

# Falkland Islands, South Georgia & Antarctic Peninsula



Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 16 November – 05 December 2023



# Ushuaia, Argentina

DAY 1 | Thursday 16 November 2023

Position at 1600 on 16 Nov

Latitude: 54°48.5'S

Longitude: 068°18'W

Course: Docked

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: NNE20 kts

Barometer: 994

Air Temp: 9°C

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

The wharf was abuzz this morning 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 Daniel and meeting the whole Expedition Team, Anne gave us some handy hints about life on board.

Hotel Director Pascal told us all about the ship facilities, followed by Dr Anzor giving us information about all things medical.

We watched *Greg Mortimer* cast off her lines and pull away from the dock, at last on our way to Antarctica!

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

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

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

The last task was a jacket swap, so 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 118 passengers (21 Americans, 48 Australians, 6 Canadians, 18 from the UK, 22 from China, 2 from Netherlands, 1 from Poland, 2 from Singapore, and 1 from New Zealand,) along with 78 crew from all around the globe.

Our 20-strong Expedition Team have a variety of specialties, including polar exploration, mountaineering, skiing, glaciology, geology, history, marine biology, photography, medicine, kayaking and snowshoeing.

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



# At sea

DAY 2 | Friday 17 November 2023

Position at 0600 on 17 Nov

Latitude: 58°34.835' S

Longitude: 068°22.8' W

Course: 155°

Speed: 13.8kts

Wind Speed: NNE 6

Barometer: 1001

Air Temp: 2°C

In the short, silky darkness of a Tierra del Fuego night, we slipped out of the Beagle Channel, rounded the three Chilean islands of Picton, Nueva and Lennox, and headed south past Cape Horn (at a distance) to enter Drake Passage. Daybreak brought slate skies punctuated by the effortless soaring of black-browed and light-mantled sooty albatross, the speedy *pintados* (Cape petrels) and more. Best of all, the Drake was in a kind mood, with swells of two to three metres, to rise marginally throughout the day.

It was the easy voice of Daniel, our Expedition Leader, that roused our international team of Expeditioners from their slumber. Australia, Canada, China, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Singapore, United Kingdom and the United States were all represented.

After a sumptuous breakfast, we gathered in the lecture room for our IAATO briefing, the guidelines we follow to protect Antarctic wildlife and environs. Most significant is how we ensure we don't spread the Avian flu. It's most important that when ashore we don't kneel, sit or lie down near wildlife, nor put our packs down. Photographers, buddy up so if you need to change lenses or film (remember film?) someone can help you.

After lunch, our naturalist, Linda, gave a fascinating introduction to some of the birds we are experiencing on the Drake, and hope to see in Antarctica.

A bit later, Citizen Science coordinator, Vicky, gathered an enthusiastic gang together on the observation deck, binoculars in hand, to bliss out on albatross magic, petrels (including white-chinned, southern giant and Cape), riding wave-driven wind-lift, and delicate dancing Wilson's storm petrels feeding on the sea surface.

In between, our activity guides gathered their charges and to prepare them for snowshoeing and kayaking, triggering waves of excitement. As afternoon turned to evening, we gathered in the lecture room for a lovely Aurora tradition, the Captain's Welcome Toast.

Daniel had the pleasure of introducing Captain Maxim, a good friend and favourite among the experienced captains. Captain Maxim, in turn, introduced the leaders of his technical and hotel teams. After a lovely toast, Daniel took the microphone to outline our plans for tomorrow.

First the mysteries of getting from ship to shore or Zodiac cruise will be revealed. Linda will give an introduction to Antarctica, then it's all hands on deck to watch as we approach the South Shetland Islands. From sighting our first iceberg, to measuring the rapid increase in both bird and marine life as we approach to South Sandwich Islands, prepare for sensory overload as Antarctica stretches out its most incredible welcome to us. And have your cameras ready, the coast of the South Shetland Islands needs to be seen to be believed.



# Approaching Antarctica

DAY 3 | Saturday 18 November 2023

Position at 0630 18 Nov

Latitude: 61°13'40"S

Longitude: 060°51.054"W

Course: 155.3°

Speed: 12.9 knots

Wind Speed: NE 31.1 kts

Barometer: 1005

Air Temp: -5°C

Icebergs and penguins! The Drake was kind, giving us a night of moderate rolling seas, blustery conditions and grey skies as we crossed the Antarctic Convergence into the Southern Ocean and Antarctica. Seabirds disappeared as Expeditioners sighted our first iceberg – the first of many, but what a view!

After a delicious breakfast, we were briefed on how to get in and out of Zodiacs! Afterwards, everyone located the famous mudroom, where there was lots of buzzing and moving around as lockers were located and Muck Boots and buoyancy aids were fitted and exchanged.

The kayakers were successful in getting their gear as well – some in dry suits for the first time, finding out how comfortable latex gaskets are around the neck!

Linda provided an excellent lecture 'Introduction to Antarctica' which came in handy as we approached Barrientos Island.

After a scrumptious lunch with far too many choices, the ship anchored and we were off to our first landing. We didn't see those conditions in the morning briefing, but everyone handled it like pros! Great appreciation for the Zodiac drivers as they expertly manoeuvred their stern landings. From a distance, Barrientos looked barren but once on land it was anything but, giving us our first penguin experience – chinstraps and gentoos provided great entertainment, as did the egg-stealing skuas. Conditions included gusty winds and cold, blowing snow, but the Expeditioners were all smiles as they experienced true Antarctic spring conditions while watching the many penguins waddling, sliding, falling, resting and arguing.

After our excitement on shore we returned to the ship, where the intrepid campers had their briefing with Dan and Peter, giving them much to look forward to.

Because we hadn't yet eaten enough today, we found our way to the Elephant Island Bar, where we enjoyed the cocktail of the day and canapés. Letting our canapés settle a bit, we all listened intently to the extraordinary Daily Recap, organised by Linda, our naturalist.

Citizen Science programs Globe Cloud Observer and the Secchi Disc Program were introduced and explained by Vicky, our Citizen Science Coordinator and marine biologist. It's exciting to be part of the scientific community, assisting researchers to gather data that will be used to better understand our world. Evidently Melina missed most of the penguins, as she was busy admiring the basalt on Barrientos Island and she gave an excellent recap on the local geology and how the columnar cliffs were formed from cooling lava.

Adrian, our photographer, amazed the audience with his gorgeous photos, photography tips, and mobile phone shortcuts.

Finally, Daniel introduced tomorrow's plan and got everyone excited as the ship moved toward the Melchior Islands and Cuverville.

To make sure we have enough energy for tomorrow, we enjoyed a fabulous dinner topped off with an extraordinary chocolate mousse!





# The Melchior Islands & Cuverville Island

DAY 4 | Sunday 19 November 2023

Position at 0600 on 19 Nov

Latitude: 64°04'57"S

Longitude: 062°51'7"W

Course: 199°

Speed: 9.4 knots

Wind Speed: S 11 kts

Barometer: 1014

Air Temp: -4°C

As we awoke from our slumber to the soothing whisper of Daniel's voice, the sun shone brightly on the Melchior Islands, casting a warm glow over the icy landscape. It was a rare and beautiful sunny day, perfect for exploring the wonders this remote corner of the world had to offer.

Exploring the islands was a breathtaking adventure filled with incredible encounters. From the Zodiacs, we marvelled at towering icebergs and playful seals popping up from the frigid waters. The kayakers navigated through a cold wind chill, getting up close to Weddell and crabeater seals lounging on the snow and swimming beneath our boats.

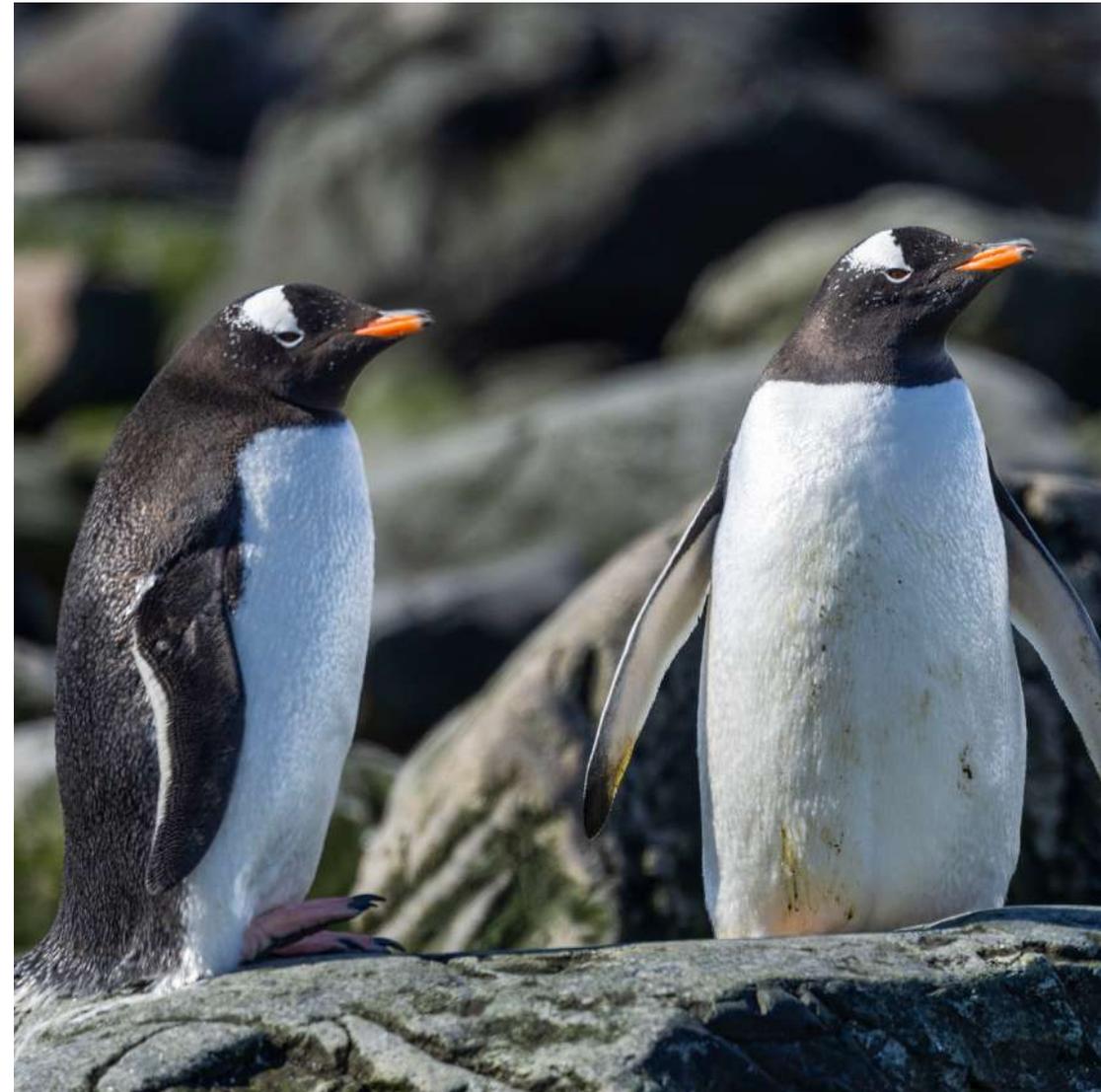
Snowshoeing was a surreal experience as each step on the untouched snow revealed a frozen world of beauty. The serenity and vastness of the landscape was humbling, and with every stride, we felt a deeper connection to this pristine white landscape.

After a delicious lunch, we emerged along Cuverville Island, which was a utopia for penguin enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. Our Zodiacs glided across the glassy waters, weaving in and out of towering icebergs that sparkled like diamonds. As we stepped foot on the island, we found ourselves in the midst of the largest gentoo penguin colony in the world. The air was filled with their distinctive calls, and we watched in awe as they waddled, slid, and dove in/out of the icy waters. The snowshoers scaled the icy slopes, and were rewarded with breathtaking, panoramic views of the island and its surrounding icebergs and glaciers.

Our intrepid kayakers navigated their way through the reflective waters and sculptures of ice surrounding them, as the sun's rays danced on the surface. Marvelling at the tranquillity of the surroundings and establishing a profound connection with nature. Penguins porpoised and dove around them curiously as they made their way back to shore to find their lifelong mate. It was truly a magical afternoon and an unforgettable experience.

At dinner, we traded our stories of adventure as we filled our bellies with Chef Edgar's wonderful cuisine in anticipation for the camping awaiting us in Paradise Harbour. The golden hour was upon us when Captain Maxim and the bridge team sailed us into our anchorage. The soft light of orange and pink hues painted the snowy mountains and glaciers as our Expedition Team readied the Zodiacs with gear. Through the slushy brash and growlers, our dauntless campers made their way, unloading from the icy waters and taking their first steps onto Antarctica.

Sweet dreams, good people! We have made it to paradise!









# Paradise Harbour, Alvaro Cove

DAY 5 | Monday 20 November 2023

Position at 0500 on 20 Nov

Latitude: 64°54.24" S

Longitude: 062°56" W

Course: 104

Speed: 1.1 knots

Wind Speed: ESE 5 kts

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 1°C

When the guides awoke to their 4.45am alarms and began to stir from their slumber they were surprised to see all the Expeditioner campers almost packed up already – apparently there were more than a few people eager to get back to the ship! To say everyone 'slept' on the mainland of Antarctica might be a bit of an exaggeration, nevertheless 34 brave Expeditioners had definitely spent the night/bivouacked under the everchanging pastel shades of an austral polar night.

Reinvigorated by a hot shower, copious amounts of caffeine and a hearty breakfast, we were ready for another full day. Paradise Harbour may seem like an unusual name for a spot in the inhospitable continent of Antarctica, but the large bay was named 'Paradise Harbour' by whalers over a century ago, because the islands of Bryde and Lemaire block much of the wind and swell from the more exposed Gerlache Strait and make the area a welcome refuge spot in stormy weather.

But today we actually enjoyed almost tropical weather with bright sunshine. The snowshoers roped up and zigzagged up a steep slope to gain a small glacier-covered plateau and then completed a beautiful circuit with several stunning lookout spots and 360-degree views of gorgeous mountains draped in extensive glaciers.

The kayakers paddled beneath some impressive vertical rock cliffs, with a cluster of shag nests and some unusual lichen colours into the spectacular Skontorp Cove.

The rest of the Expeditioners took turns in Zodiacs and landed at Almirante Brown Station, an Argentinian research station, and soaked up the wonderful sunshine and superlative scenery while watching the colony of gentoos go about their business, and a Weddell seal lazing around on the fast ice.

As we left Paradise Harbour and en route to Neko Harbour for the afternoon, we fortuitously passed by our sister-ship, the *Sylvia Earle*, who gave us the heads up that Neko was blown out by strong katabatic winds, and access was difficult due to shifting ice.

In true expedition style, our quick-thinking Expedition Leader Daniel pulled a Plan B straight out of his back pocket, and we headed to the nearby Alvaro Cove on Bryde Island, where conditions were still blissfully calm. Here we all enjoyed a wonderful three-hour Zodiac cruise among the ice, marvelling at the sheer scale of the ice-cloaked mountains, gaping crevasses and looming cornices. There was one particularly stunning fluted mountain face on Lemaire Island that kept drawing our attention in the constantly shifting light.

Back on board and to celebrate such a spectacular and memorable day, the ship's restaurant laid on an epic

barbecue on the outer decks and we bathed in the spectacular surroundings while sipping mulled wine with delicious food.

By the end of the day it feels like we have been down in Antarctica for far longer than we have, and we have achieved almost as much as a full peninsula trip in just the 2.5 days we have spent here so far.











# Polar Plunge









# Cierva Cove | Hydrurga Rocks

DAY 6 | Tuesday 21 November 2023

Position at 0530 on 21 Nov

Latitude: 64°11'52"S

Longitude: 061°20'6"W

Course: 58.4°

Speed: 7.3 knots

Wind Speed: SE 15 kts

Barometer: 1002

Air Temp: -3°C

We woke to yet another sunny and beautiful day in the Antarctic Peninsula. This time to a spectacular view of the mountains and glaciers surrounding Cierva Cove, home to the Argentinian research station Primavera and named after Juan de la Cierva. He was a Spanish pilot and engineer who in the early 1920s invented the autogyro, considered by many to be the predecessor to the helicopter.

The cove itself is home to an abundance of wildlife due to the calving ice of the glacial faces that stirs up the water surrounding them, oxygenating it and making it rich with nutrients. An ideal habitat for krill, which forms the base of the food web for all marine life. And so we went exploring with our Zodiacs this morning in search of ice and wildlife.

We had lots of fun driving and kayaking through the brash ice and looking in awe at the gigantic icebergs that surrounded us. The colours were just amazing and they came in all sorts of shapes. The chinstrap penguin colonies were a delight to watch, as they were in full courtship display high on their rocky slopes.

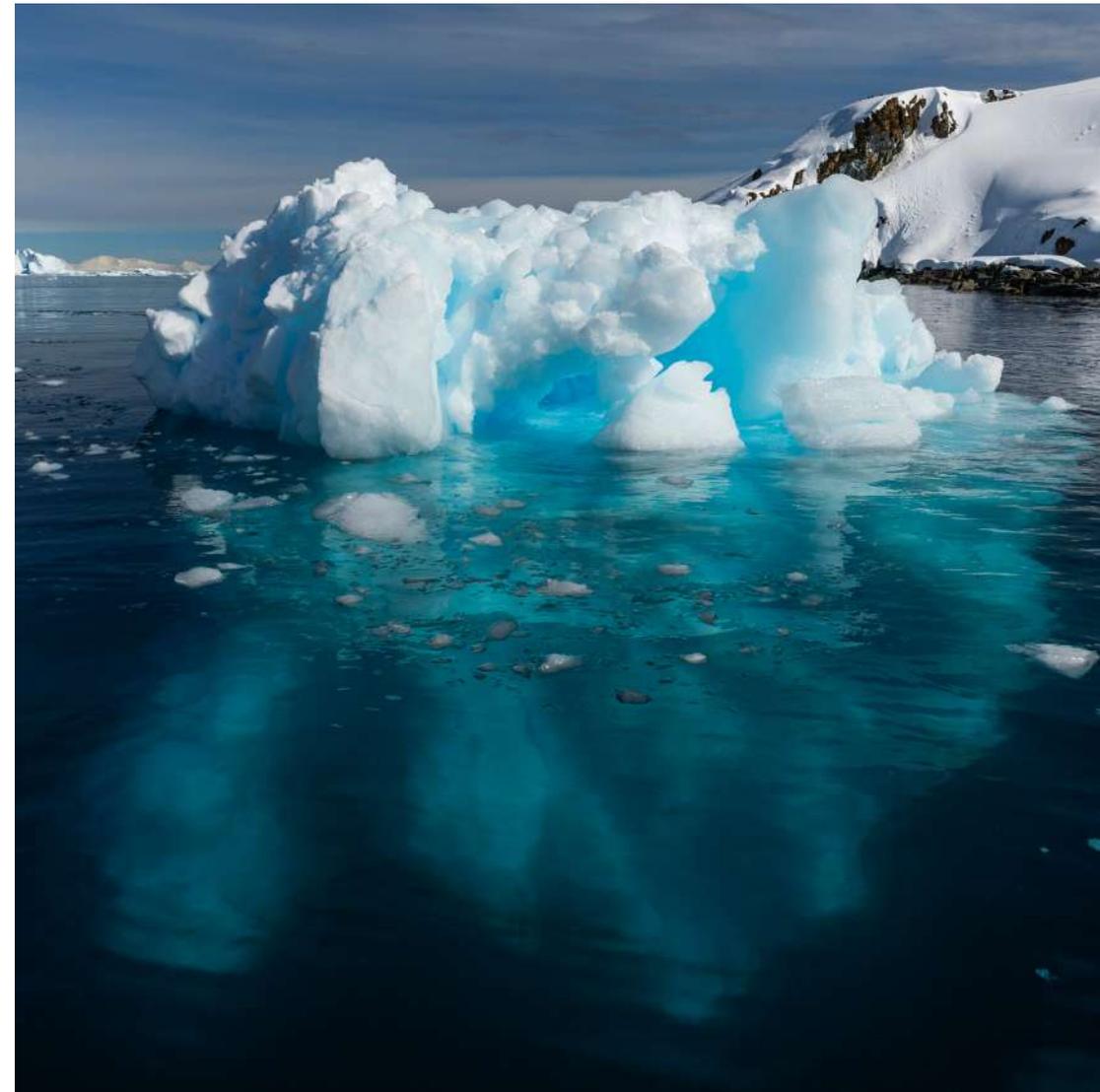
They were joined by the breeding antarctic tern, which were defending their territory with great bravery against the brown skua. Another beautiful sight was the cliffs, with extensive cover of different moss and lichen species that form a stark colour contrast to the snowy environment and make Cierva Cove an Antarctic Specially Protected Area.

Content with new memories and experiences we went back to the ship, where the amazing crew had prepared a superb lunch for us.

In the afternoon we enjoyed a split landing/Zodiac cruise at Hydrurga Rocks. Another wonderful spot full of wildlife, with unforgettable views and some of the largest icebergs we have seen so far. We were greeted by a couple of Weddell seals close to the landing site and we even saw some flying penguins... or should we say blue-eyed shags?

The chinstrap penguins were numerous and very loud, but this did not seem to bother the fur seal that was enjoying a nice afternoon snooze. We wished we could have stayed longer on this magical island so full of life, but the rest of the Antarctic Peninsula is waiting for us.

And so, rich with new experiences and memories that will hold a special place in our hearts forever, we continue our exploration of this magnificent icy continent.





# Astrolabe Island | Duroch Islands

DAY 7 | Wednesday 22 November 2023

Position at 0530 on 22 Nov

Latitude: 63°19'3"S

Longitude: 059°07'2"W

Course: 489°

Speed: 5.6 kts

Wind Speed: NW 3.5 kts

Barometer: 1001

Air Temp: -1°C

Exploration was the theme of the day! Any good plan lasts at least part of a day, and in fact, the first few plans lasted at least that long. But, any good planner always has a back-up plan: B, C, D, and even E. Luckily for us, we didn't need to go too far down the alphabet to come to a great location for the morning's outings. The small island of Astrolabe turned out to be perfect.

Astrolabe was spectacular! Our access to the landing cove was guarded by the Dragon's Teeth – the rugged and imposing peaks that rise abruptly from the ocean. The landing itself was friendly, especially compared to the steeper access we encountered yesterday on Hydrurga Rocks.

We were gifted with seeing three species of penguin: gentoo, Adélie and chinstraps. There were a few Weddell seals on the coastline, and one of our Zodiac drivers thought he saw a leopard seal (although the sighting was very quick, and in the water, so we aren't 100% sure).

The snowshoe gang explored some steep slopes above the beach, hoping to get to a col on a ridge overlooking the bay. Here's where plan C came in, as it was a bit too steep for comfort, but spectacular views nonetheless. The gang descended, gaining ever-increasing skills in negotiating walking in snowshoes. We then explored the far reaches of the bay, gaining a fantastic view of the Dragon's Teeth from a different vantage point. All of the Expeditioners who were closer to the landing spot looked like tiny specks, by comparison to the dramatic backdrop of the island and coastline.

After another fantastic lunch put on by the ship's amazing crew, we ventured to another little-known destination – Duroch Islands, near the Chilean base of Bernardo O'Higgins. Following the spirit of the day, a few of us set out to see if we could possibly land on shore – any shore – for a walk with the snowshoes.

Despite brave efforts, which included using two ice axes to access the ice, we were denied. The access was far too 'sporty', even for the alpine guides! Instead, Zodiacs were launched, and all were treated to one of the most magical experiences on earth: navigating tiny channels, among gargoyles of ice monsters and chandeliers, among so many penguins we couldn't count (actually, our Expedition Leader claims to have counted several hundred thousand).

It was a memorable, fantastical and otherworldly day. Thanks so much to the Captain and his crew for making this possible, and to the adventurous spirit of all the Expeditioners who marvelled at the chance to experience this wondrous place.







# Point Wild | At Sea

DAY 8 | Thursday 23 November 2023

Position at 0515 on 23 Nov

Latitude: 61°22'5" S

Longitude: 055°00'1"W

Course: 49.3°

Speed: 13.9 knots

Wind Speed: W 10.8 kts

Barometer: 1008

Air Temp: -3°C

The story of the shipwreck of the *Endurance*, crushed in the pack ice, the battle for survival by the stricken crew in their effort to reach Elephant Island, and the arduous voyage across the Southern Ocean in an open boat to reach South Georgia and initiate a rescue mission, have long captured the popular imagination. A classic narrative of overcoming the most challenging of obstacles to achieve the most spectacular of outcomes. Much has been made of the leadership skills of Ernest Shackleton in this undertaking; his charismatic and egalitarian manner inspiring the dedication of his crew, but without the support from and finely honed skills within his team, plaudits for the success of the rescue would perhaps not resonate so deeply across the years. And none were key to the successful rescue more so than Frank Wild.

Frank Wild has been largely overlooked by popular histories, noted mainly as Shackleton's trusted second-in-command on the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, what we now know as the *Endurance* Expedition. But he was the most decorated polar adventurer of his era, awarded the Polar Medal five times over the course of his Antarctic career. By the time of the *Endurance* voyage in 1914, he was already a veteran of three expeditions, serving on the *Discovery* in 1901 under Robert Falcon Scott, with Shackleton on the *Nimrod* expedition in 1908 to 1909, and with Douglas Mawson's *Aurora* expedition in 1911.

For more than four months, from 24 April to 30 August 1916, through the depths of the Antarctic winter with temperatures plummeting as low as -45°C, Wild and his crew were marooned on the rocky spit of land, hunkered under the jagged cliffs that now bear his name. The 22 men left behind as the *James Caird* departed, crammed into a makeshift shelter constructed from the overturned lifeboats, surviving on a diet of seal, penguin, limpets and kelp. Wild's extraordinary resourcefulness and determination were key in keeping the crew alive, maintaining their health and morale, until their rescue by the Chilean navy vessel *Yelcho*.

Nosing our Zodiacs tentatively through the brashy swell into wave-washed rocks on the headland was a touch-and-go operation, for which the opportunities to do so are few and far between. It was a rare privilege to step ashore on the land walked by such tenacious characters, feel the echoes of their incredible resilience in the most gruelling of circumstances, and feel a profound connection to this most wild of places.





# At Sea

DAY 9 | Friday 24 November

Position at 0515 on 24 Nov

Latitude: 59°10'1" S

Longitude: 048°38'0" W

Course: 58.5

Speed: 13.2 knots

Wind Speed: NNW 9.1 kts

Barometer: 1007

Air Temp: -3°C

After a whirlwind of kayaking, snowshoeing, Zodiacing, and generally absorbing the Antarctic Peninsula, today we were once again away to sea! It was with a wee bit of sadness we left the Peninsula behind in search of South Georgia.

Our Expedition Leader said it well: All of us should reflect on the amazing experiences we have had, as we may not be back. Set them well in your memory.

Early in the morning – before breakfast – a few early risers were rewarded by viewing two humpback whales, which were very close to the ship! Their spouts sprayed high into the air, and their bulk was seen glistening in the early morning sun, clearly showing off their giant forms, before dipping back into the dark sea.

Although we were at sea, today was still a very busy day. The priority in the morning was biosecurity. All Expeditioners dove in with great enthusiasm, to ensure our trip to South Georgia would not compromise the delicate ecosystem and to ensure the bird influenza would not spread on our watch. The detail in which everyone examined their belongings was impressive and very much appreciated!

Interspersed throughout the day were some wonderful lectures. Adrian presented an excellent introduction to wildlife photography.

In the afternoon, Rachel delivered a captivating presentation on the explorers Robert Falcon Scott and Roald Amundsen, in which she compared and contrasted the two intrepid explorers. It was fascinating, and we learned a tremendous amount about the different approaches adopted by the two adventurers, and how it all played out in history.

In the mid-afternoon, the chef put on an amazing treat for everyone, while the Expedition Team prepared for the South Georgia landing. This included cleaning and examining hiking poles and other group items that will be inspected upon our arrival. They also engaged in continuing professional development, as we all improve our Antarctic travel skills.

The seas were amazingly calm for our crossing to South Georgia today – a rare and pleasant experience for Expeditioners and crew alike. Icebergs continued to accompany us along the way, remaining surprisingly massive and beautiful.



# At Sea towards South Georgia

DAY 10 | Saturday 25 November 2023

Position at 0520 on 25 Nov

Latitude: 56°53'2" S

Longitude: 041°44'3"W

Course: 58.3°

Speed: 10.5 knots

Wind Speed: WSW 24 kts

Barometer: 1005

Air Temp: -1°C

Today was our second full day at sea, making our way from Elephant Island to South Georgia. Along the way we watched icebergs pass on both sides of the ship.

I could not help but think about Shackleton's miraculous small boat journey, desperately hoping to reach the whaling stations on South Georgia and then return and rescue his crew stranded on Elephant Island. We enjoyed incredibly kind seas with maximum one-metre swells, whereas Shackleton on the *James Caird* found himself in severe storm conditions. Shackleton, with Worsley navigating, was eventually blown onto the western side of the island, to begin his trek across the mountains to Stromness.

During the morning, many of the Expeditioners went on tours of the bridge. The third officer gave an explanation of the complex technology keeping us safe. We looked very hard but were unable to find a steering wheel. Perhaps the Captain keeps it in his cabin.

Before lunch, Linda gave a terrific talk to introduce South Georgia. Captain Cook thought the island was barren and inhospitable. But he didn't have the benefit of a warm cabin and coffee machine. We also learned about the rapacious nature of the early whaling and sealing industry.

After lunch, Melina explained how all the moving continental plates created the incredible scenery.

What we did not expect, was that on board we had one of the key team members of the production crew of the film *Happy Feet*. Howard told the story of being selected by George Miller (*Mad Max* fame) to travel to Antarctica to obtain key images and data to ensure film animation that reflected an accurate depiction of life in a penguin colony. The film was three or four years in the making and went on to become a box office success, winning a number of awards. If you remember the film's opening scene, Howard is the third penguin from the left.

On Saturday night, we again had to cover all windows to prevent our artificial light attracting seabirds and injuring themselves on the sides of the ship. We also have people on watch to look after any birds that may land on deck. I went to sleep to the sound of small pieces of ice brushing along the steel sides of the hull.



# Drygalski Fjord | Cooper Bay & Island

DAY 11 | Sunday 26 November 2023

Position at 0505 on 26 Nov

Latitude: 55°03'8" S

Longitude: 036°23'9" W

Course: 52.9°

Speed: 8 knots

Wind Speed: NW 24kts

Barometer: 1004

Air Temp: -1°C

As the shape of South Georgia emerged before the *Greg Mortimer* early this morning, we were graced by the view of a new land, unknown to us. Its history has been shared with many of us throughout our lives, and this faraway land from tales of adventure became a place much closer, to be woven into our own stories of adventure.

Our approach to Drygalski Fjord revealed a geological landscape both familiar and foreign. Its rock has been transported – nearly as far as we have, and from the sample place – by a gently flowing lithosphere, and its high walls have been carved by thousands of years of glacial ebb and flow.

In recent times, however, that gentle equilibrium has been disturbed, as a warming climate forces back the face of the glacier that has stood since time immemorial in this landscape.

As we approached the end of the fjord, we were invited to imagine the adventurers of the past, and also to imagine that perhaps they felt a semblance of what we did today, as the wind and rain reminded us that nature reigns supreme here.

In much the same way that Drygalski Fjord commanded our attention with its impressive physical landscape, the creatures big and small of Cooper Bay enthralled us as we explored their home.

From our chilly perches in the Zodiacs and kayaks, we saw all manner of South Georgian inhabitants interacting with each other, paying us very little heed. Some fur seal pups clung to their mothers, while others adventured together on the beaches in a gentler way than their male seniors. A fight for turf and for dominance played out before our eyes, and we bore witness to the rare phenomenon of fur seals hunting penguins.

The elephant seals impressed upon us just how large they are, and how lucky we are to not have been literally impressed upon by an elephant seal.

And finally: the birds both flightless and airborne. We were greeted by macaroni penguins and their impeccable hairdos, as they moved about doing what macaroni penguins do. We witnessed scavengers feeding on carcasses of seals, and saw king penguins reigning over their small beach empire.

This fine Sunday enriched our senses, from smells, to the sensations of bone-chilling dampness, and the sounds of the wildlife that greeted us. Not bad for a rainy day in November.







# Godthul | Fortuna Bay

DAY 12 | Monday 27 November 2023

Position at 0515 27 Nov

Latitude: 54°35'0" S

Longitude: 035°44'5" W

Course: 345°

Speed: 11.6 knots

Wind Speed: SW 22kts

Barometer: 992

Air Temp: 4°C

As we approached the small natural circular harbour of Godthul, the weather forecast was grim. Swell had set in off the South Georgia coast and 40-knot winds did nothing to ease our minds. Entering the harbour, though, we were greeted with no swell and while the wind was still present, it was drastically reduced and brought with it a light sprinkling of snow throughout the morning.

We landed at a beach inside the harbour that was populated with fur and elephant seals, giant petrels and a small group of king penguins. We disembarked the Zodiac and walked through the tussock grass, until very rapidly, the walk became a climb. The 500-metre climb landed us on a plateau from where we could view the large lake, nestled in the natural mountain-made amphitheatre.

Wandering across the table top, we passed small ponds housing many a South Georgian pintail duck. Alongside us, skuas sat on nests, patiently waiting, and South Georgia pipits made their presence known in order to keep us well away from their nests. The gentoo colony thrived with quite a number of birds, all preparing for the arrival of new members.

As our departure time drew near, we stood there overlooking the *Greg Mortimer* anchored in the harbour and soaked in the peaceful but abundant place. And the snow continued to fall.

The winds neared 50 knots as we kept our fingers crossed for an afternoon landing at Fortuna Bay. While the conditions weren't ideal, with wind speeds fluctuating and snow turning into ice and sleet, our positivity was rewarded when it was announced we would be landing. Fur and elephant seal were again there to greet us, with one huge beachmaster elephant overlooking our landing site from the nearby rocks with great interest.

We weaved our way through the adults and pups on the beach and headed to the large mass of statuesque white-chested figures in the distance – the king penguin colony. The excitement of the group was palpable as we neared the rookery and the distinct sound of king penguins sounding off was piercing the ice-filled air. Approaching the colony, adults and chicks seemed to be in equal numbers and these birds strutted carelessly around like little humans. What did Shackleton think when he crossed this fiord on the way to his eventual salvation in Stromness?

The activity of such a highly populated rookery was astonishing, with new life, the struggle of existence and the presence of death and its scavengers all obvious for us to see. Our eyes have seldom been filled en masse like this, and the experience, the conditions, the exhilaration and the satisfaction of witnessing one of nature's great phenomena, the king penguin colony, were feelings that will stay with us forever.





# Cumberland East Bay | Grytviken

DAY 13 | Tuesday 28 November 2023

Position at 0512 on 28 Nov

Latitude: 53°18'4"S

Longitude: 036°23'9"W

Course: 270.2°

Speed: 1 kt

Wind Speed: SW 20 kts

Barometer: 1013

Air Temp: 3°C

As the *Greg Mortimer* hovered just beyond the shores of Grytviken, we awoke to beautiful bluebird skies and the wind whipping through the landscape. With winds gusting up to 65 knots, we were unable to get off the ship, so we ventured out looking for protection, which we found in Cumberland East Bay.

As we cruised into the bay, the ice became more abundant, creating a stunning mosaic of frozen sculptures. Under the watchful eye of Captain Maxim, our bridge team expertly navigated us through the frozen maze. The towering peaks of the surrounding mountains stood as sentinels as we neared the Nordenskiöld Glacier, with its brilliant blue hues contrasting against the stark white surroundings, reminding us of our place in this untamed world.

After learning about antarctic seals and 'super weaners', we enjoyed lunch and started our second approach into King Edward Cove. It was amazing how much the winds subsided from only hours before. Anxiously awaiting our biosecurity inspection, we passed with 100 per cent and were all welcomed onshore for our afternoon adventures in Grytviken.

Once a bustling whaling station, Grytviken was now frozen in time by the remnants of old factory buildings and the museum painted a poignant portrait of life in this remote outpost. The post office and gift shop were full of Expeditioners, excited to send notes and buy gifts from the faraway land. Beyond the historical remnants, the pristine waters surrounding the harbour teemed with marine life – a symphony of seals, penguins and seabirds. Many embarked on the ascent up the peaks behind Grytviken, following the rugged terrain to the panoramic views overlooking the cove.

In the cemetery, we walked among the weathered tombstones, each telling a tale of courage and exploration. Here, beneath the watchful eyes of the surrounding mountains, lay the final resting place of the legendary figure: Sir Ernest Shackleton. Standing before his grave, we took toasts of whiskey and paid our respects to the great explorer and his righthand man (buried to his left), Frank Wild, who had traversed these treacherous waters in their quests to conquer the Antarctic.

As the day drew to a close, our hearts were filled with gratitude for the opportunity to be part of this extraordinary adventure, connecting us with a spirit of expedition and sense of wonder. With a 4.30am start to a triple-header day, tomorrow is our last full day in South Georgia. Good night, good people... sweet dreams and see you at sunrise!







# Stromness | Salisbury Plains

DAY 14 | Wednesday 29 November 2023

Position at 0600 on 29 Nov

Latitude: 63°51'3" S

Longitude: 060°28'7" W

Course: 190

Speed: 10.7 knots

Wind Speed: E F2

Barometer: 1012

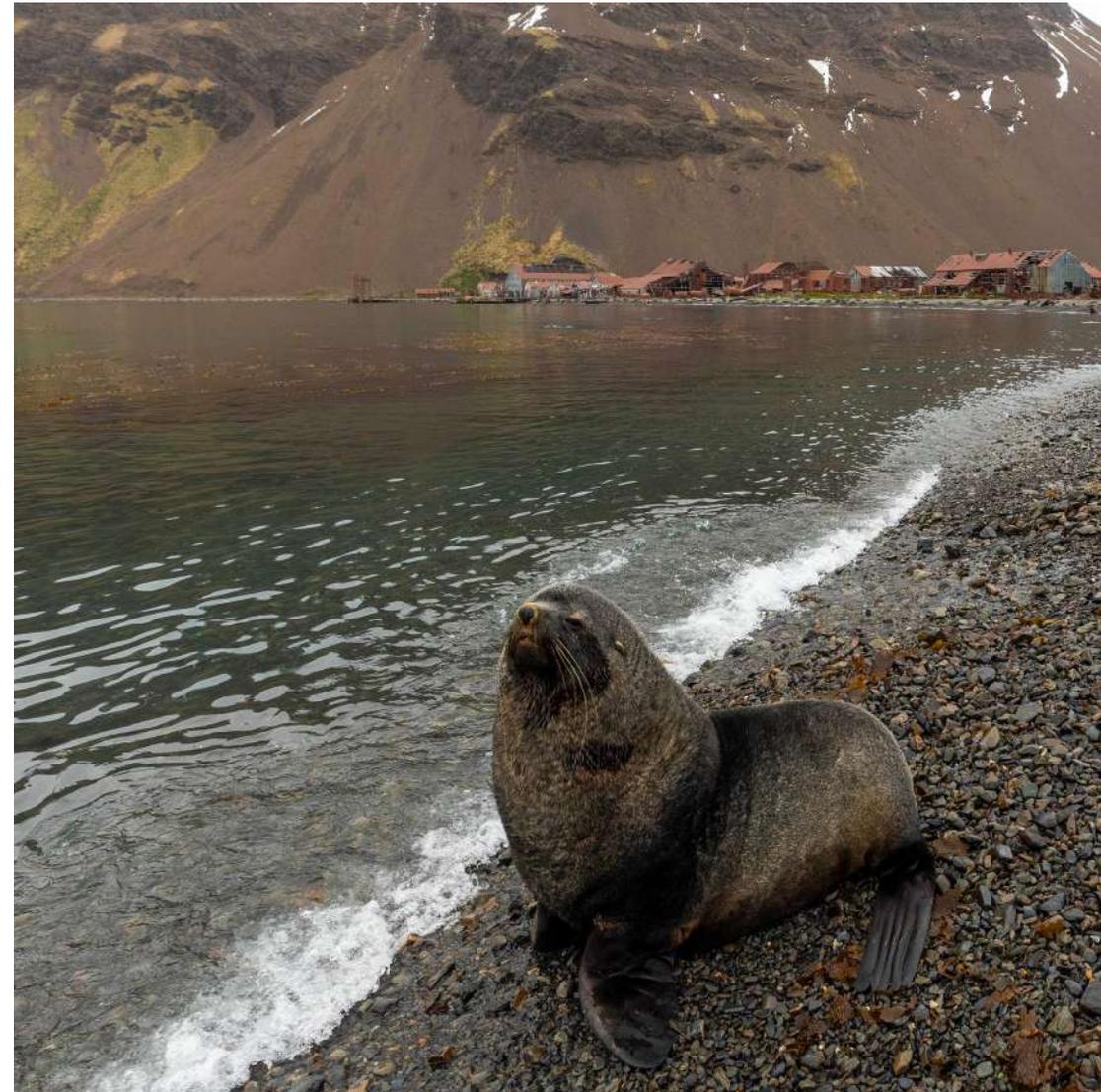
Air Temp: 0°C

Very early morning wake-up call today – who knew how bright it was at 4am? It was worth getting up to see the sights at Stromness. Nestled within the rugged landscape of South Georgia, Stromness held many treasures to explore. Winding through the feisty fur seals, the majestic king penguins, and the cute-as-a-button elephant seal weaners, our intrepid Expeditioners traced the historic footsteps of legendary explorer Ernest Shackleton to the waterfall. Captivated by the knowledge that Shackleton rappelled down the falls (ice at the time) in 1916, before finally finding help for his crew stranded at Point Wild, we felt fortunate to visit this historical site. Shackleton's journey adds a layer of historical significance to the landscape and the area serves as a living testament to the challenges faced by early Antarctic explorers. After carefully threading our way back through the seals and penguins, a Zodiac cruise to view the abandoned Stromness whaling station, including the manager's home where Shackleton, Crean, and Worsley finally found help, was in order. The scale of the former whaling station is tremendous, and the number of whales hunted for oil is mind-boggling. Now relatively safe from such practices, the whale population in the area has rebounded nicely.

As we excitedly discussed what we experienced in the early morning, the ship's captain moved us to Salisbury Plain, in the Bay of Isles. Under grey skies and a steady rain, we set out in Zodiacs, loading from the marina for the first time. Higher than expected winds forced a last-minute cancellation of the kayaking, but what a wild ride! Riding high on the swells we witnessed seals and penguins all around us, their playful antics mirrored in the dance of the waves. On the beach, who wouldn't be mesmerised by the huge king penguin breeding colony that seemed to snake endlessly up the hill. It is estimated there are 60,000–100,000 breeding pairs of penguins! Beaches were covered with elephant and fur seals and the air was alive with their cacophony and aroma. Salisbury Plain, and its raw beauty, was a breathtaking spectacle for our intrepid Expeditioners.

After drying off from the Salisbury Plain adventure, the ship's windows unveiled a wildlife bonanza. Seals and penguins, wandering and black-browed albatrosses, prions and petrels, and bubble-feeding whales gave us a show to remember as we sailed past Prion Island. Vickie gave an interesting talk on her time in South Georgia, with many fun anecdotes, leaving us wishing we could spend a season in such an amazing place.

With great sadness we leave South Georgia, but anticipation is high as we head over the seas to the Falkland Islands.





# At Sea

DAY 15 | Thursday 30 November 2023

Position at 0709 on 30 Nov

Latitude: 52°16'3" S

Longitude: 042°49'2" W

Course: 293°

Speed: 9.8 knots

Wind Speed: SW 30kts

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 3°C

For many the day really began with an excellent tour of the 'brains' of the ship - our super hi-tech and futuristic looking bridge. Our third officer Andrii Mezentsev, revealed the two most important aspects of the navigation technology in these conditions - namely the stabilisers, quickly followed by the espresso machine!

Tim, our Hurley-expert and resident historian, and talented guest-speaker Rachel, then gave us a review of the history of Antarctic exploration and the effect of colonialism, modernity and greed on Antarctica, and in particular how photography was such a game-changer, in that it enabled private funding of expeditions by newspaper and media outlets in exchange for the rights to those photos. Rachel recounted the story of Australia's most celebrated Antarctic explorer, Douglas Mawson, and particularly his tragic, but also epic survival tale of his 1911 expedition during which he lost his companions Ninnis and Mertz, but also managed to self-rescue and pull himself out of a crevasse and drag himself back to base 30 days later, only to find his ship had left for home just hours earlier.

After lunch, Steph, our multi-talented Expedition medic, with a degree in oceanography and a background in sailing, gave us a fascinating insight into the fast-moving surface and much slower-moving deep-sea oceanic currents. Steph deftly explained the influence of the Coriolis effect on the Hadley, Ferrel and polar atmospheric circulation cells, and the resulting effect on the great ocean gyres. We learned how the movement of these oceanic gyres in relation to continental landmasses and latitude changes the water temperature, density and salinity, and in turn drives nutrient redistribution and gas exchange, and in part explaining the rich productivity of the southern oceans that has been enthralling us on our voyage.

During recap our wonderful Assistant Expedition Leader, Isabelle, explained the concepts and science of water displacement and energy dissipation behind the design of the X-bow - and furthered our appreciation for the smoothness of movement through today's swell, the timing coinciding with a peak swell of around 4 metres. Our energetic and bubbly senior kayak guide, Liz, also explained the theme behind the naming of all the Zodiacs on the *Greg Mortimer* and in doing so we learned about the important role animals played in Antarctic expeditions and, of course, the affinity explorers had for these animals.

After dinner we gathered to watch an epic film about the Australian Bicentennial Antarctic Expedition, which catalogued the complexities and challenges involved in pioneering Antarctic expeditions, even in more modern times. Despite this, that expedition achieved the first ascent of the extremely remote Mount Minto in the Admiralty Mountains south of the Ross Sea. The successful first ascentionists included one of Aurora's historians Jonathan Chester, and was led by Aurora's founder Greg Mortimer. The film also gave us a background and insight into the founding philosophy of Aurora Expeditions.



# At Sea towards Falkland Islands/Malvinas

DAY 16 | Friday 1 December 20223

Position at 0720 on 1 Dec

Latitude: 51°56'4" S

Longitude: 049°54'8" W

Course: 270.8°

Speed: 13.6 knots

Wind Speed: NW 16.7 kts

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 3°C

"White rabbits!" A pinch and a punch. However, you welcome in a new month where you come from, few could be as lucky as us, as cabin drapes were opened to reveal the sparkling white caps of the Scotia Sea and squadrons of prions keeping pace.

Breakfast was a languid affair, with some choosing to sleep in, while others came late and relaxed into our second sea day since leaving South Georgia. Vicky gave a wonderful talk to introduce us to the natural wonders of the Falkland Islands, from Peale's dolphins to sea lions, nesting black-browed albatross and cormorants, rockhopper and Magellanic penguins. The Falklands is surely one of the most underrated wildlife oasis on the planet.

After lunch, our chief engineer, Dimitar, and chief electrician, Alexey, took time off from their busy schedule to lead us on a virtual engine room tour. What a privilege it was to be guided by Dimitar's deep knowledge of what goes on below decks. For some of us, it was a mysterious world where fuel is measured in metric tonnes, water in cubic metres and engines not in horsepower, but in kilowatts. Suffice it to say, the engineers among us had a field day and the Q&A session was a corker! Our fuel burn averages about 8 to 10 metric tonnes per day, to run generators that make the electricity that turns our two prop shafts and every system on board, like animals on Noah's Ark, comes in two – our lovely-named 'back to port' safety back-up.

From engine room to galley, only there was nothing virtual about the latter, as Steph, Sylvia and Isabelle led scores of Expeditioners through the stainless-steel canyons where head chef, Edgar, and head corporate chef, Shemek, tag-teamed to reveal the magic behind turning tonnes of stores into delicious meals, day after day, which sustain us on our adventures.

As the afternoon drew to a close, our dedicated photographers joined Adrian for an insider's roadmap to the mysteries of Photoshop: Just how can all those gigabytes be tracked and worked to reveal perfect diamonds of memory?

Many gathered in the Elephant Island Bar for canapes and cocktails in preparation for what has become a daily tradition – the evening recap/briefing. Our Expedition Leader Daniel regaled us with plans for tomorrow when we hope to arrive in Stanley, capital of the Falkland Islands. From morning walks above the white-sand beaches of Gypsy Cove, where many will have their first encounters with burrowing Magellanic penguins, to an afternoon exploring the cafes, shops and fantastic museum of downtown Stanley. Our days of discovery aren't over yet.



# Gypsy Cove | Stanley

DAY 17 | Saturday 2 December 2023

Position at 0600 on 2 Dec

Latitude: 51°89'6" S

Longitude: 057°42'7" W

Course: 278°

Speed: 8.8 knots

Wind Speed: SW 18 kts

Barometer: 1012

Air Temp: 3°C

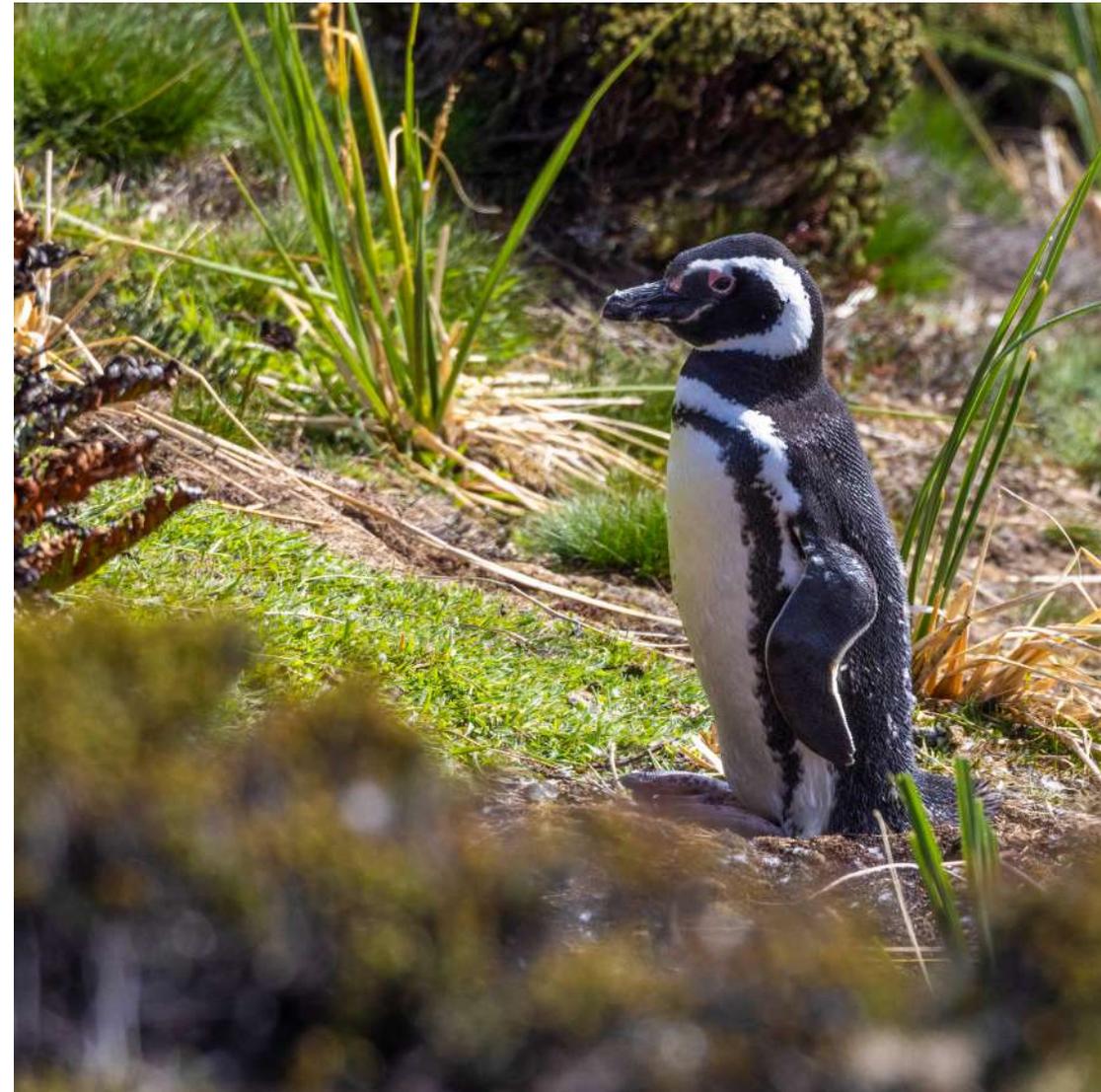
After two beautiful but somewhat swelly days at sea we finally arrived in Stanley, the capital city of the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas. The ship was granted an excellent spot at the pier and therefore we could go and explore in style, as we, for once, did not have to wear our waterproof outer layers and Muck Boots.

We spent the morning exploring Gypsy Cove, a beautiful wildlife site located just 6.5 kilometres from Stanley. It is part of the Cape Pembroke peninsula, which is a national nature reserve. The small bay, with its pristine white-sand beaches and crystal-clear turquoise waters, is sheltered from prevailing winds and is a paradise for nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts. It is home to a variety of birdlife, including the Falklands flightless steamer duck and the charming Magellanic penguins, also known as Jackass because of their braying sounds. During our morning walk, whether it was the loop walk or the longer walk, we had stunning views of the bay and got to meet a lot of the wonderful bird species along the way.

After spending a blissful morning in Gypsy Cove, we made our way to the vibrant town of Stanley. The town offers a delightful mix of quaint charm and historical significance. As we walked through the streets we were struck by the colourful buildings and the friendly faces of the locals. Most of us visited the Falkland Islands Museum, a must-visit destination in Stanley. Here, we could delve into the islands' fascinating history, from its early settlements to the infamous Falklands War and the impact it had on the islanders. Some of us visited Government House, and the Christ Church Cathedral. This charming Anglican Church, with its striking red roof and towering spire, is the southernmost Anglican cathedral in the world, and stands as a symbol of faith and perseverance.

Of course, you cannot visit the town of Stanley without some proper shopping and indulging yourself in traditional Falkland Islands cuisine. And so, we did. We enjoyed some excellent fish & chips in the local restaurants and had a fine pint of beer in one of the town pubs, before it was time to head back to the ship.

The whole day was truly an unforgettable experience. From the stunning wildlife encounters at Gypsy Cove to the rich history and warm hospitality of Stanley, a true hidden gem in the South Atlantic.







# West Point Island | Saunders Island

DAY 18 | Sunday 3 December 2023

Position at 0550 on 3 Dec

Latitude: 51°19'3"S

Longitude: 060°24'2"W

Course: 185°

Speed: 8 knots

Wind Speed: SW 25.5kts

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: 5°C

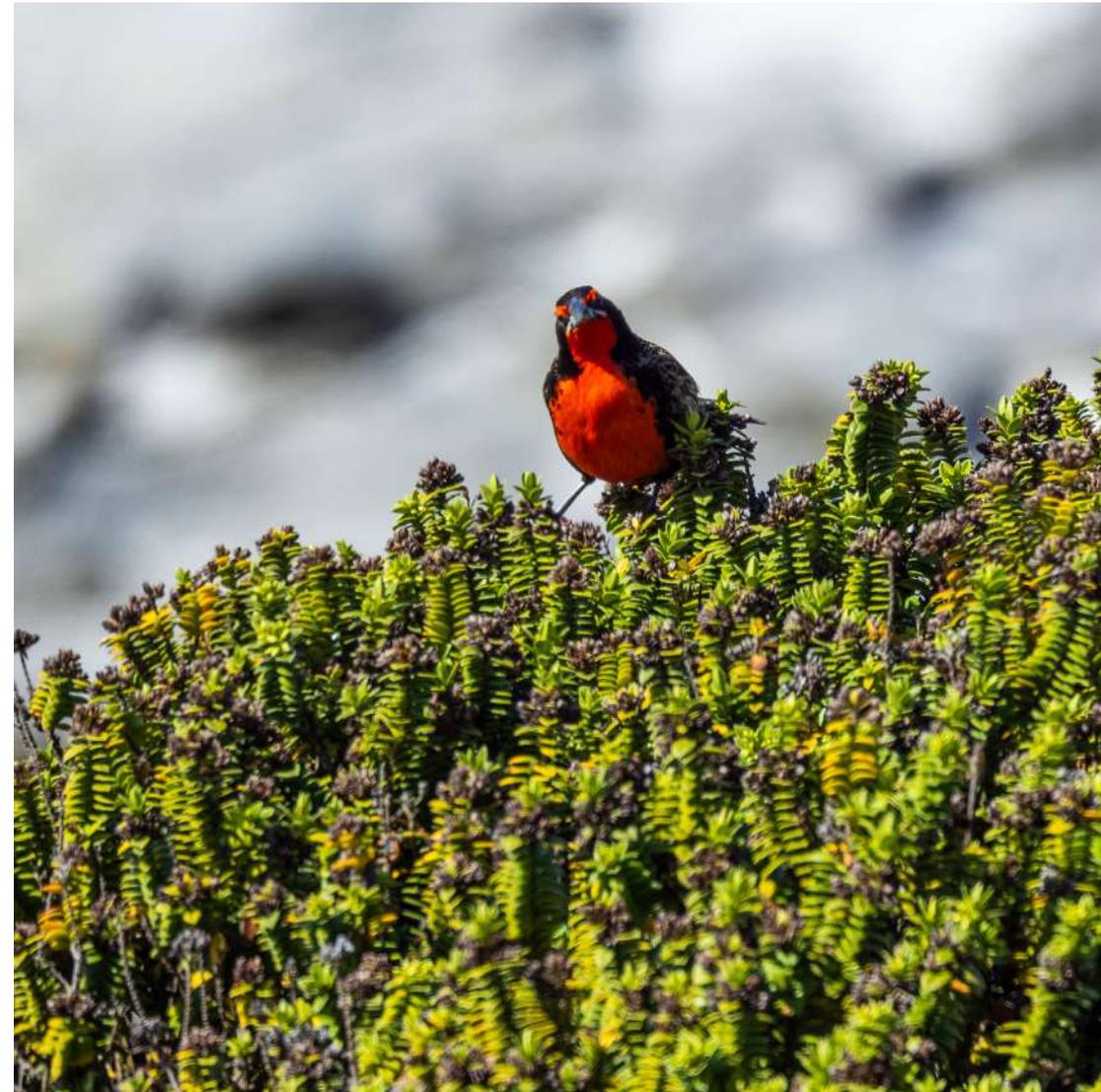
Cape Terrible, Misery Valley, Devil's Nose, Cliff Mountain, Lion Point – all place names on the small isle of West Point that we visited on day two of our Falklands stopover. It didn't look encouraging on the map, but luckily we put to anchor in Hope Bay! The objective was to visit the black-browed albatross colony – or was it to visit with Kicki and Theis, and get tea and cookies?

The winds and choppy ocean were no longer a problem for our seasoned group, as we made our way to shore, using the dock for purchase as we disembarked. One by one, or in small groups, we meandered clear across the island to visit the Albatrosses. On the way, we were treated with many more birds: turkey vultures were here and there, most particularly roosting on top of Kicki and Theis's home; there were Jonny rooks (also called striated caracara), long-tailed meadow larks (the ones with a red breast); dark-faced ground tyrants (makes you wonder how they got their name!); upland and kelp geese; and let's not forget the charismatic rockhopper penguins! Tea, coffee and delectable pastries were waiting for us, along with the hospitality of Kicki and Theis in their wonderful home.

In the afternoon, we were treated to another fantastic landing on Saunders Island. The local place names were not quite so dire, looking to describe people, colours and critters. Our objective was to put anchor down near the 'Neck' of the island, and walk the long, beautiful beach in search of wildlife and vistas. We were not disappointed! We were treated to king, Magellanic, rockhopper and gentoo penguins. This landing would not have been possible without the talented zodiac drivers, and the brave and skilled Zodiac spinners who kept the crafts afloat at shore!

While our minds may be drifting to what comes next, our hearts remain in the south, reflecting on the experiences, sights, and sensations we have been so lucky to have had. As we make our way on the final leg of this fantastical journey, ending where we started from, in Ushuaia, let us reflect on the words of the Yukon poet Robert Service:

There's the land (have you seen it?)  
It's the cussedest land that I know.  
From the big dizzy mountains that screen it  
To the deep, deathlike valleys below.  
Some say God was tired when He made it;  
Some say it's a fine land to shun;  
Maybe; but there's some as would trade it  
For no land on earth – and I'm one.







# At Sea

DAY 19 | Monday 04 December

Position at 0700 on 04 Dec

Latitude: 52°58'8" S

Longitude: 062°55'3" W

Course: 215°

Speed: 13.7 knots

Wind Speed: SW 13.2 kts

Barometer: 1017

Air Temp: 7°C

By the time you read this, fellow Expeditioners, you will have disembarked the *Greg Mortimer*. You will have re-acclimatised to the so-called real world. You will have aired your parka, dried off the damp from the falling snow. But we few, we precious few, no-one can take from us the memories of our special 21 days together in Antarctica, South Georgia and the Falklands. What wonderful memories we share!

Our last day was spent racing the storm, which we knew was about to hit Cape Horn. We enjoyed improvingly calm seas as we left behind the Falklands and took advantage of the good weather to make good time to Ushuaia. At 11.30pm we saw the pilot boat swing alongside and were able to have a restful sleep before our last breakfast on board.

Once again it had been a very full day. First up, we had our very necessary briefing for our colour-coded disembarkation. Hopefully, the airlines will not lose our bags.

Linda gave a morning talk as to the surprising confusion in the scientific community in the early 20th century for the solution to scurvy. To us the answer seems simple, a healthy diet, but many died before this was properly understood.

In the afternoon Vicki gave us a terrific explanation of the different types of albatrosses and a personal favourite, the black-browed albatross.

Today there were also more tours of the galley and we were able to meet with the head chef. We gained some understanding of how such a variety of excellent meals were produced.

At 6pm was the Captain's farewell. I think the Captain had a tear in his eye as he explained he was also leaving the ship in Ushuaia. He was very genuine in his gratitude to Daniel for wise counsel over the last three weeks in achieving smooth and safe landings at so many spectacular locations. Achieving a safe anchorage is always the first step to a successful onshore excursion. We heard also from the chief engineer and ship's doctor.

One of the highlights of the day was the opportunity to watch Adrian's film and slide show of the whole expedition. Together we relived our first day at Paradise Harbour, and were then overwhelmed by stunning image after image of the seals, penguins and other wildlife we have seen. These were greatly enjoyed judging by the smiles on the faces of Expedition members. The experience of travel is always enriched by the sharing of our experiences.



# Ushuaia

DAY 20 | Tuesday 5 December 2023

Position at 0700 on 05 Dec

Latitude: 54°48'6" S

Longitude: 068°17'9" W

Course: 97.6°

Speed: 0 knots

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



Wind Speed: SW 20kts

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 2°C



# Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Liz MacNeil, Lisa Deziel, Michael Gray (lead guide)

Number of Paddlers: 20

Total Paddle Outings: 10

Total Distance Paddled: 31 nm

Paddlers:	John Dowty	Fiona Slaven	Kyle Kitagawa
Keith Gaines	Sandy Stevens	Gavin Cheetham	Kathleen Stone
Hugh Baird	Alexa Barr	Jorge Perez-Cardona	Kevin North
Rachel Baird	Phyllis Simon	Jennifer McKay	
Lisa Griffiths	Rachel Simon	Emma Anderson	
Clare Dowty	Eng Joo Onn (EJ)	Denise Kitagawa	

## 19/11/23 Morning: Paddling trip to Melchior Island Group, 3.44 nm

Our first check-out paddle with our entire group began in SSE wind to 15 knots with all up to the task. They maintained solid control getting launched and keeping together for this first outing, and were rewarded for their efforts with their first penguin sightings (gentoo). As we found a pocket near land sheltered from the wind, we also were graced with a visit from a fur seal in the water with us and a large pair of seals (likely crabeaters) basking on land. Awed by the wildlife, we looped back around to a glacier face before heading downwind back to the ship for a short, but fun-acked first trip out.

## 18/11/23 Afternoon: Cuverville Island, 2.45 nm

Ten participated in the paddle, while half went to shore for a landing via Zodiac. Had absolutely bluebird skies and glass-calm conditions while paddling through brash and a maze of stationary ice. While cruising through the frozen margarita seascape, we were accompanied by porpoising gentoos, blue-eyed shags and skuas, for a spectacular outing that left everyone awestruck by the contrasting blue skies against calm waters and brilliant-white snow.

## 20/11/23 Morning: Paradise Harbour, 2.7 nm

A sun-filled day greeted the kayakers as they paddled past Brown Station and cruised by snow-covered rocks and glaciers along the shore. We had a great turnout for the paddle and everyone enjoyed the gorgeous conditions. It was exciting to watch a glacier calve from a safe distance as we meandered around the harbour, observing the many ice formations. Gentoo penguins porpoised all around and snowy sheathbills flew overhead, giving us quite a show.

## 20/11/23 Afternoon: Alvaro Cove, 4.16 nm

The sun continued to shine and winds were light in the afternoon as we arrived in Alvaro Cove. Both sides of the cove were steep and covered in ice with all sizes of ice formation along the shoreline. A small contingent of paddlers searched for wildlife as we completed a nice long paddle down the cove to a rock islet, which we quickly circumnavigated. Paddling through a nice patch of brash ice, we listened to the sounds of and played around in

the frozen margarita as we made our way back to the ship.

## 21/11/23 Morning: Cierva Cove, 2.7 nm

Cierva Cove greeted us with glassy, calm waters and blue skies. The amazing array of ice sculptures glistened in the bright sunshine with Base Primavera visible against the bright-white snow. Storm and Cape petrels gave us a show overhead and penguins porpoised all around us as we examined the ice formations. We circumnavigated a small island in the cove, watching the birds, and saw a sole crabeater seal lounging on the ice. Known for moss and lichen research at the base, we were able to observe some of the growth on the rocks, even with the snow. Icebergs calved from the glacier at the edge of the bay littered the landscape and provided a stunning landscape from the water.

## 21/11/23 Afternoon: Hydrurga Rocks, 1.8 nm

Today we saw chinstraps and gentoo co-habiting, Weddell seals, shags collecting seaweed for their nests, skuas and the most amazing ice sculptured by nature and all sorts of blue colouration. Photo trip. We also did some training, in which we worked on setting up kayak tows and shuttles via Zodiac.

## 22/11/23 Morning: Astrolabe, 5.1 nm

The weather was perfect for a morning paddle among the Dragon's Teeth on Astrolabe, partly cloudy and calm. We kayaked around the ice floes and growlers and had great fun paddling down the swelly channels, shooting through narrow slots. There was a bit of labyrinth paddling as we explored around the teeth, looking for wildlife and avoiding ice. Adventuring into a small cove, we discovered all three brushtail penguins (gentoo, Adélie and chinstrap) in one place. We also watched the Weddell and crabeater seals lounge on the ice as we paddled by. After plenty of photos were taken, we reluctantly left the cove and paddled among the amazing icebergs, white and blue, heading back to the ship.

## 22/11/23 Afternoon: Duroch Islands, 3 nm

We had a short, cold paddle in Duroch Islands, the *Greg Mortimer* exploring this area for the first time. Amazed by the size of the Bernardo O'Higgins Base, with its massive ship and satellite dish, we explored the ice floes and shoreline. It was a windy, cold day but the garden of icebergs around us was sparkling and amazing to paddle around, as was the brash ice with its constant chatter. The sudden noise of a plane from the base overhead was jarring but interesting as we all guessed where it was headed. There were plenty of chinstrap penguins to enjoy and photograph. The chinstraps and the blue-eyed shags were busy building nests as we watched. Kayakers enjoyed a Zodiac tow back to the ship after the wind picked up and the weather got cooler.

## 23/11/23 Afternoon: Elephant Island & Point Wild, 2.6 nm

The *Greg Mortimer*, escorted by fin whales, anchored near Elephant Island under sunny skies. Kayakers got out early and paddled around both sides of Point Wild. The clouds came in, but conditions were good and we were able to see the bust of Captain Luis Alberto Pardo, celebrating the rescue of the *Endurance* survivors by the Chilean ship, the *Yelcho*. It was an amazing place to paddle, both from a scenic and a historical point of view. Swells started to pick up but everyone handled the conditions well. After paddling the coast of Elephant Island

and visiting Point Wild, we paddled around gorgeous icebergs and through a raft of brash ice, arriving back at the ship in time for the kayakers to change, jump on a Zodiac, and go to land on Point Wild. Having weather conditions that allowed us to visit Point Wild by sea and land was a special treat and will be remembered by all.

### 26/11/23 Cooper Bay 3.0 nm

Following a gorgeous ship's cruise down Drygalski Fjord, the kayakers experienced an amazing paddle along the wildlife-rich beach in Cooper Bay. Fur and elephant seals, and gentoo and macaroni penguins were sighted. We watched skuas feeding on dead elephant seals and were awe-struck by the sheer number of animals covering the beach. Paddling in the bull kelp was interesting, as seals surfaced around us. Skuas and seals were curious about the kayakers and followed us as we paddled along the beach. Winds picked up, as they are apt to do in South Georgia, and the kayakers were picked up by several Zodiacs – some towing kayakers, others transporting the kayakers to the ship. Cooper Bay was an amazing introduction to the wildlife we would experience in South Georgia.





# Snowshoeing Log

Guides: Dan Phillips, Peter Wainwright, Sylvia Forest, Marc Delesalle

Number of Snowshoers: 20

Total Outings: 4

Distance: 6.1km

Snowshoers:	Alison Gaines	Michele Lucas	Lesley Pearce
Chris (Alan) Boyd	Jerry Kent	Philippa Lund	Arnie (Arnold) Wernick
Julie Braden	Emmalee Kent	David Lund	Lorrie Wernick
Tony (Anthony) Braden	Robyn Lock	Hew McConnell	
Eleanor Freeman	Ken Lock	Fi (Fiona) McConnell	
Jeffrey Freeman	Paul Lucas	Elaine Nimmo	

## Outing 1 | November 19, 2023 PM - Melchior Islands. Distance 1.4km

This was our first snowshoe outing, as the short bonus landing at Barrientos Island the evening before had been so windy we were not able to get to our preferred snowshoe landing site. The weather gods were with us today in the Melchiors, in sunny blue skies and a cool southerly breeze. We Zodiaced over to the north end of Omega Island in this gorgeous little archipelago of glacier-covered islands. Our first task was to get everyone fitted out with a pair of snowshoes and ski poles. We spent some time adjusting the gear and coaching some basic snowshoeing techniques and tips. Being glaciated we also introduced the concept of glacier travel and roping up, to mitigate the possibility of a crevasse fall. In four separate rope teams we began ascending towards a high point on the island; however, all too soon it was time to turn around and back track down our steps to the Zodiacs and rejoin all the other passengers.

It was a short, but highly valuable outing in a beautiful location that allowed us to gain a little bit of elevation, but most importantly got us trained up in the techniques for snowshoeing and roped glacier travel, and set us up for the rest of the trip in Antarctica.

## Outing 2 | November 19, 2023 PM – Cuverville Island. Distance: 1.2km

Arrived to magnificent sunshine, windless and glassy water, a deep, dark blue – almost black – with the density of cold, salty water below zero degrees. The team is pushed back from the preferable landing site as brash ice and bergs push onto the beach, making progress to the shore impossible. Our fearless leader quickly makes the call to approach landing beach B which is a longer Zodiac shuttle but free of ice and a welcoming rocky beach in the shallows beckons.

To get on to the snow and walk with the penguins roosting in their rookery, we are faced with a steep overhanging snow wall guarding the terrace and access to the rookery. So, it's out with the shovels and ice axes to cut a short staircase into the side of the hill, and with use of a rope for assistance, we can climb up onto the flats and wander around.

Geared up with shoes and poles then, it's off up the trail to cut the steep slope above to accommodate a line of blue and black lemmings following the Pied Piper up into the unknown. Our exploratory efforts are rewarded as the terrace above was home to a sizeable gentoo penguin rookery, and we pressed on further and further

up onto the upper slopes for a majestic panorama of ice, glaciers, snow, rock, the *Greg Mortimer*, Zodiacs and penguins with postcard-worthy sunlight and vistas. Looping back on the landing track to round out a wonderful day in the sun on Cuverville Island on the Antarctic Peninsula.

## Outing 3 | November 20, 2023 AM – Brown Bay/Paradise Harbour. Distance: 1.9km

This particular trip involved not only snowshoes, but ropes and harnesses as well. The area in the immediate vicinity of the station is not glaciated, but almost immediately, the snowshoers encountered glaciated terrain. We roped up into four rope teams, each lead by one of the alpine guides: Dan, Peter, Marco, and Syl. As is the best practice, we maintained a snug rope between each of us as we made our way up the steep hill and onto a lovely rocky peak, before heading in four different directions to see the amazing views. The rope is kept on the snug side between walkers in order to reduce the chance of falling into a crevasse. The job of the guide is to identify and avoid the crevasses; but in the unlikely event that a crevasse is hard to see, the snug rope ensures that a potential slip into one will not be very far!

It was nice that each rope team was able to explore independently of the others, as this allowed for a more intimate visit of the area, with more of a wilderness feel, rather than staying in the larger group. And the views were stunning! We were treated to a 360-degree view, offered by several high points along the trek. Our total distance was about three kilometres, with 150 metres of elevation gain. The day was glorious – actually very hot – with not a cloud in the sky, calm winds, and breathtaking scenery. The Almirante Brown station provided a bright-red contrast to the brilliant-white snow, and deep blue of the ocean and sky. It was indeed, a rewarding snowshoe trek for all.

## Outing 4 | November 22, 2023 AM - Astrolabe and the Dragon's Teeth. Distance: 1.6km

As we approached the island of Astrolabe, the dramatic snow-covered peaks rose abruptly from the grey, choppy ocean, and to our left, the Dragon's Teeth shot out of the sea, black and imposing. The landing crew secured the beach and created a friendly access for all. The alpine crew was on that first shuttle in order to scope out the options for the snowshoe gang. None of the alpinists had been here before, and we needed to assess the various slopes and potential routes. Dan and Marco prepared the snowshoe gear, and greeted and organised people as they arrived, while Pete and Syl did some exploration of the steep slopes, hoping to gain a saddle high up on the ridge above the beach. Highly motivated, we went quite high on the slope, but it became apparent it was too steep for the equipment we had. Indeed, we checked out a col adjacent to the slope, and it, too, was a bit too much.

But that didn't stop the intrepid snowshoers! Dan was able to get everyone to a remarkable high point on the slope, almost all the way to the col! Dan's ability to make a great trail, complete with switchbacks, made for a safe option to gain great views of the bay, with a great feeling of being in the alpine environment.

Looking at other options, the far end of the peninsula turned out to be another exceptional destination for the snowshoers. The slopes immediately adjacent to the sea were again too steep for travel, but we found a perfect bench a few hundred feet above the coastline, which offered good walking and great views. The view of the Dragon's Teeth from our turn-around point was exceptional. The round trip was just under 5 kilometres. All in all, it was a true highlight, and a real delight to explore a rarely visited spot.





# Bird and Mammal Sightings

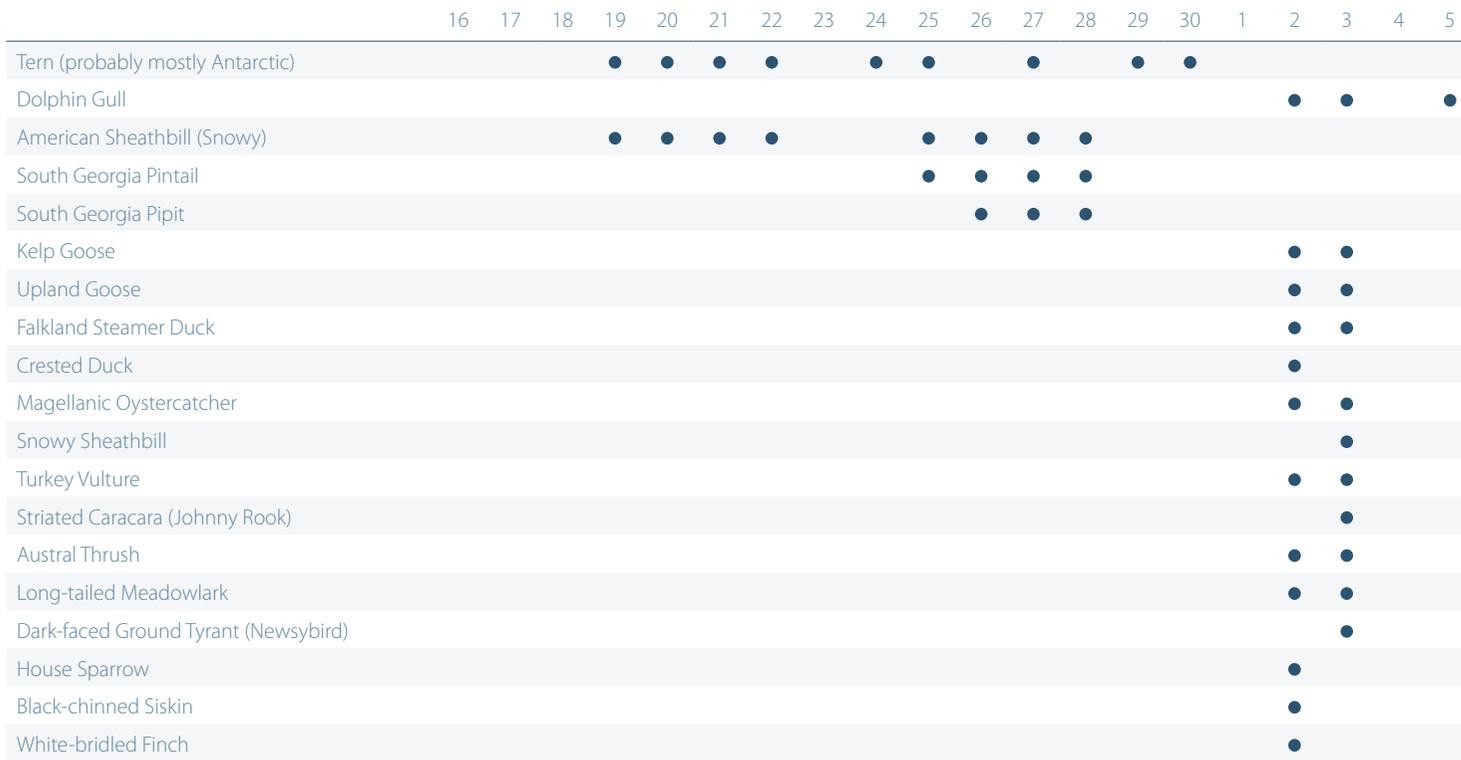
## Bird Species

November–December

	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	
Gentoo Penguin			●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●						●		
Chinstrap Penguin			●			●	●			●											
Adélie Penguin						●															
Macaroni Penguin										●									●		
Magellanic Penguin																●	●				
King Penguin										●	●	●	●								
Rockhopper Penguin (Southern)																			●		
Wandering Albatross	●							●	●				●	●							
Black-browed Albatross	●	●						●						●	●						
Grey-headed Albatross	●																				
Light-mantled Albatross	●	●						●	●				●	●	●						
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern and/or Southern)	●			●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●							
Antarctic Petrel						●															
Cape Petrel	●	●		●		●			●	●											
Snow Petrel				●	●	●				●		●									
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern)	●			●	●	●	●	●													
Blue Petrel	●	●	●																		
Prion sp. (probably mostly Antarctic)	●	●	●						●	●				●	●						
White-chinned Petrel	●	●					●	●													
Wilson's Storm-petrel	●		●	●		●	●	●	●	●				●							
Diving petrel sp.															●						
Imperial Cormorant (blue-eyed)			●	●		●													●		
Cormorant sp. (unidentified)																					●
Rock Shag																	●				
South Georgia Shag (Blue-eyed Shag)										●	●	●	●	●							
Chilean Skua																					●
Skua (Brown and/or South Polar)			●	●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●							
Kelp Gull				●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●

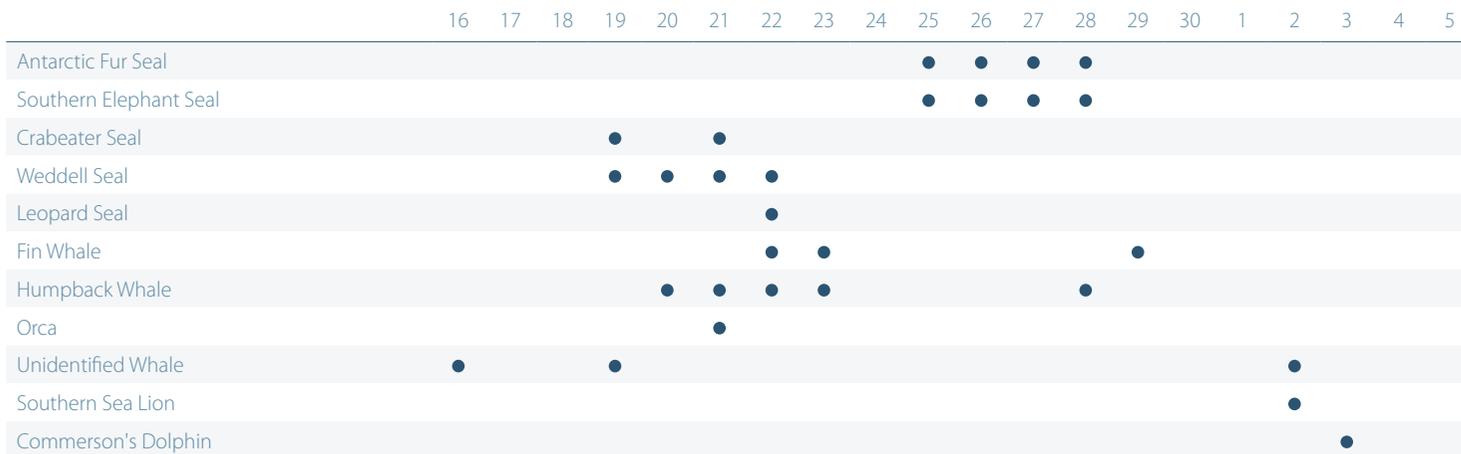
## Bird Species

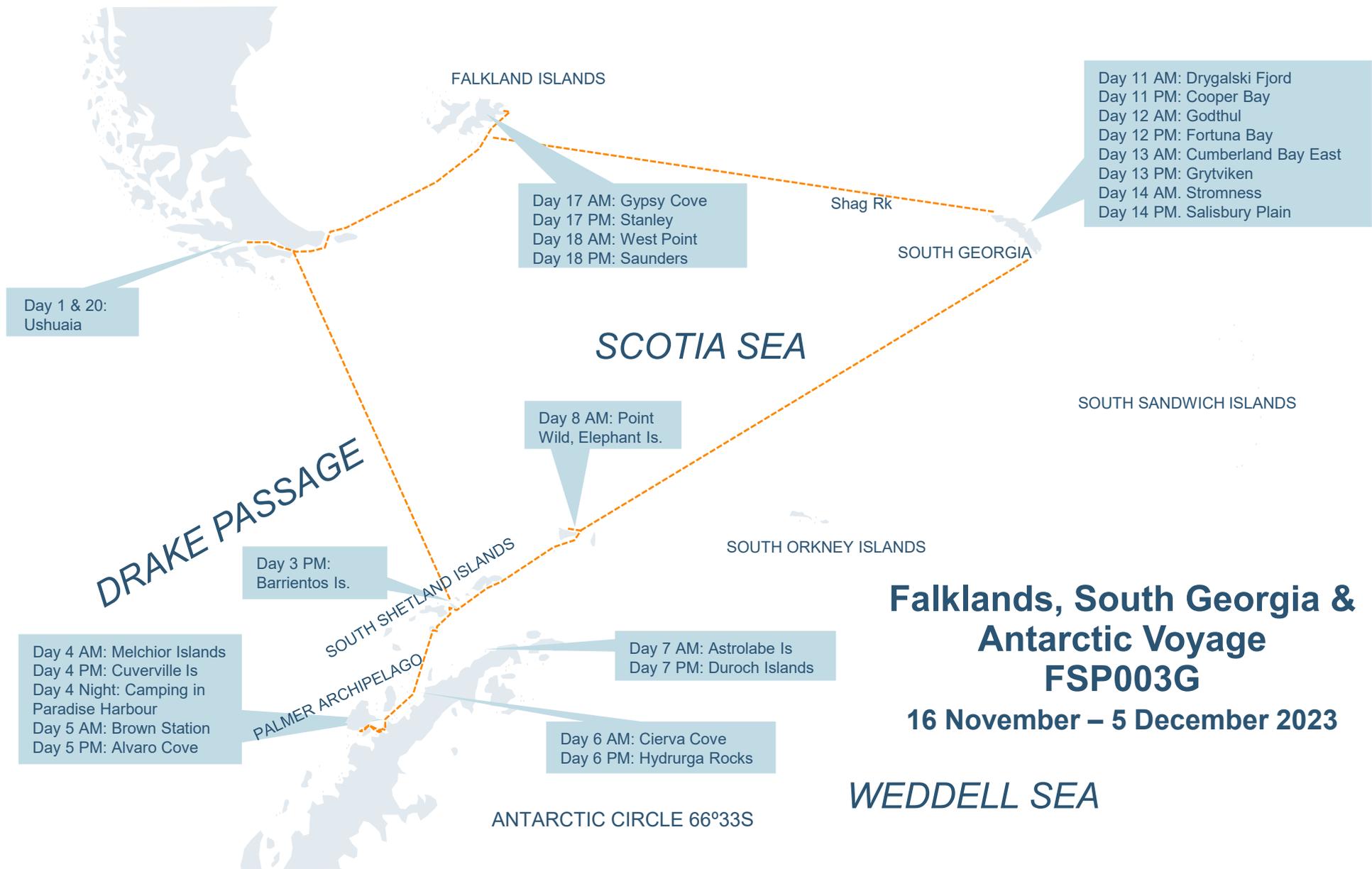
November–December



## Animal Species

November–December





# Falklands, South Georgia & Antarctic Voyage

## FSP003G

16 November – 5 December 2023

WEDDELL SEA



# Expeditioners:

Emma Anderson	Jeffrey Freeman	Kyle Kitagawa	Hew McConnell	Rachel Simon
Wendy Allsopp	Michael Fysh	Judy Klemperer	Terence Miller	Phyllis Simon
Pam Arnold	Keith Gaines	Leslie Klemperer	Marika Miller	Fiona Slaven
John Arnold	Alison Gaines	Dagmar Kriz	Helen Myers	Sandra Stevens
Ying Bai	Yi Gao	Xiaolu Lai	Elaine Nimmo	Kathleen Stone
Rachel Baird	Lisa Griffiths	Ruth Lane	Kevin North	Judith Stuart
Hugh Baird	John Hastings	Bruce Lane	Linda Oliver	Judith Tobery
Alexa Barr	Anne Hastings	Elizabeth Leinbach	Eng Joo Onn	Paul Tobery
Alan Boyd	Mingying He	Clarence Leinbach III	Lesley Pearce	Machiel van Eldik
Julie Braden	Beifang He	Dazhong Liang	Christopher Pearce	Albertus Verlinde
Antony Braden	Bonnie Hellman	Robyn Lock	Kerrie Pearson	Xiaomin Wang
Jim Cairns	Jeremy Hellman	Ken Lock	Ming Peng	Qiming Wang
Ann Cairns	Onno Hoes	Diane Lovett	Jorge Perez-Cardona	Xiaojing Wang
John Call	Ian Hollingdale	Michele Lucas	Peter Pickernell	Qi Wang
Gavin Cheetham	Pei Huang	Paul Lucas	Liz Ricketts	Arnold Wernick
Shiying Dang	Janine Hutchison	Jill Lumsdaine	Ken Ricketts	Lorrie Wernick
Barbara Davie	John Hutchison	Philippa Lund	Paul Rose	Raymond Wiblen
Des Davie	Isabella Hutchison	David Lund	Greg Rowe	Robert Willoughby
Carmen Dove	Jan Hyde	Yuwen Luo	Helen Rowe	Ru Yuan
Clare Dowty	Keith Hyde	Guoping Ma	Melinda Rowe	Fen Yuan
John Dowty	Yinhua Jiang	Lynette Mace	David Rowe	Yunfeng Zhou
Shuguang Feng	Emmalee Kent	Jennifer Mc Kay	David Rowland	Ji Xi Zhuang
Siew Ping Fong	Gerald Kent	Lindy McAllister	Barbara Shea	
Eleanor Freeman	Denise Kitagawa	Fiona McConnell	Xia Shen	



## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Daniel Stavert

Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Onboard Expedition Manager: Anne Oeyasaeter

Historian: Tim Griffiths

Marine Biologist / Citizen Science Coordinator: Vicky Inglis

Naturalist: Linda Steutel

Geologist: Melinda Pelzmajer

Mandarin Speaking Guide: Zhongyuan Chen

Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Michael Gray

Senior Sea Kayak Guide: Lisa Deziel

Sea Kayak Guide: Liz MacNeil

Lead Alpine Guide: Dan Phillips

Alpine Guide: Marc Delesalle

Alpine Guide: Peter Wainright

Alpine Guide: Sylvia Forest

Expedition Medic: Steph Kempton

Photography Guide: Adrian Wlodarczyk

Zodiac Manager: Sergei Andronov

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Reza Rusooly

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Maxim Makarovskiy

Chief Officer: Andrey Zakalashnyuk

Safety Officer: Sergeii Voina

Bosun: Francis Marvin Linga

Deck Cadet: Goncalo Alexandre Saraiva Aniceto Costa

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

Chief Engineer: Dimitar Vasilev

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: Hardik Dipakhai Rao

Able Seaman: Mark Christian Torero

Able Seaman: John Noble

## Photography thanks to:

Adrian Wlodarczyk

