

Cape Verde, Canary Islands & Azores

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 17th to 30th April 2023





Praia, Santiago Island – Cape Verde

DAY 1 | Monday 17th April 2023

Position at 2100 on 17th April

Latitude: 14°52.7'N

Longitude: 023°35.9'W

Course: 261°

Speed: 6.1 knots

Wind Speed: N 4

Barometer: 1023

Air Temp: 24°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Anyone flying into the main international airport of Cabo Verde (Green Cape in English) could be forgiven for wondering where the green is. The four-hour flight from Lisbon approached Santiago as though approaching an island cut adrift from the western Sahara – a parched landscape lay below, golden, windswept, and dusty as far as the eye could see.

Santiago may not be the prettiest of the 10 islands that make up Cape Verde, but it is home to Praia, the capital and major industrial centre of this young African nation. Today over half a million people fly here every year, but given it only became independent from Portugal in 1975, there's still a sense of it being an undiscovered destination.

That would certainly have been the case for the Portuguese colonisers who arrived here in the 15th century to find the islands uninhabited. It wasn't long before it had been made a major hub for the nation's slave trade, that rancid business making it one of the richest places in the burgeoning Portuguese empire. Owing more to its strategic westward position, some of history's greatest sailing names also stopped here to resupply before crossing the Atlantic: Christopher Columbus, Francis Drake, and, in 1832, a young Charles Darwin aboard HMS Beagle.

Quite how much of this information the new and understandably tired passengers of the *Greg Mortimer* were able to take in was unclear. The day had started with an early wake-up call in Lisbon, before a short transfer to the airport for the four-hour flight to Cape Verde. Keen-eyed passengers on the starboard side of the plane may have noticed their ship-to-be below in the harbour on the final approach, but for most, it would only be revealed after a day of touring Santiago and Praia by bus.

With the temperature around 30 degrees Celsius and a stiff wind blowing from the Atlantic, the stops included several reminders of the colonial past, including the UNESCO World Heritage site of Cidade Velha, and Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosario, a small church that would seem unassuming if it hadn't been built in 1495 and visited by explorers including Vasco da Gama and Columbus. While the history was interesting, the highlight of the time ashore for most passengers was the funana performance, a dance with roots in Portuguese folk music.



By late afternoon, it was finally time to get to the ship – a quick photograph on the dock, then a memorable ascent of the gangway for a welcome drink, and the dizzying business of meeting expedition staff, listening to safety briefings, and exploring the *Greg Mortimer*, home for the next fortnight.

When visiting this same part of the world almost 200 years ago, Darwin wrote: "I expected a good deal and I was afraid of disappointments: how utterly vain such fear is. [It was] a glorious day, like giving a blind man eyes." The first day of the trip may not quite have hit those heights, but this was just the beginning, and plenty of adventure lay ahead.



São Filipe, Fogo Island – Cape Verde

DAY 2 | Tuesday 18th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 18th April

Latitude: 14°52,0'N

Longitude: 024°31,7'W

Course: 003°

Speed: 7.8 knots

Wind Speed: N 3

Barometer: 1022

Air Temp: 24°C

A Journey is a person in itself, no two are alike, and all plans, safeguards, policies and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us.

—John Steinbeck

Had the *Greg Mortimer* not found itself in the shadow of an active volcano on purpose, the start to day two would have been a cause for alarm. As the sun rose behind its satisfyingly conical shape, Fogo appeared to be smoking, an appropriate look for an island whose name translates as Fire. At its volcanic centre, Pico do Fogo – at 2,829 metres the highest peak anywhere in Cape Verde – was simultaneously intimidating and beautiful.

The passengers of the *Greg Mortimer* would soon begin a long journey towards that iconic mountain, but first there was a tour of São Felipe, Fogo's port town and the largest settlement on the island. Few on the ship knew much about the place prior to the visit, but thanks to some excellent local guides, we soon learned.

Some mentioned that the place reminded them of Havana and it was easy to see why: many of the buildings were painted loud colours not dissimilar to the Cuban capital. The guides explained to us that islanders tend to give their homes a fresh coat of paint at the start of each new year. This included the Igreja Nossa Senhora da Conceição, a church which had been given a particularly vibrant shade of blue.

With groups heading off in opposite directions, each was to find its own highlights along the way. For some, this included local museums, but the central food market was a colourful centre of activity, photogenic and frenetic. Fruits and vegetables grown from around the island were haggled over, while the upper floors contained an altogether more fragrant fish market.

Looking beyond the town, it seemed unlikely that much could grow in what looked like a hostile environment for plants. Fogo's charred slopes are home to only a few highly adapted plants, but as we began our climb into the mountainous heart of the island, we soon found that this can be a fertile place, too.

The drive to the central caldera took around an hour in our minivans, slow progress in part because of the roads' incline, but also because of the sensational views offered across to other islands in the archipelago.

The hot centre of Fogo looked like the sort of place to test a Martian rover, all chaotic landscapes and copper-hued boulders amid endless fields of lava. The island has a long history of eruptions, with the most recent significant one coming as recently in 2015.



Sal Rei, Boa Vista Island – Cape Verde

DAY 3 | Wednesday 19th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 19th April

Latitude: 16°09,1'N

Longitude: 023°00,2'W

Course: 049°

Speed: 7.7 knots

Wind Speed: N 4/5

Barometer: 1026

Air Temp: 23°C

Nothing is weaker than water. Yet nothing overcomes immovable objects as water does. There is no substitute. Thus weakness overcomes strength and gentleness overcomes rigidity. No one denies it and no one tries it.

—Laotse, The Book of Tao

In the early morning of our second day in Cape Verde the *Greg Mortimer* approached beautiful Boavista island to pull alongside in the port of Sal Rei, the island's capital.

After breakfast, we went on a 4x4 jeep exploration tour of Sal Rei and the surroundings. Our local drivers took us through the town of Sal Rei to give us a first impression of the local lifestyle and living conditions. We stopped at the picturesque Chapel of Fatima just outside of town and returned to the city centre for a visit to the Shipwreck Museum (Museu dos Naufrageos) where we learned about the history and culture of Cape Verde as well as about the hundreds of shipwrecks around the coast of Boavista. The museum has been put in place by an Italian underwater archaeologist who embarks on exploratory dives around the island to find new wrecks, constantly adding new pieces to his impressive collection. In the Museum of the Sea (Museu do Mar) a local fisherman proudly showed us his very own collection of shells and other treasures from the sea.

Our drivers and guides then took us onto adventurous dirt roads covered with rocks and Sahara sand, leading us to a wide beach with a shipwreck lying on the sand like a giant skeleton. We couldn't resist dipping our feet into the turquoise warm waters while admiring the impressive outlines of the wreck, trying to imagine the wreckage and getting the crew off the ship through the powerful waves. On our way back we passed the Jewish cemetery in memory of the importance of Jews in the economic history of Sal Rei.

A small group of bird enthusiasts set off on a separate trip to a wetland area on the outskirts of Sal Rei, where they were enchanted by the presence of a number of birds, some of which were first species sightings for our bird lovers.

For lunch, we all reunited on the ship and exchanged our different adventure stories of the morning excursions.

After lunch, we embarked on a whale-watching tour in the Bay of Sal Rei which is situated to the north-west of the island. On two beautiful sailing vessels, we headed out of the Port of Sal Rei, enjoying the power of the wind and the sound of the waves. After a short cruise, our experienced whale-watching team spotted the first whale



Porto Novo, Santo Antão Island – Cape Verde

DAY 4 | Thursday 20th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 20th April

Latitude: 16°59,5'N

Longitude: 024°59,5'W

Course: 280°

Speed: 8.6 knots

Wind Speed: N 5

Barometer: 1027

Air Temp: 22°C

Men love to wander and that is the seed of our science.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Little did we know what a stunning, scenic island we were about to behold as our small fleet of minibuses departed the wharf. We passed quickly through the small town of Porto Novo and headed up a hillside of dry volcanic rubble. As we crested the first rise of the Lombo de Figueira Mountains, we paused briefly to look back over the volcanic landscape to where the ship was berthed. A feature of the landscape was the multiple rock terraces laid by the local people to reduce erosion.

Our next stop overlooked the secluded caldera of Cova, the floor of which was green with crops and divided into hundreds of small farms. As we enjoyed the view, we were delighted by the antics of an inquisitive toddler who seemed unfazed by all the enormous strangers who poured out of the buses.

Back on the buses, we passed through a forested national park and then along a narrow road along a spur with sheer cliffs falling away on each side. To the right, all that was left of an ancient volcano was a curved 300 metres cliff. One side of the volcano had collapsed, and millennia of erosion had created a dramatic canyon falling to the sea.

We then proceeded down to the coastal village of Ponta do Sol where we commenced a hike along a narrow winding road that was perched on the side of steep sea cliffs. Rounding a sharp turn inland, we looked down upon the tiny village of Fontainhas, where the houses were perched precariously on cliff tops. Local people served us tea and cakes while we marvelled at the fairy-tale village that looked like it belonged in the Cinque Terra.

From there, it was time to return to lunch in Ponta do Sol, then back on the buses for our return journey around the coast of Santo Antão. On our way, we had a short visit to the farming village of Xoxo and a longer visit to the rum distillery at Trapitche. The farms at both places continued down into the dry river valley, where they would be washed away during the next rainy season. Rather than storing water in dams, the local people farm the riverbeds and rely on groundwater seeping out of the rocky hillsides to provide water over the dry season. A tasting of the local rum, 'grogue' helped smooth our homeward journey.

We returned to the ship and bid a fond farewell to our delightful local guide, Adira. It was sad to see her go as she was such a lovely person and an invaluable link to the local tour providers. Adira really helped so much to make our visit to Cabo Verde something special.



Visiting Santo Antao is like visiting Krakatoa, the Cinque Terra, the Grand Canyon, Hawaii and the surface of Mars all in one day.

At Sea

DAY 5 | Friday 21st April 2023

Position at 0600 on 21st April

Latitude: 19°18,5'N

Longitude: 023°30,2'W

Course: 030°

Speed: 13.3 knots

Wind Speed: NW 3/4

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: 21°C

Tumble and rumble, and grumble and snort,
Like a whale to starboard, a whale to port;
Tumble and rumble, and grumble and snort,
and the steamer steams thro' the sea, love!

—Sydney Thompson Dobell

The day before we said goodbye to Santo Antão Island in Cabo Verde and set sail towards the Canary Islands. Two days at sea were ahead of us. Our ship the *Greg Mortimer* was moving gently through the waters of the Atlantic Ocean at a speed of 13 knots. No land on the horizon.

After a delicious breakfast, a lot of activities were ahead of us. We started the day with a great introduction to expedition photography, delivered by our expedition photographer Jamie. After the lecture, we had a chance to participate in the Citizen Science Cloud Survey. Data collected by our onboard Citizen Scientists serves NASA. After lunch, Dominic gave us a fantastic presentation about sea birds so we could use this freshly acquired knowledge throughout the rest of our trip.

Our afternoon was quite astonishing and most of us gathered on the outer decks to observe the abundance of wildlife outside. Our Captain Vadim deployed the hydraulic observation platforms for us on the port and starboard of our ship. We had the opportunity to enjoy pods of Atlantic spotted dolphins, sei whales, a minke whale, swordfish, turtles and schools of small colourful fish. With the sun above our heads and sunrays hitting the surface of the water, we were able to see deep into the Atlantic Ocean.

As the sun was moving slowly towards the horizon it was time for drinks and canapes in the Elephant Island Bar. In preparation for our daily briefing and recap, we all came together to relax and enjoy ourselves in the ship's lecture theatre. During the recap we heard about the upcoming "Earth Day", which would fall on the following day, from our expedition naturalist John, and our onboard expedition manager Samantha told us about the Lyrid meteor shower that we were due to view and enjoy together later that evening. Annette gave us a quick introduction to the Azores and told us what awaits us towards the end of our discovery voyage. Piotr also provided us with maritime origin stories of rum and "grogue". As seasoned sailors, we can easily "splice the mainbrace" and "tap the admiral" from now on. Although rum is not a currency anymore, its rich history will let us enjoy this drink even more from now on. To end the briefing David gave us some weather updates on our course and prepared us for the days to come.

Dinner time was just around the corner and again the kitchen staff didn't disappoint. After dinner, we had the utmost pleasure to listen to Ian's crocodile stories and firsthand experiences being a wildlife filmmaker. To finish up this wonderful day we enjoyed hot chocolate on the back deck while watching the stars and meteor shower. Tomorrow, another adventurous day awaited us, full of new experiences, wildlife and lectures.



At Sea

DAY 6 | Saturday 22nd April 2023

Position at 0600 on 22nd April

Latitude: 23°39,8'N

Longitude: 020°38,2'W

Course: 032°

Speed: 14 knots

Wind Speed: N 3

Barometer: 1027

Air Temp: 19°C

To have a huge, friendly whale willingly approach your boat and look you straight in the eye is without doubt one of the most extraordinary experiences on the planet.

—Mark Carwardine

The morning dawned clear and calm as the *Greg Mortimer* cruised across the mid-Atlantic.

Birders up early watched the sun rise over a smooth sea, and the scattered clouds revealed an almost perfect blue sky. Soon all expeditioners were up and about, some a little groggy after a night spent watching a meteor shower, others with healthy minds and bodies striding out their ten thousand steps on the outer deck.

The bright smiling faces of the crew in the dining room are always a welcome moment each morning, and today was no exception. Sean at reception continues to confound everyone by being both always happy in the morning, and also remembering every single person's name on the ship.

With the rituals of breakfast and coffee complete, the day began to move into its familiar contended routine, the life of a ship at sea. John began our morning program in the lecture theatre, giving an informative lecture on oceanography in the Atlantic, and no sooner had he finished than people began to see dolphins and whales alongside, behind, and at times in front of the ship. Coming in for short spells bow-riding, or cruising past aloof, sei whales and stripe-sided dolphins continued to visit the ship all day.

Many people choose to take their coffee, tea, and a book, up to the observation lounge in order to be ready for the many sudden and sporadic encounters that eventuated throughout the day. Others chose to remain vigilant on the back deck while relaxing on the sun lounge chairs, their closed eyes and gentle daytime snores a sign of their readiness for whale-watching action.

With the ship moving over a number of sea mounts, and the rises in the ocean floor bringing upwellings of water from 3000-metres deep to just a few hundred, the increase in wildlife observations was noticeable.

In the afternoon the cloud observers were out again, followed by another great presentation from Annette on biogeography and endemism in Macaronesia.

The smooth seas, incredible light, and continuous flow of wildlife made for a wonderful day at sea. The evening finished with a talent show in the lecture room, with many people demonstrating their skills, or lackthereof, to an appreciative crowd. A big thanks to all who turned up and brought about much laughter and joy.



Puerto La Estaca, El Hierro – Canary Islands

DAY 7 | Sunday 23rd April 2023

Position at 0600 on 23rd April

Latitude: 27°43,7'N

Longitude: 017°53,3'W

Course: 024°

Speed: 10.1 knots

Wind Speed: N 2

Barometer: 1027

Air Temp: 19°C

A first walk in any new country is one of the things which makes life on this planet worth being grateful for.

—Charles William Beebe

The day started with the calm voice of David, our Expedition Leader, saying “Good morning, my dear friends”. Islands are islands, but none are quite like El Hierro. Nicknamed Isla del Meridiano (the “Meridian Island”), this island is the most westerly and also the most southernly point of the kingdom of Spain.

At 9am we boarded the buses in Puerto de la Estaca, the new port on the island, which was built in the late 1970s and is where most of the shipping and ferry traffic of the island departs. Up in the mountains, we passed many beautiful forests and our first stop was at the Jinama viewpoint. After getting off the bus we enjoyed the breathtaking views over the valley below and the curving coastline, some 800 metres below. Those of us who are dedicated birdwatchers had some standout sightings here, with Canary Islands chiffchaffs, plain swifts and Berthelot’s pipits being spotted, which are all species endemic to Macaronesia.

Our next stop was the Lizard house, where we took turns spending time observing the endemic lizards in the sanctuary there and exploring the adjacent remains of the last traditional village on the island. Everyone was particularly excited to see the great dragons that Jamie had told us about the day before. The lizard re-introduction farm is where they breed the critically endangered El Hierro giant lizard to eventually set them free into the wild. The lizards are considered juvenile until the age of five. When they become adults they get trained by volunteers in how to avoid their biggest predators, such as rats and cats, by teaching them the smell of these predators.

Next to the Lizard house, we wandered through the last ancient village of the island which was abandoned in the 1950s and is now restored and used as a museum. It was great to see the ingenuity used for their old wine presses and how small the living quarters were in those days.

After this, we travelled on to a stunning coastal lookout with a view of Hotel Puntagrande, which is the second smallest hotel in the world. This hotel, located in the old harbour master’s house, once held the Guinness Book of World Records title for the smallest hotel in the world, with only four rooms on offer.



The feast we shared at Mirador de la Pena was the highlight of the day and the views from there was also amazing, not to mention the many lizards that could be seen outside on the terrace. At any given moment 4-10 could be seen running around – it was like being at a zoo. Absolutely incredible!

Back on the ship, the crew had prepared a fantastic selection of everything you could want for a barbecue on a warm day, all washed down with sangria, which we enjoyed together out on the deck.



San Sebastian de la Gomera, La Gomera – Canary Islands

DAY 8 | Monday 24th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 24th April

Latitude: 28°00,8'N

Longitude: 017°13,3'W

Course: 063°

Speed: 4 knots

Wind Speed: NW 3

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: 19°C

The grand show is eternal. There is always a sunrise somewhere. The dew is never dried at once. A shower is forever falling. Vapour is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset. Eternal dawn and glowing, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn as the earth rolls. And for this I am forever grateful to be alive.

—John Muir

As dawn broke, the *Greg Mortimer* slipped into the harbour at La Gomera, the lights of the town of San Sebastian twinkling in the half-light. This historic little bay once sheltered the ships of Christopher Columbus; indeed they were his last landfall before he set out with three ships in 1492 on a historical voyage of discovery to seek a western sea passage to the East Indies. He hoped to profit from the lucrative spice trade and find fame for himself. No one could possibly have known that the voyage would change the world.

He didn't discover what he had expected but instead landed on the islands we now call the Bahamas before sailing on to Cuba and Hispaniola. He had accidentally discovered the great western continent. In doing so, he started the fall of the Pre-Columbian Era of human habitation in the Americas. Columbus returned to Europe in early 1493 with news of his discovery and some captive indigenous people. The Europeans rejoiced to hear the first news of this unknown continent, but a time of great sorrow and pain was about to begin for the indigenous people of the Americas.

Soon after breakfast, we started our exploration of La Gomera with a guided walk through its sleepy capital, San Sebastian. Andrea, our guide, took us to the ancient church where Columbus last prayed before he set out and the spring where his ships filled their barrels with drinking water in preparation for months at sea.

La Gomera was a truly beautiful little island. Our coaches drove us up the steep hillside roads, weaving around many tight U-turns with steep and sometimes nerve-wracking drops. It was impressive to see how the early farmers had terraced pretty much every piece of sloping hillside. In the past, it seems that only the rocky cliffs were not exploited to grow crops. The amount of work that would have been needed to build so many walls and terraces was truly amazing. Sadly, much of this agricultural land has fallen into disuse as the island's climate changed, getting hotter and much drier.

We stopped in the beautiful UNESCO laurel forests which grow on some of the highest ridges and mountain slopes and walked through the trees. The forest was full of the songs of blackbirds, robins, and chiffchaff. We heard



a demonstration of the ancient Gomoran whistle language, once used to communicate across the rugged ridges and valleys.

The *Greg Mortimer* left the harbour just after 1pm and we headed out towards the Azores. Over 1000 cory's shearwater were sighted from the deck during an eBird survey led by our ace birder Dominic soon after we left La Gomera. Absolutely spectacular.



At Sea

DAY 9 | Tuesday 25th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 25th April

Latitude: 30°47,1'N

Longitude: 020°19,9'W

Course: 318°

Speed: 14.4 knots

Wind Speed: NE 3

Barometer: 1029

Air Temp: 19°C

Birds have it better than we do,
in many ways, and here are there,
with wings they fly by day and night,
and never have a cancelled flight,
with feathers they have clothes that always fit,
in styles that never change a bit,
and what we envy most, I'd say,
with bills they never have to pay.

—Anonymous

Dawn breaks late in the Atlantic, daylight finally illuminating the deck at 7.30am as our ship progressed northwest towards the Azores. Land was already a distant memory, the Canary Islands now way beyond the horizon to the southeast.

Shortly after sunrise, John led a poignant dawn service to mark ANZAC Day. This day of remembrance originally honoured the huge loss of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps troops, known as ANZACs, at the battle of Gallipoli, Turkey, that started on 25 April 1915, but it now commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders who have served and died in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. Shane gave a moving account of his experiences in the army burying the remains of a fallen soldier, and Kathleen shared photos of ANZAC Cove where the battle took place.

After breakfast, Dominic spoke about the unique birdlife of the Azores, our final destination on this voyage of discovery. The Azores archipelago is the most remote island group in Macaronesia, and as well as being home to endemic bird species and subspecies, it is also an important stop-over site for migrants crossing the mid-Atlantic – not least American songbirds rarely seen in Europe.

Later in the morning, Ian's 1000 Wild Dawns talk featured some evocative memories of filming wildlife in the Arctic. These included close-quarters encounters with the majestic gyrfalcon, observing huge flocks of red knot and sharing his tent with a sneezing lemming, but it was the film sequence of tiny barnacle goose chicks

plummeting hundreds of feet off their nesting ledges that most moved the audience – amazingly, as many as 60 per cent of the young can survive this terrifying plunge.

Meanwhile, on deck, our Citizen Science seabird survey continued with John, Frank, Carol and other volunteers joining Dominic for a timed count from the bow of the ship, our first bulwer's petrels for several days being the sole species recorded today so far out at sea.

The afternoon's programme began with a history of whaling, presented by John. We learned that, over the centuries, whalers targeted northern right whale, bowhead whale, sperm whale and gray whale, with this last species being extirpated in the North Atlantic as a result and whale stocks becoming greatly depleted over 800 years.

Annette further enhanced our knowledge of whales and dolphins with the second part of her lecture from yesterday, focusing on the extraordinary biology and ecology of these fabulous marine mammals based on her extensive research and experience in the Azores.

The evening's Atlantic-themed recap brought more wonderfully evocative contributions from Ian on Cornwall, Annette on the Azores, Sigurd on the Faroe Islands and Jamie on the Shetland island of Foula, before David talked about the historic links between Scandinavia and the Azores and looked ahead to the next day in our adventure.

After dinner, Jamie's highly entertaining 'Misadventures of a Travel Writer' talk brought another wonderful day to a close.

At Sea

DAY 10 | Wednesday 26th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 26th April

Latitude: 34°43'7"N

Longitude: 024°28'0"W

Course: 315°

Speed: 12.7 knots

Wind Speed: SSW 6

Barometer: 1025

Air Temp: 17°C

The land was gone, all but a little streak, away off on the edge of the water, and down under us was just ocean, ocean, ocean – millions of miles of it, heaving and pitching and squirming, and white sprays blowing from the wave-tops,and we had the sky and the ocean to ourselves, and the roomiest place I ever did see and the loneliest.

—Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad

Everyone handles sea days differently. For some there's an almost hypnotic rhythm, for others there's monotony. Whether reading books, organising photos, or just drifting back to sleep with the motion of the ocean, the day passed without a hint of land as we made our way northwest from the Canary Islands to the Azores. Some passengers chose to get some sun, some waited patiently for the chocolate-heavy afternoon tea. Decadently, many did both.

A series of talks were also given throughout the day. Annette spoke on whales and, much later, Jamie told a story about a misadventure while on assignment in Guyana. Prior to that, however, the team pulled together to present a themed recap on what the Atlantic means to them, with Ian talking emotively about the Cornish Coast, Sigurd detailing life in the Faroe Islands, and Jamie discussing a trip to the far-flung Scottish island of Foula. Annette meanwhile spoke about life on the Azores, our final destination for the cruise.

The route we were following between Spanish and Portuguese territories was once frequented by whalers heading north to seek out blood and fortune in the Atlantic. This murderous migration was the topic of John's lecture on the whaling business earlier in the day, a grim but fascinating examination of what for a time was a massive global industry.

Passengers today still keep their eyes trained on the horizon in the hope of seeing a blow or a tailfin, and not so very long ago, harpooners from Cape Verde, and in particular the Azores, were sailing these waters doing much the same. Their intent was of course very different – after successes with domestic whaling, when American sailors industrialised the gory business, they often sought out Atlantic islanders for work on their ships, such were their reputations for lethal efficiency.

The hideous business of processing these huge creatures is hard to imagine today, but anyone who has visited South Georgia in the South Atlantic will have at least seen the scale of the industry. Men who sailed with

Shackleton, including George Marston, provided florid descriptions when writing about their time in proximity to the whalers. 'In the bay dead whales floated, on the shore their carcasses rotted, and the beach was thick with their bleaching bones,' wrote Marston in Shackleton's obituary in 1922. 'We breathed the smell of whale day and night and fed on whale meat in company with the dogs.'

Thankfully today whaling has been massively reduced to a fraction of its former scale – it was outlawed in the Azores in 1984 – and the days of Herman Melville and the cartoonish whalers of his great novel Moby Dick are relics of the past. Now thanks to conservation efforts, to borrow from the author, there's a chance that 'the eternal whale will still survive, and rearing upon the topmost crest of the equatorial flood, spout his frothed defiance to the skies.'



Horta, Faial – Azores

DAY 11 | Thursday 27th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 27th April

Latitude: 38°21'6" N

Longitude: 028°27'6" W

Course: 319°

Speed: 10.0 knots

Wind Speed: SS 6/7

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: 16°C

Few people know how to take a walk. The qualifications... are endurance... an eye for nature, good humour, vast curiosity, good speech, good silence, and nothing too much.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Early risers were greeted by the view of the majestic Pico Island on our starboard side as we approached Faial Island, our first destination in the Azores. We went alongside in the port of Horta, the capital of Faial. Colourful houses with black lava stone decorations extending up into the green hills extended all along the bay of Horta, decorated by the masts of countless sailing yachts taking a break from their Atlantic journeys in the famous marina of Horta. In Horta, we were joined by the three local guides Antonio, Pedro and Rui who would stay onboard with us until the end of our voyage in Ponta Delgada, a few days ahead.

For our morning excursion, we went to the Capelinhos volcano at the westernmost point of the island. The volcano is the result of the most recent volcanic eruption on the island in 1957, which formed a new extension of Faial towards the west. Constructed below the volcanic ash of Capelinhos we visited the visitor centre which shows excellent documentation and explanation of the eruption as well as the geology and volcanology of the entire archipelago. Climbing up to the ancient lighthouse, which has been partly buried under the ash, gave an amazing view over the volcano and the western coastline of Faial.

After lunch onboard we went on two separate afternoon excursions. One group went to hike down along the extinct volcanic cone of Cabeço Verde towards the volcano of Capelinhos, which lead us through lush green vegetation of laurel, faia and erica azorica forests and offered spectacular views over the green island and the blue ocean. The second group embarked on a tour of the botanical gardens of Horta, where we spent an hour learning about the endemic Azorean vegetation through a movie, a small museum display and walks through the beautifully arranged gardens. We then went to the city of Horta, where we visited the scrimshaw museum displaying beautifully engraving art on sperm whale teeth. The world-famous sailor bar "Peter Sport" on the ground floor of the museum offered an excellent selection of drinks after the outdoor excursions and museum visits. The home-distilled "Gin do Mar", a mixture of gin and passion fruit liqueur, proved to be a very tasty basis for the famous Peter's Gin and Tonic, which is said to be the most consumed drink in the Atlantic.

Back onboard we enjoyed dinner while leaving the port of Horta and sailing along Pico and Sao Jorge Islands towards Terceira, our destination for the next day.



Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira – Azores

DAY 12 | Friday 28th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 28th April

Latitude: 38°41'4" N

Longitude: 027°01'1"W

Course: 022°

Speed: 6.9 knots

Wind Speed: SW 6

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 14°C

Often I feel I go to some distant region of the world to be reminded of who I really am. There is no mystery about why this should be so. Stripped of your daily routines ... you are forced into direct experience. Such direct experience inevitably makes you aware of who it is that is having the experience.

—Michael Crichton, 1988

This morning, we docked at the lovely town of Praia de Vitória on the western end of Terceira Island, an island so named because it was the third island of the Azores to be discovered. The traditional white stone white houses of the town with their orange tiled roofs looked like pretty doll houses in the distance.

Our day at Terceira Island started auspiciously for the birders, with Dominic sighting a great northern diver before breakfast: a rare find in the Azores. After breakfast, we split into three groups, with the kayakers heading off for a paddle, the birders opting for a visit to a disused quarry and the sensible people choosing to tour the historic city of Angra do Heroísmo on Terceira's southern shore.

The kayakers enjoyed a relaxing paddle around the harbour of Praia de Vitória, accompanied by a local guide. Well, I say kayakers, but they in fact paddled on surf-skis. While most people were happy with a relaxed paddle, Kathleen decided that she needed a little more exercise so included multiple short swims along the way.

Meanwhile, the birders visited three excellent birding sites in Praia de Vitória. The first was a seaside meadow to catch a glimpse of a common quail, sadly not so common anymore, and some wide-ranging seabirds. The second site was a disused quarry where they saw a wonderful diversity of wading birds amongst at least 20 bird species, and the third was a town park with a lake and some lovely waterbirds and forest dwellers.

The group touring Angra do Heroísmo ('Bay of Heroes' in English) were treated to a fascinating tour of this ancient city. The city was named in honour of the defenders of Terceira in the civil war against the arch-conservative King Miguel 1 of Portugal in 1829. However, it has a much longer history having been founded in the mid-15th century before becoming a major trading port in the 16th century. This was due to its strategic position along the major trading routes with Portuguese colonies in Africa, South America and Asia.

While the group assembled for lunch, David arranged a complete re-jigging of the afternoon's program to provide people with multiple options. Some opted to spend more time in Angra do Heroísmo, others chose to continue



birding, a few headed back to the ship and the largest group decided to visit the lava tube of Algar do Carvão in the middle of the island. Algar is the Portuguese word for a vertical cave, which is perfectly accurate, while do Carvão means 'of coal', which is an incongruous name for a cave that is thousands of miles from the nearest coal deposit. Apparently, this geological faux pas referred to blackened cave walls, also a strange choice for a cave with multi-coloured walls.

On our way back home, we stopped at some impressive outlooks over parts of beautiful Terceira, including one where gale-force winds almost blew us over. Amazingly, everybody made it to the ship on time and assembled in the lounge to share our stories and hear about plans for tomorrow, our last full day in the Azores.



Ponta Delgada, São Miguel – Azores

DAY 13 | Saturday 29th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 29th April

Latitude: 37°42'6" N

Longitude: 025°46'0" W

Course: 113°

Speed: 7.1 knots

Wind Speed: 5.3

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: 15°C

Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.

—Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

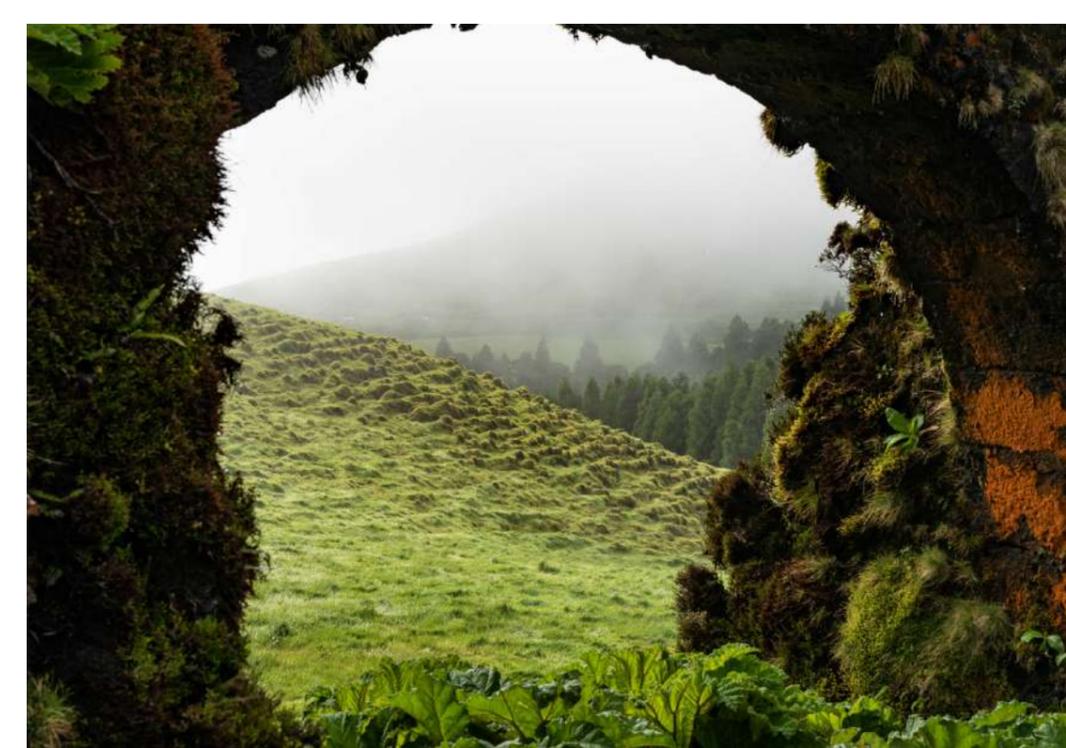
As the *Greg Mortimer* steamed into the port of Ponta Delgado we were made to feel very small by two huge cruise ships which were already docked. I don't think our beautiful little ship suffered by comparison with these two giants, each of which was carrying over 2,000 people. Indeed, the *Greg Mortimer* might have looked small but she is beautifully proportioned.

After an early breakfast, two coaches took us up to the Sete Cidades volcano on the western side of the island. This volcano has a collapsed summit caldera which is absolutely huge. It has an average diameter of 5.3 kilometres and a maximum depth of 630 metres and is estimated to have formed 36,000 years ago. This UNESCO Global Geopark comprises several lagoons, tuff cones, pumice cones and trachytic domes. On the floor of the caldera are two large lakes, one a bluish colour (Lagoa Azul) and the other greenish in colour (Lagoa Verde). It is thought that the last eruption occurred around 1439. We split into two groups to hike around the rim of the crater, one happy doing a 5-kilometre hike while the other more ambitious group went for 10 kilometres. The views were utterly stunning – on one side of the path, the green slopes of the volcano dropped away down to the sparkling blue ocean. On the other, we were looking right down into the crater. What was really impressive was just how green everything was. Well-ordered fields grazed by cattle with small woods of trees dotted between them. A small village hugged the shore of the two lakes. As we walked between hedges of hydrangea and azalea, the spring song of chaffinches, blackbirds and blackcap filled the air. At the end of the morning walk, we stopped at a café at the bottom of the caldera and sat drinking tea and coffee while watching buzzards and gulls soaring above us.

The afternoon was split, with some going out on a whale-watching expedition which didn't produce any large whales but did bring some great views of many dolphins riding on the bow of the boat, and others choosing to visit a great little tea plantation called Cha Gorreana. Who knew that tea was grown in the Azores? It was fascinating to see the process of turning raw green tea leaves into the drink we all know and love. We saw the whole production line for green and black tea through steaming, rolling, oxidising, drying, polishing, separating and packing, and at the end we were all lucky enough to have the opportunity to drink the different types of tea

they produced. It was very impressive to taste the high quality of their teas.

As this was the last day of our voyage, we had the Captain's farewell in the evening, and then after a great dinner a wonderful slide show from Jamie really captured the fun we had shared and the many spectacular things we have all seen together on this great adventure in Macaronesia.



Ponta Delgada, São Miguel – Azores

DAY 14 | Sunday 30th April 2023

Position at 0600 on 30th April

Latitude: 37°44'2" N

Longitude: 025°39'8" W

Course: In Port

Speed: In Port

Wind Speed: SSE 6

Barometer: 1029

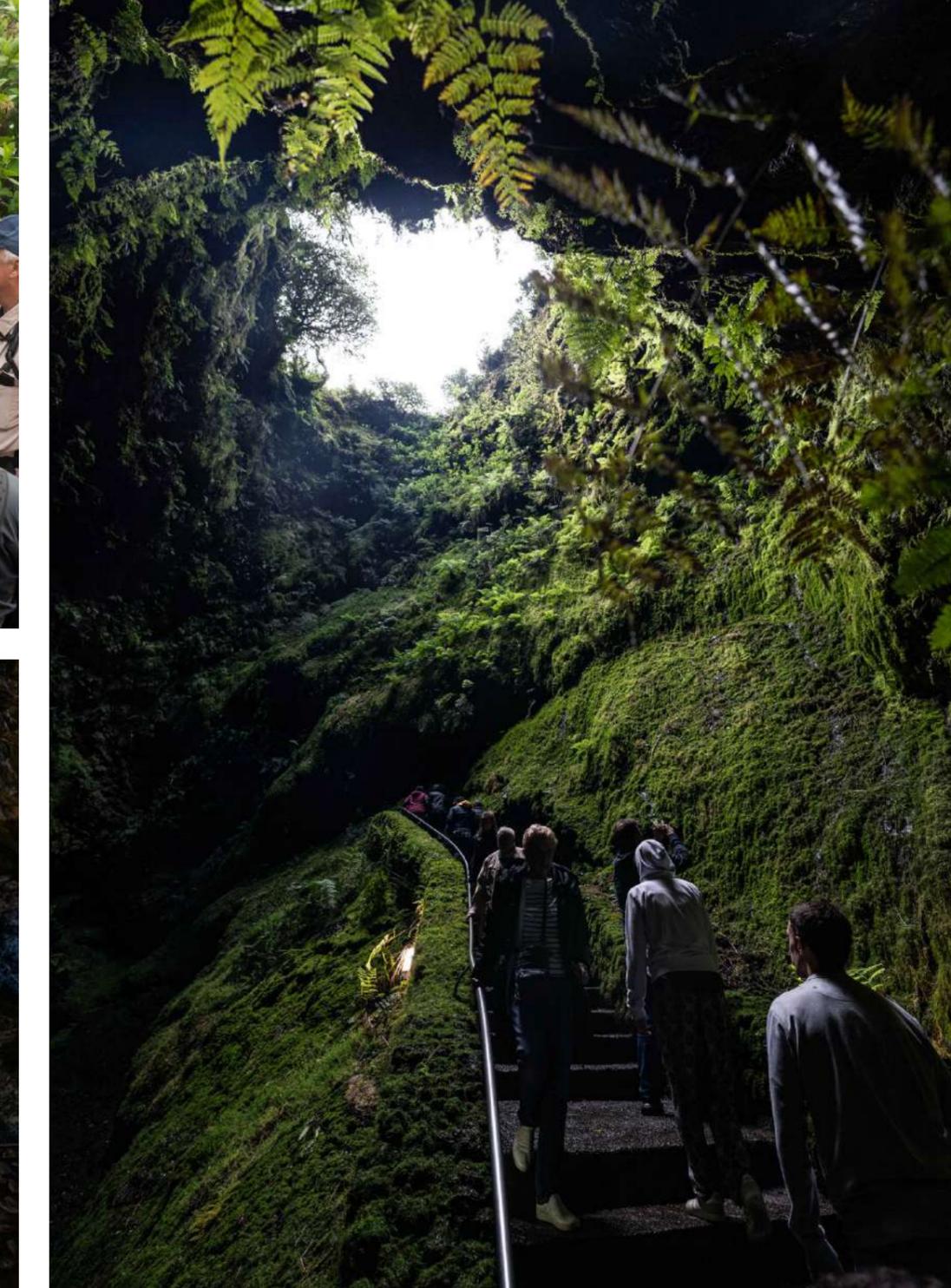
Air Temp: 16°C

The three great elemental sounds in nature are the sound of rain, the sound of wind in a primeval wood, and the sound of outer ocean on a beach. I have heard them all, and of the three elemental voices, that of the ocean is the most awesome, beautiful and varied.

—Henry Beston

Our day began with a torrential downpour which was soon followed by what was to be our final wakeup call from our beloved expedition leader, David. After breakfast, we all gathered together on Deck 4 to say goodbye or see you later to our fellow expeditioners, many of whom had transformed unwittingly from acquaintances to good friends. It was a strange feeling to bid farewell to our expedition family after two weeks onboard our faithful steed, the *Greg Mortimer*. Many a hug was given and received, and more than a few promises of future catch-ups could be heard amongst our crowd that buzzed with the enthusiasm that only those who had shared such an experience as we had could emit.

The entire Aurora Expeditions Team and the ship's crew would like to thank you for joining us on our adventurous explorations around Cape Verde, the Canary Islands and the Azores. We hope to see you on the high seas again someday in the near future!



Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Daniel and Sigurd

Number of Paddlers: 8

Total Paddle Outings: 3

Total Distance Paddled: 11.6 km

Paddlers:	Leigh Hudgins	Jane McNeilage
Kathleen Wright	Sally Johnson	Elizabeth MacMillan
Edward Hudgins	Kay Kramer	Justin Ewin

19th April 2023, Sal Rei - Distance: 4.5 km

With the ship alongside in Sal Rei, the kayakers prepared to get out and into the water. Clear blue skies and sunny conditions were tempered by gusty and breezy winds. Meeting our local kayak guide, Nobierto, at the back of the ship, the team swiftly launched and were away. Hugging the northern coastline, the kayakers cruised amongst anchored fishing vessels and dodged surf waves as they reared up over the scattered shoals.

Staying tight out of the wind, Nobierto taught us the history of the islands, fishing and salt and slaves, along with a growing future in tourism. Soon locals on the beach had seen us and were calling out to say hello to their friend, our guide. Within seconds a dozen children were jumping off the pier, swimming out and splashing all around the kayakers, holding on to our bows and getting a free ride along. Soon, Sigurd had a child sitting on the back of the kayak and one on the front; a close encounter with the locals we hadn't quite expected.

Leaving behind the town, the kayak team headed across to a small island opposite the town and made a landing on the golden sand beach. Hiking up to the old Portuguese fort, the paddlers were able to appreciate the long history of Portuguese involvement in these islands. The silent cannons of the fort are a testament to the rough history of the West African island communities. A quick morning tea of pineapple and watermelon and the paddlers were back in their boats and on their way home. A strong headwind and surging chop made for a solid challenge, but soon the team was home onboard after a fantastic paddle in Cape Verde.

28th April 2023, Andra do Heroismo on Terceira Island - Distance: 1.5 km

We got picked up at the pier in Praia da Victoria where the *Greg Morimer* was docked. We drove across the island to the town of Angra do Heroismo and arrived at the marina, where we met Juan, the guide and safety driver in a Zodiac.

We geared up and adjusted our sleek and fast surf-ski kayaks. The paddle was an exploration of the marina, where we got a nice test of these amazing kayaks, that were a bit more challenging than we are used to from previous kayaking trips with Aurora Expeditions. Unfortunately, weather conditions did not allow us to go outside in the Bay of Heroismo, but it was incredible to paddle amongst hundreds of small and large sailboats, with the historic

town of Angra above. The cathedrals, town halls, old trading warehouses, and the riot of colours, made for a truly unique paddling experience. Getting back on shore the kayak team turned into land mammals and went for a wander in town before joining the rest of the expedition for lunch.

29th April 2023, Vila de Franco, Sao Miguel - Distance: 5.6 km

The kayak team left the ship loaded with their gear and walked up into the town of Ponta Delgada. Waiting at the bus stop in the driving rain, they really had no idea what to expect or what would happen. Soon local guides, Bruno and Riccardo, arrived and we were away. In the small port town of Vila de Franco, we got our kayaks, put on our drysuits and were away. The wind had dropped completely, but it left behind some solid choppy waves and the paddle team slashed its way out of the marina and out into the Atlantic. The target island lay ahead. The remains of a volcanic cinder cone, a submarine volcano, that sent plumes of ash into the atmosphere. The ocean had cut a hole into the interior of this volcano and now it was possible for the kayakers to paddle their vessels in through the gap. Taking a moment to appreciate their position, some paddlers were able to jump in and snorkel for a few minutes. Paddling home with the wind behind us was a simple task, and it was soon time to disrobe and prepare for the second phase of the day. Driving up to the town of Furnas, the kayak team had a delicious lunch. Traditionally cooked meats and vegetables, buried underground and cooked in the heat of the volcano. A truly memorable meal that had everyone walking gently back to the van. But the day wasn't done yet. It was time for some real relaxation. The local hot springs beckoned and the whole team happily submersed themselves in the healing waters, emerging an hour later looking ten years younger and ready for a long snooze on the way home to the ship.



Bird and Mammal Sightings



Bird Species	April													
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Muscovy Duck (domestic type)							•						•	
Mallard (domestic type)													•	
Common Pochard												•		
Helmeted Guineafowl		•												
Barbary Partridge							•							
Common Quail													•	
Feral Pigeon	•	•	•	•			•	•			•	•	•	
Common Woodpigeon												•	•	•
Bolle's Pigeon								•						
Collared Dove		•	•	•			•	•			•	•		
Alexander's Swift		•	•	•										
Plain Swift							•	•						
Common Moorhen													•	
Eurasian Coot													•	•
Black-winged Stilt			•											
Grey Plover			•										•	
Kentish Plover			•										•	
Common Ringed Plover			•										•	
Semipalmated Plover													•	
Whimbrel (European)				•									•	•
Black-tailed Godwit													•	
Ruddy Turnstone			•	•							•	•	•	
Ruff													•	
Curlew Sandpiper													•	
Sanderling	•	•	•										•	
Dunlin													•	
Little Stint			•										•	

Bird Species	April													
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Least Sandpiper													•	
Wood Sandpiper			•											
Black-headed Gull												•		
Yellow-legged Gull							•	•				•	•	•
Great-black-backed Gull													•	
Common Tern											•	•	•	•
Arctic Tern					•									
Red-billed Tropicbird			•			•								
Great Northern Diver												•		
Leach's Storm-Petrel					•									
Monteiro's/Band-rumped Storm-Petrel												•		•
Fea's Petrel						•	•							
Bulwer's Petrel					•	•	•			•	•			
Cory's Shearwater						•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Cape Verde Shearwater					•									
Sooty Shearwater													•	
Manx Shearwater													•	
Barolo Shearwater						•								
Grey Heron								•						
Great Egret		•											•	
Little Egret		•			•									
Western Cattle Egret		•		•	•									
Glossy Ibis													•	
Osprey			•	•										
Common Buzzard								•	•			•	•	
Grey-headed Kingfisher			•											
Common Kestrel								•	•					



Bird and Mammal Sightings



Bird Species	April													
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Neglected Kestrel			•	•										
Alexander's Kestrel		•												
Peregrine Falcon				•										
Rose-ringed Parakeet	•													
Brown-necked Raven		•	•	•										
Common Raven							•							
African Blue Tit							•							
Greater Hoopoe-Lark			•											
Bar-tailed Lark			•											
Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark	•													
Canary Islands Chiffchaff							•	•						
Eurasian Blackcap				•			•	•			•	•	•	
Sardinian Warbler							•							
Spectacled Warbler		•												
Goldcrest								•			•		•	
Starling											•	•	•	•
Eurasian Blackbird							•	•			•	•	•	
European Robin								•			•	•	•	•
Common Waxbill			•									•	•	
House Sparrow											•	•	•	•
Spanish Sparrow	•	•	•				•	•						
Cape Verde Sparrow	•		•	•										
Grey Wagtail											•	•	•	
Berthelot's Pipit							•							
Azores Chaffinch											•	•	•	
Canary Islands Chaffinch								•						
European Greenfinch												•		

Bird Species	April													
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
European Goldfinch												•	•	
Atlantic Canary							•	•			•	•	•	
Corn Bunting							•							

Mammal Species	April													
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Sei whale					•	•								
Humpback whale			•			•								
Minke Whale					•	•								
Common dolphin						•								
Bottlenosed whale					•									
Short Finned Pilot Whale					•									
Atlantic Spotted Dolphin					•									
Green turtle				•										
Flying fish			•	•	•	•		•	•					
Tiger moth		•												
Hawk moth		•												
Swallowtail butterfly		•												
Yellow Finned Tuna					•									
El Hierro Giant Lizard							•							



Cabo Verde, Canary Islands, Azores



1	17.04	Santiago Island
2	18.04	Fogo Island
3	19.04	Boa Vista Island
4	20.04	Santo Antao Isl
5	21.04 22.04	Crossing Atlantic Ocean
6	23.04	El Hierro Isl
7	24.04	La Gomera
8	25.04 26.04	Crossing Atlantic Ocean
9	27.04	Faial Island
10	28.04	Terceira Island
11	29.04 30.04	Sao Miguel Island





Expeditioners:

Kit Armstrong

Nicola Beams

Shane Beams

Sébastien Bouillon

Allan Braun

Carol Cave

Peta Cruttenden

Brigitte Dagenais

Pedro Dias Freire

Antonio Dos Anjos Raposo

Anick Dupuis

Justin Ewin

Adira Ferreira

Rudyard Franklin

Orlando Garza

Rosemary Garza

Philippa Graham

John Graham

Jean-Francois Guimont

Martha Horman

Ian Hotchkiss

Andrea Hotchkiss

Wren Hudgins

Leigh Hudgins

Sally Johnson

Kathy Kalinowsky

Margot Kalinowsky

Kathleen Keech

Natalie Kelly

Carol Kohl

Kay Kramer

Lara Lance

Elizabeth Macmillan

Jane McNeillage

Len Miller

Kelli Ann Mills

Gordon Moodie

Dawn Moodie

Doris Neilson

Bryan Reese

Rui Silva Guedes de Oliveira Amen

Shirley Silvestri

John Sise

Judith Sise

Kristin Small

James Small II

Susan Soloyanis

Jay Spingarn

Sidney Sponer

Jae Sponer

Dennis Sponer

Amilcar Tirado

Jamie Valentino

Robert van Kempen

Gary Wapnitsky

Roger Watkiss

Ulrike Watkiss

Vicki Weinerman

Yee Sang Welten

Frank Welten

Chandra Williams

Kathleen Wright

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: David Berg

Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Onboard Expedition Manager: Samantha Deer

Ornithologist: Dominic Mitchell

Naturalist: John Kirkwood

Naturalist: Ian McCarthy

Marine Biologist: Annette Scheffer

Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Daniel Stavert

Sea Kayak Guide: Sigurd Davidsen

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ana Prado

Expedition Medic: Piotr Damski

E-Team Photography Guide: Jamie Lafferty

Zodiac Master: Sergei Andronov

Expedition Leader: David Berg

Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Onboard Expedition Manager: Samantha Deer

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Vadym Tavrovetsky

Chief Officer: Andrey Zakalashnyuk

3rd Officer: Andrii Mezentsev

Safety Officer: Sergii Voina

Bosun: Giovanni Dela Torre

Deck Cadet: Goncalo Alexandra Saraiva Aniceto Costa

Deck Cadet: Miguel Saraiva Delgado

Ship Doctor: Andres Felipe Peralta Cuervo

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

Chief Engineer: Sergiy Melnyk

Hotel Director: Pascal Joubin

Chief Purser: Willie Lirio

Executive Chef: Edgar Mangliano

Head Waiter: Allan Liscaro

IT Officer: Ihor Yesmieniev

Receptionist: Sean Akbar

Receptionist: Ana Gabriela Fernandez Araujo

Head Stateroom: Roniel Garcia

Able Seaman: Bobby Payumo

Able Seaman: Hardik Dipakbhai Rao

Able Seama: Tim Kitson

Able Seaman: Joel Noble

Able Seaman: Ajay Kumar FNU

Poetry thanks to:

John Graham

Photography thanks to:

Jamie Lafferty





