

# Antarctica Complete

Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 28 December 2023 – 18 January 2024



# Ushuaia, Argentina | Beagle Channel

DAY 1 | Thursday 28 December 2023

Position at 0800 on 28 Dec

Latitude: 54°48'6" S

Longitude: 68°17'9" W

Course: At wharf

Speed: 0 kts

Barometer: 1015 hpa

Air Temp: 6°C

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

The wharf was abuzz this afternoon with arrivals, departures, fishing vessels unloading their catch, and all sorts of activity. Our expeditioners were met by the Aurora team and had their photos taken for our 'photoboard' to help us learn each other's names.

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

After a welcome briefing from our Expedition Leader Greg, we had an introduction from Onboard Expedition Manager, Kerry; Hotel Director, Pascal; and Dr Anzor; all of whom gave us some handy hints about life onboard.

Just after the *Greg Mortimer* set sail, we had the all-important safety drill. The sound of the ship's horn signalled us to don bulky orange lifejackets and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed our crew up to deck 7, where the polar-class life vessels sit (they can hold 136 people each, for 5 days!).

With the safety drill completed, we were cleared to begin our journey.

We made our way to the dining room to enjoy a delicious dinner, prepared by our talented galley team and served by our smiling and welcoming waiting staff.

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

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

Together we total 106 passengers (40 Americans, 44 Australians, 1 Canadian, 8 from the UK, 3 Chinese, 1 Estonian, 1 Indian, 1 Irish, 2 Singaporeans, 2 Germans, 2 Japanese and 1 New Zealander) along with 105 crew from all around the globe. Our 20 Expedition Team have a variety of specialities including polar exploration, mountaineering, skiing, glaciology, geology, history, marine and terrestrial biology, ornithology, photography, medicine, and kayaking.

After the many hours of travel to reach the *Greg Mortimer*, it's time to kick back, breathe in the sea air, and get excited for the next 22 days of adventure!



# At Sea | Drake Passage

DAY 2 | Friday 29 December 2023

Position at 0850 29 December

Latitude: 56°13'6" S

Longitude: 66°43'3"W

Course: 175°

Speed: 9 kts

Wind Speed: 28 kts SW

Barometer: 1022 hpa

Air Temp: 7°C

Today we were firmly aware that we were in the midst of an open sea crossing, waking to feel most definitely the 'motion of the ocean'. Though, thanks to the ship's X-bow design, the movement was much smoother and more restrained compared to the bashing and crashing against the swell that typical V-shaped hulls are prone to.

Even though many folks felt most comfortable in the private surrounds of their cabins, a fair few of us were able to participate in the many activities scheduled throughout the day. T-A began with sharing her passion of seabirds with us, which then allowed us to know a bit more about the birds we have been and will be seeing around the ship as our time in the Southern Ocean progresses.

Then Alasdair gave context to our personal voyage of discovery, highlighting several historic expeditions that historically traversed these waters, ultimately paving the way for all those of us who come after.

After regaining physical sustenance over lunch, the afternoon held more in store to feed our minds. Joselyn took us through the Citizen Science program and the different projects we'll be able to get involved with, including helping to identify and track humpbacks around the world as well as helping to understand phytoplankton dynamics. We'll even be able to call ourselves NASA scientists, helping to ground-truth satellite imagery in support of understanding world weather and climate models! Afterwards, several passengers joined the team out on deck 7 to try their hand at cloud observing and then tallying birds over a half-hour's survey transect. Several species were seen, and the scene was set for identifying even more as we get deeper south.

Following the citizen science extravaganza, Jamie was meant to start a photography presentation – but was momentarily delayed by shouts of 'Look, there!' from the coffee station. A pod of dolphins was sighted leaping through the swell alongside the ship. Many of us were able to watch these sprightly marine mammals charging along with us, and ultimately able to identify the tell-tale markings of the hourglass dolphin. Jamie then shared some of his top tips on how to get the most out of our photographic efforts this trip. Both smartphone users and the big-lens crowd were given a variety of techniques to consider in expanding their skills and results.

Before dinner we gathered together at the Elephant Island Bar, enjoying some conversation, and then our expedition leader Greg made a gracious introduction to our Captain Kapko, who then welcomed us aboard and introduced the rest of the Expedition Team on board who were charged with taking care of our safety and comfort these next three weeks. With this warm feeling of onboard family and fellowship, we continued on to dinner and talk of what tomorrow might bring.



# At Sea | Drake Passage

DAY 3 | Saturday 30 December 2023

Position at 0915 on 30 Dec

Latitude: 61°13.70'S

Longitude: 66°46.38'W

Course: 181°

Speed: 13 kts

Wind Speed: 15 kts W

Barometer: 1007 Hpa

Air Temp: 5°C

Early, very early in the wee hours, we crossed the Antarctic Convergence!

We are now in Antarctica; politically, biologically, almost emotionally and spiritually too. How happy we were to have breakfast in a calmer Drake than yesterday.

We started the day with our mandatory induction and briefings to fully understand how Antarctica operates and how we can keep it pristine for generations to come.

Theory into practice, out came the vacuums, metal brushes and even a few fine-toothed combs. Now we are biosecurity-ally ready for Antarctica too. All the penguins, sea birds, seal and whales thank you for your care in protecting them from avian flu, invasive species, and all other unwanted stowaways.

We swapped Muck Boots, adjusted PFDs and tried to figure out our systems for tomorrow too.

To really whet our appetites for both lunch and Antarctica, the iceberg competition closes as we see our first. A beauty, floating along in the big Southern Ocean.

A delicious lunch got us all ready for T-A's penguin chat, remember her favourite penguin? Gentoo! Love how many different types of feathers penguins have, even feathers to find gaps in their feathers!

Kayakers and snorkellers got fitted for their drysuits and are ready for their exciting activities. What will they find below the water? What will they find under their little plastic boats?

Some fresh air and another chance for citizen science on the top deck was very refreshing. Quite the full cloud cover out there and it didn't seem like many birds at first... however, once we got looking and started the timer on the bird survey, they all came out of the wash. Grey-headed albatross, black-browed albatross, white-chinned petrel, Wilson's storm petrel, two Cape petrels and a prion (of some sort). Cape petrels are also called 'pintado' for their 'painted' wings.

Teatime! Don't need to be hungry to enjoy those delicacies, do we? A little free time to get back out on deck and really soak in the vast ocean, when... iceberg! Dead ahead! Nice dry dock formation with beautiful blues. This is why we come, isn't it?

Greg briefs us on tomorrow; how exciting, our first excursion in Antarctica, and so far south as well.

Congratulations to Geoff for his big win at the iceberg competition; can't wait to see those cufflinks at dinner, eh? Speaking of, another incredible meal, and off to bed.

Can't wait for tomorrow!



# Prospect Point | Across the Circle – New Year's Eve!

DAY 4 | Sunday 31 December 2023

Position at 0830 on 31 Dec

Latitude: 65°59'4" S

Longitude: 66°66'0"W

Course: 120°

Speed: 10kts

Wind Speed: 13 kts SE

Barometer: 1004hpa

Air Temp: -2°C

"Good morning good people." Greg's dulcet tones beckoned us from our slumber this last morning of 2023. We had arrived in Antarctica, he went on to say, sailing in through the Pendleton Strait towards our afternoon goal of Prospect Point. A bit windy outside during breakfast, we hoped that the weather forecast from the night prior of calm blue would appear by the time we reached our destination.

We rugged up and got out on deck, taking in these foreign surroundings so different from any landscapes from home. Icebergs of every size, shape and colour dotted the horizon. Glaciated shorelines receded into the distance, just to pop up again in another direction. We had arrived in Antarctica!

To warm ourselves from the time outside, many of us grabbed a cup of tea and headed down to the lecture theatre to watch Annette's talk on 'Marine Dynamics from Ocean Currents to Predator Abundance.' We learned all about how and why the Antarctic Convergence happens and how the thermocline (where cold water from Antarctica meets the warmer waters coming from further north) creates a foraging hotspot for many animals, including penguins.

She showed how the environment provides a supermarket in the ocean for different species on different scales, so they know where to go to find food. Annette's visuals of ocean currents all around the world really brought home the significance of marine dynamics, the ocean's impact on the climate, and how everything is connected. After being thoroughly inspired by Annette's words, she shared that we too can be ocean ambassadors by understanding what is going on and talking to people about what is happening. We are on our way!

Before we knew it, we had arrived in the glassy calm, ice-speckled anchorage in front of Prospect Point and the Fish Islands. We hopped in the Zodiacs and made our way to shore – for many of us well-travelled folks, stepping onto the seventh continent! The afternoon was idyllic: sun, icebergs, every shade of blue and white imaginable... comedic Adélie penguins and busy blue-eyed shags. What a glorious last day of 2023.

The evening brought much festivity and celebratory cheer – from silly hats, karaoke and whales at dinner, to belly laugh-inducing trivia led by the dynamic duo Liz and Mark. Then it was up to deck 8 to sip champagne and watched the golden light on icebergs all around as we sailed closer and closer to the Antarctic Circle. Then it was 3, 2, 1... HONK KKKK. The *Greg Mortimer* crossed the Antarctic Circle at midnight and we gathered on deck to cheers our glasses and we were marked with the ceremonial sink-plug circle stamp. Happy New Year!





# Isacke Passage | Detaille Island

DAY 5 | Monday 01 January 2024

Position at 1250 on 01 Jan

Latitude: 66°49'1"S

Longitude: 69°03'4"W

Course: 112°

Speed: 8 kts

Wind Speed: 5 kts SSW

Barometer: 1011 hpa

Air Temp: 6°C

Today, many of us found ourselves completely lost for words as we faced the enormity, beauty and strangeness of Antarctica. Our jaws dropped, our eyes popped out, and we filled the Zodiacs with guttural, penguin-like noises as we attempted to make sense of our surroundings and to explain it all to ourselves and to each other. Thank goodness for 'ineffable' – that handy word that describes when something is too great or too intense to be expressed in words!

The day started gently with a wake-up call at 0800 - thanks, Greg for the New Year's morning lie in! Cheery (and/or bleary-eyed) New Year's greetings filled the corridors, decks and dining room as we shook off our post-celebratory slumber and fuelled up for the adventures ahead. Breakfast included trays and trays of incredible Danish pastries. And we nearly broke the coffee machine in our shared enthusiasm for the first caffeine hit of 2024.

Coffee disaster narrowly averted, we set off in absolutely perfect conditions to explore Isacke Passage, which separates Liard Island and the Arrowsmith Peninsula. We cruised amongst the bluest of blue icebergs, met sleeping crabeater seals and some Adélie penguins, and marvelled at the mountains all around us. The snorkel team enjoyed a taste of ice snorkelling, and the kayakers paddled their way across glassy waters under the bright-blue sky. Just in case that all that wasn't perfect enough, we stepped 'ashore' onto some ice floes – an astonishing feeling to be standing in the middle of all this magnificence on a little platform of frozen sea water.

Back on board we watched for whales as we had lunch and set sail towards Detaille Island. Ashore at Detaille, we visited Station W, a British scientific research base established in the late 1950s, then abandoned in a hurry when winter sea ice threatened to trap the researchers there. The long-johns still strung up to dry hinted at the speed with which the base had to be abandoned. Minke whales were spotted from the hill above the station, and kelp gulls, terns, skuas and shags flew above us.

It was also a fantastic day for citizen science with some slick operations by 'team Fjord Phyto', with the day's sampling adding to our great contribution to this important research project.

After an ineffably ineffable day, standing out on the ship's viewing platforms as we sailed out through the icebergs, with whale tails in all directions, the only words we could muster to describe the day were – 'the happiest of happy New Year's Day ever!'

Best wishes to all for 2024!





# Winter Island | Yalour Islands

DAY 6 | Tuesday, 2 January 2024

Position at 1230 on 02 Jan

Latitude: 65°31'9"S

Longitude: 64°16'6"W

Course: 50°

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 6 kts SW

Barometer: 1009 hpa

Air Temp: 5°C

Glasgow's James Wordie was one of several notable Scotsmen to come to the continent during the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration but, unlike many, he would ultimately become successful. Though his first experience in the white south was on Ernest Shackleton's calamitous *Endurance* expedition, the acclaimed scientist Wordie would return again and again to the Polar regions. On top of this, he was involved in both world wars, and had a three-year stint as President of the Royal Geographical Society. All of which is to say: for a man of this kind of stature, Wordie House on Winter Island does not seem like an especially great monument\*.

A small historical hut used by British scientists in the post-war period, the refuge has been abandoned for over 60 years, though its setting in a beautiful bay – just around a channel from the much larger and more modern Vernadsky Station – is incontestably scenic.

While expeditioners from the *Greg Mortimer* commented on this idyllic setting, many were still buzzing with excitement from watching three humpback whales incessantly feeding during the Zodiac transfer from ship to shore.

The afternoon's outing was very close by at the Yalour Islands. Here, a sprawling Adélie penguin colony was waiting to be visited. Ridges and hillocks around one of the islands had been free from snow for several weeks, creating what looked like little islands in a white sea. Thousands of penguins had seized on these ideal little promontories to make nesting sites above the snow, and many had already entered the fraught early days of parenthood.

With the majority of chicks still only a few days old, they were particularly vulnerable to predation by skuas and giant petrels, both of which were seen skulking nearby. Several times, expeditioners saw adult Adélie working as a team to scare off the would-be assailants, but there was a sense that inevitably guards would eventually be let down, and the predators would have their wicked way.

Such violence still felt like a distant concept at the windless Yalours, however, which despite their low profile offered 360-degree views across the surrounding bay. This included the entrance to the storied Lemaire Channel, one of the narrowest and most beloved passages anywhere on the Antarctic Peninsula.

As people made their way to outer decks it was clear that the weather wouldn't be entirely welcoming, but with gales and hard rain coming down, no-one could accuse the Lemaire of lacking drama.

\*Wordie also has two bays, an ice shelf, a type of limestone, a glacier and several points bearing his name – he has hardly been forgotten.





# Chiriguano Bay | Damoy Point

DAY 7 | Wednesday 3 January 2023

Position at 0840 on 03 Jan

Latitude: 64°30'9"S

Longitude: 62°29'4"W

Course: 5°

Speed: 10 kts

Wind Speed: 12 kts E

Barometer: 998 hpa

Air Temp: 4°C

We started our day under morning snowflakes in Chiriguano Bay, a protected, enclosed bay on the south end of Brabant Island in the Palmer Archipelago. The bay was surveyed and named by the Argentine Antarctic Expedition 1948–49 after the Argentine tugboat *Chiriguano*, which was involved in the survey.

Our Zodiacs made their way slowly through the half-frozen sea water, along impressive ice cliffs and glowing icebergs of ancient, dense-blue glacier ice. Terns flew over our heads and accompanied us through our voyage, while we soaked in the peaceful atmosphere of the magical surroundings. A few moments with switched-off Zodiac engines made us sink deeply into the silence, just interrupted by the light crackling noise of the ice all around us.

The *Greg Mortimer* then turned southwards once more, and took us through the southern end of Gerlache Strait and the narrow, scenic Neumayer Channel to our afternoon destination, Damoy Point in Dorian Bay. When stepping out onto the deck before the landing we could already smell it: penguins! We quickly jumped into our Antarctic outdoor dress and the Zodiacs took us to the landing site.

We were greeted by the joyful rolling sounds of hundreds of gentoo penguins all along the bay that led to the landing beach. And once we stepped out of the Zodiacs and walked up the snowy slope, we realised that this place was in fact full of penguins. All the rocky, snow-free hilltops were populated by gentoo penguins, with the occasional chinstrap penguin hiding in between.

A beautiful walk through deep, crispy snow took us up the hills towards some of the many penguin rookeries, and we stopped to admire their busy nesting and socialising behaviour. With a bit of patience, we even got a glimpse of the precious penguin eggs as some of the parents briefly lifted off their nests to stretch, pick at other birds that had come too close to their nesting perimeter, or stretch their necks to emit one of their unmistakable sounds, followed by answer calls all around them.

Little stones play an important part in the busy rookery life – from choosing a suitable one to pick up, to transporting them carefully in the beak while waddling over the uneven rocks (and sometimes slipping and falling over), to proudly dropping it in the nest with a bowing gesture to the partner sitting on the ever-growing rock pile while incubating the eggs. We could have watched the spectacle all day without getting bored!

As the Zodiacs took us back to the *Greg Mortimer* waiting just outside the bay, we were once more accompanied by gentoo calls, which will stay in our memories forever.



# Danco Island | Gerlache Strait

DAY 8 | Thursday 4 January 2023

Position at 0740 on 04 Jan

Latitude: 64°43'0" S

Longitude: 62°35'0" W

Course: 040°

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 4 kt SE

Barometer: 996 hpa

Air Temp: 1°C

Bing bong. Time to wake up, and earlier than we have been accustomed to. Greg let us all know that the surrounding atmosphere was grey and winds were light. He alerted the 'water babies' to check their whiteboards for updated outing times as well.

As we all headed to the dining room for a hearty breakfast, we saw that we were nearing Danco Island as we cut into the Errera Channel. To complete the astonishing outing rate of 100% on the Antarctic Peninsula, the paddlers, sea kayakers and snorkellers all hopped off the ship with their various piles of gear, before other folks headed towards the Danco Island landing site.

The paddlers cruised around the tip of the island with gentoos, petrels and snowy sheathbills before towing back to the ship. The kayakers moved along the shore and across through the ice towards the peninsula prior to hopping ashore. The snorkellers spotted a ctenophore radiating iridescently in the water.

On shore the gentoo colony was busy and bustling. The main highways were filled with activity. We managed to arrive on shore during their rush hour. We, patient as always, allowed them to get to where they were purposefully going while appreciating their every hop, slide and stumble.

T-A shared elucidating information about gentoos, as they are her favourite penguin. Some adventurous souls went with Elena to the top of the island for 360-degree views around. While they were successful in reaching the top, the weather had a contrasting idea for the morning and reduced visibility to near nil. Vows were renewed on the shore with the vocal approval of the nearby gentoos. Danco magic delivered for all.

Once back on the ship, we all dried off, warmed up and filled our bellies with schnitzel and other goodies. We headed north up the Gerlache Strait. Without much delay, we found ourselves in a hearty bowl of whale soup. Humpback whales began surfacing all around the ship. Bubble-net feeding was spotted in multiple areas as groups of whales worked together to contain mass quantities of food in a localised location. They then lunged towards the surface, trapping the fish and krill behind bars of baleen in the prison of a whale's mouth. The prey would soon take a trip down the whale's grapefruit-sized throat to its stomach. As humpbacks generally feed during their respective summers and travel to warmer waters for breeding during their respective winters, they can feed for up to 22 hours a day.

After leaving the whales to their feeding marathon, the Captain found an ideal location for the notorious polar plunge. Off the stern, over 50 of us cannonballed and leaped into the frigid two-degree Antarctic waters. It was a fitting end to near a week of exploration on the stark, beautiful and immersive Antarctic Peninsula.



# Polar Plunge

DAY 8 | Thursday 4 January 2023













# At Sea | Elephant Island – Point Wild

DAY 9 | Friday 5 January 2024

Position at 1120 on 05 Jan

Latitude: 62°01'1" S

Longitude: 55°59"W

Course: 038°

Speed: 12 kts

Wind Speed: 31 ktW

Barometer: 1000hpa

Air Temp: -2°C

We woke to waves roly and rocky as we made our way northeast to Elephant Island. Our first day of transit at sea! Alasdair began our daily educational program with part one of his Shackleton series: 'A Glorious Failure: Shackleton and the Imperial Transantarctic Expedition'.

We learned of how the Transantarctic Expedition came to be, with Shackleton's planning and dreaming. After becoming stuck in the ice, their ship *Endurance* fell prey to the Weddell Sea gyre, infamous for trapping ships in its circular current of ice. On 21 November 1915, the *Endurance* sank beneath the sea ice and so began the epic saga of escape for Shackleton and his men. Alasdair left us with a cliffhanger on the overall story, but did provide us with notes as to how the men arrived at our very own afternoon destination of Elephant Island.

And then it was up to the deck! Citizen Science was happening in force – cloud observations, bird surveys and general enjoyment of fresh air out on deck took place, as well as a photography workshop by Jamie.

Post lunch we heard from Joselyn about 'Underwater Antarctica' and how plankton provides half the oxygen that we breathe. Then T-A showed us how mesmerising the dynamic soaring of seabirds can be.

In the afternoon, Greg's voice rang out through the PA that Elephant Island was drawing near. Alasdair read from a passage about what life had been like for the 22 men living on Elephant Island for four months, awaiting rescue.

We sailed around Cape Valentine with fin whales in the water. The clouds hanging low over the foreboding peaks of the islands gave an atmospheric vibe as we sailed closer to Point Wild. And then we had arrived. Point Wild was true to its name as the swell rocked our ship and the glacier calved loudly upon our arrival.

Despite the inclement weather, it was our lucky day. Greg and Captain Oleg made the call that we could, in fact, get out on the Zodiacs! And then it was all systems go. We donned our gear and zoomed over to the swelly cove. Chinstrap calls greeted us as we rounded the corner to have a look at the bust of Louis Pardo – the Captain of the *Yelcho*, the ship that came back to save the 22 men.

A quick landing on the rocky shore thanks to the receiving team of Thomas and Gus, and then back through the swelly seas. A wet and woolly and lovely afternoon, we got back on board just in time for dinner, the atmosphere buzzing and stories being told. What a lovely way to end our time on the Antarctic Peninsula.





# At Sea

DAY 10 | Saturday 6 January 2024

Position at 1000 on 06 Jan

Latitude: 59°39'8" S

Longitude: 50°12'9"W

Course: 058°

Speed: 12 kts

Wind Speed: 23 kts NW

Barometer: 1050 hpa

Air Temp: -2°C

Oh, what an evening that was! Most of us went to bed last night on an absolute high after setting foot at Point Wild on Elephant Island. So very few get the chance to come that close to one of the mythical places from Antarctic history.

Warm in our beds, and as the gentle movement of the ship lulled us to a comfortable sleep, many of us would've spared a thought for those brave men stuck on Elephant Island for more than four months in 1916.

And knowing that we hadn't yet had nearly enough of that classic Antarctic saga, Alasdair took to the lecture room microphone at 0930 and delivered part two of his presentation: 'A Glorious Failure: Ernest Shackleton and the Imperial Transantarctic Expedition'. Not only did we learn of the dramatic events that followed the sinking of *Endurance*, but we also got down and dirty – figuratively speaking – in the makeshift hut, known as the Snuggery, that Shackleton's men sheltered in through those long winter months more than a century ago.

T-A then gave a very useful guide to the identification of seabirds, extending the 'classroom' knowledge with a seabird survey out on deck. The run to South Georgia is such a wonderful area for seabirds, and today's sightings certainly lived up to expectations with seemingly hundreds of Cape petrels, prions and fulmars observed, along with both northern and southern giant petrels. Our day at sea also gave the rest of the citizen scientists another chance at a cloud survey.

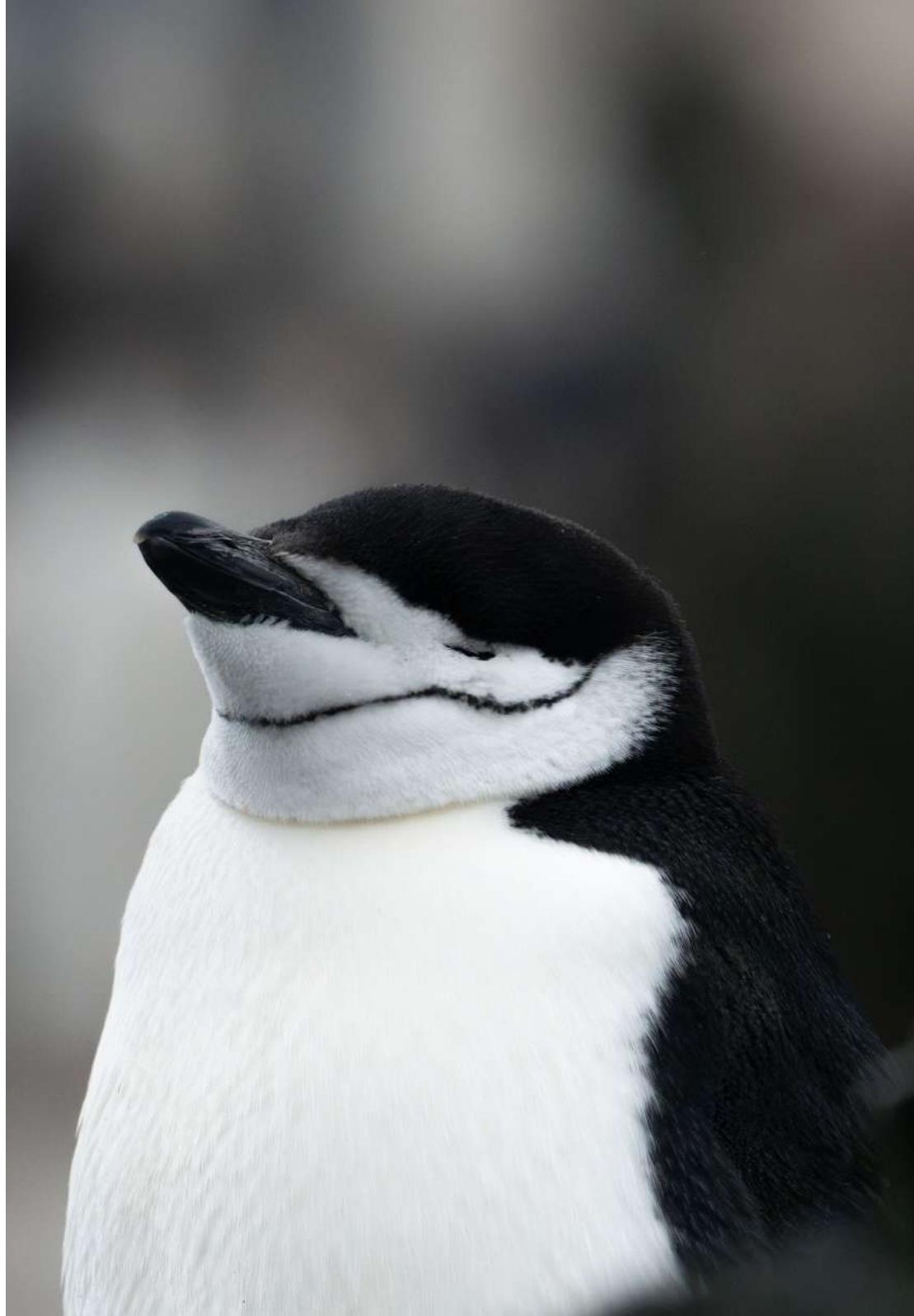
And speaking of South Georgia, our first full day at sea gave us the time to prepare for the stringent biosecurity requirements of the South Georgia Government. After viewing a wonderful short documentary on the unique nature of this island gem – complete with a trademark Sir David Attenborough narration – the vacuum cleaners, tweezers, wire brushes and paper clips came out.

Velcro was thoroughly cleaned, pockets emptied, and outerwear inspected by the Expedition Team. Some even sacrificed their velcro to the cause, deciding that picking at seeds after every landing was too tedious a prospect to contemplate. And that was just in the Lecture Theatre.

From there, it was down to the mudroom for a forensic cleaning of our boots. Dipped in the Virkon biocide solution, and returned to our lockers, rows of squeaky-clean boots now stand ready for the fray.

Recaps on the *Greg Mortimer* are always filled with humour and delight, as well as information. Today's session was no exception, with topics ranging from the anniversary of Shackleton's funeral (yesterday) to an explanation of the Antarctic Convergence, and on to the mirth of Frankie Wild – the song sung all those years ago on Elephant Island. And who ever said that sea days were dull? Ridiculous!





# At Sea

DAY 11 | Sunday 7 January 2024

## Position at 0900 on 07 Jan

Latitude: 57°08'9" S

Course: 050°

Longitude: 42°36'6" W

Speed: 12 kts

Wind Speed: 24 kts NW

Air Temp: 1°C

Barometer: 1016 hpa

The journey across the Southern Ocean towards South Georgia aboard the X-Bow *Greg Mortimer* felt calm amidst the choppy Scotia seas. With the use of stabilisers, the vessel adeptly managed the waves, ensuring smooth progress. The day unfolded with a series of engaging activities and insightful experiences.

Our morning began together with T-A and Wes under sunny skies on deck 7. Our group of 14 participants engaged in various Citizen Science surveys. With Wes to assist, the team began by observing cloud layers, their types, and sky coverage. These observations will contribute to comparing and validating data collected by NASA satellites, aiding in enhancing our understanding of atmospheric conditions.

Up next came a 30-minute e-bird survey, providing an opportunity to monitor bird populations while witnessing an array of species in flight. Prions, petrels, and the majestic albatross gracefully soared through the 25-knot winds, showcasing their remarkable aerial prowess.

The day's highlight included two captivating lectures by Annette. The first delved into the world of king penguins, explaining scientific discoveries and conservation efforts aimed at understanding these magnificent creatures. The second lecture focused on macaroni penguins, shedding light on their interesting behaviour and adaptations. The presentation came to a close with actions being taken to protect and preserve these unique species.

As we navigated the sea, tabular icebergs punctuated the horizon, a sight that never failed to awe us. In the evening Greg kicked off recap with our impending first day in South Georgia. Thank you, guest speaker Phil, for sharing inspiring stories of Marie Stopes and Marie Tharp. Ground-breaking discoveries in the field of geoscience. Additionally, Alastair's presentation shed light on the untold stories of the wives left behind when explorers embarked on long and arduous expeditions to the southern regions.

The day encapsulated an amalgamation of learning, adventure, and scientific contributions. Each activity and lecture deepened our understanding of the region's wildlife, the challenges they face, and the ongoing efforts towards their preservation. As we eagerly anticipate our arrival in South Georgia, today's experiences serve as a testament to the richness of knowledge and camaraderie fostered amidst this remarkable journey across the seas.



# Cooper Bay | Gold Harbour

DAY 12 | Monday 08 January 2024

## Position at 0830 on 08 Jan

Latitude: 54°30'3"S

Course: 125°

Longitude: 35°55'5"W

Speed: 12 kts

Wind Speed: 6 kts SE

Air Temp: 2°C

Barometer: 1020 hpa

A few hardy guests and crew began the day at 0300, with hopes of spotting a colossal iceberg of almost 40 nautical miles in length, which was thought to lie near to the ship's track towards South Georgia. Sadly, the ship's radar had not been able to identify it, and the Captain explained that it may have moved south since its last reported position. A thick blanket of fog around the ship may have thwarted all attempts to photograph it anyway, so back to bed for a few more hours was deemed the only sensible option.

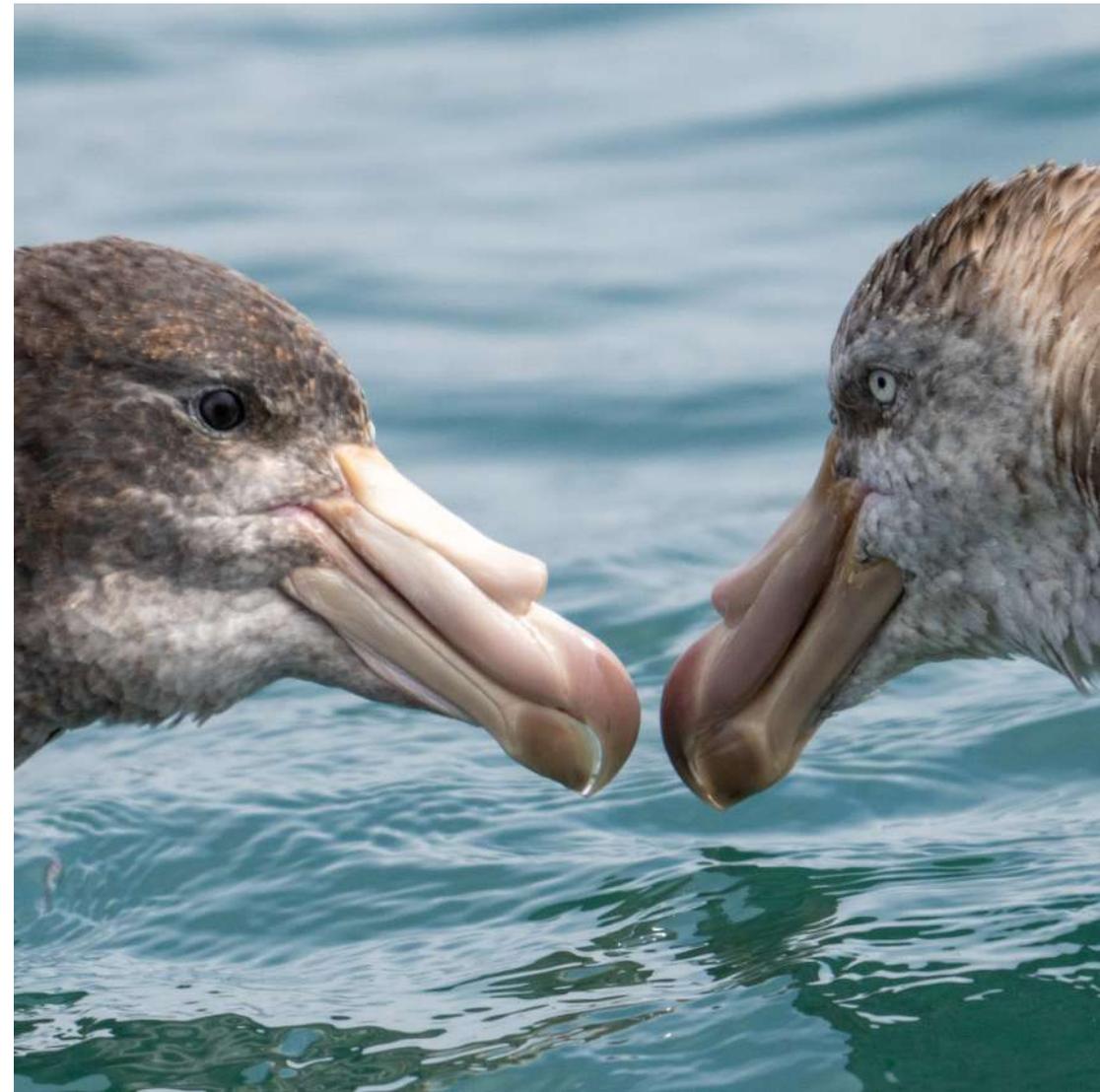
The day began officially with a leisurely pre-breakfast ship cruise in Drygalski Fjord. The steep-sided rocks of the fjord were shrouded in fog and appeared quite grey, yet the ice-laden water around the ship was a bright hue of green; quite the contrast.

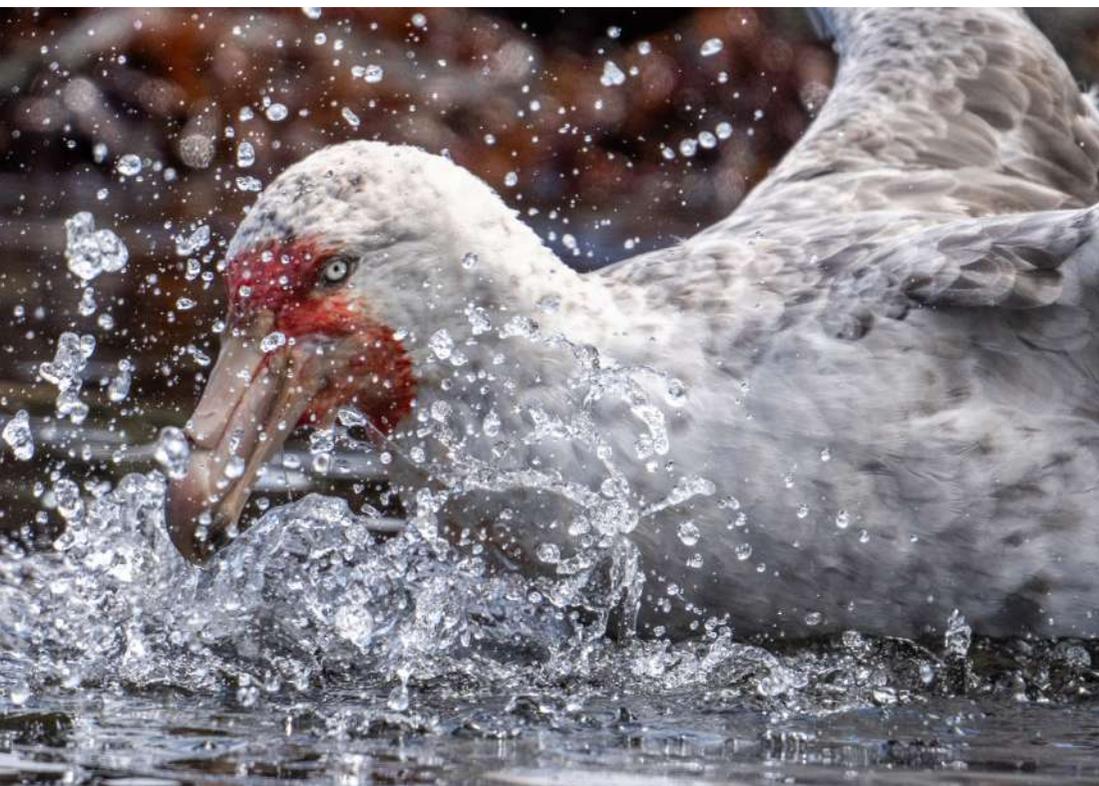
After breakfast, we headed off the ship for a Zodiac cruise in Cooper Bay. There was some ocean swell, which is common in South Georgia, but it didn't affect our ability to get close to the shore. The beach was teeming with penguins - king, gentoo, and chinstrap. Adult and baby fur seals played, fought, and rested, and elephant seals rested both at the shoreline and higher up the beach. Zodiacs and kayakers meandered along the shore, idly observing the hustle and bustle on the beach, with Quensel Glacier providing the perfect backdrop towards the foreboding interior of the Island.

After lunch, we took the Zodiacs and kayaks to Gold Harbour. The swell had decreased since the morning and we progressed at a relaxed pace parallel to shore. All the while we took in the sights, sounds, and smells of king, gentoo, and chinstrap penguins, elephant seals, fur seals, and even a leopard seal. King penguins were by far the most vocal, with the noise carrying far down the beach.

Perhaps the most striking thing about all that life living on the 2.4-kilometre stretch of beach, is that we saw penguins sitting next to fur seals, who in turn sat next to elephant seals. They appeared to co-exist quite successfully in what is a place of constant movement and noise.

A group of 12 kayakers began their journey in the morning at Cooper Bay, and stayed out on the water all day, eating lunch on the move and finishing their journey at Gold Harbour – a total distance kayaked of 16 kilometres! That kind of adventure is what Aurora Expeditions is all about, and it made for quite the recap in the lecture theatre before a well-deserved dinner.







# Grytviken | Fortuna Bay

DAY 13 | Tuesday 9 January 2024

Position at 0800 on 09 Jan

Latitude: 54°16'9"S

Longitude: 36°30'1"W

Course: 270°

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 3 kts SE

Barometer: 1017 hpa

Air Temp: 5°C

The day has been a mixture of the best of what South Georgia can give. History, gorgeous landscapes and, certainly, wildlife. A profusion of wildlife, to be correct. If it is your first time in South Georgia, how could you ever imagine that the day would turn out like so?

In 1904, when the whaling industry started in South Georgia and in Grytviken, it was a different time. Humanity would look at 'nature' for its resources and nearly 200,000 whales were slaughtered in South Georgia's waters through the whaling time, bringing some species to the brink of extinction. The decline of available animals, the new offshore technology and the emergence of concerns towards the environment brought the whaling activity in Grytviken to an end in 1965.

Fifty-eight years later, we landed in the past. Remains of the human activity is everywhere. Apart from a few renovated buildings, the whaling station is left as it was. Did you notice the giant saw mounted on some sort of hydraulic pistons displayed in front of the museum entrance? Reading the words of Einar Lönnberg, zoologist and (early) conservationist who visited Grytviken in 1906: "To such barbarisms there ought to be put an end, not only in the name of science but in the name of humanity", makes me wonder... is our civilisation now really better? I will let you the complicated task of answering.

Something we can be all sure about, is the abundance of wildlife in South Georgia. Landing at Fortuna Bay in the afternoon was nothing but an immersion in a forestless jungle, where over 10,000 king penguins have set up their realm. The big fur seal bulls as much as the cutest weaners, all showed us that we were in their territory, in their kingdom.

What an overwhelming feeling it is to be allowed into this place and to be able to roam freely (apart from the few warnings against breaching seal distance). This place felt out of our modern human world and we were welcomed into it with a spectacular sky. The wind kept opening and closing the views to the breathtaking mountain range and glaciers hidden from us since our arrival.

The fog set down as we walked back to our landing site and obscured the scenery as we got back to the comfort of the ship, where a delicious barbecue was waiting for us.

A magical day with the best of South Georgia. A magical day to remember and to remind us: we are part of this thing we call nature, and this nature is fragile. Let's all care for it, so we can proceed with being amazed with what it gives us back.







# Stromness | St Andrews

DAY 14 | Wednesday 10 January 2024

## Position at 0730 on 10 Jan

Latitude: 54°09'5" S

Course: 240°

Longitude: 36°41'9"W

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 3 kts SE

Air Temp: 6°C

Barometer: 1014 hpa

More than a few of us experienced conflicting emotions listening to the early wake-up call, finding out that the Shackleton walk from Fortuna was cancelled due to poor weather: at once disappointed to miss out but relieved to sink back into blissful slumber.

Reality came calling soon enough and we were back at it – grabbing what South Georgia had to offer by both hands. The ship repositioned to Stromness, where we were able to go ashore and experience the final portion of the journey by Shackleton, Worsley and Crean. Not to mention the chaos of life onshore in a fur seal world! Hooting and hollering animals were everywhere and we truly felt we were running (well, walking) the gauntlet across the grass-covered flats, as many of us headed inland towards the famed 'Shackleton Waterfall'.

Meandering up the broad, glacial-carved valley along the braided gravel stream, we could see our goal in the misty distance. This was our first true opportunity for a long walk in South Georgia's big, open terrain, beyond the reach of hooligan fur seals and the stoic presence of onlooking Kings – with nothing but the slopes and the ground beneath us to focus on.

Finally stood at the bottom of the falls, we could only try to imagine what those men felt as they reached flat earth and the promise of safety and rescue. The fog and clouds danced up and down the horizons, lifted a bit to expose some snow-covered slopes but then descended, adding to the atmosphere.

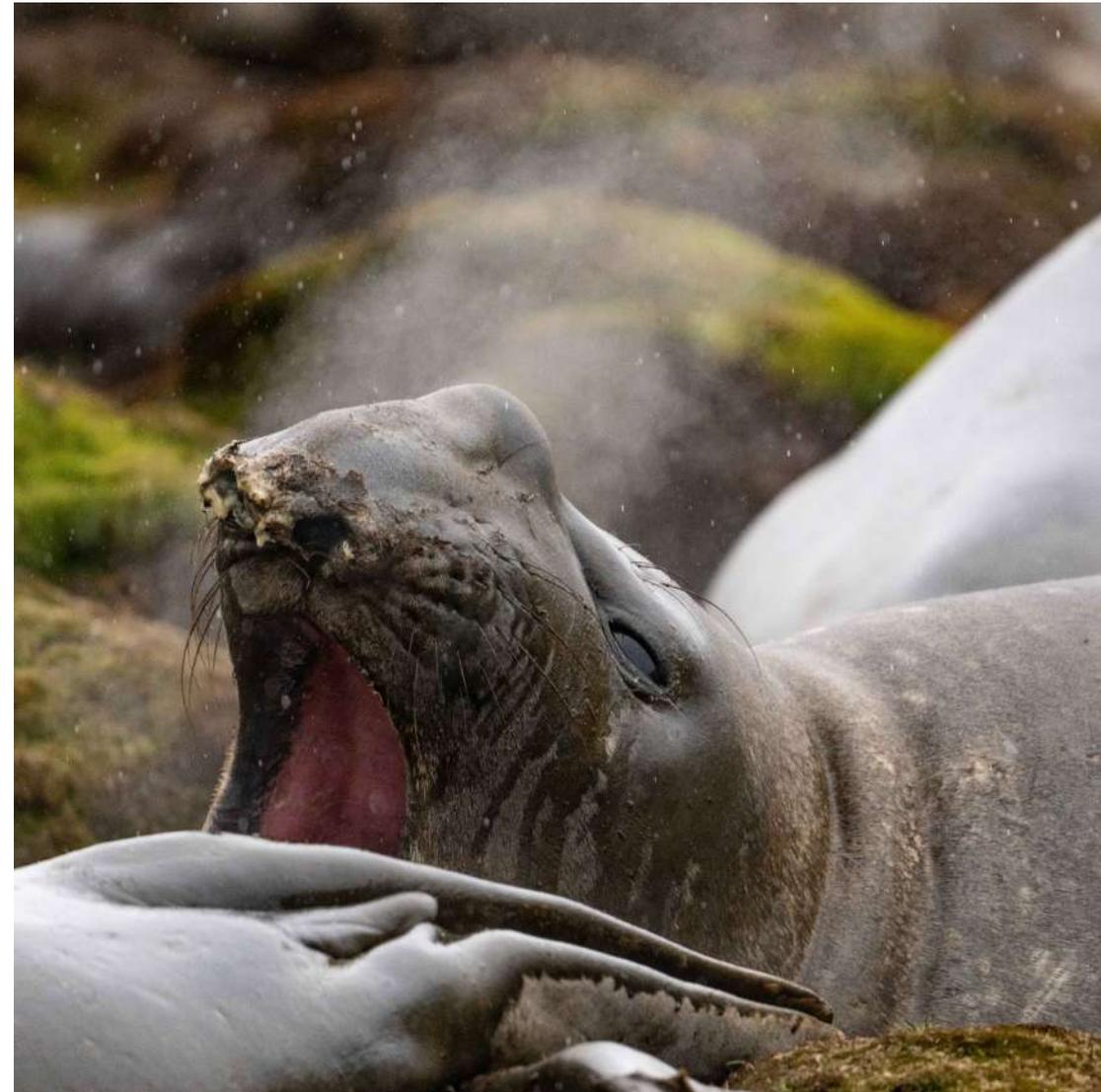
The streams and riffles were a riot of colour, the mosses showing off in spectacular form. And so did the fitter amongst us, climbing up the steep slope to probe the limits and see what was around the next corner. A whole lot of fog!

Returning to the landing, several folks were entranced by a rather active elephant seal wallow, being treated to a sonorous chorus of belches and snorts while we stood marvelling at the steaming bodies.

The rain finally turned more earnest and reluctantly we made our way home for a break to warm and feed up before an afternoon excursion, which turned out to be a Zodiac cruise along the largest colony of king penguins—St. Andrews!

Despite the moist conditions, the majority of expeditioners returned to the Zodiacs for a glimpse of this amazing spectacle. Four kilometres – at least! – of waterfront these penguins have taken up, with the colony extending inland for what appeared to be forever.

As we tore ourselves away from a truly marine-influenced afternoon and headed back to the mothership for our version of safe harbour and shelter from the proverbial storm – it was clear the day had been a true privilege.





# Larsen Fjord | Royal Bay cruise

DAY 15 | Thursday 11 January 2024

## Position at 0730 on 11 Jan

Latitude: 54°49'6" S

Course: 250°

Longitude: 35°58'2"W

Speed: 2.3 kts

Wind Speed: 5 kts W

Air Temp: 7°C

Barometer: 989 hpa

With those pink, tending purple areas appearing on Windy, our ever-reliable weather app, the decision of late yesterday to seek shelter at the southern end of South Georgia proved correct.

Around breakfast, the *Greg Mortimer* came to anchor at the mouth of the Larsen Fjord, a branch of the Drygalski Fjord where, all those days ago, we had made a fog-bound ship's cruise upon arriving at South Georgia.

By 0900 we were heading off in Zodiacs, and as soon as we poked our noses into the mouth of the Fjord, the 25- to 30-knot gusts of wind had died to a mere zephyr.

For the next couple of hours, we meandered up the fjord, enjoying the sight of small groups of fur seals, the occasional elephant seal, or a penguin or two gathered on the narrow shores of this majestic waterway.

Some Zodiacs reported seeing a Weddell seal, while blue-eyed shags, kelp gulls and antarctic terns completed the species list.

The towering peaks of the Salvesen Range flanked our path as we gradually made our way to the head of the fjord, and the last remnants of the glacier that once ground against its steep sides.

Probably in a year or two there will be no ice left at this site – a comparatively small example of what is happening to many of South Georgia's glaciers.

Again, with the intent of dodging Windy's pink and purple, we snuck up the coast after lunch to Royal Bay and its subset of Moltke Harbour, hoping to find shelter. Once at a potential anchor site, the *Greg Mortimer* tried to hold station using its dynamic positioning system but that proved fruitless in the 40-knot gusts that streaked across the bay. So, our eponymous leader, in consultation with the Captain, decided to reluctantly make an exit for open water. But the ensuing ship's cruise was no consolation. Rather, it was so much more.

Not only did the Citizen Science program bag a bird survey brimming with prions, petrels and black-browed albatrosses, but those who were on deck were treated to a humpback whale or two and an unforgettable avenue of remnant tabular icebergs.

One berg held us transfixed. Half was unremarkable – if any iceberg can be considered so – the rest was a precious jewel. Deep-blue ice like an uncut sapphire or emerald. There was much speculation about the ancient

origins of this rare sight, and naturally the questions spilled over to the evening recap where, both Alex and Joselyn gave fascinating explanations of both the colour and origin of this exquisite work of nature.

And so, the day drifted into dinner and the exciting prospects for what will sadly be our last day on and around the sub-Antarctic jewel of South Georgia.





# Godthul | Cobblers Cove | Cumberland Bay

DAY 16 | Friday 12 January 2024

## Position at 0730 on 12 Jan

Latitude: 54°17'65"S

Course: 226°

Longitude: 36°17'8"W

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 10 kts NE

Air Temp: 6°C

Barometer: 984 hpa

This morning at the Early Riser pastry bar, passengers were commenting on how the ship felt like it had been rolling much more through the night. Just as those words were said, we slipped into the calm of Godthul Harbour.

Harbour means 'good cove' in Norwegian... and what a good cove it was. A perfect location to launch what would become an epic last day in South Georgia.

With the *Greg Mortimer* at anchor, we were soon off the ship and speeding northeast in our Zodiacs to explore Cobblers Cove, and specifically to see the several thousand breeding pairs of macaroni penguins, near and around Rookery Point.

On the way, everyone will remember leaving the glassy swells of Godthul and then experiencing the sea state around Long Point as a big, bouncy, swelly mess of reflexing waves, only to then return to calmer waters in Cobblers Cove.

The morning was filled with the sights of thick kelp beds; steep, tussock-clad hillsides; 50-metre-high cliffs of folded jointed sedimentary rock; and Gentoo penguins; Southern giant petrels; king penguins and macaroni penguins leaping from the water. As well as seeing more fur and elephant seals, we encountered a curious leopard seal, spy-hopping and swimming beneath our Zodiacs.

We stayed at anchor following lunch. Forty-five passengers and guides mounted a hike west, crossing from Godthul to Sandebugten, in Cumberland East Bay.

The remaining passengers landed at the same take-off point but explored the old whaling shore depot from the early 1900s and checked out the fur seals, elephant seals and moulting king penguins.

Some took part of the same route as the hikers and climbed up the steep, tussocky hillside to see the lake and mosses. A handful of passengers also took a Zodiac cruise.

As half the party enjoyed the peace of Godthul, the hikers had to dig deep. The 6-km hike is rated as 'RED' in the guidebook. Up through the steep tussock and spongy ground they did go, facing off with little gremlin fur seals hiding in the thickets, then up to much starker landscapes, and across Reindeer Valley, an open field of scattered reindeer bones. A few hikers noticed four bold skuas looking at them longingly, licking their beaks, anxiously awaiting any fallen hikers, 'Oh, such a bountiful free meal'. After taking in the amazing vistas, they followed an old

glacial bed down to a steep-cut little valley, ending up in a stream filled with frolicking fur seals. The weary hikers were grateful to see the ship awaiting their return.

The evening was short, as the day was long, and the chatter of the day's stories filled the air.

It is in places like this that you (figuratively) leave tattered shreds of yourself scattered in the tussock, the rocks, the stream beds, the waves... Later, when you go looking for those bits of yourself you will find them in these memories.





# At Sea | En Route to the Falkland Islands

DAY 17 | Saturday 13 January 2024

## Position at 1330 on 13 Jan

Latitude: 54°49'6" S

Course: 250°

Wind Speed: 45 kts W

Air Temp: 7°C

Longitude: 35°58'2"W

Speed: 3 kts

Barometer: 987 hpa

A little bit tired, but very inspired – a Scotia Sea sea-day.

A slow and somewhat wobbly morning as many of us searched for our sea legs again and/or nursed our minor aches from yesterday's hike. With huge winds blowing across the top of South Georgia, we opted for a slightly longer but more comfortable route towards the Falklands, initially sailing south again before scooping westwards below South Georgia to set us up nicely for the passage.

Sea days are never dull days aboard the ship, and right after breakfast Alasdair introduced us to the life and works of the Australian photographer and adventurer Frank Hurley. While many of us knew of Hurley's iconic photographs of the stricken *Endurance*, we were fascinated to learn about his work beyond Antarctica, and about the creative licence he took with some of his images – it turns out that amalgamating images for dramatic effect is not just for modern-day Photoshop fiends...

Then followed Joselyn's much-requested geology talk in which she revealed what all those convoluted folds in the rock actually mean. Suddenly the South Georgia landscapes we'd been exploring for the past week made so much more sense! To top the session off, we raided the question box and discovered that there is actually a formula to determine the rate at which an iceberg melts, but it's brain-explodingly complicated to use...

After lunch, a band of brave citizen scientists ventured out on deck to collect data for the Polar Collective's Southern Ocean Seabirds research project. A snowy squall reduced visibility to almost nothing part way through, but 'team seabird' prevailed and recorded 75 individual birds across 10 species, including diving petrels, aka 'the flying potato' birds.

Pel invited us all to afternoon tea in the Elephant Island Bar (so many cakes!) then we joined Annette in the lecture theatre to find out about the new penguin species we may encounter in the Falklands. As well as the gentoo, king and macaroni penguins, the Falklands are home to Magellanic and southern rockhopper penguins – can't wait to meet them!

The evening's recap took us from the sublime to the hilarious and back again. Greg and Mark guided us through reflections on all we had seen and achieved in South Georgia. How did we fit so much into our time there?!

Nacho shared an actual published scientific research paper on high-pressure penguin poo, then Alex quoted Henry Beston's work, *The Outermost House*, and invited each of us to start planning how we will advocate for nature beyond our current adventure. Then the ocean rocked us all gently to sleep.



# At Sea | En Route to the Falklands

DAY 18 | Sunday 14 January 2024

## Position at 0930 on 14 Jan

Latitude: 54°07'9" S

Longitude: 54°07'9" S

Course: 288°

Speed: 14 kts

Wind Speed: 30 kts SW

Barometer: 997 hpa

Air Temp: 3°C

On this morning, we woke up to calmer seas – we all noticed the kinder movements of the ship compared to yesterday, and looking out of the windows revealed just a long, gentle swell slowly rolling under the ship, and the sun reflecting off an almost calm ocean surface. What a beautiful setting to continue our voyage to the Falkland Islands!

This sea day gave us the opportunity to have a closer look at the ship's bridge, and understand more about the complex navigation of our vessel.

Accompanied by bridge officers we admired the incredible display of fine-scale instruments on the bridge, and the knowledge and experience necessary to use all these buttons and charts to navigate us safely through the Southern Ocean. And finally, we also understood a bit more about the ship's stabilisers, these very useful wings on the vessel's side that kept us stable and steady in the waves of the last days.

To the surprise of some of us, the *Greg Mortimer* doesn't have an actual steering wheel – all is achieved just by modern instruments.

A group of fin whales accompanied the ship for a short while, giving a beautiful display of their long, slim bodies in the water and their up to six-metre-high blow fountains sparkling in the sunlight.

In a joint lecture, Joselyn and T-A introduced us to the flora and fauna of the Falkland Islands, a very different ecosystem to Antarctica and South Georgia that we had left behind now. Birds on white sand and green grass instead of icy cliffs; what a change!

In the afternoon, Alasdair gave a captivating lecture about historical conservation in Antarctica, brought to life with his personal stories from his time spent in Mawson's Hut.

Illustrated and underlined by many pictures and his incredible stories, we took a deep dive into this fascinating part of the Antarctic Heritage.

And in the evening, we got some good news: our efforts to take suitable photos for whale identification had led to success!

At recap we were informed that for five occasions of whale sightings during our voyage, the Happywhale ID program was able to use our photographs as contributions to the global whale database.

The onboard identification tool had indicated a total of seven matches with previous whale sightings in Antarctica and beyond, with potential migration paths of the identified whales reaching up to Peru and Hawaii!

Five of our photographed individuals appear to be new to the Happywhale database, which indicates a great contribution to Citizen Science from our voyage. Well done!

As the sea continued to gently roll below our feet we continued our journey to the next destination, the Falkland Islands.



# At Sea | En Route to the Falklands

DAY 19 | Monday 15 January 2024

## Position at 1100 on 15 Jan

Latitude: 52°18'9"S

Longitude: 54°22'9"W

Course: 295°

Speed: 14 kts

Wind Speed: 30 kts SSW

Barometer: 1005 hpa

Air Temp: 3°C

Our sea days began to blend together as we became more comfortable with our new lives at sea, unsure how much longer we would travel nor how long we had been sailing in the Scotia Sea. Nonetheless, our day was filled with curiosity, wonder and plenty of fun.

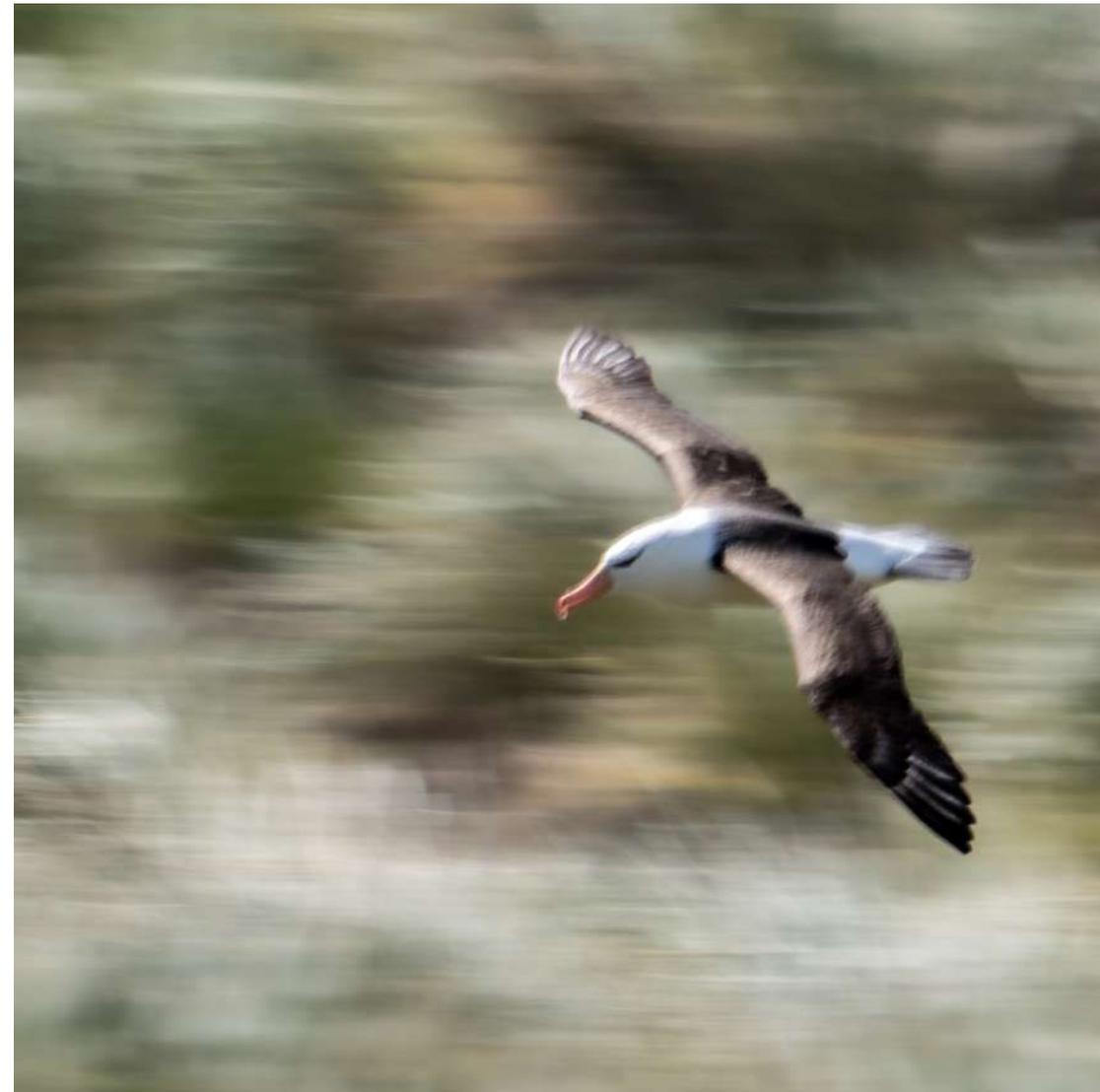
This morning the swell picked up again as the troughs and the crests more vigorously bobbed our ship. In addition to the newfound vitality of the swell, groups of seabirds soared all around us. A wandering albatross was seen strafing the waves and riding the wind off the ship's bow. Once again, the prize of spending a moment with these incredible creatures was bestowed upon those out in the wind on deck.

After some morning tea and cookies, we filled the lecture theatre to see a historical double-header featuring both Alasdair and Jamie. They spent the next hour elucidating the past of the Falkland Islands. Their telling of the past began with the possible journeys of the indigenous Fuegians from Patagonia and the now-extinct warrah. British Captain John Strong first landed on the islands in 1690 and thus began a long and tumultuous history of colonial settlement, national claims and exploration on the over 750 islands that comprise the Falkland Islands. Jamie shared about the modern history of the Falklands War and the ways in which military service and the war make up a large part of the islanders' identity and memory.

Lunch filled our bellies for the eighteenth time this voyage. Without time for digestion, we were soon on deck for the bird survey, led by the inimitable T-A. With a record turnout, folks had to spread to both the decks 6 and 7 to get a view of the aerial shows occurring. With black-brow albatross and giant petrels 'hanging in the sky' near the enthusiastic birders, everyone had a memorable experience with the flying giants of the sky.

Next up were tours of the ever-important galley. Chef Edgar and sous chef Dharma answered any and all questions that could spring off the top of our minds. While the tours were ending, cries of frustration, jubilation and fierce competition rang out from the lecture theatre. Liz and Mark had organised a game with what some participants described as a 'dubious and morally suspect' scoring system. It, of course, ended with our fearless Expedition Leader Greg being physically lifted to measure his length toe to ice axe.

As dinner wrapped up, we pulled into the outer harbour of Stanley. Excitement emanated from all on deck 8, who had bundled up to view the village outpost on East Falkland Island, hundreds of miles from major civilisation. I can't speak for others, but I sure enjoyed the sight of land, again. As the sun set, we headed to our rooms to tuck in, awaiting another adventure with the sun's return.



# At Sea

DAY 20 | Tuesday 16 January 2024

## Position at 0730 on 16 Jan

Latitude: 51°21'1"S

Course: 275°

Longitude: 60°28'5"W

Speed: 12.5 kts

Wind Speed: 30 kts SW

Air Temp: 7° C

Barometer: 1019 hpa

Three days at sea was a wonderful opportunity for all expeditioners onboard to rest and reflect; however, the energy at breakfast was one of eager anticipation as we raced towards Westpoint Island in the northwest of the Falkland Islands.

This day would include the two final landings for our voyage. Our first landing was at the Westpoint Island Settlement, where we delivered two hitchhikers we had picked up in Stanley, the night before, Kiki and Marta. Kiki is actually one of the residents of the island and Marta was a visiting friend.

The winds calmed when we entered Westpoint Cove, the sun was shining, and as we got closer to the docks, a serenity took over us as we looked up to see the green hills and a quaint English-style cottage with beautiful gardens surrounding it. For most, the first attraction was to hike two kilometres up the rolling hills and over to Devil's Nose to see nesting black-browed albatross, their chicks and rockhopper penguins. On the way we also saw the occasional Magellanic penguin, some turkey vultures and striated caracara.

The nesting area for the albatross and rockhopper penguins was surrounded by high tussocks, and created a nicely protected bed, into which we could watch, mesmerised by the interactions between parents and chicks. All the while, the albatrosses were dancing on the wind above us, and out above the pounding waves exploding from the cliffs of Devil's Nose.

It was hard to leave this site, despite the lure of an English teatime provide by our gracious hosts, Kiki and Marta.

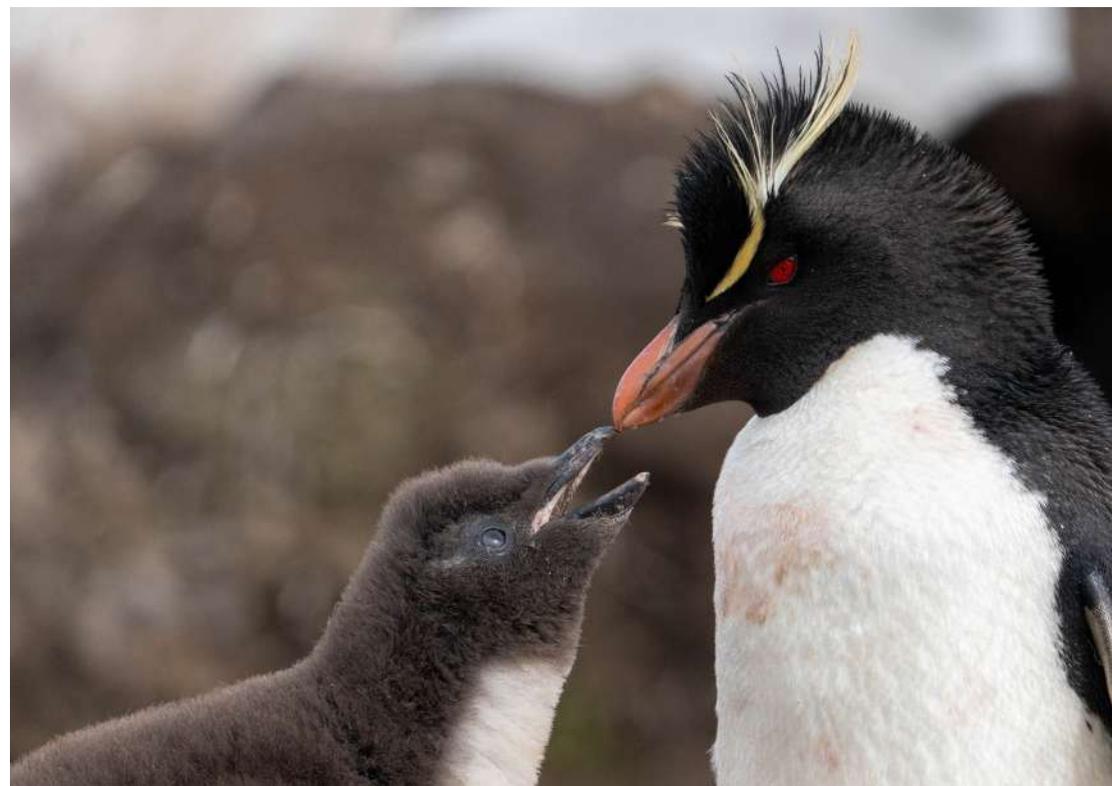
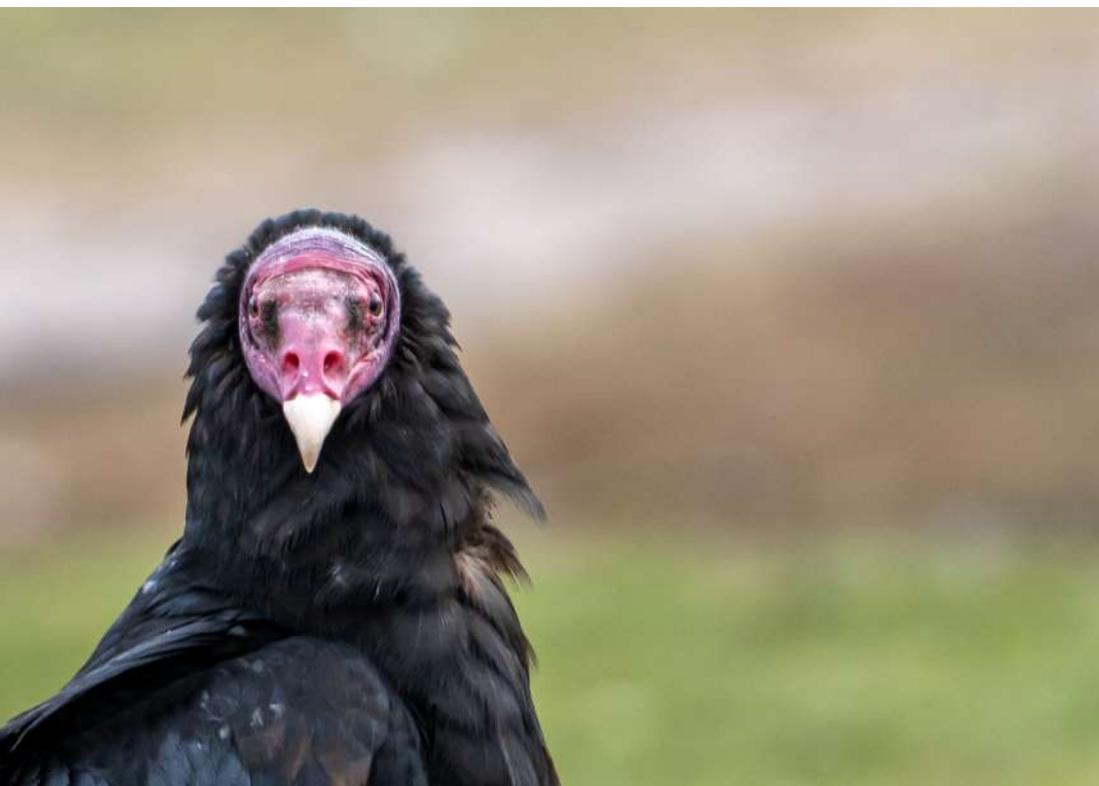
Soon we were on our way eastward, to the second landing, at Saunders Island. This is an incredibly unique place. The scenery is dramatic, with Mt Harston and Mt Richards rising in each direction from our landing spot, a white sand isthmus between the two peaks called The Neck. It is also a place where there are four species of breeding penguins: gentoo and king penguins nearest to the beach and as you hike upwards, east towards Mt Richards, you pass by the Magellanic penguins in their little burrows and then on higher you see the rockhopper penguins. When you go further and higher yet, you come upon black-browed albatross nesting on the steep hillsides and cliff edges.

As well as the major attractions there were also nesting Falkland skuas and oystercatchers aplenty. Then there are the sheep. It is a strange scene when you are taking pictures of penguins next to sheep, as the settlement on Saunders Island raise sheep for their wool.

On a bumpy, wet ride back to the ship, a few Zodiac groups saw a pod of Commerson's dolphins. They swam alongside and beneath the Zodiacs, their bright-white backs shining through the water.

Following dinner, we had a talent show in the Elephant Island Bar. Despite it being a huge day, the energy was so high that the talent show played well into the night.





# At Sea

DAY 21 | Wednesday 17 January 2024

## Position at 1030 on 17 Jan

Latitude: 53°36'3"S

Course: 215°

Longitude: 63°38'7"W

Speed: 13 kts

Wind Speed: 15 kts NW

Air Temp: 14°C

Barometer: 1012 hpa

First off, Jamie gave us a few tall tales and true (mostly) of his incredible life as a travel writer and Photographer of the Year – perhaps in truth more than just 'so far'. And wrapped around the nuts and bolts of a disembarkation briefing – yes, we truly really will be getting off tomorrow – Kerry and Liz gave us an extremely tempting rundown on all the other marvellous opportunities to travel with Aurora to the world's great wild and remote regions besides Antarctica.

And for a fascinating insight into just what it's like to live in Antarctica, Joselyn and Eddie teamed up to talk about their winters spent at both McMurdo Station and at the South Pole. An interesting modern perspective, given that much of our talk of living in Antarctica on this voyage has been in connection with days of Shackleton and co.

In the world outside the ship there was bird action aplenty, T-A's bird survey snaring – figuratively speaking of course – several great albatrosses. That's wanderers and royals, and certainly a great way to end our avian encounters.

Last evening in recap, Greg showed a photograph of his crampon-shod feet at 8,000 metres on the side of Mt Everest. Beyond and below lay all the earth. That image set the scene nicely for a late-afternoon discussion in the lecture theatre about how we as individuals, having had the immense privilege of visiting Antarctica and South Georgia, can actively engage with our communities to drive change. Many thoughtful observations and suggestions were made, and everyone came away with a genuine sense of purpose.

Captain's farewell drinks followed soon after and a big vote of thanks was directed to the said master of the *Greg Mortimer*, Oleg Kapko, his officers and crew. In turn, we all gave a rousing thank you to Greg for his superb leadership throughout the voyage. And not to be outdone, the Expedition Team took a metaphorical bow.

The dining room was abuzz with excitement and good cheer for our last evening meal together, the wonderful hospitality staff were cheered, and then it was auction time!!

The standout purchase was of course Gabby's beautiful, illustrated chart from our time in South Georgia. Congratulations to Ian and Lynne! And a hearty thank you to all the successful bidders – you contributed just over USD30,00!

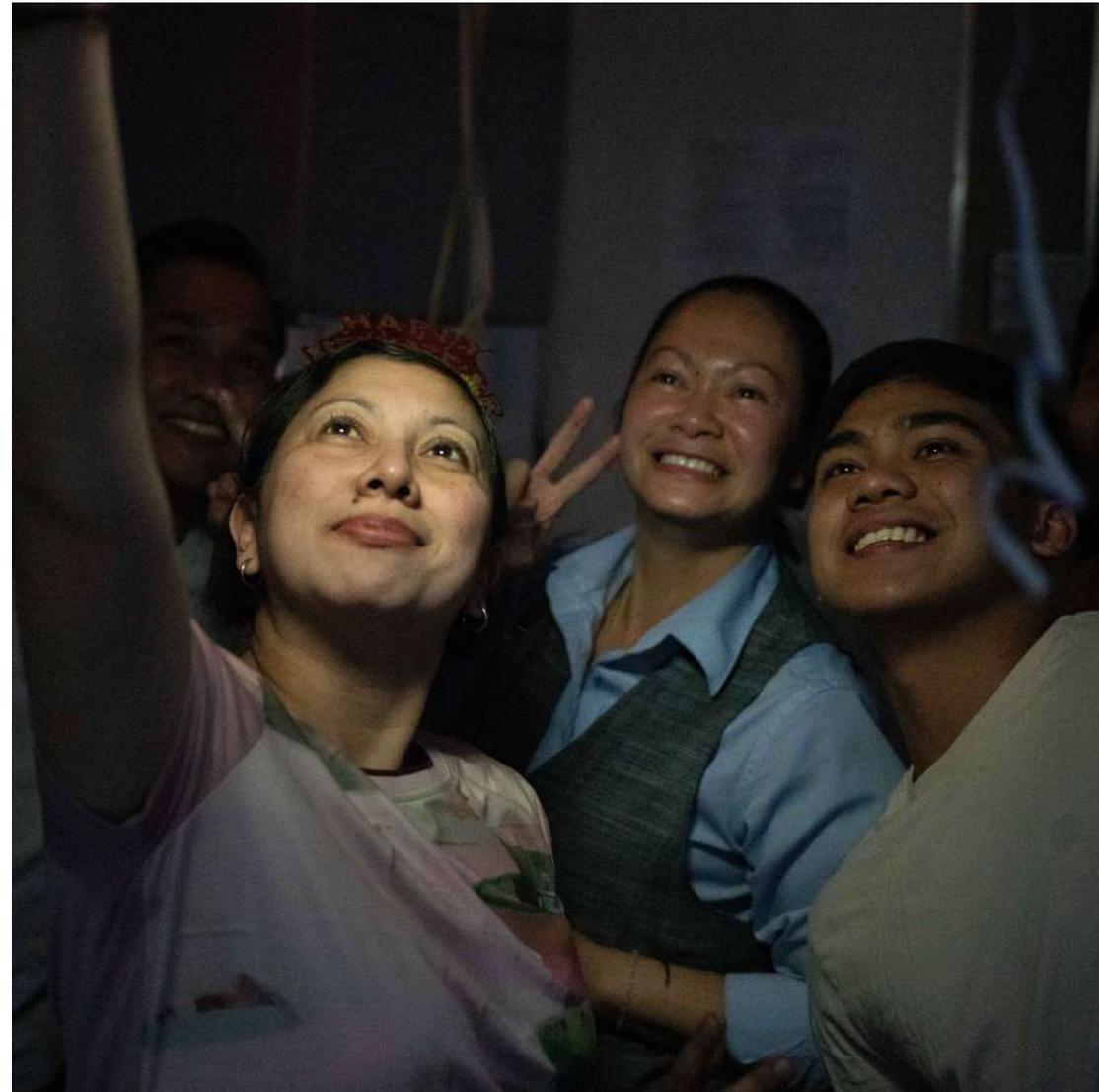
And so, there is nothing left but to wish everyone safe onward travels. We came, most of us, as strangers. We now depart as firm friends – a measure of true experience.



# Ushuaia

DAY 22 | Thursday 18 January 2024

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



# Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Liz MacNeil, Gabe Vink Wackernagel, Gabby Bruce, Wes McNeil and Gus Wimberger

Number of Kayakers: 20

Total Paddle Outings: 13

Total Distance Paddled: 59.5km

Paddlers:	Daniel McCoy	Phil Gilmore	Chris Panes
Candace McClenahan	Gregory Cahill	Edward Brose	Jake Winkler-Schuder
Irene Wilk	Virginia Cahill	Toni Hamilton	Cheryl Ann Winkler
Juerg Wilk	Emma Broadfield	Bailey Kessing	
Chris Bonnily	Rodney Wilson	Glen Duffy	
Erica McCoy	Cressida Gilmore	Yuko Yonebayashi	

## 31/12/23 PM: Prospect Point

Total Distance: 3.7 km, 20 kayakers

We began our Sea Kayaking adventure in Antarctic waters off Prospect Point. After a chat about kayak safety and proper paddling, we launched off of the ship. We couldn't have asked for better conditions, as the glassy water held brash ice, growlers and bergy-bits for us to weave around. A thunderous roar caught our attention as we witnessed the calving of the nearby glacier's wall. The swell bobbed our boats and bergs alike as we were shown the power of both ice and water. A meditative silence welcomed us to Antarctica, and we paddled back to our floating home.

## 01/01/24 AM: Isacke Passage

Total Distance: 4.1 km, 19 kayakers

We were blessed with a sunny Antarctic day! A rarity in this part of the world so we were all very happy. Amazing glassy kayaking conditions set us up for an awesome paddle, weaving through bergy-bits and large icebergs. We managed to catch a few sleepy crabeater seals perched on some ice floes. We explored the amazing icebergs, admiring the amazing shapes and colours. The clarity of the day was amazing and with clear mountain-top views we couldn't have asked for much more! As if the day couldn't get better, after we loaded onto the Zodiac we managed to make a very quick ice-floe landing, which I believe everybody loved!

## 01/01/24 PM: Detaille Island

Total Distance: 4 km, 15 kayakers

For our afternoon outing the weather persisted to be amazing for us. We were lucky enough to have perfect conditions to circumnavigate Detaille Island. Our journey began with some helpful paddle strokes, the draw stroke that Gabe and Gabby taught. After that we began our paddle to check out some penguins. This was our first sighting of an Adélie penguin colony. Yet again we were lucky enough to have flat, calm conditions, which

were perfect for watching the charismatic Adélie. Our kayaking consisted of rock weaving, iceberg hopping and we even spotted some kelp gull chicks! There was just so much to look at! It was a perfect day out on the water.

## 02/01/24 AM: Argentine Islands

Total Distance: 7.5 km, 20 kayakers

Again, we were able to enjoy another outing with sunshine. Antarctica has been treating us well! Our day was filled with many, many gentoos, as the Argentine Islands is home to a colony of them. A lot of us were practising our expert gentoo calls, which were far from perfect... Our kayak excursion had great variety. We encountered our first Weddell seals, landed our kayaks on some fast ice, saw the active Vernadsky Research Base, and the historic Wordie House. It was also our biggest paddle in terms of distance yet! Safe to say it was a glorious day.

## 02/01/24 PM: Yalour Islands

Total Distance: 4.4 km, 9 kayakers

North of the Circle we encountered the Yalour Islands, home to thousands of Adélie penguins. We navigated along the shores and inlets of the rocky outcrops, passing the many colonies that were pink from krill-infused poo. Paddling in and out of wafting stinks, we watched the playful birds swim, waddle and hop. A large berg rolled completely over in what seemed to be slow motion. Nearby skuas waited for an opportune time to snatch a baby Adélie for lunch, but the well-organised colonies were able to protect the chicks on this day. Another great outing!

## 03/01/24 AM: Chiriguano Bay

Total Distance: 3.4 km, 15 kayakers

The day started off with an announcement from Greg that the weather was filthy and we were making plans for our plan b, Chiriguano Bay. Clouds hung so heavily, dumping snow! Down went the anchor, with Gus and Gabe out into the wintry conditions our kayak team went. So much snow was settling that it formed centimetres of slush on the sea's surface. Ready for an adventure, our paddle strokes propelled us deep into the glaciated bay. Ice and snow was the theme of the morning. A single solitary antarctic tern flew by as we paddled along through the heavy slush. A beautiful morning on the water.

## PM: Damoy Point

Total Distance: 4.5 km, 13 kayakers

Through the Neumayer Channel we sailed to our next outing location, Damoy Point. Used in the '70s and '80s as an airstrip for British Antarctic researchers, Damoy Point hosts gentoo penguins in large numbers. We paddled near the shore, watching the playful birds steal rocks, porpoise through the water and lie on their nests. Along the way, we spotted a lonely chinstrap penguin looking lost amongst all of the orange-beaked gentoos. Around Damoy Point, we spotted a happy humpback feeding amongst the ice. After quite the show, we paddled back to the ship. Exciting times for all of us!

## 04/01/24 AM: Danco Island

Total Distance: 4.2 km, 19 kayakers

Our final paddle for the Antarctic peninsula was a true reminder of the harsh environment that we have been exploring. Danco Island is home to more gentoo penguins and, of course, plenty of ice... We set off with relatively calm conditions that quickly turned into winds, which increased throughout our paddle. However, there weren't enough winds to deter us from carrying on our kayaking! We saw many gentoos and skirted the edges of Danco Island. There were more icebergs to see as well. Cape petrels surrounded us in flocks as they preened and washed their feathers. The icy weather continued to persist and as time went on all but one kayaker disembarked onto the Zodiac to head to shore and make a landing. The one kayaker, Bailey, and guide Gabby continued on for a further 4 kilometres and enjoyed the beautiful, moody conditions. A great way to finish off the Antarctic Peninsula portion of our trip!

## 08/01/24 AM: Cooper Bay

Total Distance: 4.2 km, 7 kayakers

Arrived in South Georgia at 0600 this morning for a pleasant ship's cruise up Drygalski Fjord.

As the low cloud began to lift from the mountainous landscape of Coopers Bay, the anchor went down and our kayak team took a short Zodiac ride into the shelter of Chinstrap Bay. By 0930 our team of nine were settled in our kayaks, watching in amazement all the life that existed on the shore and in the water around us. Antarctic fur seals tossed and turned then stopped to observe us. Giant petrels floated nearby and checked out how the rudders of kayaks worked. Elephant seals lazed amongst penguins, so many penguins! Chinstraps, gentoos and the magnificent kings. Throughout our paddle along the weathered coastline we observed bull kelp sway in the swell and wildlife surf the breakers, penguins tend to their feathers and week-old pups tussle with each other. The sun broke through, illuminating the colourful scenery. Just before we thought we'd seen it all, rounding a point, there perched on rocks and climbing up onto a tussock point were macaronis – not the pasta but the coolest penguins of all with their stylish yellow-crested hairstyles.

## 08/01/24 PM: Gold Harbour

Total Distance: 6.3 km, 8 kayakers

Our second outing in South Georgia continued to impress upon all of us the richness of the wild ecosystems we were paddling through. We plopped off of the Zodiac at the north end of Gold Harbour. From there, we weaved through some rock gardens inhabited by fur seals as some South Georgia pipits flew overhead. As we cruised along the beach behind the surf, we passed elephant seals hauled out on the beach and an increasing number of king penguins. A rocky reef guarded the entrance of a nearby glacial lagoon, but we were able to navigate our way into the protected lagoon. With the reef knocking down the majority of the ocean's swell, we were able to meander along the shoreline and gawk at the tens of thousands of king penguins that have made Gold Harbour their own. The vastness of the colony left us all in awe as we Zodiac-cruised back to our floating home.

## Day Trip – Cooper Bay to Gold Harbour

Total Distance: 23.8 km, 11 kayakers

A big day was in store for 11 brave kayakers ready to challenge themselves with a full day's paddle! The amazing plan was set out with our fearless leader Liz and the kayak team thinking about how to make it all possible - to paddle from Cooper Bay to Gold Harbour to meet the ship after repositioning. Greg Mortimer, our expedition leader, was in full support of the plan and with that, we set off! Testing the team's capabilities we rock-hopped and snuck through gaps with the swell challenging us, making sure everyone was up to the task during our paddle in Cooper Bay. We were also overwhelmed with the astonishing amount of wildlife, fur seals and macaroni penguins everywhere... a very special place! We took our time to enjoy hanging out with the abundance of wildlife before heading around the point to commit to our 30-kilometre total journey. The weather tested us with some wind; however, once we kayaked around the point, we were greeted by calmer conditions and less swell. The group was amazing as we focused on paddling with no stopping for a good 15-20 mins to cover some distance. We were rewarded with some peaceful rock-hopping and elephant seal observations in a quiet bay. We continued along the coast, stopping at beautiful wildlife and scenic waterfalls! When we rounded into Wirik Bay we noticed a giant cave, which we had to investigate. It was an amazing cave, which we all paddled into whilst fur seals watched... and just like that we had been paddling for four hours already and covered 15 kilometres! So, it was time to hop in the Zodiac and feast on our packed lunches, and then rest!

During lunch we transited about 8 kilometres via Zodiac through Iris Bay, and spotted a humpback whale feeding and saw spectacular icebergs! We passed Muller Point to a calm bay to load back into our kayak. Much to our amusement as we were towing the kayaks, a gentoo penguin jumped into the cockpit of one of the kayaks for a quick ride before jumping back out! We had never seen that before! Cheerfully, we got back into the kayaks and carried on with our mission. Only another 8 kilometres to Gold Harbour! Very proud of our efforts we arrived at Gold Harbour greeted by proud Zodiac cruisers and bumping into our equally proud kayaking companions. We enjoyed the rewards of the amazing Gold Harbour, riddled with thousands of king penguins littered across the beach! Before we knew it we were back on board, victorious and very stoked with our achievements! What an epic day to remember forever!

## 10/01/24 AM: Stromness Harbour

Total Distance: go the distance; 8.5 km, cruisers; 4.5km, 12 kayakers

What seemed like a gloomy morning with the weather supposed to turn worse, turned out to be an amazing morning kayaking around Stromness Harbour. At first we left the ship, heading for the old whaling station, built in 1912 and operated by Norwegian whalers until 1931 when it was converted into a ship repair yard for the following 30 years of use. We split into two groups, half choosing to hang out with Gabby, observing the playful seals and calm king penguins. The others headed along the coast out of the bay, around Pipit Island and magnificent

icebergs where gentoos, a chinstrap and king rested, looking out to sea. We checked out shingly beaches strewn with fur seal harems and peaceful Elephant seals. Identified interesting geologic formations, including ancient sedimentary layers compressed causing foliation and weaknesses carved out by ocean swell. Eventually we were chased back to the ship by curious seals, completing just under 9 kilometres in three hours.

12/01/24 AM: Godthul

Total Distance: 4.5km, 19 kayakers

With the raging winds surrounding the entire island of South Georgia, we were lucky enough to find a sheltered oasis to hide away from the stormy seas. Godthul, meaning 'good cove' in Norwegian, proved to be a good cove for us to do so! We had beautiful, calm conditions and amazing scenery with sunshine peeking through the clouds. The trip started off with a 45-minute Zodiac cruise with Gabe and Liz to check out the nesting macaroni penguins at Rookery Point and make the most of the amazing location. After the cruise, we met Gabby, Wes and Gus with the kayaks in tow, and off we hopped into our boats to get closer to wildlife and admire the entire bay of Godthul. We broke up into a group of chargers and cruisers and made our way around the cliffy shores of the bay, paddles grabbed by the thick kelp forests underneath. We all kayaked our way around the bay, taking care as the swell was rolling into the bay, creating crashing waves on the rocks. The kelp forests provided amazing investigations as we admired tube worms, sea angels, molluscs, bryozoans and much more, living under the vibrant depths! King penguins and fur seals littered the beaches, nesting shags on the cliffs and gentoos on icebergs. We stumbled upon an amazing waterfall that captivated us; this was truly a magical oasis. As we rounded the bay we noticed two gentoos trying their best to summit the impossible... a large iceberg, nearly vertical. We watched as they slid off, continuously trying to climb with no success. After the morning's entertainment we scrambled back onto the Zodiac to head back for lunch. A truly stunning final kayak and a great way to send off South Georgia, with our minds captivated by the never-ending beauty of South Georgia.







# Paddling Log

Kayak Masters: Liz MacNeil, Wes McNeil, Gabe Vink Wackernagel, Gabby Bruce, Gus Wimberger

Number of Paddlers: 7

Total Paddle Outings: 8

Total Distance Paddled: 28km

Paddlers: Pam Pearson  
Max Robbins George Nelson  
Sheldon Robbins  
Katie Hantke  
David Hantke  
Chuck Peach

## 31/12/23 PM: Prospect Point

### Total Distance: 2.6 km, 8 paddlers

Our first paddle on the Antarctic Peninsula was long anticipated, as we sped further south towards the Antarctic Circle than we normally would have to find favourable weather... and find it we did. It was a glorious, sunny and mild day, with very little wind. Following a visit to the Prospector's Cabin at Prospect Point, we returned to the ship to change our boots to wetsuit booties so we could finally explore this icy world from our kayaks and under our own power. When you are in a kayak it becomes an extension of your body and you are able to feel the marine environment through your bones. This experience is even more profound and at the same time brings out the child in us, when we get to paddle in brash ice. As we slipped between the larger growlers and bergy bits, we would also part a path through the small bits of ice, bumping and grinding along to go on our first tour of icebergs. We would stop occasionally to watch the gentoo penguins swimming out beyond and between our kayaks. As we explored our new surroundings we would stop to learn more about safety, paddle signals, how to paddle in brash ice and some various paddle strokes to aid us in manoeuvring our kayaks. We also learned how to use our paddle as a rudder. What a gift of a first paddle in Antarctica.

## 01/01/24 AM: Isacke Passage

### Total Distance: 2 km, 6 paddlers

A picture-perfect morning in southern Crystal Sound. The paddling team launched from *Greg Mortimer's* marina out onto the glassy waters, where blues and whites of icebergs and mountainous landscapes reflected the amazing scenery above the surface. Guided through a maze of ice, Gabe introduced new strokes such as the sweeps, murdering and draws. Paddling techniques were improved with tips on posture and use of different muscle groups. We observed crabeater seals lazing on an ice floe in the morning sun. Magnificent sculptures of ice enticed us onwards, completing a circuit of 2 kilometres in about an hour and half. Group photo showed smiles all round!

## 01/01/24 PM: Detaille Island

### Total Distance: 2 km, 4 paddlers

The outing at Detaille Island had to be relatively short today, as we needed to head north to follow the best weather. We squeezed in a lot, however. First, we did the landing at the old base camp, then proceeded to take a few detours on our return trip to the ship to see a large iceberg with an arch and to observe some crabeater seals out on the flat ice floes. We changed at the ship, then towed our inflatable kayaks a short distance, got in, and paddled north, zig-zagging through brash ice and large icebergs. We paralleled the ship as it moved north to reposition. We ended our paddle at a very large, towering berg, with a hard, sheer, vertical face, and was topped with a small spire. After we took guesses on its height, we sat silent to take it in, then towed back to the ship.

## 02/01/24 AM: Argentine Islands

### Total Distance: 3.4 km, 6 paddlers

Another very fortunate day of paddling today. Although the wind was stiffening from the northwest, we were able to tow our kayaks from the ship to the Argentine Islands, an amazing rocky archipelago, topped with small icecaps and sprinkled with icebergs. On our way in, to find shelter from the wind, we got distracted by three humpback whales feeding. After being mesmerised by them for 20 minutes or so, fluking left and right, we remembered that we were supposed to be kayaking. We continued towards the Vernadsky Research Base and almost immediately found a little calm bay to launch our kayaks, complete with its own grotto of icebergs, on the northwest corner of Skua Island. We paddled in the bay then headed more north into an inlet near Skua Creek. The inlet was blocked by sea ice, where we found a solitary penguin and a few Weddell seals sunning themselves, out of the breeze. We continued following the shoreline north and into the central sound of Vernadsky were, there was no wind. We then found ourselves also bathing in the warmth of the sun and watching a few Adélie penguins till it was time to tow back to the ship.

## 02/01/24 PM: Yalour Islands

### Total Distance: 8.1 km, 4 paddlers

As the clouds rolled over and the sky turned a little more overcast, we made our way to Yalour Islands, home to an Adélie colony. We arrived in calm conditions, which provided an amazing paddle. As there were only four paddlers, we were able to offer an opportunity to try out the hard-shell kayaks! We set off cruising along the coastline admiring the Adélie penguins, watching their charismatic behaviour. As we were paddling along, we spotted a young male elephant seal perched high and dry. We said hello and paddled on. The paddle was peaceful and beautiful. We were lucky enough to enjoy some large iceberg hopping and hang out with many Adélies, as well as a lazy Weddell seal. The excursion was a decent length, being the longest paddle yet at 8.1 kilometres! An amazing day on the water.

03/01/24 AM: Chiriguano Bay

Total Distance: 3.1 kms, 6 paddlers

The weather finally caught up with us today and we were treated to a quintessential Antarctic paddle. Although the temperature was a warm 6 degrees Celsius, there was a light breeze, and the air was filled with giant snowflakes as we approached Chiriguano. We had arrived at a marine winter wonderland, and we would get to paddle in it. We launched our kayaks directly from the ship and began to paddle in a slushy mix made from the big snowflakes and the salty seawater, intermixed with some brash ice. This mix was the early stages of a type of ice called *shuga*, which can get very thick and bond to other ice fragments, making a type of ice that can entrap you, and that you cannot escape from by getting out of your kayak, because it cannot support you. Despite the cold and wetness of this paddle we had a lot of fun paddling in the mild *shuga*. We paddled along the glacial walls, watched a Weddell seal and, when deep in the northeastern arm of Bahia Markman Bay, toward the end of our paddle, took a few minutes of silence to take it all in.

03/01/24 PM: Damoy Point

Total Distance: 3.7 kms, 7 paddlers

What a beautiful day in the neighbourhood! We navigated towards the shore of Damoy Point through icy growlers of various shapes and sizes. At the shore we smelled, heard and saw penguins participating in all of their meaningful activities. Some were porpoising through the water, others skilfully flying onto shore. Some were waddling across their local colony highway, others stealthily stealing their neighbour's pebble. Amongst the busy colony were two lonely chinstraps – forlorn in a gentoo's world. Near the end of the point, a whale's fluke could be seen in the distance. Together we hustled across the bay to get a closer look at this gentle giant, feeding in and around brash ice. Wildlife abounded and with gorgeous lighting on the nearby peaks, we loaded into Zodiacs and cruised back the ship, reminiscing on another spectacular outing.

04/01/24 AM: Danco Island

Total Distance: 3.1 kms, 6 paddlers

North of Danco Island we weaved through the icy growlers scattered along the shallows towards the well-established gentoo colony. A penguin superhighway led the penguins from the island to the rocky shore, where we watched the birds hop, plop and swim around us. There were also gulls and snowy sheathbills hanging near the colony. As we paddled south along the island, we saw some soaring skuas and gliding petrels over the water. We paddled into the brash for one last time before climbing back into the Zodiac. What a fantastic end to an awe-inspiring adventure on the water.





# Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guide: Tomas Gov, Richard Devanny, Birgitta Mueck

## Snorkellers:

Ben Martinez

Haley Schools

Natalie Sutcliffe

Christopher Brayshaw

Adam Thatcher

Alex Moles

Jennifer Martin

Jill Doran

Monique Coorey

## 31/12/23 PM: Prospect Point

The scenic display surrounding us when we headed out for our first snorkel excursion was breathtaking. Icebergs of all sizes, shapes and forms passed by while we scouted for the perfect snorkel spot. This is our first snorkel in Antarctica and for most of us our first drysuit experience. To test the gear and make sure we all feel comfortable in the water, we chose a good spot to make a try-out snorkel in shallow water close to one of the islets. The sun smiled at us when we slid from the Zodiac pontoon into the cold, 2-degree water. The visibility was good and we had a closer look at how the ice looks underwater. Along the shore we also see sea stars, krill, algae and a beautiful shell. Such a great start to our Antarctic snorkel adventure!

## 01/01/24 AM: Crystal Sound

We went for a leisurely Zodiac cruise and found some sea ice on deep water to snorkel along the edge of. The water temperature was 1 degree Celsius and the underwater visibility was 15 metres.

## 01/01/24 PM: Detaille Island

Starting out with a Zodiac cruise, we encountered numerous crabeater seals. They are all resting on the ice, some alone but mostly in twos or threes. None were at all disturbed by our presence. We also saw a few Adélie penguins, initially on the ice, but then they slipped away from us into the water. There were numerous large icebergs, some very tall.

## 02/01/24 AM: Winter Island

Even before getting onto the Zodiacs, we could see many humpback whales feeding around the area. It didn't take long before we found a couple of them at safe distance. We spent half-an-hour observing them surfacing to feed and tail diving. We then headed to a sheltered little cove to snorkel nearby a gentoo penguin colony and luck was with us, as they started to swim around us in shallow water. We then landed for a visit to Wordie House before heading back to the ship for a deserved warm lunch.

## 02/01/24 PM: Yalour Islands

What a landscape! What a landscape we had here. We landed where a few small Adélie colonies were located. After a walk around the island, we got back into the Zodiacs for a small cruise before going snorkelling. But as nature always delivers the unexpected, we found ourselves surrounded by at least a dozen feeding humpback

whales. What a show we had; we didn't know where to keep our eyes to, as whales were surfacing all around us, with beautiful blue ice right behind them. The spectacle was so good that we decided to stay looking at the whales and not snorkel. It was, we can say, a whale of a day!

## 03/01/24 AM: Chiriguano Bay

We woke up to grey skies, wind and snow in the morning. But this didn't stop our eagerness to explore more of the Antarctic wonders! After the ship has been repositioned to the sheltered Chiriguano bay, we happily jumped into the Zodiacs, all ready and dressed up in our drysuits. We first made a lovely Zodiac cruise among pancake ice, glaciers and blue icebergs covered in snow. We found a nice spot for snorkelling where we had a beautifully shaped icebergs to explore underwater; also the softer ice at the surface was fun to observe from beneath. Play and laughter were heard from our fun snorkel group when enjoying our time in the water. Cold but happy, we then got back to the Zodiacs and a short ride later we were on board our cosy expedition ship again to warm up and continue our voyage a bit further north.

## 03/01/24 PM: Damoy Point

After a good lunch and rest, we had all regained warmth and energy for our second excursion of the day. First we made a landing at Damoy Point, where we observed the many nesting gentoo penguins and beautiful mountain scenery surrounded. Back in the Zodiacs we headed for Casabianca, a small islet not far from the landing site. A Weddell seal snuck along the bay when we arrived, and it didn't take long until we were eagerly ready to enter the cold, 1-degree water. The sea floor was covered by kelp, algae and beautifully coloured rocks. Even though the visibility was not the best it is still plenty of fun to swim around and watch these various colours beneath us. Also, some gentoo penguins swam past with rapid speed. The Weddell seal is still around but kept its distance. Happy from our snorkelling, we did some drysuit dancing in the Zodiacs to warm up a bit before heading back to our comfy floating home *Greg Mortimer*, where a delicious dinner was waiting for us.

## 04/01/24 AM: Danco Island

We went onto the island, landing on the northern shore. From there we walked up a hill to a hut and spent some time observing a gentoo colony. Then we got back in the Zodiac and headed to a rocky outcrop to the east of Danco Island. We snorkelled in fairly shallow water, surrounded by fast ice-grounded icebergs. There was a lot of krill in the water, and we saw a couple of ctenophores, which are a type of comb jellyfish.



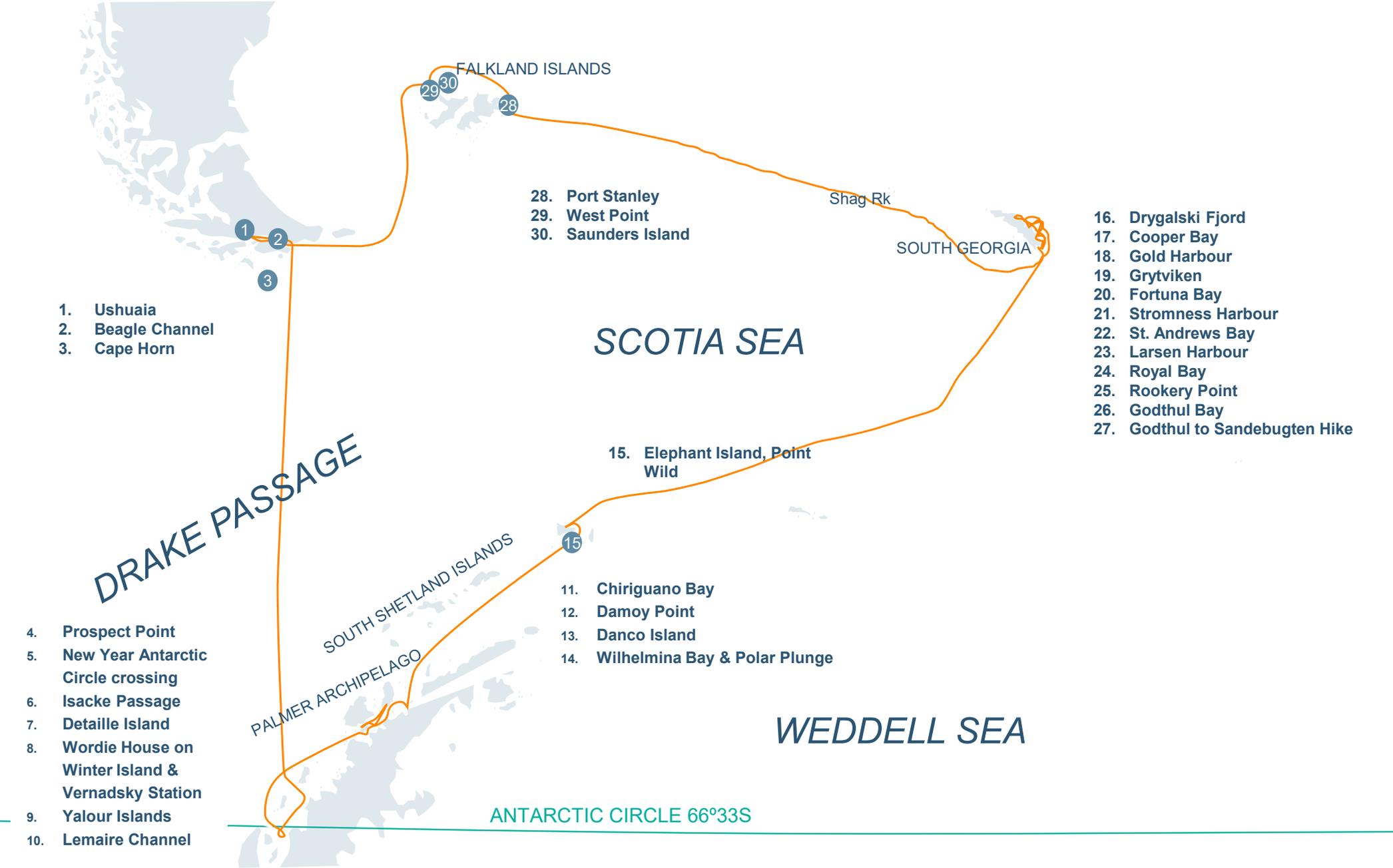






# Antarctica Complete Overview

Dec 28, 2023 – Jan 18, 2024



- 1. Ushuaia
- 2. Beagle Channel
- 3. Cape Horn

- 28. Port Stanley
- 29. West Point
- 30. Saunders Island

- 16. Drygalski Fjord
- 17. Cooper Bay
- 18. Gold Harbour
- 19. Grytviken
- 20. Fortuna Bay
- 21. Stromness Harbour
- 22. St. Andrews Bay
- 23. Larsen Harbour
- 24. Royal Bay
- 25. Rookery Point
- 26. Godthul Bay
- 27. Godthul to Sandebugten Hike

- 4. Prospect Point
- 5. New Year Antarctic Circle crossing
- 6. Isacke Passage
- 7. Detaille Island
- 8. Wordie House on Winter Island & Vernadsky Station
- 9. Yalour Islands
- 10. Lemaire Channel

- 15. Elephant Island, Point Wild
- 11. Chiriguano Bay
- 12. Damoy Point
- 13. Danco Island
- 14. Wilhelmina Bay & Polar Plunge

ANTARCTIC CIRCLE 66°33'S



# Expeditioners:

Sherri Balmer	Glen Duffy	Kathie Lawson	Christopher Neill	Art Simon
Chris Bonnily	Valerie Edson	Larry Lawson	George Nelson	Anne Maree Sleat
Christopher Brayshaw	Kathy Engler	Peter Leadbeater	Lee Phin Ng	Peter Snell
Emma Broadfield	Carsten Fischer	Jie Liang-Fischer	Nanette O'Driscoll	Patty Sparrell
Ed Brose	Drue Freeman	Jenny Lim	Catherine Ottley	Duncan Sparrell
Nicola Burgess	John Fu	Soo-Keat Lim	Christopher Panes	Paul Stanford
Greg Cahill	Jean Gardner	Greg Mackrodt	Arthur Panos	Natalie Sutcliffe
Virginia Cahill	Bronwyn Gillies	Jennifer Martin	Ann Panos	Sin Siew Tag
Thomas Calabrese	Phil Gilmore	Andy Martin	Charles Peach	Adam Thatcher
Peggy Canale	Cress Gilmore	Ben Martinez	Pam Pearson	Irene Wilk
Kan Cheng	Janet Greenlee	Judy Mather	Karen Povey	Juerg Wilk
Valmai Clues	Ronda Hall	Yukiko Matsuda	Sanirat Ratchinda	Rod Wilson
Trevor Clues	Peter Hall	Candace Mc Clenahan	Onjira Ratchinda	Cheryl Winkler
Rob Cooper	Toni Hamilton	Dan Mc Coy	Eleanor Ridley	Jacob Winkler-Schuder
Monique Coorey	Katherine Hantke	Erica Mc Coy	Maxine Robbins	Ian Wright
Helen Costello	David Hantke	Frank McDonald	Sheldon Robbins	Yuko Yonebayashi
Janette Costello	Dan Horner	Liz Mc Grath	Donna Rogers	Ilene Young
Lindsay Cumming	I-Ping Hsieh	Sarah McGregor	Ian Rose	Zhijing Zhao
Geoff Cumming	Rose Jenkins	Patti Mitchell	Paul Russell	
Jane D'Olier	Bailey Kessing	Alexandra Moles	Robyn Russell	
Peter D'Olier	Saleem Khan	Vipasha Mukherjee	Lynne Saunders	
Jill Doran	Wing Lai	Jackie Neill	Haley Schools	



## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Greg Mortimer

Assistant Expedition Leader: Alex Cowan

Onboard Expedition Manager: Kerry Lorimer

Historian: Alasdair McGregor

Marine Biologist / Citizen Science Coordinator: Annette Scheffer

Naturalist: Joselyn Fenstermacher

Naturalist: T-A Hooley

Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Liz MacNeil

Senior Sea Kayak Guide: Wes McNeil

Sea Kayak Guide: Gabriel Vink Wackernagel

Sea Kayak Guide: Gabby Bruce

Sea Kayak Guide: Gus Wimberger

Lead Snorkel Guide: Thomas Gov

Snorkel Guide: Richard Devanny

Snorkel Guide: Birgitta Mueck

Expedition Guide: Mark Brophy

Expedition Guide: Elena Wimberger

Expedition Medic: Eddie Quinn

Photography Guide: Jamie Lafferty

Zodiac Manager: Nacho Marino

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Reza Rusooly

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Oleg Kapko

Chief Officer: Andrey Zakalashnyuk

Safety Officer: Sergeii Voina

Bosun: Francis Marvin Linga

Third Officer: Goncalo Alexandre Saraiva Aniceto Costa

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

Support Doctor: Julio Andres

Chief Engineer: Sergiy Melynk

Hotel Director: Pascal Joubin

Chief Purser: Pia Blanca Bangug

Executive Chef: Edgar Mangalinao

Head Waiter: Jemuel Alcantara

IT Officer: Ihor Yesmienieiev

Receptionist: Ana Gabriela Fernandez

Receptionist: Jonathan Valdez

Head Stateroom: Florente Lusomg

Able Seaman: Dan Well Danico

Able Seaman: Jufri Mujahid

Able Seaman: Nikola Georgiev

Able Seaman: Mark Christian Torero

Able Seaman: Joel Noble

Able Seaman: Roberto Ixtan Mejia

Deck Cadet: Giuseppe Guidice

## Photography thanks to:

Jamie Lafferty

