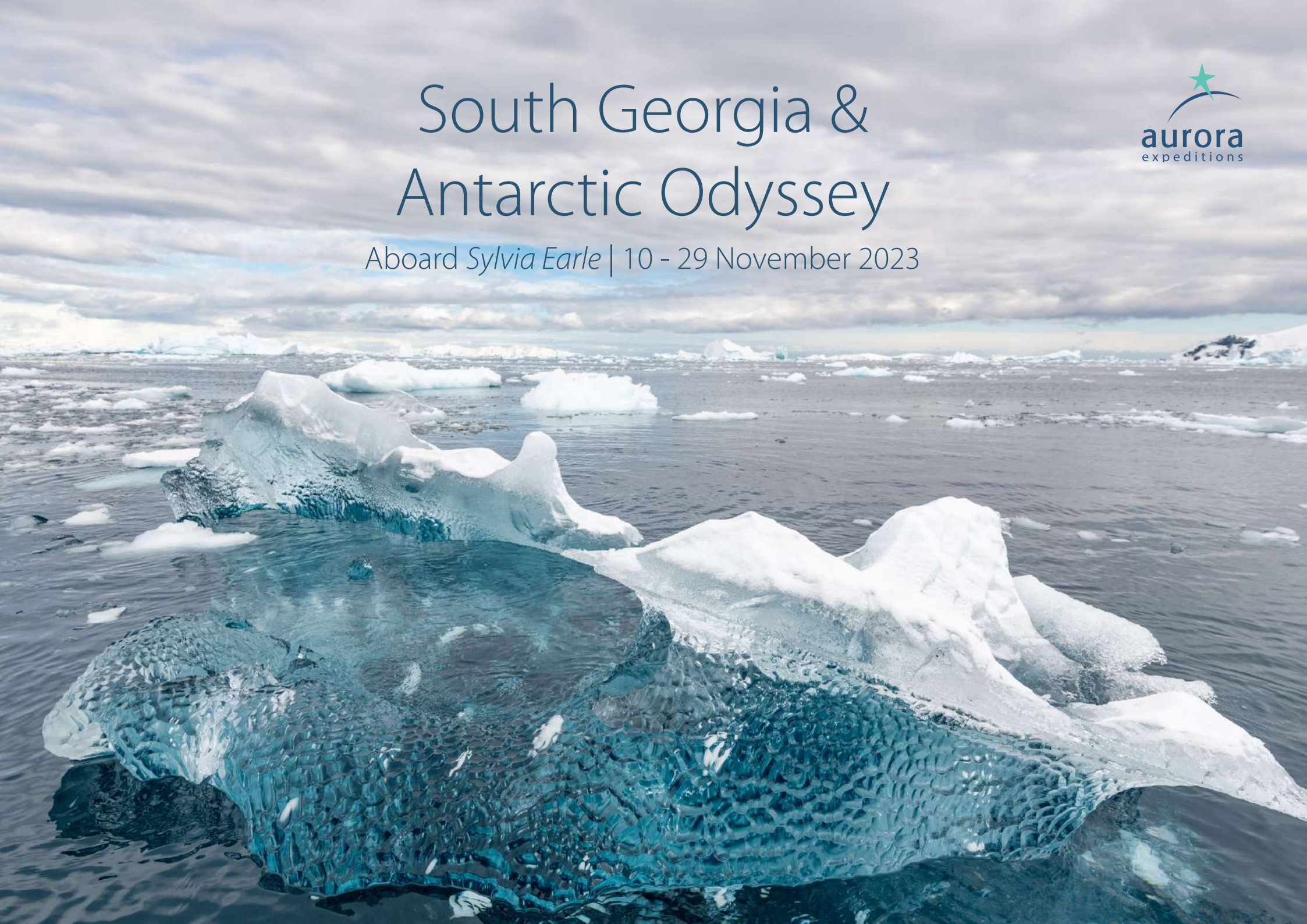


South Georgia & Antarctic Odyssey

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 10 - 29 November 2023



Ushuaia

DAY 1 | Friday 10 November 2023

Position at 1025 on Nov 10

Latitude: 54°48.608' S

Longitude: 068°17.884' W

Course: 117°

Speed: At Anchor Ushuaia

Wind Speed: 3 knots NNW

Barometer: 984

Air Temp: 16°C

Embarkation can be just as hectic and full of activities as any expedition day and today was no exception. The slightly delayed arrival of the *Sylvia Earle* meant an early morning embarkation and a rare day transit of the Beagle Channel.

After casting off we were treated to a calm and seasonable afternoon with no shortage of spectacular views. Along the Chilean and Argentinian coast we could see small "ranchos" on the rolling hillsides, cattle and sheep grazing on new spring grass.

From the outer decks we spied many seabirds including several magnificent black browed albatross and multitudes of rock shags gathering nesting material. sea lions were spotted, albeit fleetingly, while a pod of bow-riding dusky dolphins led in the tender that carried off our Chilean pilot.

At 14:00 we gathered in the lecture lounge to meet our Expedition Team and to take in our first mandatory briefing. From our expedition leader, Flo, we learned about IAATO and our responsibilities as Antarctic Ambassadors.

The sound of seven-short-one-long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes, bulky orange lifejackets and gather at the muster station to sample our safety gear. Our safety officers and crew guided us up to the lifeboats to get us familiar with their whereabouts.

At 15:00, the *Sylvia Earle* turned due south with Isla Nueva on our starboard. To the south-west, Isla Deceit could just be seen in the lee of Isla Hornos, which features the historic and notorious Cape Horn, that marks the tempestuous northern border of the Drake Passage.

As we left Tierra del Fuego in the mist, the sea rose to meet us in long gentle swells, while the breeze kicked up, bringing with it more pelagic species, giant petrels, Antarctic prions and grey headed albatross.

The dinner hour found us rolling in a moderate but manageable Drake, tired from our long journeys to Ushuaia but excited for the adventure to come.

Onboard we total 69 Expeditioners with nationalities representing Australia (33), Canada (2), France (1), Germany (1), Ireland (1), New Zealand (8), UK (8), USA (15), along with 20 Expedition Team and 84 ship's crew from all over the world.

Drake Passage

DAY 2 | Saturday 11 November 2023

Position at 0700 on Nov 11

Latitude: 56° 42.864' S

Longitude: 065° 30.815' W

Course: 160°

Speed: 12.1 knots

Wind Speed: 10 knots S

Barometer: 984

Air Temp: 4°C

The first full morning of our expedition was spent continuing to familiarise ourselves with ship life with the *Sylvia Earle* rolling gently south on a calm Drake. The ship was surrounded by dozens of black browed albatrosses as well as many other pelagic species including a magnificent wander.

Breakfast was followed by the introduction of our Expedition Team and a mandatory briefing on IAATO, the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators.

Albert, Paulina, Hans and Eddie introduced us to the four citizen science projects we would be participating in, including the popular Happy Whale program, cloud and bird surveys and a phytoplankton study.

The sea continued to roll under low overcast skies and ever-present albatrosses were joined by flocks of beautiful cape petrels, one of the more common birds in the southern hemisphere.

After lunch we reconvened for our final mandatory briefing, where Flo taught us about Zodiac 'dos and don'ts'. Afterward we brought our gear to the lounge to be made biosecure and then visited the mudroom to pick out our Muck Boots. We were now fully briefed and outfitted for our Antarctic adventure!

We learned, too, that, due to an approaching storm, the Captain had decided it would be best if we turned north and headed for the

shelter of Tierra del Fuego. In the lee of the cape, the ship's engineers will be making sure our stabilisers are in good working order for the long journey ahead.

An interesting workshop on smart phone photography by our E Team photographer Max introduced us to many of the mysteries hiding in the miraculous devices we all take for granted.

The *Sylvia Earle*, graceful even in a long rolling sea, carried us northward back toward the Chilean coast. As the night wore on, the rolling ceased and we rested easy, grateful for the unbroken rest.

Beagle Channel

DAY 3 | Sunday 12 November 2023

Position at 1815 on Nov 12

Latitude: 54° 58.647'S

Longitude: 066° 047.270'W

Course: 336°

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: 17 knots

Barometer: 989

Air Temp: 14°C

The disappointment of riding our anchor in the Beagle was softened somewhat by the beautiful late spring weather. Isla Picton could be seen to the south while the snow-dusted mountains of Tierra del Fuego beckoned to the north.

Albeit being surrounded by trees and mountains rather than five metre swells, sea days on an expedition cruise vessel mean activities and lectures and the team did not disappoint.

First, Megan shared her compelling story of rounding Cape Horn on the historic bark Europa. It made us feel even more grateful for the amenities on board our vessel hearing about Megan's experience traveling under sail power. Our birder, Albert, next led us out on deck for a seabird survey. The low winds in the channel meant most of the birds were further out to sea where they could soar, but it was still informative and got us outside for a lungful of pine-scented air.

After lunch we gathered again to watch the movie 'Around Cape Horn', the 1929 film of a journey from the North Sea to Chile on board the Peking, one of the last iron-hulled sailing ships in the nitrate trade. Narrated by Irving Johnson 50 years after the journey, the film was yet another reminder of the seriousness of the seas we will soon be sailing in.

A cloud survey with Paulina followed the movie after which we continued to enjoy our afternoon aboard the gentle swaying *Sylvia Earle*.

Kevin presented a lecture on the discovery of Antarctica and shared an original song following the talk. Before our first recap of the day and another update from Florence, Jane invited us to a yoga session, something not usually possible in the Southern Ocean.

Another wonderful meal was followed by a relaxed evening in our cabins or with a nightcap in the Tektite Bar.

Beagle Channel, Ushuaia

DAY 4 | Monday 13 November

Position at 2000 on Nov 13

Latitude: 54° 48.641'S

Longitude: 068° 17.730'W

Course: 112°

Speed: At anchor Ushuaia

Wind Speed: 4 knots WNW

Barometer: 981

Air Temp: 4°C

Today we woke up to a new dusting of snow on the foothills of Tierra Del Fuego. The air had a distinct nip in it this morning as the winds slowly picked up.

As we settled in for Max's morning lecture with cameras in hand, we gained valuable insights into adjusting settings and enhancing our photography skills.

As the morning progressed, the winds intensified to 25 knots. The engines of *Sylvia Earle* rumbled into action as white caps emerged in the narrow Beagle Channel.

Just before lunch, we watched the pilot boat approach the side of the ship. Some of us were out on deck at the perfect moment to capture a great photo! The use of a pilot is mandatory in many territorial waters as they are familiar with the local waters and special conditions, ensuring our safe navigation back into port.

During the afternoon, Albert delivered an introductory lecture on the marvels of Antarctica. It's truly remarkable to consider that Antarctica is not only a desert but also the driest continent on Earth. Following the lecture, Albert and Hans guided us to Deck 8 to observe the stunning wildlife present in the Beagle Channel. The bird count turned out to be quite impressive, as we had the opportunity to witness imperial cormorants, kelp gulls, South American terns, giant petrels, and a couple of black-browed albatross.

At approximately 17:30, the ship safely docked back in the port of Ushuaia.

To conclude the day, we gathered once more for an update from Flo, which was followed by a delightful singalong to another entertaining song by Kevin. This time, Kevin treated us to his hilarious song about the dogs of Ushuaia.

After dinner, many of us had the pleasure of enjoying more of Kevin's singing at the Tektite Bar, while others took the opportunity to stretch their legs and explore the town.

Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego

DAY 5 | Tuesday 14 November 2023

Position at 0730 on Nov 14

Latitude: 54° 48.641'S

Longitude: 068° 17.730'W

Course: 112°

Speed: At anchor Ushuaia

Wind Speed: 3 knots SE

Barometer: 983

Air Temp: 7°C

Waking up to a beautiful sunrise over Ushuaia and the surrounding mountains, we all got ready to embark on a day of adventure. Our destination was the less-travelled Laguna Escondido and Laguna Fagnano. The day unfolded as a laid-back exploration, each scenic stop revealing the quiet beauty of Tierra del Fuego.

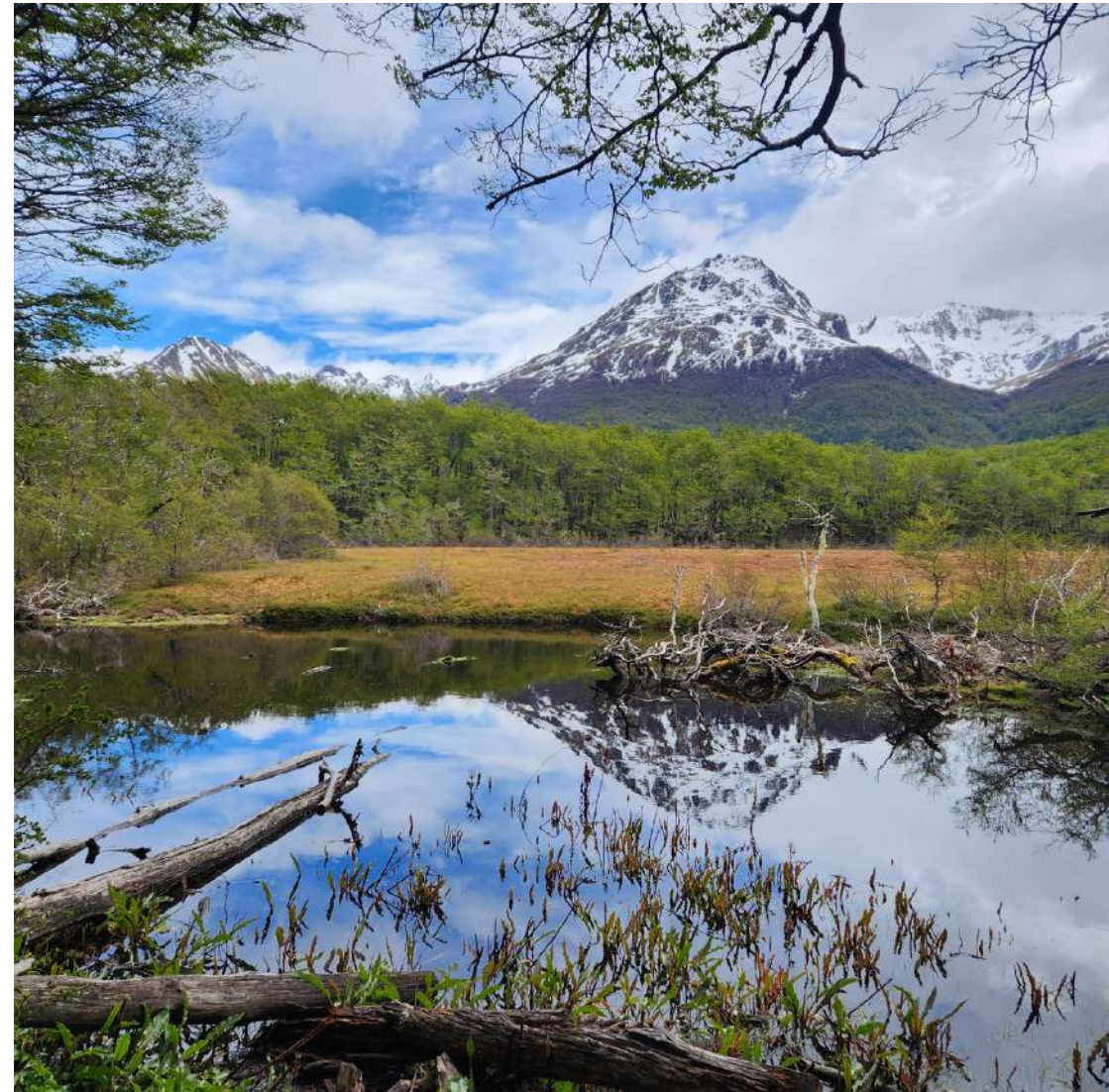
The bus meandered through the landscapes, providing glimpses of the region's diverse birdlife. Birdwatching enthusiasts among us enjoyed spotting everything from magellanic shags to austral parakeet, and the amazing magellanic woodpecker. Cameras quietly clicked as we appreciated the unassuming charm of these feathered residents.

Upon reaching Laguna Escondido the atmosphere was serene, with the natural soundtrack composed of birdsong rather than exuberant exclamations. The lake's clear waters mirrored the surrounding mountains, creating a peaceful backdrop for our casual exploration. The moment was simple but profound as we absorbed the quietude of the landscape.

The lake unfolded before us, framed by forests that whispered stories of the region's ecological diversity. Guides shared anecdotes about the indigenous birds, enhancing our understanding and giving us a glimpse into the wildlife and landscapes of this remote part of the world.

For many, the highlight of the day was the food that awaited us at midday – a lamb lunch that showcased the authentic flavours of Patagonia. Seated in a true Patagonian atmosphere, we enjoyed a well-prepared meal, and each of us ate for a full week.

As we bid farewell to Laguna Escondido and Laguna Fagnano, we travelled back to our floating home, the *Sylvia Earle*, where we were welcomed to an update and our Expedition Leader Flo gave us a glimpse of what was awaiting us as we would sail south as soon as possible.





Ushuaia

DAY 6 | Wednesday 15 November 2023

Position at 2150 on Nov 15

Latitude: 54° 48.641'S

Longitude: 068° 17.730'W

Course: 112°

Speed: At anchor Ushuaia

Wind Speed: 2 knots SE

Barometer: 991

Air Temp: 6°C

The morning started off where all was white. Ushuaia was inside a snow globe as morning broke. November, a month of transition in the Southern Hemisphere, painted a unique canvas for our adventures, promising a mix of spring and the lingering whispers of winter. All onboard enjoyed a lovely breakfast in either the Gentoo or Rockhopper Restaurants and we prepared for the excursions planned for the day. Everyone bundled up and we were off to explore either Tierra Mayor Nature Reserve or Tierra del Fuego National Park.

The Expeditioners visiting Tierra Mayor Nature Reserve were picked up in 4WD's. The reserve is about 20 kilometres from Ushuaia and is one of the best places nearby for trekking through valleys and mountains. The reserve, home to diverse flora and fauna, revealed a few of its secrets, a delicate dance between life and the elements. Lago Fagnano was spectacular and to top it off, a delicious 'snack' was provided and made a lasting impression on many of us.

The other destination was the renowned Tierra del Fuego National Park, a place where nature seamlessly intertwines with history. The park was established in 1960 and was the first shoreline national park to be established in Argentina. Navigating through dense forests and along pristine rivers we learned about the indigenous Yamana people who once thrived in harmony with these wild landscapes. We saw the Antarctic beech, lenga beech, and coihue trees. Among the 90 species of birds living in this forest we witnessed the kelp goose, torrent duck and the austral parakeet. As we walked along some of the coastal trails, the panoramic views of Ensenada Zaratiegui, Lago Acigami and Bahia LaPataia unfolded before us, providing a breathtaking glimpse into the untouched beauty of Tierra del Fuego.

In the afternoon, some of us enjoyed walking the streets of Ushuaia and relaxing while the crew stayed busy keeping the *Sylvia Earle* shipshape. As the sun began its descent over the southern horizon, casting a warm glow on the landscapes, we indulged in the comforts of the ship and savoured the fine cuisine onboard. The fresh snowfall from the early morning could be seen high up on the mountain slopes as we said goodbye to Ushuaia.





Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego

DAY 7 | Thursday 16 November 2023

Position at 2100 on Nov 16

Latitude: 55° 08.750'S

Longitude: 066° 26.293'W

Course: 131.1°

Speed: 13.6 knots

Wind Speed: 14 knots

Barometer: 974

Air Temp: 8°C

We had quite the unexpected opportunity to fully explore "The End of the World" here in Tierra del Fuego, "The Land of Fire". The Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan named it in 1520 due to the many fires he saw on the beaches lit by native people.

Our group of intrepid explorers departed early for the Laguna Esmeralda trail, a supposedly 5.5 mile trek up to an ancient emerald green glacial cirque through a lovely temperate rainforest. With three different species of southern beeches, many festooned with mosses and lichens, one of our guides explained how especially beautiful it is during their Autumn, a palette of oranges, reds and green. The trees were also adorned with interesting and unusual plants including Darwin's fungus or "Indian bread" a parasite which causes the trees to produce large burls, on which the round, bright yellow-orange, edible fruiting bodies appear. These tasteless (yes, one was tried) "golf balls" helped support the supercontinent theory of Gondwanaland, but I digress. Also, the hemi-parasitic southern mistletoe known locally as "farolito chino", or "little Chinese lantern" glowed throughout the woods. The patches of snow added depth and drama to this picturesque scene.

In the valleys we could see the results of human good intentions and interventions of the natural world. In 1946, the Argentine military flew 20 beavers from Canada to Tierra del Fuego in hopes of encouraging a fur trade. The industry never flourished, but the beavers did with around 110,000 today, having already decimated an estimated 120 square miles. Chile and Argentina are both attempting to eradicate the beavers (also muskrat and mink) from this area that has no natural predators and no tree adaptations for regeneration.

Then the fun really began. Mud, encouraged by melting snow, and hundreds of human feet, turned into bogs as those of us without Muck Boots attempted to navigate the many bifurcating trails and wallows. The snowscape re-emerged as we climbed a bit in elevation in awe of the stunning mountain backdrop, grabbing a brief lunch, hot tea and coffee out of the wind in the woods. A cadre of well-trained opportunistic Rufous-collared sparrows and Patagonian Sierra finches (actually a tanager) joined us for some potential crumbs. The round-trip ended up being closer to 7-mile slog. Laughter, muddy boots and clothes indicated a great time was had by all. Once back on the ship (we got to practice our biosecurity protocols and scrub away) we met up with the city tour folks (they loved the old airstrip and prison museum) and the 4x4 group (highlights included the huskies and the steak lunch) returned to the ship, and an hour later the dock lines were cast off to check the stabilizers. At 1900 we were beyond thrilled to hear the fabulous news that we would be dropping off the pilot and technician at the pilot's station then heading to Antarctica! In the Beagle Channel an eBird survey was conducted with some Magellanic Penguins being sighted!

One could feel the relief and palpable excitement as the adventure resumes...stay tuned!





Drake Passage

DAY 8 | Friday 17 November 2023

Position at 1520 on Nov 17

Latitude: 58° 57.741'S

Longitude: 062° 52.064'W

Course: 153°

Speed: 14.8 knots

Wind Speed: 20 knots NE

Barometer: 981

Air Temp: 4°C

The Drake Passage marked a significant phase in our Antarctic expedition, and the day unfolded with a smooth crossing, the gentle rocking of the ship providing a backdrop to our maritime journey. The morning commenced with a necessary biosecurity protocol, underscoring the importance of maintaining the pristine environment of Antarctica. Our gear underwent, again, a thorough cleaning, vacuumed meticulously to ensure we left no trace of contaminants before stepping onto the icy continent. With the biosecurity measures complete, our attention shifted to the sky, where we were treated to a mesmerizing display of avian wonders. Various species of albatrosses soared gracefully, captivating us with their majestic flight. It was a spectacle of nature, a prelude to the unique encounters that awaited us in Antarctica.

The educational aspect of our journey continued as Jane took the floor, delivering a captivating lecture on ice, astronauts, and her personal experiences living in Antarctica. Her stories, intertwined with encounters with space heroes, added a fascinating layer to our understanding of this remote and extreme environment. The lunch break provided a moment of respite, allowing us to recharge for an afternoon filled with more knowledge-sharing. Sigurð delved into the history of kayaking, providing insights into the evolution of this waterborne activity across the globe. Following this, Paulina led a cloud survey, expanding our awareness of the atmospheric conditions that shape Antarctica's unique climate. Albert took the stage next, offering a lecture on whales. However, the marine giants themselves decided to make a guest appearance, interrupting the presentation not once but twice. It was an unexpected and thrilling interlude, emphasizing the untamed nature of the Antarctic ecosystem.

As the day progressed, we gathered for recap where exciting news unfolded – the possibility of reaching Antarctica the next day. The anticipation and excitement among us were palpable as we contemplated the prospect of setting foot on the seventh continent in the following days. In the evening, we reflected on the day's experiences and enjoyed a delicious dinner, preparing ourselves for the potential landfall on South Shetland Islands. The Drake Passage had treated us kindly, and the wealth of knowledge imparted throughout the day only heightened our eagerness to explore the wonders that lay ahead. Resting in our cabins, we brimmed with anticipation for the remarkable adventures awaiting us as we approached the elusive and pristine Antarctic landscape.



Drake Passage, Whalers Bay; Deception Island

DAY 9 | Saturday 18 November 2023

Position at 2120 on Nov 18

Latitude: 63° 24.567'S

Longitude: 060° 44.184'W

Course: 192°

Speed: 8.0 knots

Wind Speed: 5 knots SE

Barometer: 990

Air Temp: 0°C

As morning came, we could finally see the South Shetland Islands in the distance. As we got closer to the islands, we could see the snow- and ice-covered mountains, plus a couple of humpback whales in the distance.

Flo gave a presentation on today's plans – she said, "welcome to Antarctica", and we all cheered. What a relief! We had finally arrived.

After lunch, we passed through Neptune's Bellows. What an amazing navigation through this narrow passage. The remains of the old whaling station revealed itself in Whalers Bay to the right of the entrance.

We all landed safely and were welcomed by a large crowd of gentoo penguins on the beach.

Gentoo penguins are the largest species of brush-tailed penguins, which consists of Adélie, gentoo and chinstrap penguins. Gentoos are also the third largest penguin after the emperor and king penguin. They grow up to 75cm tall and can weigh up to 6kg. Gentoos are excellent swimmers and can reach a speed of 35 km/h or 22 miles per hour. Their diet mainly consists of krill and shrimp. Generally, the gentoos are friendly and very curious, and some of the team's favourite penguin.

Whalers Bay is now an Historic Site and Monument. The whaling station was occupied during 1906 - 1931. During this time approximately 150 people worked at the station during the austral summer, producing over 140,000 barrels of whale oil.

Back onboard the *Sylvia Earle*, we enjoyed drinks at the bar, and the daily recap with information and plans of what's to come. Paulina answered our red rock query, followed by photo tips from Max and a grand rock performance by Kevin, where he performed his own song with thoughts about the whaling era.

After sailing out of the caldera, we enjoyed the sight of several magnificent and massive tabular icebergs in the distance. The sun's rays illuminated them, creating a stunning reflection of beautiful orange sunlight. Meanwhile, we relished a delicious dinner prepared by our talented chefs at the Gentoo and Rockhopper restaurants.

Some Expeditioners concluded our first day in Antarctica by admiring the breathtaking sunset from the observation lounge on Deck 8. Others had the opportunity to witness four humpback whales blowing and lunging behind the ship, adding an extraordinary finale to this unforgettable day.





Enterprise Island; Foyn Harbour, Orne Harbour

DAY 10 | Sunday 19 November 2023

Position at 1850 on Nov 19

Latitude: 64° 38.262'S

Longitude: 062° 38.202'W

Course: 268°

Speed: 5.6 knots

Wind Speed: 2 knots N

Barometer: 998

Air Temp: 7°C

Waking up on the 19th of November is one morning we are all likely to remember. Antarctica doesn't get much better than this! Clear blue skies, smooth seas and incredible icebergs in every direction. It was hard to stop gazing out the windows - the perfect weather for a day full of Antarctic adventures.

Excitement was high as we arrived in Foyn Harbour for our first Zodiac cruise of the trip. The keen skiers were first to land and make their tracks up the slopes. "Perfect conditions" for ski touring, Jane described in the morning as they were keenly gearing up in the mudroom. Next the snorkellers were on the water, keen to be getting in with hopes of exploring the Governoren shipwreck. They were followed by the photography Zodiac with Max, the Citizen Science Zodiac with Hans and Albert, and the rest of us eager Expeditioners. Chinstrap penguins, Weddell seals and blue eyed shags were some of the wildlife we got to enjoy while cruising around on this stunning morning. The kayakers and snorkellers were excited to be exploring the cold waters from a different perspective for the first time.

Before lunch, Jane gave an exciting briefing about the possibilities of camping in Antarctica! She educated us on the equipment we would be using, and how to build your "Bivvy Burrito" to keep you warm for the night. Not sure whether it's everyone's idea of a fun sleep.

After a picturesque lunch enjoying the view, we prepared for our next stop at Orne Harbour. Somehow, the weather managed to get even better, with glassy waters making perfect reflections of the icebergs and mountains. As we approached our landing site, we could see a track built up the steep slopes of the mountains - "are we really walking up there?!".

Walking poles in hand and determined to reach the penguin colony on the hill, up we went along the zig zag track. At the top, we enjoyed observing chinstrap penguins going about their business along with the stunning view of the landscapes that surrounded us.

To top off the day, we had orcas and finn whales hunting nearby. A stunning day in Antarctica!





Lemaire Island, Paradise Harbour, Punta Vidt (Camping)

DAY 11 | Monday 20 November 2023

Position at 1030 on Nov 20

Latitude: 64° 47.118'S

Longitude: 062° 50.920'W

Course: 280°

Speed: 8 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots SE

Barometer: 991

Air Temp: 3°C

We woke up to the stunning view of the glacier at Neko Harbour. Right in front of the ship we could see the landing site (a continental landing), and penguins with many individuals enjoying penguin life. Content with coffee and breakfast, we counted the minutes until it was our turn to jump into Zodiacs for a new adventure ashore.

From atop the mountain, a powerful wind blew with great force, carrying snow along the slope and down to the water. This wind altered the water colour, creating waves and causing the crest of the water to churn vigorously.

Suddenly, Flo's voice came over the PA system, announcing that Plan A for today needed to be changed due to the presence of katabatic winds. Katabatic winds, similar to a land breeze, occur when cold air drains down the valley, resembling the flow of water. As the cold air descends from the high mountains, it cools rapidly, becoming denser than the surrounding air and accelerating as it slides down the mountain.

Lucky for us, our creative team and Expedition Leader came up with several amazing and intrepid ideas; first a Zodiac navigation from Aguirre Channel to Brown Station, however the channel was blocked with ice, making it impossible to cross even in Zodiacs. We decided to navigate around Lemaire Island in order to reach Paradise Harbour and were greeted with a breathtaking view of the stunning scenery. The entrance to the bay was filled with ice, indicating that the crew must frequently navigate through such conditions. However, the bridge team carefully assessed the situation and successfully guided us through the ice, allowing for a beautiful midday navigation.

After arriving at Paradise Harbour, we anchored directly in front of Almirante Brown base, an Argentinean research station. This location served as the starting point for our afternoon outing, during which we embarked on a Zodiac cruise amidst icebergs. We had the opportunity to witness captivating ice formations while being surrounded by magnificent mountains and glaciers in Skontorp Cove. It was truly a privilege to experience such a sunny day for this remarkable adventure.

During our journey, we had the opportunity to observe Weddell seals and penguins swimming in the water, as well as witness the impressive shag wall. Snorkellers had the unique experience of swimming alongside the penguins, while kayakers explored the surroundings from their kayaks.

After our Zodiac cruise we had time to make another continental landing. Our Expedition Team onshore gave us a quick briefing before we were free to go and explore.

Back onboard we gathered for our daily recap and briefing, which finished with Jane's logistical meet up with the campers. After a quick meal, 27 intrepid Expeditioners stepped off the warm and cosy *Sylvia Earle* for their night on the ice. By approximately 22:30 the ship got word that Bivvy Burritos were established with success and excitement levels were high for a sleepless night ahead!





Danco Island, Useful Island

DAY 12 | Tuesday 21 November 2023

Position at 1250 on Nov 21

Latitude: 64° 44.035'S

Longitude: 062° 36.627'W

Course: 22°

Speed: 0.2 knots

Wind Speed: 4 knots NE

Barometer: 982

Air Temp: 10°C

Following a placid night in Paradise Harbour (some on board, warm in their bunks, with a group of hardier souls ashore lying on the snow), we made for our morning destination, the Lemaire Channel. Alas, the report of a passage blocked with ice compelled Flo to change our plans and make for Danco Island which thankfully was available. When we arrived the weather was ideal, with the seas like glass reflecting the cathedrals of ice and stone that surrounded us.

The air was so still that every distant rumble of a glacier or every splash of a porpoising penguin could be discerned. The noise of our outboard motors, the roar of the *Sylvia Earle's* bow thrusters, even our own voices seemed out of place in the unearthly silence of the Errera Channel.

While we climbed the long sloping shoulder of Danco amidst crowds of nonplussed gentoos, the kayak and snorkelling teams hit the water for a marvelous morning of water sports. The operation was capped by the appearance of a sole Adélie penguin who materialised on a nearby floe, watching quizzically as we passed by on the Zodiacs, through the brush and back to the ship for lunch.

Once again, the ice forced a change in our plans but as the Captain and the leadership team pondered a "Plan B", orca were spotted approaching the ship. We all rushed out on deck and were treated to a rare up-close encounter with a small pod of Type B killer whales. As if a brush with these legendary aquatic predators wasn't enough, we were thrilled to witness one whale snatch up an unlucky gentoo in its jaws and make a meal of it. It's rare indeed to witness these incredible cetaceans successfully hunting penguins.

By the time the whales had moved on our new plans had been made; a visit to nearby Useful Island, a tiny islet so rarely visited that the Expedition Team did not know what to expect. But despite having so little written about it, Useful proved to be as charming as Danco, with gentoos and chinstraps nesting on the slopes, as well as a small group of giant petrels, including a rare white morph resting near our landing site. The snorkellers and kayakers had another commune with the sea while the rest of us stretched our legs climbing to an old Argentinian navigation marker at the high point of the island.

After our daily briefing and recap, we were pampered yet again by the galley and dining room staff before we retired, somewhat sunbaked, to our cabins. Our expedition is not quite at the halfway mark and already it seems like Antarctica has given us its very best. Who knows what tomorrow may bring!





Damoy Point, Port Lockroy

DAY 13 | Wednesday 22 November 2023

Position at 1445 on Nov 22

Latitude: 64° 49.566'S

Longitude: 063° 30.836'W

Course: 86.2°

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: 2 knots NE

Barometer: 987

Air Temp: 9°C

The morning arrived overcast, which was a relief for the photographers and our sunburned faces! Fortunately, the ceiling was high and the mountains of Anvers Island and Wiencke Island were visible up to the highest peaks, including Luigi and the Seven Sisters, one of the peninsula's more recognisable landmarks. The waters of the Neumayer Channel were flat calm, reflecting tremendous icebergs which crowded lovey Dorian Bay.

The plan was to visit the historic British hut at Damoy Point. While we waited for the scouting team to assess the landing, the skiers, kayakers and snorkellers geared up for another outing. The shores along the shallow cove were still high with snow, so Flo opted for an easier approach around the corner. The hiking from the landing was easy and we had a fantastic view of the glaciated peaks that surrounded us.

The hut was a fascinating window into life on the peninsula in the 1950s. Walking down to the shore, we observed a single elephant seal, nearly indistinguishable from the surrounding rocks, lounging in the bay.

Due to the growing threat of avian flu the hut at Port Lockroy was closed, so the Lockroy team was shuttled to the ship. After a short presentation on life on an Antarctic base, they set up a "pop up" shop in the Citizen Science Centre where we could support the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust through our purchases.

Many of us also wrote postcards to be sent from the famous Penguin Post Office, the most southerly post office in the world.

A Zodiac cruise around tiny Goudier Island offered us views not only of the base but several Weddell seals sleeping on the last of the fast ice.

Immediately after the cruise, the foolhardy among us donned their swimming attire and lined up in the marina for the polar plunge. To the strains of "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy" and "I Will Survive", we took the ultimate test of polar travel and leapt, untethered, into the sea.

A lovely barbecue on Deck 7, complete with silly hats, capped off another memorable day in Antarctica. The evening light was ethereal as we sailed north into the blessedly calm Gerlache Strait.





Polar Plunge

DAY 13 | Wednesday 22 November 2023









At Sea (heading north), Walker Bay

DAY 14 | Thursday 23 November 2023

Position at 1815 on Nov 23

Latitude: 62° 45.115'S

Course: 154°

Longitude: 060° 33.508'W

Speed: 10.5 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots N

Air Temp: 2°C

Barometer: 989

Today, some of us enjoyed a sleep in, while others stayed up until the early hours of the morning watching whales, including some orcas close to the ship. After our usual wakeup call from Flo, we had a delightful breakfast while observing Deception Island passing by. It feels like our first landing in Antarctica was a long time ago, considering the packed expedition days we've had since then.

After receiving a briefing from Flo regarding today's plan, many of us opted for a leisurely morning, taking some well-deserved rest. During this time, we had the opportunity to attend an intriguing lecture by Paulina on the captivating topic of '50 Shades of Ice.' The lecture focused on educating us about the various types and formations of glaciers.

Fun fact from Paulina: "If you cut the glacier ice with a chainsaw, it smells like popcorn"

Upon reaching Walker Bay, some of us had the pleasure of witnessing humpback whales gracefully swimming nearby, while others quickly realised they would definitely need more layers for the slightly chillier afternoon. The weather proved to be more demanding today, following a series of exceptionally sunny and calm days down south in the Peninsula.

While eagerly anticipating Justine's call to the mudroom, we were informed that upon reaching the shore, we would be greeted by the presence of elephant seals. This afternoon's landing truly embodied a feeling of South Georgia, with a gentle swell and a remarkable display of wildlife. While always maintaining a safe distance, we were able to appreciate the southern elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*) as they went about their daily lives.

During our exploration of the bay, we were fortunate to encounter more wildlife. Gentoo penguins, chinstrap penguins and crabeater seals to name a few. Additionally, our kayakers had an exhilarating encounter with a curious leopard seal, which added an extra level of excitement to their experience.

Back on board we were treated to a fun recap full of exciting videos of kayaking, polar plunging and Freya's flapping fins. To top it off, our exceptional restaurant and galley team curated a special Thanksgiving menu for us to savour in the Gentoo restaurant. The evening commenced with a champagne on arrival, followed by a delectable five-course meal. The energy in the room was truly remarkable, creating a memorable dining experience for all.





Brown Bluff, Weddell Sea

DAY 15 | Friday 24 November 2023

Position at 1815 on Nov 24

Latitude: 64° 04.462'S

Longitude: 056° 25.694'W

Course: 204.5°

Speed: 6.4 knots

Wind Speed: 14 knots SSW

Barometer: 985

Air Temp: 0°C

Through the night we sailed from the South Shetlands toward Erebus and Terror Gulf. The early morning light revealed calm seas slick with grease ice. Looking to the east, we observed giant tabular icebergs creeping ever northward on the Weddell Gyre. The Trinity Peninsula was dark under overcast skies and Brown Bluff's distinct rust-coloured tuff stood out against the greys and blacks.

With the snow almost gone, the female gentoos and Adelie's were busy sizing up potential mates with eager suitors collecting pebbles. Pairs of skuas and lone kelp gulls stalked the colonies for unattended eggs, while the penguins brooded over their nests.

Leopard seals were also busy in the shoals and their curiosity kept our snorkellers as well as our kayakers out of the water. The skiers did find a window for a short run while the rest of us marvelled at this busy colony already in full swing. A hike to a viewpoint overlooking the glacier to the east capped off a perfect morning on the continent.

By the time we left the wind was up, making for a cold ride back to the *Sylvia Earle*. Imperial shags were seen rafted up in the choppy waters.

Just before lunch we had a briefing by Flo. The Captain had decided it was feasible to continue south toward Snow Hill Island. It made for a careful navigation through closely packed sea ice but by early afternoon we had clear seas ahead and were travelling at speed due south into the Weddell.

We kept our eyes on the floes while the Expedition Team kept us occupied with a cloud survey and a presentation on Sir Ernest Shackleton's famous expedition. But everyone's attention was on the sea, as Seymour Island gradually came into view.

At 16:00 tea was served and by 17:00 Seymour Island was dead ahead, with Cockburn directly to starboard. Massive tabular bergs dwarfed our ship and we could see that the way south to Snow Hill was choked with ice.

But just as we were getting comfortable in the dining room, the tannoy chimed and Flo excitedly announced that our expedition afternoon had paid off. An emperor penguin had been spotted on a nearby floe and another soon after that. Dinner had to wait as we all grabbed our cameras and went out on deck. The *Sylvia Earle* approached cautiously so as not to flush these rarely seen and magnificent animals.

Our mission accomplished, the ship turned about and we headed north again, grateful that the Weddell had granted us this brief glimpse into the world of the emperor penguin.





Weddell Sea, Antarctic Sound/Kinnes Cove

DAY 16 | Saturday 25 November 2023

Position at 1800 on Nov 25

Latitude: 63° 12.734'S

Longitude: 056° 58.454'W

Course: 281.6°

Speed: 14.2 knots

Wind Speed: 16 knots

Barometer: 974

Air Temp: 3°C

Today unfolded as an unexpected adventure for all of us aboard the *Sylvia Earle*, sailing through the Antarctic Sound. Waking up to the ship gently manoeuvring through the pack ice was a quietly mesmerising start to the day. The frozen landscape outside our cabin windows stretched endlessly, a mosaic of icebergs and broken up floes. There wasn't a need for words; we all just stood there, coffee in hand, taking it in with a shared sense of quiet appreciation.

Our day took an exciting turn as we gathered for a Zodiac cruise amidst the pack ice. The small inflatable boats navigated the icy labyrinth, offering close-up views of the intricate details sculpted by nature. The experience was exciting as the ice shifted around us, revealing more and more Adélies. The highlight, however, crept up on us unexpectedly – a minke whale gracefully gliding through the frigid waters. This curious whale came to investigate what our strange vessels were doing in its home, quietly, just a ripple of excitement passing through the group as we fumbled for cameras to capture the moment.

As we got back on board for a needed rest from the cold and to fill our stomachs, we had the incredible luck of seeing a third emperor penguin to cap off this amazing morning with a bang. A juvenile probably just a year old, standing tall alone on a floe, drifting with the currents before it has rested enough to go back out at sea catching fish, to grow large enough to go breed next year.

After a scenic navigation through the Antarctic Sound, we hopped back in Zodiacs at Kinnes Cove on Joinville Island, closer to the heart of the Antarctic landscape. The coastline unfolded with a rugged charm, and our encounters with Adélie penguins became the day's entertainment. Watching them jump off ice walls into the chilly waters was both amusing and endearing. The collective "oohs" and "aahs" were more spontaneous reactions than orchestrated displays of awe. Many photos were taken and many laughs shared. As we rounded the cove, Antarctica was telling us it was time to leave the Weddell Sea as snow started falling and quickly turned to a blizzard. A stark reminder of the harshness of this continent and of the incredible stamina of the first explorers who came down here in wooden boats with very little knowledge of these areas, and no lifelines if things went wrong.

Back on board, we warmed up and enjoyed our evening onboard excited about what tomorrow might bring.





Cierva Cove, Mikkelsen Harbour

DAY 17 | Sunday 26 November 2023

Position at 2215 on Nov 26

Latitude: 62° 10.291'S

Longitude: 061° 37.187'W

Course: 331.2°

Speed: 10.2 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots SW

Barometer: 980

Air Temp: 1°C

Early in the morning we sailed past Trinity Island and Mikkelsen Harbour was blowing 28 knots, hard to know what that would mean for later in the day where we planned to have our last outing.

Onwards for another hour or so, we slipped into Cierva Cove, where we were welcomed by a scattered sky and an armada of large icebergs. After a delicious breakfast we headed out for a Zodiac cruise towards Primavera Station. The variation of the iceberg shapes, sizes and colours was breathtaking, the morning light highlighting different icy faces and giving us endless reasons to keep taking photos.

The kayakers headed in the other direction through the icebergs to visit the small island where they saw amazing rock formations, local mosses, lichens and grasses fighting for survival and were treated to an encounter with a leopard seal floating on a growler. He dropped into the sea to inspect the group, then once satisfied, returned to his spot on the growler.

Once all back on board we headed back out of Cierva Cove and north towards Trinity Island, sailing into Mikkelsen Harbour. We geared up again for what would be our final expedition. The shore party were shuttled to D'Hainaut Island and saw a cute Weddell seal pup and gentoo penguins. They watched the skiers who also managed to get out for a final trip with a ski off Borge Peak. They had fantastic snow conditions on the up and the down and enjoyed amazing views all around from the summit.

The kayakers were shuttled to the southern end of the harbour and had a fast downwind trip to D'Hainaut Island where they made a circumnavigation of the island. It concluded what had been an amazing trip for them, with many outings in amazing conditions.

Back on board we enjoyed a leisurely cocktail and recap, where Kevin shared his music inspired by the Adélie penguin while the *Sylvia Earle* turned north, heading for our upcoming crossing of the Drake Passage. Over dinner, we shared stories of the day's events and celebrated the birthdays of alpine guide Jane and Head Waiter Allen. It was a great ending to our last day of expedition adventures.





Drake Passage

DAY 18 | Monday 27 November 2023

Position at 1100 on Nov 27

Latitude: 60° 46.628'S

Longitude: 063° 10.539'W

Course: 346°

Speed: 11.6 knots

Wind Speed: 2.4 knots NW

Barometer: 995

Air Temp: 2°C

A well-seasoned Drake Passage complement of crew and Expeditioners were delighted to be rocked to sleep in a "Kind Drake" cradle of love and acceptance. How many folks are given the opportunity to do three Drake crossings after all? Those who made it to midnight were treated to a rising full moon and aqueous reflections that had risen a few hours before; what a glorious evening!

Pauline jumped into her lecture earlier than expected to continue enlightening us all on the wonderful and whacky world of the Kingdom of Ice; moulins, eskers, refraction of light, etc. It made many of us eager to throw on our crampons, grab an ice axe and explore!

Bridge tours were conducted for about half of our group, finally glimpsing the inner sanctum of the control room of our diligent navigators who stay focused at all hours staring at a radar screen avoiding bergs and bergy-bits on our way to dramatic destinations.

Following yet another great spread at lunchtime, Max led an informative and inclusive photo critique session for those wanting to improve their art, their hobby, and their passion of photography. A film, 'The Last Husky', was played, which documented the passing of the era of sledge dogs in Antarctica. One viewer commented on the big beards required to lead a team.

Kevin performed pieces he had composed inspired by his experiences in these landscapes, his talented and eloquent fingers speaking to us in the universal language of music. A scan of the room conveyed the evocative mood of thoughts and memories floating to the infinite horizon of the mighty Southern Ocean. This incredible voyage overcoming adversity while forging ahead, undeterred, allowing skill, perseverance, humility and serendipity to be our guides.

Chatter and laughter at dinner followed a beautiful photo summary by Max at recap, Kevin telling the history of Spyker (our player piano) and Hans discussing why whale poop and whale falls (death) should be an inspiration (i.e. breath) to us all.

Those of us lucky enough to stay up for the stunning sunset were treated to a surprise aerobatic performance by a half-dozen or so light-mantled (sooty) albatrosses, soaring to the music of the waves.

Drake Passage

DAY 19 | Tuesday 28 November 2023

Position at 1215 on Nov 28

Latitude: 56° 15.497'S

Longitude: 065° 48.617'W

Course: 344°

Speed: 11.1 knots

Wind Speed: 21 knots SW

Barometer: 982

Air Temp: 8°C

Our day unfolded with a series of engaging activities, marking the culmination of our remarkable Antarctic journey. The morning commenced with three guided tours to the ship's bridge, where we delved into the intricacies of maritime navigation. One of the officers explained the mechanics of how the ship navigates through the icy waters, providing us with a newfound appreciation for the seamanship that guided us through the expedition.

Following the bridge tours, Albert took stage with a captivating lecture about orcas. His insights into the lives and behaviours of these enigmatic creatures deepened our understanding of the marine life inhabiting the frigid Antarctic waters. A delicious lunch energised us for the next adventure—a bird observation session on the outside decks. Amidst the graceful flight of albatrosses, an unexpected delight unfolded as we spotted pilot whales, adding an extra layer of excitement to our wildlife encounters. The afternoon continued with Expeditioners sharing personal stories, offering glimpses into the diverse experiences that shaped our eclectic group. Tim recounted his kayaking adventure, Paulina shared tales of her dogs, Megan detailed her sailing expedition, and Kevin regaled us with stories from his band's journey. It was a rich tapestry of individual experiences that contributed to the collective narrative of our Antarctic exploration.

In a playful turn, we engaged in a game with Eddie of estimating the sizes of various objects around us. Laughter and camaraderie filled the air as we tested our perception and estimation skills, bringing a light-hearted touch to the day. As the sun began to set on our Antarctic adventure, we gathered for the Captain's farewell. This poignant moment marked the approaching end of our journey, fostering a sense of gratitude for the shared experiences and the bonds forged over the past three weeks. After dinner, we reconvened for a final slideshow, a poignant reflection on the incredible journey we undertook together. The images and memories brought tears to our eyes as we relived the awe-inspiring landscapes, the diverse wildlife encounters, and the camaraderie that defined our expedition.

With hearts full of gratitude and a tinge of nostalgia we retired to our cabins, knowing that the indelible moments of our Antarctic adventure would stay with us forever. As the ship sailed towards its final destination, we reflected on the unique and transformative experiences that defined this extraordinary journey at the southernmost reaches of the Earth.

Ushuaia

DAY 20 | Wednesday 29 November 2023

Position at 0600 on Nov 29

Latitude: 54° 49.1'S

Longitude: 068° 14.4'W

Course: 285°

Speed: 7.7 knots

Wind Speed: 16 knots SW

Barometer: 980

Air Temp: 7°C

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



Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Sigurð Davidsen, Vanja Davidsen, Tim Vanhoutteghem

Number of Paddlers: 7

Total Paddle Outings: 13

Total Distance Paddled: 51.5 km

Paddlers:	Anne Quinn	Christina Cifuentes	Antony Mower
John Short	John Pierce	Dale Boulton	Joanne Mower

Enterprise island/Foyn Harbour 2.6km

After a sunny wake up with our first views of the Antarctic Peninsula, we were ready and super excited for our first morning kayak session. We anchored up close to Enterprise Island, headed out in the Zodiac, drove to a less wavy spot, and launched from the Zodiac into our kayaks. We paddled towards the southern shoreline off the island and passed by our first icebergs. After taking the necessary photos, we made our way towards Gouvernor Harbour and bay. We had a safety brief regarding ice cliffs and glaciers, paddled a little bit closer to the Gouvernor shipwreck, and then made it safely out of the bay. After this we had more time to explore the coastline of the island, while watch some chinstrap penguins and Antarctic shags. We then made our way back safely to the ship and finished our first amazing kayaking experience in Antarctica.

Orne Harbour 4.9km

After a beautiful navigation to Orne Harbour, we launched from the Zodiac and started exploring the ice floes and growlers heading west. As we paddled along the ice floes we encountered a few chinstrap penguins resting and gaining energy on the ice. As we got closer to the cliff, we enjoyed the Antarctic shags diving for the seaweed that they use for building their nests. The group slowly kayaked along the cliffs where the chinstrap penguins and Antarctic shags nested. We got closer to the landing site where we saw the skiers where majestically skiing down the mountain. Our guides led us for a short exploration into the tough brash ice to get a taste of how challenging it can be to paddle in ice. We paddled further eastbound into the more open and sunny part of the bay, where we cruised between the blue growlers from the glacier.

Paradise Harbor 5km

After a beautiful ship cruise finding our way through all the ice, we finally made it into Paradise Bay. After launching from the Zodiac, we headed out with our kayaks past some beautiful icebergs and paddled a bit closer to the glacier front. With the low tide and a shallow coastline, there were some beautiful stable grounded growlers that we decided to take a closer look at. Some of us even had a taste, figuring out if it was sea or glacier ice. We then followed the coastline past Brown station, which was still closed (only open in summer) but seemed to be populated by a lot of gentoos instead! After this we followed the rocky shoreline towards Skontorp cove, before paddling through some brash ice and making our way back safely to the ship.

Danco Island 4.5km

We had an amazing paddle in the morning. The weather was perfect for paddling; flat, calm and glassy sea. We saw many gentoo penguins on the small island and in the water, swimming past us and jumping in and out of the water. Our plan was to circumnavigate the island. We headed our way along the coastline, sticking our noses into the ice just to have a feel of it. When we reached the point to the back of the island, the ice was so thick and it was impossible for us to complete our plan to circumnavigate, as the ice was moving too fast with the tides. Instead, we explored the wildlife and icebergs in the area. We saw a bunch of crabeater seals and giant petrels on the rocks.

Useful island 4.4km

After a ship wildlife cruise and a close encounter with orcas, we arrived at Useful Island. Excited for our afternoon kayak trip, we started kayaking from the ship. There was a bit of wind out, but we made our way to the small island group where we could paddle sheltered. We followed the rocky coastline and had plenty of encounters with chinstraps, before making our way to the small channel between the two main islands. This channel was blocked by grounded bergy bits, but we found a small passage through at the start with some beautiful views. We decided to not go through the channel because of the weather conditions on the other side and incoming icebergs. Instead, we paddled back around the backside of the island and explored some of the bigger icebergs. A beautiful afternoon paddle!

Damoy Point 4.5km

The kayak group launched from a Zodiac on back of the marina of *Sylvia Earle*. They paddled a route between all the amazing icebergs of all shapes and sizes, some blue and some white, then paddled to the small islet outside the hut where they stopped in a small bay. Again the local gentoo penguins were intrigued by the kayaks, swimming underneath the kayaks and jumping up on land studying the kayakers. Some of the kayakers went back to the *Sylvia Earle* to change into Muck Boots in order to join the landing, while the rest of the group continued, paddling along the glacier and enjoying the tranquility of being alone without Zodiacs.

Port Lockroy 4.5km

After the *Sylvia Earle* picked up the crew from the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, who were coming on board to set up a 'pop up', the kayaks were launched from a Zodiac. The group paddled east towards land and explored the icebergs in the sound, again with our favourite gentoo penguins coming close in large groups. We went close to the base and observed the surroundings, including whalebones in the clear Antarctic sea. As we continued our journey, we encountered some Antarctic blue-eyed shags that fighting for some seaweed for their nests.

Walker Bay 1.6km

We launched near Hannah Point, where we paddled north along the coast. We passed a chinstrap colony and an Antarctic shag colony, and further along we came to a beach where we encountered some elephant seals and a resting leopard seal. As we headed back, we came across a leopard seal in the water chewing on a gentoo penguin. As we were about to head over to the east side of the point, the winds started to become so fresh that we decided to get back to the warmth of the *Sylvia Earle*.

Kinnes Cove – 3.4km

After enjoying the emperor penguin on our way to Kinnes Cove, the group started exploring the icebergs and growlers to the west, where we encountered some playful Adélie Penguins on the ice. We continued our exploration northeast where we got to shore, the water incredibly clear and the beautiful rocks visible under our kayaks. We enjoyed observing the Adélie penguin colony (with the odd gentoo at the shoreline), and as we explored further east, we playfully paddled along the coastline between the growlers that were stranded. After all the Zodiacs had passed, we enjoyed the tranquility and peace of mind while looking for ice to bring back to the Tektite Bar. As we finished the kayak trip it started snowing and we could see the weather coming in from the southeast.

Cierva Cove 2.5km

As we arrived at Cierva Cove, the wind came down and we had another chance of kayaking. The group paddled northeast towards the small island in the cove, opposite to the Argentinian base where all the Zodiacs went exploring. On our way towards the island, we saw a few beautiful bergy bits, and as we approached the island, we noticed that something was looking at us on the foot of a bergy bit. It started moving and we realised that another leopard seal was joining us on this kayaking outing. The group got together, as procedure states. The leopard seal was not really interested in us, and after swimming under the kayaks a couple of times it went back to its initial resting place. We paddled around the back of the island, which had some amazing rock formations. We also saw a bunch of lichen on the rocks. On top of the island, we could see some grasses and mosses, which is an uncommon sight in Antarctica. As we came to the northern side of the island, we noticed that there was a lot of ice blocking our way around to circumnavigate the Island. We headed back to the *Sylvia Earle* the same way we came.

Mikkelsen Harbour 4.6km

Arriving at Mikkelsen Harbour, it was a bit windy and there were some waves, but this seemed perfectly fine for the experienced paddlers we had become throughout this trip. It was our last kayak trip for this expedition, so we were all super excited to take in as much of the Antarctic experience as possible. We started with a Zodiac drive to get ourselves more upwind and sheltered before starting the kayaking. After ferrying against the wind over to the first island, the conditions became a bit calmer, and we saw some seals here. Leaving from the shallow island, we had our first kayak surf experience, with some small but fun waves pushing us towards the bay. Once we headed to the main island, Mikkelsen Harbour, we decided to circumnavigate it against the clock, to use the wind to our advantage. We had some beautiful close to coast paddling, heading in and out with the small waves, which made for some fun exciting paddling. Once on the protected backside of the island, we paddled in between some stranded growlers and had some gentoo penguins swimming close and underneath us.

Full of wonderful Antarctic kayak experiences, we headed back to the ship, only more excited for more kayak adventures to come.





Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guides: Eddie Hauzer & Freya Dooley

Number of Snorkels: 8

Total Outings: 7

Snorkellers:

Ali Borovali

Ali Artunkal

Sion Marx

Joe Cuffaro

Matthew Moran

Holly Moran

Georgia Wilson

Neil Robertson

Foyn Harbour, Governor Wreck

The boat is full of excitement this morning as we wake up to clear blue skies and surrounded by icebergs. Our group is keen to get into the water for the first snorkel of the trip. Following a short Zodiac cruise enjoying the scenery including some chinstrap penguins, a sunbathing Weddell seal and the incredible wreck of the Governor, we started gearing up for our first snorkel. After putting on our hoods, gloves, fins and masks, we were ready to hop in the water. The clear blue waters made for the perfect spot to get comfortable with our equipment and feel how cold the water really is! The beautiful blue skies meant we were able to really appreciate the beauty of our surroundings. After exploring the area, back to the ship we went to warm up and prepare for an afternoon of activities.

Orne Harbour

When we thought the weather couldn't get any better... it did! Clear skies and glassy waters made for the perfect conditions for our afternoon snorkel. After warming up with a nice lunch on the boat we set out for Orne Harbour. As we approached the landing site, we saw a steep track up to a point with a penguin colony on the top. With drysuits on, up we went through the snow and wow, the views were worth it – 360-degree views of the beautiful landscapes with amazing reflections on the water, and amusing gentoo penguins to watch while resting at the top. Back down we went, nice and warm to head off for our second snorkel of the trip. After finding a nice spot, we hopped in the water which quickly cooled us down. The clear blue waters allowed us to see right to the bottom, spotting ctenophores, starfish, sea angels and of course some playful gentoo penguins in the background. Another successful snorkel outing for the team!

Paradise Bay

We awoke to another stunning day on the Antarctic Peninsula; however, the catabolic winds made this morning's plans change, meaning we could enjoy a sleep in. Once away from the wind, what stunning scenery there was. To Paradise Bay we headed, and the Captain even put the ship through some ice for us! What a treat. Once at Paradise we could see how it got its name. We had a scenic Zodiac cruise enjoying the stunning conditions, then

we landed at Brown Station. After a nice walk around to warm up, we headed to the entrance of a gentoo colony with hopes of snorkelling with some curious penguins. Gearing up is getting quicker and easier meaning we have more time in the water to explore. A few brave penguins came to check us out and show us their speed and agility in the water. After braving the cold, back to the boat we went for a nice jacuzzi and dinner.

Danco Island

Another blue skied day and still no wind! We set off for Danco Island with the plan to explore land before we snorkel. At the landing site a nice track has been made, zig-zagging up the hill to remind us of the multiple penguin colonies that live here. With only two brave snorkellers this morning, we had time to go and explore the best snorkel spot before hopping in. We find three relaxing Weddell seals on a small island nearby, enjoying the sun. Back towards the landing site we went, to the entrance of the penguin colony with the hopes of snorkelling with some more penguins. Watching them waddle down into the water is something that you could never get sick of. After we are too cold to continue, back to the ship we head lucky enough to spot a lonesome Adélie penguin on an iceberg, posing perfectly for our cameras. What a great way to end the morning!

Useful Island

By now we are well aware how quickly plans can change down here, but sometimes it works in our favour. On our way to Useful Island, we are greeted by many orcas using the area as a hunting ground and we even saw them catch a little gentoo penguin. Once we arrived at our site, we landed and explored the area, including more penguin colonies. The snorkel consisted of more penguins too, with these guys being a bit more curious and coming a lot closer to us when we were in the water. The nice little bay was completely sheltered from the wind and made it very easy to explore right into the shallows.

Damoy Point

We woke to another beautiful day down in Antarctica. Damoy Point definitely put on its best for us this morning. After a lovely landing exploring the sites, out for another snorkel we went... today around icebergs! Amazing clear waters and a variety of bergs to explore. It was amazing to see all the bubbles coming up from below, and to see how big the icebergs really are under the water.

Kinnes Cove

We made it to the Weddell Sea! What a treat the past days have been... amazing sea ice, and even emperor penguins. While making our way back north, we managed to stop at Kinnes cove for a scenic Zodiac cruise, followed by our final snorkel of the trip. We had three brave snorkellers jump into the cold waters of the Weddell, the highlight being the clear blue waters - the visibility would have been at least 40 metres, which made it nice and easy to spot the Adélie Penguins playing through the water. A cold but awesome experience.



Ski Log

Snorkel Guides: Jane Morris and Marius Bron

Number of Skiers: 2

Total Outings: 6

Skiers:

Justine Gosling

Ken Gutterson

Deception Island/Whalers Bay

With favourable conditions, we made excellent time across the Drake, squeezing our first outing of the trip onto the end of Day 2 at Deception Island in the Shetlands, which was a small win after a week of waiting and wondering.

The weather cooperated enough for the ship to travel through Neptune's Bellows and into the caldera of the island, to the relative shelter of Whalers Bay.

Despite a brisk breeze we were able to make our first landing onto the volcanic beach near the old whaling station. With the new avian flu protocols, we were using tarps to protect our equipment from the ground, and finding a new normal with not being able to put anything down on the snow.

After an initial avalanche safety briefing refresher, we set off up towards the ridge.

Increased elevation came with increased wind and a drop in visibility and we stopped below ridge crest to maintain some sense of ski workable conditions.

The descent was unusually good for what is typically a wind and rain hammered surface, and made for a great first ski to begin our programme.

A brief tour passed the old aircraft hangar on the beach and penguins lining the shore, back to the pickup point for a foot bath and boot scrub.

On returning to ship, all equipment that had been on the snow was hosed down or had the appropriate biosecurity measures applied – cloths with bleach for skins, virkon for boots.

We were underway, and although the focus had unfortunately shifted away from prepping for the crossing, there was enthusiasm and good vibes for our new look ski program.

Enterprise Island

After travelling overnight towards the Antarctic Peninsula, we awoke to the magical scenery (and weather) that followed us around for nearly the whole trip.

Our snow access point was a narrow rib leading down to the water, flanked on either side with hanging glaciers, providing a dramatic entry to the morning's outing.

We skinned to the highest area on the top of the island, taking care of the large cornices that surrounded us and keeping a healthy distance back from the edges in all directions.

The first half of the ski down was unremarkable, but the second half made up for it. With an audience filling the Zodiacs awaiting just offshore, unbeknownst to us, we provided a unique insight into what skiing in Antarctica entailed, and plenty of footage for our team to record their outing with.

Orne Harbour

The original plan for the afternoon was not going to work for a ski outing, but then when this changed and we found ourselves in Orne Harbour, it didn't take much to convince Ken and Justine that a second outing for the day would be worth the effort.

We managed a great loop up onto Spigot Peak, dropping towards Selvick Cove on the other side of Orne, and looping back up to meet the rest of the landing party up at the chinstrap penguin colony on the ridge.

The final ski down – in full view of everyone again – was challenging at best, with breakable crust and semi-refrozen snow, something we didn't necessarily need recorded this time as many a lens pointed our way.

Leith Peak

The day went through several iterations due to ice conditions not making our 'Plan A' destinations possible.

However, we were rewarded with a superb afternoon ski at Leith Cove, in Paradise Bay.

Despite being west facing and a warm day, we had just enough of a katabatic rolling off the continent to provide some air conditioning for the skin up.

Then we were rewarded with perfect cream corn for the descent, all of us agreeing that was the best pitch for length and consistency so far for the trip.

Doumer Island

The morning arrived calm and fine again, with high cloud capping the sun.

We set off for the western ridge on Doumer Island, which after the initially short pull up from the beach was a mellow, low angled skin to where the terrain steepened.

We transitioned into boot crampons and ice axes and travelled in short-rope mode for another 20 minutes until the breakable crust became too unbearable for the heavier members of the party.

Back down to our skis and once through the bumpy wind waved surface of the upper mountain, we had a fantastically cruisy return to the beach on slightly sun-softened corn, with the landscape slowly passing us by as our skis carried us downward.

Brown Bluff, Antarctic Sound

With the weather reminiscent of our first outing at Deception Island, we managed a shorter outing at the unusual rock formation of Brown Bluff.

The inquisitive Adélie penguins greeted us and made use of our step up off the beach.

Conditions were firm and slightly awkward skinning on the diagonal through hard, windblown sastrugi.

On reaching the cloud base at 250 metres elevation we transitioned, with the downhill run not really improving until the lower third where there was the odd wind-blown patch of fluff in amongst the firm. Despite average snow conditions, at this point of the trip any additional outings were a bonus, and we all appreciated the time outside.

Borge Peak

Despite forecasts of strong winds and inclement weather, we had a mellow morning in Cierva Cove Zodiac cruising, and then one last outing in Mikkelsen Harbour to Borge Peak.

The upper pitch of the peak had some drier windblown snow and a fantastic pitch to lead us into the lower, sun softened corn zone. We had an audience across the waters in the form of the shore landing party on D'Hainaut Island, as we in our ant appearance inched our way up to the top, and then had some admiring fellow ski appreciators watching our descent. Among them was Justine's dad, who had not seen his daughter skiing, remarking "I hope you had your flippers" as we skied towards the water.

It rated as one of the better slopes we had skied for the trip, all in agreement it was a great way to finish.







Expeditioners:

Peter Thompson

Ali Artunkal

Ellen Bartel

Evgeniya Beletskaya

George Blenkhorn

Susan Blenkhorn

Susan Bolam

Graham Bolam

Ali Borovali

Denise Boulton

Dale Boulton

Maureen Brown

Jenny Campbell

Cristina Cifuentes

Ann Crafton

Kathy Cuffaro

Joe Cuffaro III

Karen Dellert

Lois Dellert

Linh Diep

Todd Do

Marilyn Embelton

Jill Engel-Cox

Glen Engel-Cox

Justine Gosling

Peter Gosling

Kenneth Gutterson

Jacqueline Gutterson

Jane Hofto

Elizabeth Hosick

Rex Jewell

Susan Jewell

Tobias Kaempf

Tina Kordys

David Lillywhite

Jon Lloyd

Richard Longes

Elizabeth Longes

Susana Low

Victor Low

Sion Marx

Cath Moore

Matthew Moran

Holly Moran

Antony Mower

Joanne Mower

Cameron Neill

Carol Oakley

Robert Parker

Dave Peregoy

Carol Peregoy

Barbara Peterson

John Pierce

Anne Quinn

Lyn Regan

Neil Roberston

Warren Salmon

Marcelle Scrivener

John Short

Kevin Smith

Graham Snell

Sue Spencer

Nadine Staehli

Jennifer Stenger

Logan Stenger

Eimear Tuohy

Lynn Weak

Gael White

Martha Willox

Randy Willox

Georgia Wilson

Graeme Wilson

John Wilton

Selena Zhao

Hong Zhao

Davis Zhao



Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Flo Kuijper

Assistant Expedition Leader: Dot Robertson

Onboard Expedition Manager: Justine Bornholdt

Marine Biologist: Albert Michaud

Glaciologist/Geologist: Paulina Pierzak

Naturalist: Hans Bruning

Musician/Naturalist: Kevin Closs

Photography Guide: Max Seigal

Expedition Medic: Belinda Denchfield

Expedition Guide: Megan Frey

Kayak Guide: Sigurd Davidsen

Kayak Guide: Vanja Davidsen

Kayak Guide: Tim Vanhoutteghem

Ski Tour Guide: Jane Morris

Ski Tour Guide: Marius Bron

Snorkel Guide: Eddie Hauzer

Snorkel Guide Trainee: Freya Dooley

Zodiac Master: Jeb Pearce

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ana Prado

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Donael Soto Hernandez

Chief Officer: Sergio Saldana Hernandez

Second Officer: Raymer Fernandes

Deck Cadet: Carlos Florido Carvalho Da Silva

Safety Officer: Matko Zagorac

Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan

Ship Doctor: Gloria Gonzales Iraheta

Chief Engineer: Luis Edgardo Gil

First Engineer: Warlito Verzosa

IT Officer: Valentin Cojocar

Hotel Director: Balvant Singh

F&B Service Manager: Narendra Seeram

Head Bartender: Lloyd Laylo

Chief Purser: Josephine Blanco

Executive Chef: Cristiand Carlos Minl Pineda

Sous Chef: Hubert Ramiro Barreto

Hotel Controller: Orlando Costa

Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska

Receptionist: Jaypee Alota Abonitalla

Head Stateroom Attendant: Marthony Penalosa

Able Seaman: Lexter Fadriquela

Able Seaman: Rene Casipe

Able Seaman: Bahar Buhari

Able Seaman: Noel Reugia

Able Seaman: Ferdy Diaz Roque

Able Seaman: Rajiv Rauniyar

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