

South Georgia & Antarctica Odyssey

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 22 December 2023 – 10 January 2024



Ushuaia

DAY 1 | Friday 22 December 2023

Position at 1600 on 22 Dec

Latitude: 54°48.6'S

Longitude: 068°18.1'W

Course: Alongside

Speed: Alongside

Wind Speed: 7 knots SW

Barometer: 992 hPa

Air Temp: 14°C

Today we embarked the *Sylvia Earle*, our lovely home for the next few weeks. We decided to leave Ushuaia the following morning, a bit of a delayed departure, to make the Drake Passage as comfortable as possible. In proper expedition fashion, plans sometimes change!

Once everyone was on board, it was time to go through our safety briefing and lifeboat drill. We then met our Expedition Leader, Mario, and the rest of the Expedition Team, all coming from a variety of backgrounds and with different specialties. Mario showed us the wind and wave forecast from Windy, our trusty weather site, and the vibrant colours showed us that it was probably best to stay in the shelter of the Ushuaia port a few more hours.

It will be exciting to head through the Beagle Channel tomorrow, enjoying the end of the South American continent before making our way even further south. Today, we have plenty of time to get to know the ship and all the fine amenities on board. The atmosphere is buzzing with excitement for our coming journey, and the spirit of adventure is alive. Just like the earlier explorers who ventured into the unknown, we will soon head off on our own expedition.

Once leaving the Beagle, it will be time to start crossing the infamous Drake Passage in the evening and we will continue crossing over the next couple days. We are hoping for smooth sailing, but it is nevertheless exciting to cross such a legendary body of water. What makes the Drake so dramatic? The strong Antarctic Circumpolar Current circles around the globe uninhibited, no land mass to slow it down. The heavy winds and currents funnel through this narrow passage between Tierra del Fuego and the Antarctic Peninsula, often causing enormous swells and waves.

Onboard we total 119 Expeditioners with nationalities representing Australia (59), Brazil (1), Canada (4), China (2), India (1), Ireland (2), New Zealand (3), Singapore (5), Switzerland (1), Thailand (1), UK (16), USA (24), along with 22 Expedition Team and 86 ship's crew from all over the world.



Beagle Channel and Drake Passage

DAY 2 | Saturday 23 December 2023

Position at 0700 on 23 Dec

Latitude: 54°53.255' S

Longitude: 067°52.130' W

Course: 107°

Speed: 11.7 knots

Wind Speed: 11 knots

Barometer: 1000 hPa

Air Temp: 4°C

As we sailed through the Beagle Channel and left the protection of South America, we started our journey South towards Antarctica. We had to baton down the hatches, and I even saw our head chef, Chris, securing the gingerbread houses, I wonder if the Christmas trees will be tied down? We got through all our mandatory briefings, biosecurity and fittings, and now we are ready for Antarctica!

Crossing the famous Drake Passage is quite the feat! From Cape Horn to South Shetland Islands, the Drake connects the waters of the Pacific Ocean in the west to the South Atlantic Ocean in the east and the Antarctic in the south. The passage, only 800 kilometres wide, is the shortest crossing from Antarctica to the other continents. The waters of the passage are known to be the roughest in all the world and are considered one of the most treacherous voyages a ship can make, as currents at its latitude meet no resistance from any landmass and in severe weather, waves can reach a height of over 10 metres. It is here where the cold, humid sub-polar climate starts changing into freezing, dry Antarctic climate.

The passage was named after Sir Francis Drake, the 16th-century English privateer. In 1577, Sir Francis Drake became the second man to circumnavigate the world, after Ferdinand Magellan's expedition, and he is said to have sighted the passage. However, the Spanish navigator, Francisco de Hoces, was the first European to sight the passage in 1525. That is why the Spanish Armada and some Latin-American natives call it *Mar de Hoces* (Sea of Hoces).

After lunch we had a great lecture from Kelsey on Shackleton and one from Vicky on seabirds. After a great afternoon of learning we met our Captain and his wonderful team! Excited to sail south and even more excited for Christmas. Let's hope Father Christmas can locate our ship to deliver presents and since we will be ever on the move, it might be hard for him to land on deck if we have big wave.



Drake Passage

DAY 3 | Sunday 24 December 2023

Position at 0700 on 24 Dec

Latitude: 59°21.5'S

Longitude: 059°59.8'W

Course: 141°

Speed: 11.7 knots

Wind Speed: 6 knots SW

Barometer: 986 hPa

Air Temp: 5°C

On and on rolled the waves yesterday as we sailed over the Drake Passage, with the ceaseless swells of the Southern Ocean that circle the globe, driven by the winds that carry albatrosses on their oceanwide wanderings. Soft, low cloud and steely grey water lifted for a while to allow the sun to reveal the blue water of the open ocean, before feathery flakes of snow started to drift over from our horizons.

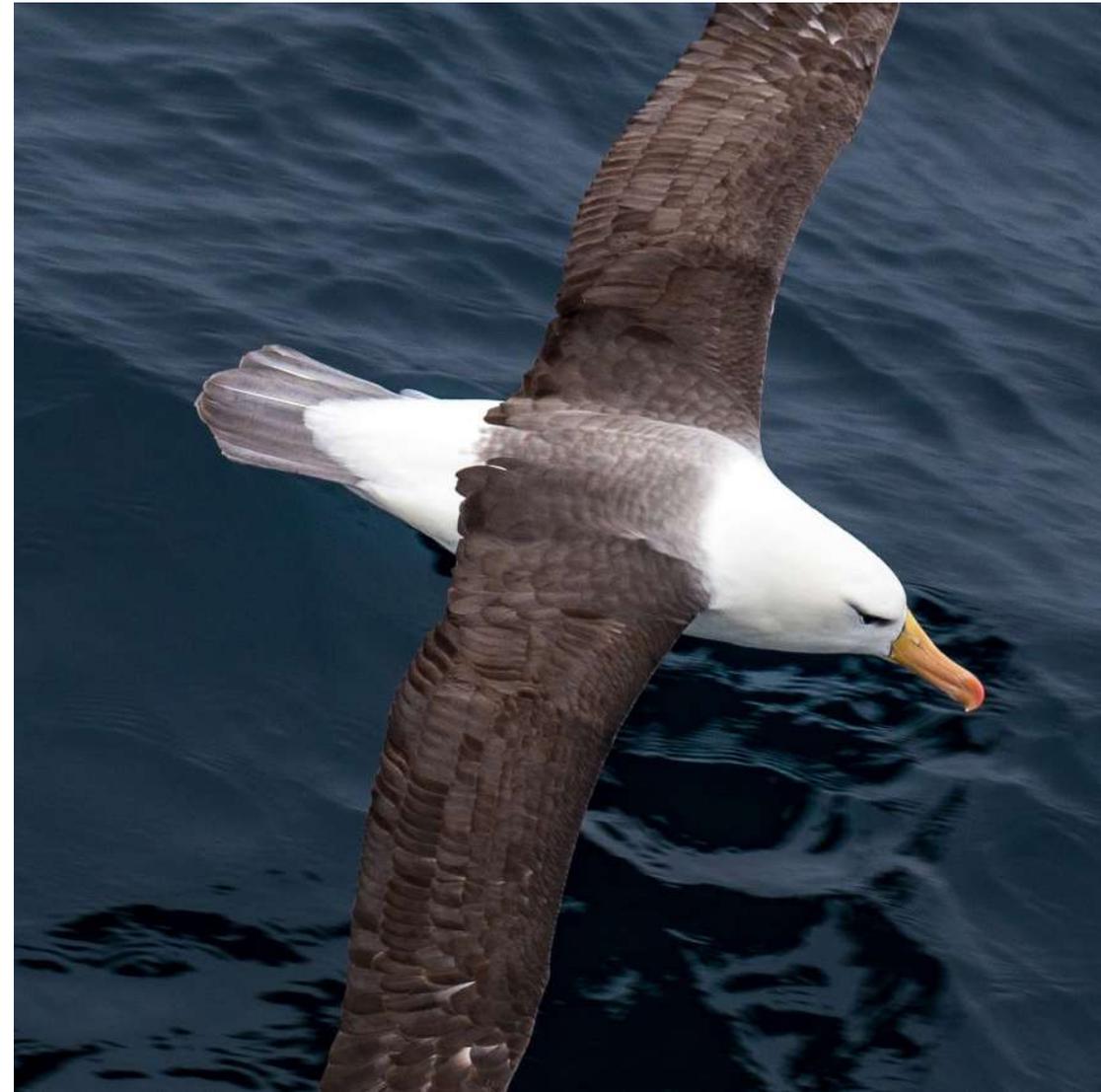
We have settled into a rhythm on board the ship as we prepare ourselves for arrival into Antarctica; enjoying good food and getting to know good company between various briefings and meetings, lectures, and lessons through the day, with added fun and festive games. The first iceberg of the voyage was spotted in the late afternoon (was that the prediction?) as we tucked into afternoon tea.

The sense of anticipation for that first sighting of the South Shetland Islands in the morning was fuelled by a recap dive into the history of the first sightings, and Mario's outline of our plan (A?) for the day ahead.

It's always worth remembering there are moments of looking at a place that are completely unrepeatable. Taking in landscapes of ice and rock, and noticing a particular play of the light, the exact feel of the wind, the sounds of birds calling, the sharp burst of breath as a whale blows. And here especially, Antarctica, where the air is purer, the water clearer, and the landscapes unlike anything we have ever seen before. One could live several lives and never again see this place quite like that again. Though the rock and ice and ocean remain the same, and could almost be considered eternal, they will never again recur in such a way. They exist on another timescale.

These first magical moments of ours in Antarctica, as we stepped onto the rock and ice after crossing the wild waters of the Drake Passage, those glimpses of seabirds, whales and icebergs that heralded our arrival to a new and strange land, are ours and ours alone, never again to be repeated for others.

So, make a toast to yourselves this festive evening, to the otherworldliness of our location, the strange sense of the surreal we feel being here at the end of the world. And think for a moment about those blue-tinged ice cubes in your glass, timeless glacial ice gathered from our first day's excursions, older even than the very idea of whisky.



Penguin Island, Turret Point

DAY 4 | Monday 25 December

Position at 0720 on 25 Dec

Latitude: 62°09.194' S

Longitude: 057°52.745' W

Course: 1271°

Speed: 6 knots

Wind Speed: 5 knots

Barometer: 983 hPa

Air Temp: 5°C

We woke up to an authentic Christmas morning. Expedition Leader, Mario, treated us to a nice wakeup call with the daily quote. Our original plan was to go to Turret Point, but as we have all learned, plans sometimes change. As soon as the scout team left the ship in the Zodiacs to check the conditions, they quickly realised that the swell and the size of the waves would make for a complicated first landing. For that reason, we switched to Plan B and were pleasantly surprised to land on Penguin Island. What an incredible place! An extinct volcano with an impressive crater and view; a chinstrap colony with a few nesting skuas; giant petrels gliding around in the wind.

It is quite rare to experience this kind of day in the Antarctic. We were able to go on a long walk to the top of an extinct volcano. Most places in the Antarctic are covered with snow and ice, making the landscape difficult to travel through. Even though the wind gusts were strong, some might say it was a great way to wake up and feel the fresh air after a couple days at sea in the Drake Passage.

After the morning excursion, we headed back to the ship to warm up and enjoy a delicious Christmas lunch. Even though it was tempting to sink into the comfort of a warm room, the nice afternoon weather was calling us. We quickly dressed up in our gear again and headed back out. Luckily, the wind had died down and the weather was clearing. We had a chance to try for Turret Point again, and we were not let down!

When we landed on shore, we had a stunning view of dozens of elephant seals living their best lives. They playfully jousted in the shallows as the waves crashed around them. It was incredible to witness their majestic demeanour, even as they slumbered peacefully on the beach, belching in a pile.

All in all, it was a beautiful first day of operations in the Antarctic. Once back on board, everyone rested before going to a Christmas-themed recap. Followed by a delicious five-course course dinner that our wonderful hospitality and chef team put together. Santa made an appearance, and his Penguin assistant was waddling around the dining room like a lost gentoo. A Christmas in Antarctica; one that we will always remember!











Devil Island, Vega Island, Antarctic Sound

DAY 5 | Tuesday 26 December

Position at 0740 on 26 Dec

Latitude: 63°47.419'S

Longitude: 057°18.823'W

Course: 136°

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: 2 knots

Barometer: 967 hPa

Air Temp: 4°C

As we all woke up after a wonderful holiday celebration and visit from Santa Claus, the horns of Devil Island were in view. What a daunting name for such a heavenly place. Weaving through beautiful icebergs and spotting a few Adélie groups on their own private floating islands was a treat.

As our first landing zone came closer, the sound of thousands of Adélie penguins and their chicks started to overcome the hum of the Zodiacs motors, and the rocks appeared to begin moving. Devil Island had become an Adélie paradise. As far as the eye could see, Adélies plumped up their young, scrambled up and down the cliffs, and negotiated their drama. Clans of them strolled along the beach and popped in and out of the water without warning and total effortlessness. Occasionally, an iceberg becoming grounded would break or roll, generating a loud, thunderous clap.

The tide was moving out fast so we only spent a short time here before the Expedition Team had to push us back out to deeper water to head to our next landing spot for the morning. We again weaved through magnificent icebergs in all shapes and sizes and shades of blue. Looking out to the horizon it was hard to tell where clouds ended, and glaciers began.

Gliding up to the landing on Vega Island we were greeted by an expansive glacier. Mario led the charge and laid out a walking path, making sure to avoid the streams of water, and keep us on solid ground. Looking down at the melt pattern caused by specs of dirt was fascinating. The sound of the water running down the glacier and spilling over the edge into the water, combined with the sunshine, truly made it a special way to wrap up the morning.

After a big morning we were able to enjoy a more relaxed afternoon cruising through the Antarctic Sound, spotting a few humpback whales, and enjoying another lecture from our favourite historian and wonderful storyteller, Kelsey. The day finished with a fabulous recap that included Adélie facts with Vicky, glaciology with Russell, photo sharing information from Pia, and some questions from the question box answered by Laura and the Expedition Team.





Charcot Bay, Curtiss Bay

DAY 6 | Wednesday 27 December

Position at 0740 on 27 Dec

Latitude: 63°49.913' S

Longitude: 059°30.392' W

Course: 047°

Speed: 6 knots

Wind Speed: 1.2 knots

Barometer: 968 hPa

Air Temp: 3.5°C

These are the words that echo through my mind, looking out on the calm, glassy water that greets us at Curtiss Bay this evening. The golden light of the midnight sun is blinding whenever it punctures through the soft layer of cloud that separates us from the vast blue sky beyond. Warmth radiates on our cheeks, and the evening is swallowed in a particular kind of silence – an Antarctic silence: one with the occasional low growl of ice calving, as glaciers liberate pieces of themselves to become icebergs.

It is strange to think that it was only this morning we awoke to the glaciated amphitheatre of Charcot Bay. Here, we saw ice in so many forms: in deep crevasses cascading down mountainsides, in sculptural icebergs that capture the imagination in their form, in the brash ice that crackles around our Zodiacs and kayaks. An exploration of these dramatic ice cliffs was rounded off by a visit from a pair of humpback whales, mother and calf, whom we were lucky to witness spending a few minutes at the surface.

Our ship transit to Curtiss Bay was spent by many in napping form, or otherwise at Pia's smartphone photography lecture. For those who missed it, fortunately, the landscape is so picturesque that it is hard to take ostensibly bad pictures, here.

After a lovely dinner, we take once more to the water for our evening excursion. Dwarfed in scale, we zip around in Zodiacs through the labyrinth of icebergs, admiring the tenuous arches and caves that are almost inviting, save for the eventual promise of collapse that keeps us at a safe distance. There are some glimpses of Weddell seals, as well as hungry chicks in an imperial (blue-eyed) shag rookery. This coastline offers endless exploration.

It is now 11.00pm. We have just returned from our improbable landing, astutely scouted by our E-Team leadership. It is not unlikely that we are the only people who have ever stepped foot on this outcropping of land. The Antarctic is full of improbabilities.





Mikkelsen Harbour

DAY 7 | Thursday 28 December

Position at 0740 on 28 Dec

Latitude: 63°54.760' S

Longitude: 060°46.988' W

Course: 012°

Speed: 5 knots

Wind Speed: 12 knots

Barometer: 980 hPa

Air Temp: 4°C

Another Antarctic day dawned (although the sun was already up!) to the south of Trinity Island, in Mario's immortal words, 'the most beautiful place in the world... this morning'. In this case it was beautiful in a calm but somewhat murky kind of way as we cruised into Mikkelsen Harbour – named somewhat confusingly after an intrepid Danish explorer who performed his deeds at the other end of the world, in Greenland.

After another fine breakfast, the morning operations swung into action. The main landing party headed off to a small island with a lot of penguins. The flagged path led through various mini-rookeries of gentoos. These endearing birds provided plenty of entertainment, with a combination of contented nest sitting, raucous squabbling, and waddling walks to the sea and back. Weddell seals lounged around, recovering no doubt from a hearty breakfast of fish. Of interest also was a small Argentinian refugio and a Chilean marker trig, indications perhaps of competing territorial claims in this part of the world. Meanwhile, the intrepid snorkellers bobbed around in the frigid waters, competing for style with the high-speed penguins zooming past them.

The kayakers and paddlers completed a circumnavigation of the island – possibly a world first and a place in the history books. The snowshoers headed off to a different spot, on Triad Island, where they found a veritable menagerie at the landing site: gentoo, Adélie, and chinstrap penguins along with Weddell, crabeater seals, blue-eyed shags and giant petrels. After a lap of the Island, they joined the team at the main landing site. All this was conducted in front of the towering, crumbling ice cliffs of Trinity Island, which periodically staged a noisy collapse into the sea.

After finishing up the landing operation, we were on to the crazy part of the morning, the Polar Plunge. All those tormented souls who decided they wanted to leap into the frigid Antarctic Ocean lined up in the mudroom in their best beachwear. Making their way down the stern steps with an impending sense of doom, there was a final warm (relatively speaking) step onto the Zodiac pontoon, a moment of pondering one's life choices and then a launch into the dark, 2-degrees-Celsius depths. Surprisingly when they came to the surface, everyone seemed very focused on the exit. A cheering crowd, dry towel and a shot of vodka seemed to revive the smiles. Everyone looked very awake, happy, and remarkably youthful.

After another wonderful lunch, the ship pointed north-east along the northern peninsula coast, bound for new adventures in South Georgia. And so, once again, back into the infamous Drake Passage. Hopefully, it proves as benign as the voyage south! Time will tell.







Polar Plunge

DAY 7 | Thursday 28 December













Day at Sea, sighting of A23a

DAY 8 | Friday 29 December

Position at 0800 on 29 Dec

Latitude: 61°59.571'S

Longitude: 053°46.861'W

Course: 068°

Speed: 13.9 knots

Wind Speed: 15.1 knots

Barometer: 993 hPa

Air Temp: 2°C

This morning we all awake with the gentle rocking from Neptune's cradle. We are well on our way towards the incredible South Georgia.

Mario gets us all out of our comfortable beds for breakfast followed by a briefing on South Georgia including a beautiful film by David Attenborough. The images of all the wildlife and landscapes leave a big impression for things to come.

However, there is also a serious message about biosecurity: how to protect South Georgia from invasive species and further outbreaks of avian flu. It is very important for us to make sure we are not responsible for bringing any seeds from home or any penguin poo from our Antarctic travels into South Georgia.

We are scheduled to start biosecurity after the briefing. But, a day on board the *Sylvia Earle* would not be complete without a change of plans to accommodate the alternative plan Mother Nature brings us!

Today's nature intervention is the early arrival of the A23a alongside the ship. Our captain changes course to give us a close-up view that seems to never end! We travel alongside the iceberg for around two hours without it tailing off. The very impressive iceberg is about 400 metres thick, and almost 4,000 square kilometres in area, about three times the size of New York City. It weighs in at almost 1 trillion tons - citing data from the European Space Agency (ESA).

After lunch biosecurity gets into full swing. We vacuum, scrub, and inspect every millimetre of our outdoor gear, removing all mud, stones, seeds and any other suspicious fluids or alien objects.

Leo's amazing lecture about his time as an Antarctic seal scientist wows us, with lots of videos and images alongside his stories of life on the ice sheets through 17 winters in Antarctica.

Cocktail time! Dinner time and, as we get further North, we will get some nighttime... just a glimpse, but darker than we have seen for a week from our southern adventures.

The day was rounded off with an excellent cinema night in the lecture theatre, accompanied by fresh salted popcorn, to watch a film about Shackleton's epic adventures

Perfect end to an exciting sea day.





Day at Sea

DAY 9 | Saturday 30 December

Position at 0730 on 30 Dec

Latitude: 59°00.503' S

Longitude: 045°39.063' W

Course: 060°

Speed: 12.8 knots

Wind Speed: 19.6 knots

Barometer: 992 hPa

Air Temp: 2°C

On this second-last day of the year, we were still at sea, steadfastly making our way towards the islands of South Georgia. As we enjoyed breakfast, the sun broke through the clouds and gifted us the sight of blue sky for a few precious moments, accompanied by several pintados that soared alongside the ship: a truly Antarctic morning on board the *Sylvia Earle*!

We spent the second-to-last day of the year by listening to a morning lecture by Andrea, who introduced polar psychology and discussed what is involved in selecting the people who get to work on the ice for extended periods of time. This was followed by a bird survey by Vicky, which gave us the welcome opportunity to venture outside, take in some fresh air and help science by counting and classifying the birds that could be found near the ship.

Vicky recorded our coordinates and the time, and will submit this data along with our results to a global database. Citizen Science is an important part of advancing our understanding of animal data and behaviour, and we were glad to be able to participate.

After buffet lunch, we had time to kick back on the ship – for some, this took the form of a coffee, a book, a game with fellow passengers or simply a snooze in our cabins. The immensely popular bridge tours gave us the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the command centre of our ship. In the afternoon, Russell gave us an entertaining presentation on plankton, a keystone species of the Southern Ocean – who knew plankton could look so cute?

Time passes quickly when brain and belly are fed well – and yet, we cannot wait for South Georgia to appear on the horizon! We finished the day with Mario giving us an overview of where the weather will be at tomorrow and the E-Team answering some operational questions, including what happens with waste on board the *Sylvia Earle*, ship statistics, and what is behind our trusty Zodiacs. We went to bed content and in anticipation of adventures to come.





Day at Sea, Drygalski Fjord

DAY 10 | Sunday 31 December

Position at 0836 on 31 Dec

Latitude: 55°52.695' S

Longitude: 038°17.628' W

Course: 053°

Speed: 12.5 knots

Wind Speed: 5.7 knots

Barometer: 982 hPa

Air Temp: 1°C

The ship was unusually quiet early this morning, as passengers and staff alike took the opportunity for a sleep in, in preparation for tonight's festivities, while others might have simply forgotten to switch to South Georgia time.

During our crossing throughout the day, we were blessed by magnificent scenery of icebergs of all shapes and sizes. We came across another giant tabular berg - D30A, which is 72 kilometres long and 20 kilometres wide. Another very impressive sight to see.

The birds were more frequent and higher in number, so we knew we were getting very close to our first sight of South Georgia. The excitement could be felt all around on board the *Sylvia Earle*.

In the morning, Mike gave us an interesting lecture on mountain climbing - the tallest peak in Antarctica, it was great to hear about the logistics involved in getting there – setting up camp and the amount of time you sometimes must stay put in different locations due to weather.

On the outside decks more wildlife was seen: penguins jumping through the water, fur seals swimming and even a couple of whales were spotted.

Later in the afternoon, we were entertained by Erin with trivia and an early recap to allow us to go on deck and appreciate the views of South Georgia as they came into view.

It was beautiful; snowing and getting slightly misty.

The ship entered and sailed through Drygalski Fjord in the late afternoon, which was named after the German leader of an Antarctic Expedition in the early 20th century. It is truly a natural wonder, a beautiful inlet with steep cliffs and magnificent blue glacier. We could not have chosen a better place to celebrate the new year.

After a very special New Year's Eve dinner everyone joined together accompanied by great hits in the Tektite Bar for some dancing, lots of laughs and bubbles to go around. At midnight we toasted the new year in style before slowly navigating back to our cabins for a few hours' sleep and a night's rest before our first day of activities in this beautiful part of the world.

Happy New Year and all the best for 2024!







Cooper Bay & Gold Harbour

DAY 11 | Monday 1 January

Position at 0730 on 1 Jan

Latitude: 54°47 'S

Longitude: 035°48 'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: 7 knots

Barometer: 975 hPa

Air Temp: 8°C

The day began with another lovely wakeup call from Mario and the quote of the day. Our first day of operations have begun in South Georgia and all are very excited after the welcome of the Drygalski Fjord.

Our first location for the morning is Cooper Bay, named after Robert Palliser Cooper, a lieutenant on James Cook's HMS *Resolution*. Another beautiful spot packed full of wildlife, notably macaroni penguins and fur seals! Fun fact, the early English explorers named this penguin. In the mid-18th century, a young man who wore flashy feathers in his hat was called a 'Macaroni'. This is also the origin for the words of the song 'Yankee Doodle' sung during the French and Indian War war to poke fun at the poorly dressed American colonists.

The Zodiac exploration was beautiful, so much wildlife, seals, penguins, and many birds to check out. A few penguins were seen trying to jump onto icebergs, not landing very high and some rebounding off, getting a few laughs from guests and the team who were observing. Back on board everyone enjoyed a lovely lunch together, talking all things they saw throughout their exploration in the morning.

Then back out again, everyone went for an afternoon in Gold Harbour. What a stunning afternoon it was! A black sand beach, teeming with wildlife, surrounded by glaciers. As we landed, we walked around the snorting, farting elephant weaners; we love weaners! South Georgia is where 54% of elephant seals mate. The male comes to shore between August and October, followed soon by females. The dominant male establishes a harem of most commonly up to 20 females. The female gives birth within 3 days of coming to shore and nurses for 3 weeks before mating and returning to sea, leaving the weaner pups. The weaners spend another 8-10 weeks ashore to moult and then head to sea themselves. Dispersed around the weaners were the 25,000 breeding pairs of king penguins, accompanied by gentoos, giant petrels, skuas and snowy sheathbills scavenging around. A definite assault on all the senses!

Back on board again for an evening with beverages in hand while the Expedition Team did their recap and Mario talked about upcoming plans for the following day. This was followed by a beautiful meal for dinner and then all retired to their cabins after a very exciting day and eager for another to follow.











Godthul, St Andrews Bay

DAY 12 | Tuesday 2 January

Position at 0712 on 2 Jan

Latitude: 54°17.270'S

Longitude: 036°17.444'W

Course: 234°

Speed: 5.8 knots

Wind Speed: 5.1 knots

Barometer: 994 hPa

Air Temp: 2°C

The moment we have all been waiting for finally came. The second day of our South Georgia adventure brought us to Godthul Bay – the first landing on the island. The 'Good Hollow' used to be a base for Norwegian sealers and whalers working in the area. Thankfully today, that is no longer the case. Instead, the stranded icebergs, tussock grass slopes and an absurd amount of fur seals delivered a very different experience of the place.

After the shore party scouted the area, everyone set off looking for their own piece of heaven: Zodiac teams by exploring the coastline and its vibrant wildlife; hikers by walking up the steep labyrinth of tussock grass to then get a great view of the bay; kayakers by immersing themselves in the world of playful fur seals and tens of thousands of sea angels floating among the kelp forests. Right below the ruins of the old whaling station one could easily spot a blond beauty – leucistic male fur seal basking in the sun.

After repositioning to St Andrews Bay for the afternoon, we were met with katabatic winds coming down Cook Glacier. That obviously did not stop us from getting out on the Zodiacs to witness and experience the madness of the place – half a million nesting king penguins (as far as the eye can see!), a mass of black and white with an accent of yellow, dotted with the brown fuzz of their offspring. While the fledging and mottling was in full swing for these birds, the beach was also buzzing with fur and elephant seals going about their business – the lucky ones might have even spotted a super-weaner! Occasional giant petrel and brown skua would yet remind us of fragility of life in these places, as they preyed on the less lucky individuals.

No doubt most of us would struggle to describe the place, but phrases like 'absolute overwhelm', 'swarm of life' and 'positively traumatizing' seem quite fitting.







Stromness, Grytviken

DAY 13 | Wednesday 3 January

Position at 0735 on 3 Jan

Latitude: 54°28.671'S

Longitude: 036°47.844'W

Course: 254°

Speed: 1.5 knots

Wind Speed: 13.7 knots

Barometer: 1008 hPa

Air Temp: 77°C

The day started out bright and early for 39 brave, adventurous souls as they shuttled to shore in Fortuna Bay. These hardy hikers were setting off to complete none other than the famous Shackleton Walk. From the final leg of Shackleton and his boys' epic survival story, they crash-landed on the south side of the island, and then needed to cross the rugged, mountainous interior to reach the whaling station at Stromness on the north side. After making it to the north coast they then had to go over one final col to reach safety. This is the leg of the journey our hikers enjoyed today! I imagine they were in slightly better condition than Ernie and his gang were after their struggles and hardships...

The rest of us made our way round to Stromness in comfort and ease on board. Once at anchor we dropped Zodiacs and had a lovely operation in prime conditions. As the hikers tramped away, some folks opted for a shorter walk up to the waterfall, while others simply enjoyed the animals along the beach and in the valley doing their things. Lastly, I must mention Leanne, who went out as the only kayaker and had an incredible time with kayak guide Erin! Once everyone was back on board, we set sail for Grytviken.

The afternoon in Grytviken was as equally amazing as the morning. The South Georgia representative came on board and did her biosecurity checks (which we passed with flying colours), then everyone set off for shore! A group quickly set out on another lovely walk up to the col above the station.

Non-hikers were divided between two landing sites. One group was sent over to Shackleton's grave, where historian Kelsey told stories, and the other half were at the museum side of Grytviken. Highlights there included a history tour around the old whaling station, sending postcards in the post office, purchasing little trinkets from the gift shop and, of course, ringing the old church bells!

Just before six o'clock we finished up on shore and headed to the ship for barbecue! We even brought a few special guests to join from the South Georgia U.K. Heritage Trust and the King Edward Point research station for the evening. The hotel staff did an amazing job preparing an absolute feast, which we all got to enjoy outside on deck in an absolutely stunning location. What. A. Day!









Salisbury Plain, Rosita Harbour

DAY 14 | Thursday 4 January

Position at 0652 on 4 Jan

Latitude: 53°59.522'S

Longitude: 037°07.221'W

Course: 283°

Speed: 2.2 knots

Wind Speed: 17.1 knots

Barometer: 1008 hPa

Air Temp: 6°C

We woke up to another calm day filled with sunshine—a great start to our last day in South Georgia. After breakfast, we loaded into the Zodiacs and set out to explore Salisbury Plain. Once again, the concentration of wildlife was astounding. Fur seals bathed and swam in the waves, while king penguins waddled around on shore with a purpose. The beach was crowded and vibrant: seal pups playing, penguin chicks maling, and giant petrels patrolling. The scene played out like a movie in all directions.

Luckily for us, our Zodiacs allowed us to cover a lot of ground and experience the true expanse of the place. Salisbury Plain has one of the largest king penguin colonies in the world, and it was evident as we coasted along the shore. We watched the penguins hurry out to the waves in large groups, diving into the water and surfing the swell.

In many places, we watched seals swirl around in the kelp forests and propel like rockets through the water. Sometimes they would suddenly porpoise out of the water and surprise us. Their speed is impressive!

After an incredible Zodiac exploration, we got back on board for lunch and a little bit of relaxation before heading out again. Meanwhile, the kayak team was off on their own adventure: after a picnic in the marina, they got into their boats and island-hopped all the way to where the *Sylvia Earle* was repositioning. The conditions were phenomenal and extremely rare, allowing them to explore rock formations and places that would not otherwise be possible due to heavy seas.

In the afternoon, the rest of us prepared for a landing and hike at Rosita Harbour. However, when the scout team went out to check the conditions, they unfortunately discovered mass mortality among fur seal pups. It was a shock to see, but sadly the reality in a place that is experiencing the consequences of avian influenza.

Instead of landing, we opted for a Zodiac exploration along the different coves and beaches in the area. We observed thousands of rowdy fur seals, lazy elephant seals, and a couple of king penguins resting in the sun.

It was a magical last outing in South Georgia, and many of us reflected on how we will miss the sounds of the seal songs echoing in the hills and, of course, we will miss watching them run up impressive slopes— who could have imagined how much seals love hiking?

In the evening, we sailed away from South Georgia and headed for a new destination: the Falkland Islands, otherwise known as Islas Malvinas!







Shag Rocks, Day at Sea

DAY 15 | Friday 5 January

Position at 0905 on 5 Jan

Latitude: 53°32.594' S

Longitude: x

Course: 281°

Speed: 10.8 knots

Wind Speed: 16.5 knots

Barometer: 1000 hPa

Air Temp: 6°C

The days waddled on by in South Georgia with an abundance of wildlife; from the macaroni penguins singing 'Yankee doodle' to the fur seals frolicking in the kelp, spectacular views led to dropping jaws and tears in eyes! Unfortunately, the time has come to start a new voyage, en route to Falkland Islands!

After navigating the wild seas for over 12 hours, we hear a whisper in the air, the fog is thick and breaking waves draw nearer! Alas, the echoes reveal themselves as none other than the cormorant, amassing in number as the shags glide effortlessly through the air, circling the vessel, leading us to their jagged fortress! Glimpses of the shag rocks are seen from afar and are no sooner left behind as we tell a story from another age.

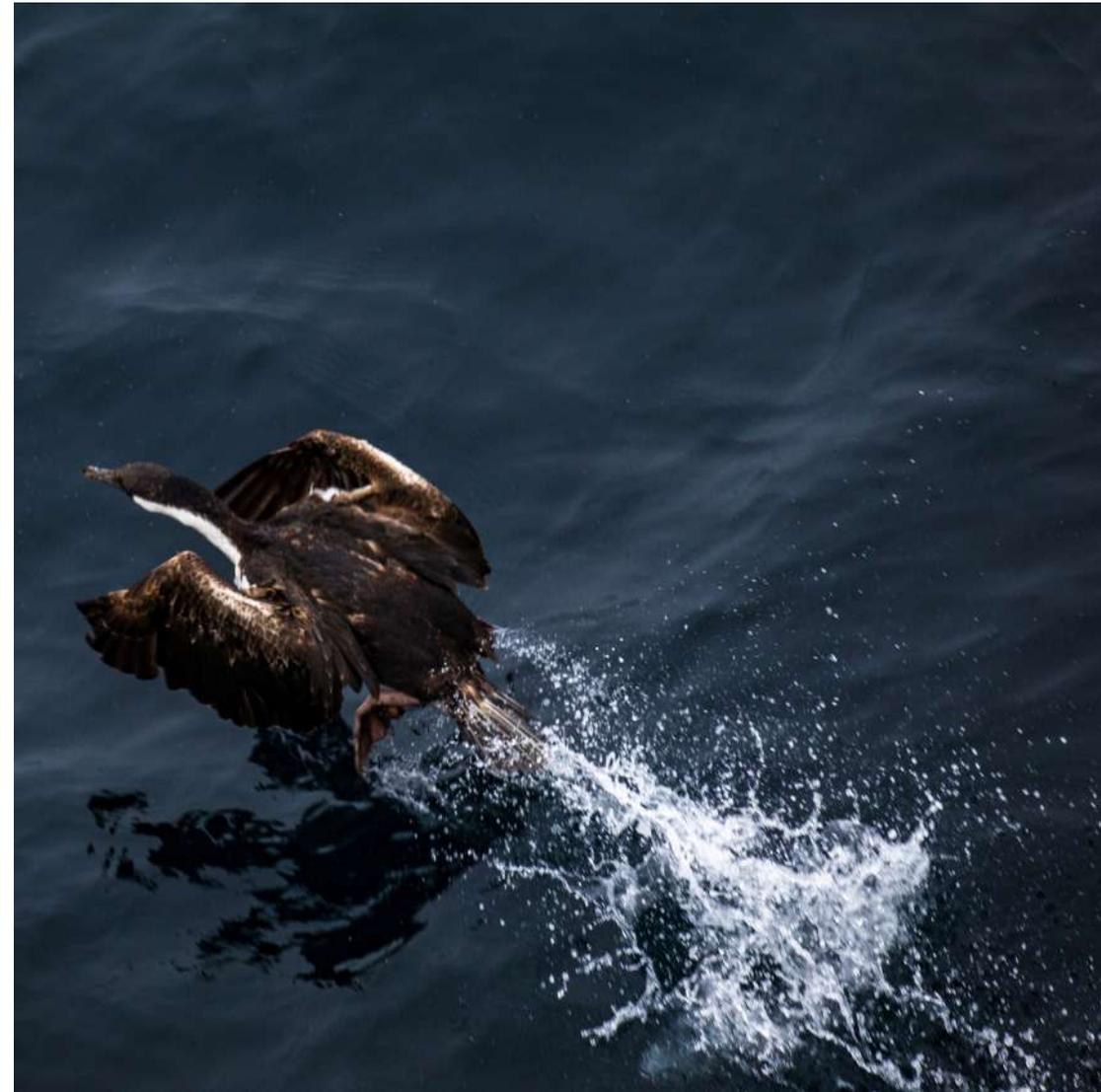
After lunch, guests enjoyed a lie down if they wished or enjoyed the ship's beautiful facilities. The afternoon came round and the final entries for our photo competition were collated by Pia and Tim.

Later in the afternoon, we raced back in time to the heroic age of explorers – those involved in the race to the South Pole – with Kelsey's lecture. Starting off we have Shackleton's Nimrod expedition from 1907–1909, leaving Shackleton so close to his goal but unable to continue and making a hasty retreat! Tensions are high as Shackleton's best man Scott has plans now to make his own attempt for science and glory to reach the pole! The plot thickens as another hero is made.

Roald Amundsen, with a single mind of heroism, plants the flag in record-breaking time with a return journey of 99 days! After reaching the pole over a whole month later, Scott is left in despair, as sickness and starvation tackle the explorers, all is lost, and the return journey is no longer an option.

Guests joined for another briefing and recap in the lecture theatre before heading to the dining room for another delicious meal.

After dinner, crowd favourite *Happy Feet* was played in the lecture theatre – stealing the hearts and bringing out the song in dance and all, who enjoyed relaxing on the couches with a beverage or two.



Day at Sea

DAY 16 | Saturday 6 January

Position at 0924 on 6 Jan

Latitude: 52°59.953' S

Longitude: 048°20.319' W

Course: 280°

Speed: 9.1 knots

Wind Speed: 23.6 knots

Barometer: 992 hPa

Air Temp: 8°C

It is the weekend, and we continue westbound in the northern reaches of the Scotia Sea. The grey monotony betrays a diverse and distinctive bathymetry beneath: our course puts us aloft an aquatic range called the North Scotia Ridge, then its adjoining, symmetric sea-valley, the Falkland Trough. Andrea's morning presentation gives us an illuminating, firsthand look at human experience on the far side of the white continent doing field work from New Zealand's Scott Base. Such operations quietly uphold the prime objective of the Antarctic Treaty — science — in stark contrast to these comfortable sojourns of modern tourism. Who would have guessed that, in the face of a ubiquitous absence in 'spontaneity', Andrea managed to smuggle down a pet rock!

Late morning, the soup outside begins to burn off. Perhaps a sign we are unofficially taking leave of the Antarctic? A huge fog bank often marks the boundary we have called the Convergence — where cold water sinks beneath warmer, and a mixing of surface temperatures often results in variable weather and inversion layers. That otherwise invisible, wandering bio-belt does indeed swerve north here to encompass South Georgia in its icy grip.

As we start to reflect on our time south, voting opened for the photo competition, and everyone got a first look (and many laughs) at all the entries. While the selections were rolling, many of us noticed that just outside the windows, we were again being accompanied by an assortment of curious seabirds, some conspicuous and novel to us. A bright and brisk E-Bird count on the top decks promptly followed.

After lunch, we continue to do our part for data collection in the form of another cloud survey. Then Vicky's afternoon natural history lecture prepared us for the unique features of our upcoming visit to the Falklands~Malvinas archipelago: from the puzzling, extinct warrah (wolf), to singing sei whales, and how Magellanic penguins haplessly endured sheep and landmines! Up next, a delightful guest lecture (and lively Q&A) with passenger Ronald about his expedition skiing 'the last degree' to the South Pole. Recaps by Anula and Sean explained how our bar is named after a famous aquanaut program and how the Falklands bedrock rifted all the way from Southern Africa!

The evening brought cerulean views to all horizons and a memorable sunset. Thanks to Tamsin for organising some hilarious hijinks with a nightcap game called 'How Big Is It?' complete with a dancing bonus round! One more sea day, then Stanley.



Day at Sea

DAY 17 | Sunday 7 January

Position at 0924 on 7 Jan

Latitude: 52°23.190'S

Longitude: 053°21.551'W

Course: 288°

Speed: 7.0 knots

Wind Speed: 20 knots

Barometer: 1008 hPa

Air Temp: 6°C

Another day at sea, everyone settling into this cosy ship of ours. People are sleeping in, with no wake-up call from Mario, they are finding their comfortable hangout spots, games are being played, people are enjoying a tea as they look out at the ocean swell and the many birds, which are seen diving and using the thermals to their advantage for flight. You can tell people are getting a little antsy to get moving again and onto shore, for the Falkland Islands getting very near! An overall feeling of excitement.

Today was filled with lots of knowledge, starting off with Mike, who talked about his life as an alpine guide and the many amazing feats he has achieved throughout his career. A very inspiring talk for all the guests to enjoy.

Next up was lunch, and then some unscheduled time for people to have a nap, read a book, roam the ship, or photograph birds, among other things. There has been a pretty much steady appearance of at least one but usually multiple wandering albatross soaring up and down the ship the last couple of days! This does not happen during every voyage, so it really is a treat to always have these giant birds with their 3- to 3.5-metre wingspan almost within arm's reach.

In the afternoon, our wonderful bar staff hosted a cocktail workshop in the lecture theatre – whipping up some yummy beverages and showcasing their marvellous skills. A few cocktails in hand for guests to enjoy at the end.

Later our wonderful naturalist, Leo, had everyone very curious, with his talk on mummified seals! Not something to miss and again, charming all who attended with his wonderful presentation, beautiful nature and, of course, passion for this part of the world and all things that live in it.

Evening had soon dawned on us, and the chatter grew as all gathered at the bar for a few more beverages, laughter, and good conversation. Another briefing and recap before everyone joined in the restaurant for a wonderful dinner as always!

After dinner, everyone who had not retired to their cabins for another good night of rest joined in the lecture theatre for the movie *Encounters at the End of the World*.



Stanley – Falkland Islands

DAY 18 | Monday 8 January

Position at 0711 on 8 Jan

Latitude: 51°41.235' S

Longitude: 057°50.979' W

Course: 277°

Speed: 0.1 knots

Wind Speed: 9 knots

Barometer: 1000 hPa

Air Temp: 10°C

The sleepy settlement of Stanley is the capital of the Falkland Islands~Islas Malvinas, a far-flung outpost of the United Kingdom surrounded by the surging swells of the Southern Ocean. The cluster of low, colourful buildings around the shore, often topped with a corrugated tin roof, around the shore, melting out into rolling heathland and craggy hills, is reminiscent of a blend the northern isles of Scotland and rural New Zealand. Maybe that's got something to do with all the sheep too?

Stanley was officially upgraded to city status for the late Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, despite a resident population of somewhere between a large village and a small town elsewhere in the world.

We arrived in or at the harbour, which once provided shelter for old-time sailing vessels making for Cape Horn on a rare day. Not just because we caught a bluebird day of sunshine and fair winds, but on a day where the number of visitors to these sparsely populated islands outnumbered the locals by almost two to one.

After a slightly chaotic start as the monstrous *Sapphire Princess* disgorged her many passengers alongside our landing pontoon into a fleet of coaches, minibuses, Land Rovers and Hiluxes, we were able to set off on our explorations into town and further afield.

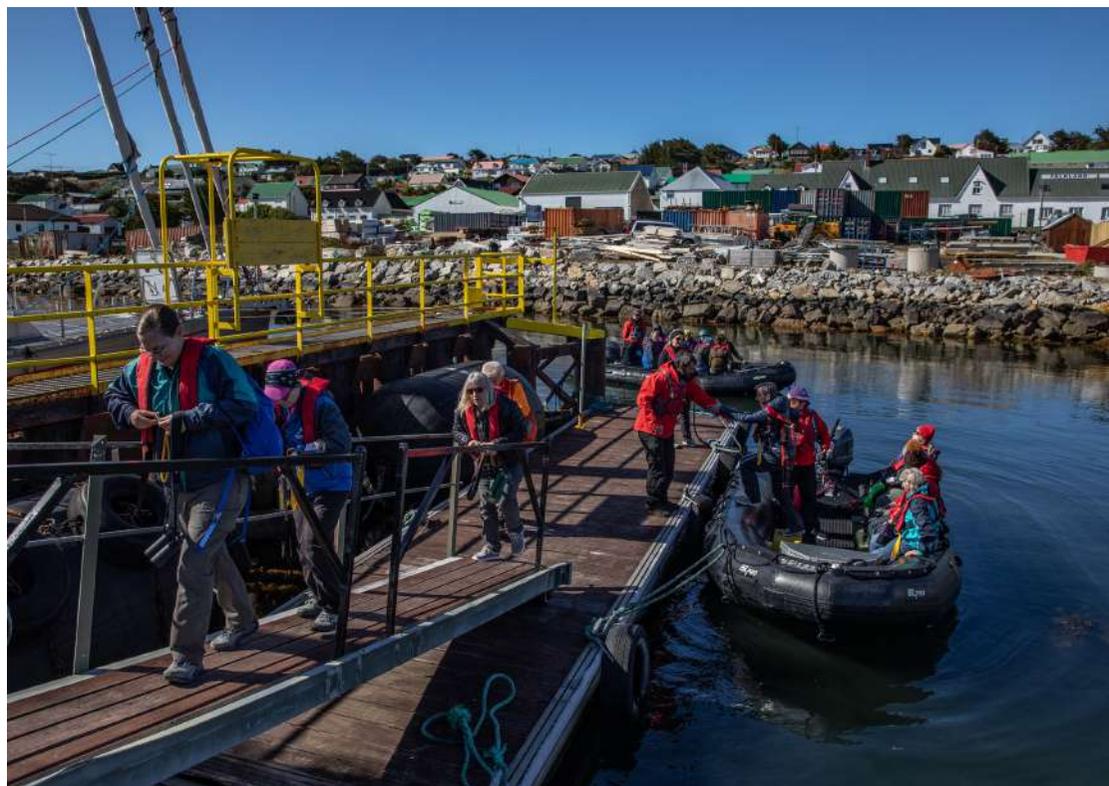
Gypsy Cove and the sweeping white sands of Yorke Bay lie just to the east of Stanley, lapped by crystal-blue water that looks almost tropical, and the snorkellers insist was a comfortable 12°C. The area was one of the last minefields on these islands to be cleared, with the challenges of operating in a dynamic sand dune ecosystem meaning it wasn't until 2020 that the islands were finally free of landmines.

The areas of exclusion became de-facto nature reserves, havens for Magellanic and gentoo penguins, which were not heavy enough to detonate mines, and refuges for native plants, which were protected from the ravages of sheep grazing. The waters of the bay are also superb for wildlife, as the kayakers were treated to a spectacular encounter with a pod of Peale's dolphins, and the snorkellers braved the presence of ferociously predatory sea angels (though not the grumpy bull sea lion they had been cautioned of by the Port Authority).

The wildest of all wildlife in Stanley, though, is usually found in the Victory Bar, a traditional British-style pub, and one of the most famous drinking establishments anywhere in the Southern Ocean.







Drake Passage, Day at Sea

DAY 19 | Tuesday 9 January

Position at 0800 on 9 Jan

Latitude: 53°56.209' S

Longitude: 061°34.674' W

Course: 226°

Speed: 14.3 knots

Wind Speed: 4 knots

Barometer: 992 hPa

Air Temp: 11°C

Guests woke at their own leisure as the ship made way from the Falklands across the Drake – proving itself to be a 'wild place' as it is often referred to. The weather has been lovely throughout the voyage, which has been very lucky, and only just now has the wind picked up. The stronger winds are making it a perfect playground for the birds to soar and fly around, displaying their abilities to all watching from the ship.

At 10am, Andrea presented another fascinating talk on Ushuaia, 'Not as Boring as you think'; as always very informative but managing to bring in some good humour as well for all.

Shortly after, Asha took one guest per travelling party through a disembarkation briefing to ensure all on board were across the process and what was to happen the following morning in Ushuaia.

All joining back in the Gentoo Restaurant for everyone's last delicious lunch onboard the *Sylvia Earle*. Everyone then enjoyed a relaxing afternoon and maybe a cheeky nap if they wished.

Our wonderful historian back again with yet another very interesting talk, this time informing all on the Belgica Expedition. A fantastic historical story, which, as always, Kelsey brings to life. The afternoon rolled by along with the swell and guests joined for a casual chat with some of the Expedition Team, and with Asha for a chat about future trips they may be interested in. This rolled into Captain's farewell drinks – Captain Soto delivering a beautiful goodbye speech, a few beverages to go round and, of course, with Mario talking about tomorrow's plans.

The last dinner commenced in the Gentoo. Our wonderful Hotel Director, Singh, inviting all his crew on along with the macarena song in the background, for a big round of applause for their hard work throughout the voyage. A few stayed up for last-night drinks and mingling before retiring to their cabins.

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



Paddling Log

Paddle Guides: Tim Vanhoutteghem and Matthew Barnes

Number of Paddlers: 8

Total Paddle Outings: 4

Total Distance Paddled: 10 km

Paddlers:	David Hicks	Betty Zhang
Suzanne Finney	Leslie Anne Myerscough	Willy Chang
Donna Hicks	Micah Myerscough	Mimi Srfuengfung

26/12/2023, AM: Devil Island. Distance paddled: 1.5 km

Adjacent to the conspicuous brown cliffs of Cape Well Met, the north shore of in front of this two-horned island had flat water and protection from the light winds. A full moon produced unusually big tides (2 metres) giving us shallow water and a little current. But all the grounded bergy bits, icebergs, rocky islets, and hidden boulders were no problem for our manoeuvrable, flat-bottomed inflatables. Heaps of Adélie penguins were swimming, chilling on ice and rocks, or patrolling the beach; the rest, thousands upon thousands, were up on the rookery in clear view. Skua and antarctic terns were also about.

27/12/2023, AM: Lindblad (Charcot Bay) Cove. Distance paddled: 3 km

We launched more confidently from the marina of the ship, smack middle of a glacially enclosed embayment, with no hospitable shoreline to be found. A gentle half-metre swell rolled underneath us, but provided no challenges. Before we could start towards the nearest glacial tongue, a humpback whale approached from the north, sounded and came up again on our other side, heading deeper into the cove. We paddled along and through strings of brash ice until we found some great icebergs, then approached within a safe distance of the glacial cliffs. The brilliant blues and our bright-orange boats and suits must have stood out like highlighting on a black-and-white page. Pictures from the excursion will be epic. Got a look at a few solo birds: a gentoo, terns, and imperial shag. On our Zodiac transport back, we were treated to two more smallish humpbacks (quite close!) milling at the stern of the ship.

27/12/2023, PM: Curtiss Bay. Distance paddled: 4 km

With timing constraints, a post-dinner, exploratory operation was arranged in a largely unfamiliar, but spectacular area. Afternoon sunshine gave way to slightly cloudy dusk as we launched directly from the marina and paddled abeam the *Sylvia Earle*, and out towards another glacially lined cliffside. Tim cleared us a path through the brash with the Zodiac, and we cruised by probably the best icebergs yet. At the base of an exposed, rocky outcrop, with just enough swell to make it interesting, we were able to approach and navigate through a 'rock garden' of islets and ice, get directly beside a shag colony, watch terns dog-fighting kelp gulls, and get a close-up view of a sleeping Weddell seal! The prominent cliffside displayed some oxidization and lichen. We were then zoomed over to a tiny point for our continental landing, which included a short post-hole climb to an overlook, with one sentinel each of gentoo and shag.

28/12/2023, AM: Mikkelsen Harbour. Distance paddled: 1.5 km

The whole team was back together for another staggered, Zodiac-assisted launch. We put in alongside the other Zodiacs and kayakers, right off D'Hainaut Island. We observed more steep tidewater glaciers in the distance as we approached the shallows near the landing. Another ideal spot for inflatables, unworried by the submerged rocks and bars. We weaved through outcrops and small bergy bits, then circled to the leeside. Close-up views of the Argentine hut, gentoos nesting and commuting, snowy sheathbills, and a few other random birds such as a Wilson's storm petrel. The gentoos also gave us many close looks from the water, approaching much closer than the Adélies had. After completing our mini-circumnavigation, we were picked up by Tim, had some hot cocoa, swapped into Muck Boots, and headed over to explore the island by foot.





Kayaking Log

Kayak Guides: Russell Henry, Anula Jochym, and Erin Scott

Number of Kayakers: 19

Total Paddle Outings: 10

Total Distance Paddled: 57.5 km

Kayakers:	Hilary Lewis	Jennifer Wells	Simon Ray
Elizabeth Neumeier	Willow Goldie	Erica Munro Ferguson	Laurina McLoughlin
Bethany Ericson	Travis Ryan	Ronald Ferguson	Michael Hynes
Brian McMahon	Jacinta Mallam	Leanne Cummings	Darren Saumur
Graham Long	Craig Johnston	Bronwyn Ray	Kelly Barrowcliffe

25/12/2023, PM: Turret Point. Distance paddled: 4km

One can honestly say the wind gods did a pretty good job at trying to stop us from paddling! They actually did well enough to split our group in two, where only half of us managed to get out kayaking. After enduring several kayaks being flooded, flipped, emptied, flooded, and flipped again (thankfully without people in them at that point!) the group A finally got out into the lee of King George Island, where conditions were calm...ish, enough at least to finally get into the boats! After a bit of directional confusion and running a few circles here and there in order to figure out the inner works of the rudder, off we went for, what turned out to be, an epic paddle. Penguins and elephant seals in abundance, funky rock formations and a fantastic icy landscape wiped off the initial struggles of the day.

26/12/2023, AM: Devil Island. Distance paddled: 6 km

A post-Christmas paddle! Calm winds greeted us this morning so we set off on a paddle around the rugged, rather desolate Devil Island. We had a big gang out and it turned out to be a beautiful outing. We circumnavigated the island, poked through some rather shallow (sometimes too shallow) rocky outcroppings, and watched thousands of Adélies do their thing both on shore and in the water. Once back on the ship, a small crew swapped their booties for Muck Boots and were zipped over to Mario's impromptu landing on Vega Island on a glacier!

27/12/2023, AM: Lindblad Cove. Distance paddled: 5.5 km

Today we awoke to a different view: one of the western aspect of the Antarctic Peninsula! Dramatically articulated with glaciated cliffs and bays full of brash ice, we headed out in our kayaks to explore Charcot Bay. We started in Lindblad Cove, paddling due northeast around Auster Point and into the next cove. The light was brilliant: the sun shone on us all morning, and we were able to see a wide array of whites, blues, and purples in the icebergs around us – not to mention some creative shapes. We paddled along this amphitheatre of ice, listening to the sounds of brash ice crackling in the sea around us, and occasionally bashed through it with our boats. There were some persistent antarctic terns trailing us for sustained parts of our paddle, and the odd gentoo penguin porpoising around us. This morning, however, seemed notable for its relative solitude, away from the cacophony

of life that had followed us on previous outings. Instead, we could focus on the sublime beauty of the ice that surrounded us in so many forms. Our journey back to the ship was punctuated by a mother and calf humpback whale, which were in no hurry to avoid us!

28/12/2023, AM: Mikkelsen Harbour. Distance paddled: 2.5 km

After a late-evening operation last night we were all up early to roll into our last outing on the Antarctic Peninsula. After launching from the back of the ship we paddled towards the island and made a slow circumnavigation of it, watching gentoos, seals, and snorkellers along the way. Everyone was itching for a little bit more time on shore with penguins, so we kept it as a short-but-sweet paddle, then dropped everyone off for a tramp around. Off to South Georgia!

01/01/2024, AM: Cooper Bay. Distance paddled: 4.5 km

The conditions we got in Cooper Bay were truly spectacular. We cruised around the rock gardens, where we found our own private chinstrap colony with some elephant seals, casually basking in the sun. The swell and breeze pushed us through the rocky outcrops to the other side – right past the iceberg, with penguins awkwardly holding for their dear life onto the slippery ice. The playful fur seals and honking king penguins escorted us to the well-hidden gem: macaroni penguins! The stand-off competition between them and Travis for the best hairstyle was fierce, but ended up a tie in order to keep the peace between our two species. We ended up surrounded by tall stacks, rock-hopping and catching the last waves of the day.

01/01/2024, PM: Gold Harbour. Distance paddled: 5 km

We rang in the new year this morning, by paddling at Gold Harbour! This spectacular site offers a diversity of exploration, and we started by tackling the rocky headland that defines the north end of the bay. Looking for elephant seals, instead we mostly found some dramatic sea stacks, as well as some neat channels that came alive with the swell that pushed through them. We watched kelp wrap around the shoreline like writhing snakes, while all manner of seabird life flew overhead. As we turned back to paddle alongside the main shore, we found belching elephant seals, maniacal fur seals, innumerable king penguins, and proudly outstretched giant petrels, all coexisting in seeming harmony along the flat beach. On an ice floe, we also found a restful leopard seal! This was a first sighting for the trip, and a spectacular opportunity to get a sustained glimpse of this remarkable creature's form. As we paddled along the beach, we were conscious of surf, and had to occasionally stop to allow for rafts of penguins to land on shore. The chaos of wildlife was all around us, and it was glorious. Our final destination was the lagoon that is bookended by hanging glaciers, and guarded by a surf break. Matt paddled ahead to scout an entrance, and found one on the south end of the break. We scuttled through the surf and were greeted by a strange silence on the other side, despite the substantial population of king penguins. The waters were calm, the wildlife subdued, and it felt like a place we could've hung out for the entire afternoon!

02/01/2024, AM: Godthul. Distance paddled: 2.5 km

This morning we had our first opportunity to land on shore in South Georgia. However, the kayakers were still keen to get out on the water so we went for a wee paddle! The conditions were awesome, with glassy calm water and loads to see. We headed off in two separate groups over to a cool, misty waterfall, then we found

some serious PLANKTON in the water! There were thousands of sea angels all swimming around us! Very cool. After (mostly Russell) lost our minds about this, we carried on around the bay and found ourselves in the thick of wildlife. Fur seals frolicking in the water, elephant seal weaners snoozing on shore, and a few clusters of kings wandering about. After a little over an hour we had a quick pick-up and dropped folks at shore to get further immersed in the wildlife!

03/01/2024, AM: Stromness. Distance paddled: 4 km

This was a rather special paddle... if only for one of us! While most of the kayak crew was off doing the Shackleton walk from Fortuna Bay to Stromness, Leanne paddled with Erin from Stromness to Leith Harbour! It was a spectacular day, with bright sunshine and calm conditions. Fur seals were so thick along the shoreline that it took some care to place one's paddle: pups mewling on shore while their parents twisted and dived around in the kelp beds. There was sure to be a seal in pursuit of our kayakers throughout the entire outing – we were never left alone. Leanne even, at one point, received a fur seal baptism when one slapped his tail right beside her kayak and created quite a crashing wave that engulfed her! The view shifted as we departed Stromness and approached Leith Harbour to include more pointed, snowy peaks, which frame the latter's whaling station. It was an outstanding morning, which left behind a lovely suntan

04/01/2024: Salisbury Plain to Rosita Harbour. Distance paddled: 16.5 km

Our final paddle in South Georgia and it was a real beauty! Logistically a little more challenging than usual, but totally worth it. First, all the kayakers went out in two Zodiacs to cruise around Salisbury Plain, checking out the mass amount of wildlife. We then booped back to the ship a little earlier than others to transition into our paddle. Once dressed, Russell brought down bagged lunches for everyone, which we all enjoyed picnic-style sitting on the kayak room floor. It was all rather cute actually! Once fed we got on the water behind Tern Island. The fur seals there were next level in their excitedness to be in the water with us. Very cool. As we then started our crossing over to the waters around Albatross Island the *Sylvia Earle* sailed on past us, making its way to Rosita Harbour where we would meet it a few hours later. Now the paddle went next level. With small swell coming in around interesting coastline, we made our way out around the Bay of Isles in true sea-kayaking fashion. It was glorious. Next up was our big crossing over to the cliff-lined coastline east of Rosita Harbour. It was a long 3 kilometres but in absolutely perfect conditions as the wind completely died off and the water surface turned into an oily reflection. Once on the other side we had a little celebration, then made our way down the kelp-full coast back to the ship! This was the biggest paddle lots of the group had ever done, and they all crushed it. Sun, calm winds, South Georgia backdrop; how could one ask for more?

08/01/2024, AM: Stanley, Falkland Islands. Distance paddled: 7 km

We had a spectacular last paddle, leaving behind the throngs of people in Stanley, and setting out on our own! We were greeted by all sorts of new bird species, including Falkland steamer ducks, kelp geese, South American terns, upland geese, blackish and Magellanic oystercatchers, turkey vultures, Magellanic penguins, and many more! The water was a stunning turquoise. We paddled past Gypsy Cove and Yorke Bay, almost reaching the Cape Pembroke lighthouse. We shared the end of our morning with some extremely playful Peale's dolphins, who bow-rode our kayakers! An amazing end to our adventures together.





Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guides: Nicki, Ana, Remi

Number of Snorkellers: 10

Total Outings: 4

Snorkellers:

Adrian

Samantha NG

James

Carolyn

Byron

Kelly

Samantha W

Mathew

William

Ricky

26/12/23: Weddell Sea, Devil Island

The journey has begun for our fellow underwater Expeditioners. After braving the donning of dry suits we ventured out into the labyrinth of icebergs! A quick little Zodiac cruise led us to a beach landing on Devil Island, where we were greeted by thousands of Adélie penguins. The cruise continued with dozens of penguins jumping through the calm, crystal-clear water, leading us to our snorkel location. The group, revving up to get into the icy-cold Antarctic waters, take that first plunge... smiles on all faces as they appreciate there are no leaks in their dry suits, and, of course, they have finally made it! Finding a penguin who has succumbed to an eternal sleep left the group with something to think about. In the shallow water we also had a quick pass by from a few penguins and also had a first taste of some small icebergs from bellow! Time to warm up!

27/12/23: Trinity Peninsula, Curtiss Bay

Once again, the snorkel team are ready for an exciting day full of adventures! Starting the day with a Zodiac tour in Charcot Bay, with magical scenery pathed with picturesque icebergs and littered with brash ice, whales lead us deep into the bay! After heading to Curtiss Bay, our Expeditioners had our first leap onto continental Antarctica, with smiles on their faces they were soon face to face with their next snorkel location. A perfect little alcove, with raised cliffs covered with moss and small amounts of brash ice covering the glassy waters. Beautiful geological structures can be seen in the depths, with an abundance of kelp bringing the sea floor alive, and a mysterious feather-like creature floating by, also joined by some krill. This all left the team with bright faces and memories to share!

28/12/23: D'Hainaut Island, Mikkelsen Harbour, Trinity Island

After a late-night exploration, the new day has once again greeted us with calm seas and beautiful scenery! Arriving at D'Hainaut Island we see a colony of gentoo penguins waiting to be played with! Hopping on the island in dry suits, and hiking up the hill is one way to keep warm and work up a sweat, ready for the cold waters to come! Sleeping Weddell seals on the shores and gentoo penguins skirting around the place leads to excited spirits on the Zodiac! Jumping into the fresh, 2-degrees-Celsius water, the punters are on their way, small invertebrates are scattered among the shallow, rocky bottom, with plenty of red and brown seaweeds to

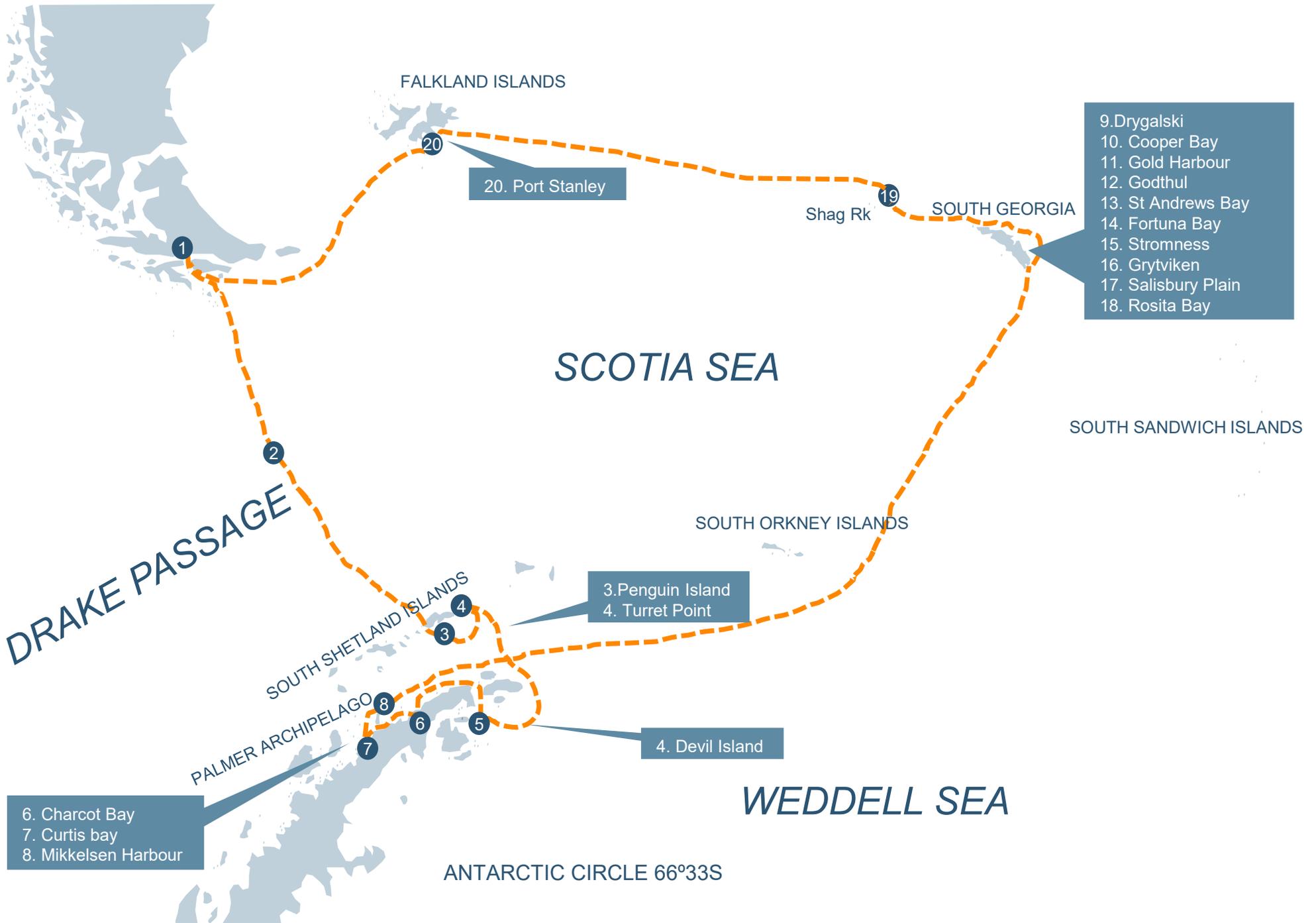
add colour! The gentoo penguins, with their speed and agility, are able to mysteriously pass us by in an instant, almost as if they are intentionally taunting us! Eventually, with a few spotters and sore necks, we are able to get some memorable moments with the cheeky penguins, and we are now sufficiently cold and ready to take on the plunge!

08/01/24: Gypsy Cove, Stanley, Falkland Islands

The boat is full of excitement and anticipation this morning as we venture into a brand-new day in the Falkland Islands! Starting the day off strong with a Zodiac mission headed to a penguin colony on the far side of Gypsy Cove, we are distracted by a pod of gymnastic Peale's dolphins! Frolicking in the sunlight, the dolphins were bow riding and breaching all over the place, sticking with us for nearly 30 minutes. After saying goodbye to our cetacean friends, we found ourselves looking into the lives of the Magellanic penguin, a new species to add to our list! The time has come to gear up for our final two-part snorkel; the water visibility helped by the bright blue skies made for crystal-clear water! The rocky shores are engulfed by kelp and an abundance of seabirds, the depths below are covered with a variety of invertebrates! Fish species, spider crabs, molluscs are all on the lists in everyone's minds as they navigate their way in the warmer (11 degrees Celsius) water of the Falklands. Our second location had an audience of both humans on the cliff tops and terns on the foreshore, all cheering us on for our last snorkel! After having braved these cold waters for the last time, it is safe to say it was a successful trip and beautiful experiences were had by all!









Expeditioners:

James Finnie	Kim Penelope Faulkner	Roderick Calder Kinkead-Weekes	Kathleen McIlvenny	Madleina Christina Scheidegger
Byron Dain Aharonian	Suzanne Scott Finney	Kathleen Hickey Kunkle	Carolyn Wendy McIlvenny	Ursula Katharina Scheidegger
Stephen Travers Allworth	Adrian John Flook	Earl Hilton Kunkle	Rosanne Cecilia McMahon	Jeffrey Daniel Shulkin
Kelly Dawn Barrowcliffe	Frangelica Carmela Flook	Leonard Andrew Kuo	Brian Charles McMahon	Barry Lynn Shulkin
Anne Finlay Best	Clementine Alexia Richardson Flook	Joanna Kathryn Kuo	Carmel Marie McNaught	Zachary David Shulkin
Beverley Anne Bruen	Penelope-Rose Campbell Floyd	Chee Ping Lau	Annette Carol Miller	Niranjalie Silva
Carol Lee Byars	Margaret Anne Folkard	Hilary Ann Lewis	Jean Marie Monson	Peter George Skinner
Linda Elizabeth Cadioli	Matilda Goldie	Ian Christian Lewis	Randall Michael Monson	Naluthporn Srifuengfung
Jiayang Cao	Willow Goldie	Graham Paul Long	Ronald Ralph Luttrell Munro Ferguson	Anthony David Stevenson
Saonti Chakraborty	David Grant Stephen Gottlieb	Thomas William Gordon Lowe	Erica Susan Munro Ferguson	Sean Tan
Willy Chang	David John Graham	Penelope Janice Lynn Mabie	Lesley-Anne Myerscough	John Douglas Taylor
Wai Mei Cheong	Janet Rose Green	Natasha Mallam	Micah James Myerscough	Susan Ann Taylor
Ai Ling Chua	Bernard John Guerin	Jacinta Mallam	Elizabeth Elaine Neumeier	Emma Kate Taylor
William Richard Clark	Margaret Mary Hayes	Patricia Ann Mandel	Samantha Yet Mei Ng	Matthew Joseph Taylor
Charlotte Marie Clark	David Jason Hicks	Graham David Marshall	Suzanne Kathleen O'Hara	Lakshmi Upadhyaya
Leanne Michelle Cummings	Donna Suzanne Hicks	Luke Jonathon Marshall	Giovanna Maria Ostacchini	Edwin Ronald Vowles
Marcela De Oliveira Ortolan	Jayne Margaret Higgins	Peter Maybury	Michele Pigott	Wendy Anne Vowles
Laura Mary Denholm	Peter Michael Higgins	Ailsa Maybury	Geoffrey Francis Pigott	Jennifer Margaret Wells
John Stephen Denholm	Tamara Dee Hutzler	William Lee Mc Henry	Bronwyn Joyce Ray	Bruce William Wharrie
Rinku Dewri	Michael Hynes	Laurna Patricia Mc Loughlin	Simon David Ray	Joanna Lynne Whisnant
Carol Anne Dolling	Craig Alexander Johnston	Ellen I McCoy	Sally-Anne Ray	Samantha Wilson
Keith William Dolling	Wayne Jones	Gary John McFarlane	Judith Anne Russell	Adrian Trannack Yeeles
Bethany Lyn Ericson	Elizabeth Anne Jones	James Peter McIlvenny	Travis Luke Ryan	Liuxiao Zhang
Katia Felix Faris-Denis	David Miles Kennedy	Kelly McIlvenny	Darren Saumur	



Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Mario Placidi Spring
Assistant Expedition Leader: Jeff Nagel
Onboard Expedition Manager: Ashleigh Peters
Marine Biologist/Citizen Science Coordinator: Vicky Inglis
Naturalist: Leo Siobelzon
Historian: Kelsey Camacho
Anthropologist: Andrea Herbert
Photography Guide: Pia Harboure
Expedition Medic: Laura Boenish
Expedition Guide: Tamsin Both
Kayaking Guide: Russell Henry
Kayaking Guide: Anula Jochym
Kayaking Guide: Erin Scott
Kayaking Guide: Matthew Barnes
Kayaking Guide: Tim Vanhoutteghem
Snowshoe Guide: Mike Roberts
Snowshoe Guide: David Stark
Snowshoe Guide: Sean Waters
Snorkel Guide: Nichola Meharg
Snorkel Guide: Ana Poulalion
Zodiac Master: Jeb Pearce
Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ari Benzo Ciria

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Donael Soto Hernandez
Chief Officer: Andrey Gilevskiy
Second Officer: Raymer Fernandes
Deck Cadet: Carlos Florido Carvalho Da Silva
Safety Officer: Matko Zagorac
Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan
Ship Doctor: Gloria Gonzales Iraheta
Chief Engineer: Constantin Turmacu
Chief Engineer: Ujevic Branimir
First Engineer: Petr Alyenkov
IT Officer: Valentin Cojocar
Hotel Director: Balvant Singh
F&B Service Manager: Narendra Seeram
Head Bartender: Lloyd Laylo
Chief Purser: Josephine Blanco
Executive Chef: Cristiand Carlos Minl Pineda
Sous Chef: Hubert Ramiro Barreto
Hotel Controller: Orlando Costa
Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska
Receptionist: Jaypee Alota Abonitalla
Head Stateroom Attendant: Marthony Penalosa
Able Seaman: Lexter Fadriquela
Able Seaman: Rene Casipe
Able Seaman: Anthony John Brosas
Able Seaman: Noel Reugia
Able Seaman: Rossell Fernandez Araujo
Able Seaman: Rajiv Rauniyar

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