites are preserved as open-air museums and protected under the Antarctic Treaty System. Embrace the spirit of exploration as your expedition team designs your voyage from day to day, bringing decades of experience to selecting the ideal sites based on the prevailing weather, ice conditions and wildlife opportunities. Some places we may visit include:

Ross Ice Shelf Find a spot on deck as we cruise perfectly cleaved ice cliffs towering some 30 metres above the crystalline waters of the Ross Sea. This is the floating edge of the largest ice shelf in Antarctica, which covers an area the size of France. Watch for elegant emperor penguins, sweet-faced Weddell seals hauled out on ice floes, and the unmistakable 'pouf' of an orca's exhalation.

Franklin Island This delightful ice-free outpost with a rookery of rambunctious Adélie penguins is well worth a visit. Stretch your legs as you stroll up a gentle incline past the colony to a high point, where panoramic views of the Ross archipelago and the ice shelf unfurl.

McMurdo Sound Enter a realm of exquisite beauty, an otherworldly icescape set against a backdrop of gleaming glaciers, shimmering mountains, and the polar ice sheet itself. McMurdo Sound is the historic gateway to the South Pole and remains a busy working harbour today, serving as a logistics hub for the extensive scientific operations taking

place at the McMurdo and Scott Research bases on Ross Island. It is here, in this achingly barren landscape, that early explorers established their base camps and struck out for the South Pole. If conditions allow, we aim to land at one (or more) of their beautifully preserved huts, many of which still stand, to dwell for a moment amongst the artefacts of a distant time, and reflect on the triumphs and tragedies of those who brought them here.

Cape Washington, Terra Nova Bay Bounded by soaring peaks and fed by immense glaciers, Terra Nova Bay supports an abundance of polar wildlife, including the rarely sighted Amou's Beaked Whale. Fast ice anchored to the bay's northern shore in the shelter of Cape Washington is home to one of the largest known emperor penguin colonies. Some 20,000 males huddle here each winter, incubating their eggs and awaiting the sun's return. Weather and ice permitting, visit the bustling rookery to witness the delightful emperors and their fledging chicks.

Cape Hallett The snow-capped Admiralty Mountains rise dramatically from the gravelly spit of Cape Hallett, where we hope to land. This is the site of a decommissioned scientific base and an abundance of Antarctic mosses, lichens and invertebrates, protected by the Antarctic Treaty System. Amble across gently undulating terrain, taking care to give resting Weddell seals a wide berth. The Adélie penguin rookery here can host close to 50,000 breeding pairs, while snow petrels, Wilson's storm petrels and South Polar skuas breed in the rocky crevices nearby. Cape Hallett also has a special significance for Aurora. It was from this rocky foothold that Greg Mortimer, co-founder of Aurora Expeditions, launched the Australian Bicentennial Antarctic Expedition in 1988. Cape Hallett provided access to the glaciated coastal ranges beyond, where the six-man team completed the first ascent of Mt Minto (4,165 metres).

Cape Adare Cape Adare lies 100 km (62 miles) north of Cape Hallett, at the western entrance to the Ross Sea. A rare ice-free refuge on this icebound coastline, Cape Adare is home to Antarctica's largest Adélie penguin colony. Ice and weather permitting, wend your way through the pack ice to land on the flat, cobbled spit where more than 250,000 breeding pairs of Adélies gather to busily breed, feed and raise their chicks in the short southern summer. First visited by James Clark Ross in 1841, this rocky promontory played an important role in the pioneering expeditions of the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration. It was here in 1899 that the Southern Cross expedition, led by Carsten Borchgrevink, became the first to winter over in Antarctica and establish the first human structures on the continent. The remnants of these pioneering constructions, and thousands of artefacts scattered in their vicinity, remain virtually untouched and protected under the Antarctic Treaty System. We hope to enter Borchgrevink's living quarters to experience the awe and imagine the perils of conducting science here, as they did, through an Antarctic winter.

Days 18-20 At Sea

We leave the grandeur of the ice to the seals and penguins and head northwards, but our voyage is far from over. In the days ahead there is plenty of time to enjoy the magic of the Southern Ocean and the life that calls it home. You won't want to miss presentations from your onboard specialists about the wonderful wildlife and rich human history of Macquarie Island. These days at sea also offer time and space to reflect on the emotions and special moments you've lived over the past few weeks. You may like to take a moment of quiet contemplation or reminisce with your fellow travellers over a cuppa (or other beverage of choice!) As you approach Macquarie Island keep watch for graceful grey-headed, black-browed and light-mantled albatross, which may venture from their nests to welcome their human visitors.

Days 21-22 Macquarie Island

"Penguins were in thousands on the uprising cliffs, and from rookeries near and far came an incessant din . . . seabirds of many varieties gave warning of our near approach to their nests" Douglas Mawson, 1911. As they sailed towards Antarctica, Mawson and his men encountered 'an exquisite scene'. Macquarie Island (known affectionately as Macca) rises steeply from the Southern Ocean in a series of emerald summits: a beautifully fierce, elemental landscape teeming with life. Keep your binoculars handy because this subantarctic refuge is home to 3.5 million breeding seabirds, including no less than four species of penguin! Alongside boisterous colonies of tuxedoed kings, charming gentoos, robust rockhoppers and endemic royal penguins, you'll find three types of fur seals and a large proportion of the world's elephant seals. Layer up and head out on deck to experience the sound, sight (and smell!) as you approach one of the largest concentrations of life in the Southern Ocean. Remember to keep an eye out for Macca's kelp forests—these remarkable underwater ecosystems are quite mesmerising as their fronds sway back and forth on the water's surface. In addition to being a globally recognised and protected wildlife refuge, Macquarie Island played an important role in Antarctic history. It was here, in 1911, that five men disembarked Mawson's Aurora and established a radio relay station which would transmit the first communication from Antarctica to the outside world.

Days 23-24 At Sea

As your journey draws to a close, take some time to reflect on the experiences of the past few weeks. Perhaps take some time to organise your photos, jot some more notes in your journal or simply relax and soak up the ambiance on board as you farewell your travel mates . . . until next time! We hope you become ambassadors for the great Southern Ocean, advocating for its conservation and preservation, and share your experiences with your loved ones, so they might visit and become ambassadors themselves.

Day 25 Disembark Dunedin

After breakfast, farewell your expedition team and fellow passengers as we all continue our onward journeys, hopefully with a newfound sense of the immense power of nature. Note: At the conclusion of the voyage, we do not recommend booking flights departing prior to 12.00 pm on the day of disembarkation in case there are delays.