

# Antarctic Circle & Weddell Sea

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 09–24 March 2024



# Ushuaia

DAY 1 | Saturday 9 March 2024

Position at 1900 on 9 Mar

Latitude: 53°3,5' SW

Longitude: 067°48,0' W

Course: 099

Speed: 14.9 knots

Wind Speed: 6 knots W

Barometer: 981 hPa

Air Temp: 10°C

Here we are in Ushuaia, 'el fin del mundo', the southernmost city in the world, and our final taste of civilisation before we journey to the inhospitable south.

We stepped off the catamaran into the chilly wind and rain of an Ushuaian late summer, but the warm *Sylvia Earle* awaited us with a welcome spread of drinks and snacks.

With everyone checked in, Elena (Assistant Expedition Leader) announced that we would be casting our lines and leaving the dock. Many of us gathered out on deck to witness this occasion, which marks the beginning of our adventure! Once underway, we met our Expedition Leader, Ashley, in the lecture theatre, and were introduced to a few of our Expedition Team. There are 21 E-Team in total, with various specialities including ornithology, marine biology, geology, glaciology, photography, history, medicine, kayaking, snorkelling, mountaineering, mountain rescue, and SCUBA diving.

In addition to our E-Team, we have 86 wonderful ship's crew, from all corners of the world, here to look after everything from our cocktail order to the engines of the ship.

After our welcome briefing it was time for the all-important safety drill.

The sound of seven short, one long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes, grab our bulky orange lifejackets and gather at the muster station to sample our safety gear. Our safety officers and crew guided us up to the lifeboats to get us familiar with their whereabouts. Once the Captain fired the 'abandon ship' horn, we were free to carry on exploring the gorgeous *Sylvia Earle*, and for the divers, snorkellers and kayakers to meet up with their activity guides.

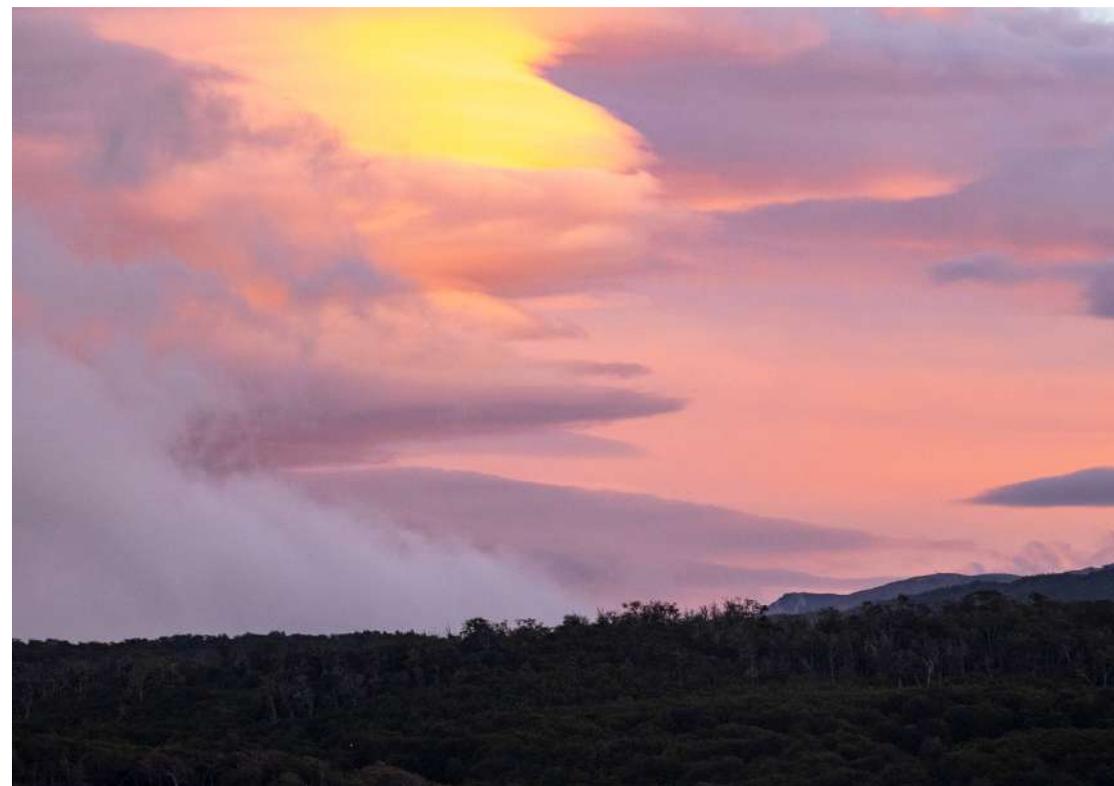
We total 75 Expeditioners from all over the world including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, UK, USA and Vietnam.

As we enjoyed our first dinner on board, we cruised along the Beagle Channel on the border between two countries: Argentina on our port side, and Chile on our starboard. Black-browed albatross and giant petrels soared in the distance, occasionally passing closer to the ship so we could appreciate their enormous wingspan. The green, rolling hills outside were a stark contrast to the landscapes we will experience in days to come.

As we left Tierra del Fuego in the distance, the sea rose to meet us in long, gentle swells, reminding us to use 'one hand for the ship' to steady ourselves.

Night-time found us rolling in a very manageable Drake, tired from our long journeys to Ushuaia, but excited for the adventure to come.





# Drake Passage

DAY 2 | Sunday 10 March 2024

## Position at 1000 on 10 Mar

Latitude: 56°18.01'S

Longitude: 064°39.7'W

Course: 127

Speed: 14 knots

Wind Speed: 4 knots WNW

Barometer: 976 hPa

Air Temp: 9°C

After a pretty calm night at sea, we could sleep in and our wake-up call was followed by a hearty breakfast. The Drake Passage has been very gentle with us. Captain Artem said, 'we are going to pay for this one on the return!' Well, maybe, maybe not – only one certainty, we cannot control it.

At 9.45am, everybody gathered in the lecture theatre for the first mandatory briefing of all the safety and security measurements in the Antarctic. Elena and the E-Team showed us how important it is to keep our distance from wildlife and respect the given instructions by IAATO, the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators. We even witnessed a little Adélie penguin being distracted enough for a skua to steal its chick from the nest. Can you imagine!

After that we did biosecurity with all our outer gear we will wear when exploring the Antarctic, and we got the right pair of Muck Boots fitted down in the Mudroom.

The morning was full of information. It was a perfect introduction before reaching land.

Right before lunch we could participate in the first Citizen Science session, to observe clouds and birds on deck. How exciting.

In the observatory lounge we heard how we could be part of the big iceberg competition and Nicole explained to us how to read a chart properly to enter our guesses as to where will we be spotting the first iceberg on this trip! That was fun.

Time for lunch and to rest a little bit, because right after, our geologist, Marcos, has prepared a lecture with the promising title of 'Antarctic Peninsula: the land of fire and ice.' We received a great overview about the nature and geology of Antarctica.

With so much to do and learn, we had to fortify ourselves with delicious cakes and rolls served for teatime, because photographer Scott was already waiting for us, to explain how we can take good pictures with our smartphones. Great! Because we don't all have a professional camera with you to capture the beauty of nature that surrounds us here.

At cocktail time at 6pm, Captain Artem and his officers came on stage to welcome us and introduce himself and the bridge team. Ashley, our Expedition Leader, promised us some surprises for the next day and with this excitement, we went to the restaurant.

Time for dinner and a tasty welcome menu.

The view by the windows was beautiful. We cannot believe we are in Antarctica for real.

Let's go sleep and dream about tomorrow! How lucky we are to be here, together...



# At Sea & Elephant Island/Muckle Bluff

DAY 3 | Monday 11 March 2024

## Position at 1100 on 11 Mar

Latitude: 64°04.6'S

Course: 134°

Wind Speed: 11 knots NNW

Air Temp: 8°C

Longitude: 057°06.3'W

Speed: 14kts

Barometer: 972 hPa

It was a beautiful morning on the ocean as we made our way towards Elephant Island, spotting our first iceberg. Welcome to Antarctica!

We were gently woken by Eddie with the theme song from Willy Wonka, 'Pure Imagination' and in the Gentoo Restaurant we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast prepared with great care by the catering team.

We attended the mandatory briefing on how to use our 'tickets to fun' to join the Zodiac operations safely. The E-Team continued to introduce themselves while demonstrating how to dress and how 'not' to wear a lifejacket.

At mid-morning, Ben offered a fantastic lecture on Sir Ernest Shackleton's life and his Antarctic expeditions. He was abruptly interrupted as a large pod of fin whales travelled past the ship, surprising all of us with our first whale encounter of the trip.

After the lecture we all made our way to deck 8 as we approached Elephant Island. More whales were spotted as well as some cheeky fur seals and large rafts of chinstrap penguins swimming by. They were recorded in the Citizen Science bird survey, along with albatross, antarctic terns, and some variety of petrels. A quick lunch followed, and we eagerly anticipated our arrival.

As we approached the island, Shackleton's story vividly in our minds, a dramatic misty veil fell. It was deemed too rough for the Zodiacs, so we relied on the amazing skills of Captain Artem to turn the *Sylvia Earle* into our close-shore cruise vessel. He pulled up tightly so we could all view the monument to the captain of the *Yelcho*, which marked the site at which 22 of Shackleton's men took shelter for 139 days awaiting rescue.

It is phenomenal to think about what Shackleton and his men went through during their fateful expedition. It is a true testament to Shackleton's family motto, 'Fortitudine Vincimus', which means 'by endurance we conquer'.

As the afternoon rolled around, we readied ourselves for our first outing. We pulled up at Muckle Bluff and lowered the Zodiacs. Cruising along the shore, the vibe in the boats was super fun. The glaciated mountains were a stunning backdrop and we saw chinstraps, gentoos, fur seals, elephant seals and the odd swimming Weddell seal.

'Staying Alive' played in the Tektite bar for cocktail hour.

Recap got underway as the sun set slowly on a magical first day in Antarctica!





# At Sea & Snow Hill Island

DAY 4 | Tuesday 12 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 12 Mar

Latitude: 62°56.6'S

Course: 181°

Longitude: 056°58.2'W

Speed: 12 kts

Wind Speed: 20 knots W

Air Temp: 4°C

Barometer: 983 hPa

The day started with a beautiful sunrise around 6am; the sky was pink and the clouds were showing off their best shapes. We have not passed the Antarctic Sound yet, so it was a great opportunity for those who were up to see the magic of this passage. Huge tabular icebergs and a sweet silence. We are in the Weddell Sea.

After breakfast, we listened to Peter's lecture, and were eager to assist the Happywhale program. Peter was charming, like our favourite biologist teacher, and then he said feel free to go outside if whales show up. And in that moment, we heard the call from E-Team safety officer, Alex, through radio on the bridge: 'Erm, Ashley, are you interested in orca?' Some of us with the E-Team ran to deck 8. There they were, just outside, more than 20 orcas, type-b icepack, swimming, being gorgeous animals, having fun. We saw them following seals and penguins, and then suddenly humpbacks in the area as well. One humpback was tail and pectoral slapping. We could hear it, breaching strongly and slowing moving, when suddenly we saw some of the orca pod swimming towards the humpback and pushing it down. What we were seeing was the adult orcas training the youngsters in the pod. They were also hunting a penguin. It was amazing, we were watching them from deck 8, deck 7, from the bow of the ship, from the aft, they were everywhere; a fantastic experience. Pretty unique, all the E-Team agreed on that. This kind of encounter happened for a reason, some luck we were in the right place at the right time, but also the good energy that is on board is another factor, so thank you, everyone, for bringing that with you. Of course, when everything ended, Peter continued with his awesome lecture about whales in the Southern Ocean.

After 30 minutes, Ashley called us; it time to go back on our way to first fist landing of the trip, Snow Hill Island. After lunch we arrived there, to calm water, massive brown mountains and the feeling of the Nordenskjöld expedition around us.

Luckily Ben gave us a very comprehensive lecture about the expedition; it is amazing everything that happened to them. The landing was super. We walked to the hut and we could get in and see the place, and we walked up to a viewpoint. After that we went for a Zodiac exploration around some beautiful icebergs.

The snorkellers found a leopard seal cruising around in the murky water near shore and decided to stay dry. Kayakers and paddlers went for a little adventure and the divers went in the water. What a fantastic day!





# James Ross Island & Red Island

DAY 5 | Wednesday 13 March 2024

Position at 0600 on 13 Mar

Latitude: 63°55.29'S

Longitude: 057°27.04'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: 5 knots S

Barometer: 980 hPa

Air Temp: 6°C

When the lyrical sounds of Edvard Grieg and Barbara's mellifluous tones gently wake us, we find ourselves at The Naze, the appropriately named northern 'nose' of James Ross Island. James Ross Island is the largest on the Weddell Sea coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. It is named after the British naval captain best known for the discovery of the Ross Sea, but whose expedition (1939–1943) also explored the northern parts of the Weddell, in the ships *Erebus* and *Terror*.

The Naze proved to be an interesting place to explore. Those ashore roamed at will across the pebbly plain and small lakes, encountering ammonite and copepod fossils, remnants of the marine life that flourished on earth before the KT extinction event 65 million years ago that wiped out 75 per cent of all life. We also saw a variety of current species – both dead and alive. Seals popped up on shore, where antarctic skuas also picked over kelp. On the gravel plain, remains of crabeater seals and the odd dead Adélie penguin and antarctic petrel remind us of the facts of life and that dominate the Antarctic experience. Some groups walked up onto the sandstone bench on the east shoulder of Mt Terrapin, gazing from this vantage point across Herbert Sound to Erebus and Terror Gulf. Kayakers were treated to another near-perfect morning, with calm conditions and an array of entrancing icebergs. Snorkellers got in the water for their inaugural outing. After another treat-filled lunch, the bridge team took us through the spectacular narrows of Herbert Sound towards our afternoon destination, Red Island.

Infrequently visited, Red Island rises like a massive gothic castle surrounded by the moat of Prince Gustav Sound. We get great views of its shattered volcanic architecture as we sail the coastline searching for a rumoured Adélie penguin colony. Finding no sign of them being home, we head across to nearby Vortex Island in brilliant afternoon sun and a light breeze. En route we encounter a pod of cruising orcas, nosing around a few Adélies on a small berg. Vortex has its own intimidating volcanic charm, but instead of a whirling vortex we find a beautiful, calm landing spot on this lovely afternoon. To get onto the beach we have to nose in between grounded bergy bits and ice boulders. Once ashore we can get a look at a sizeable colony of these engaging little birds, warming themselves in the sun, some still moulting. Hundreds more sport around our Zodiacs, sleek bullets rocketing along and springing out of the water. A flight of cormorants and some curious crabeater seals pass us by as we wind our way through some lovely, small icebergs, lit up like stained glass, in the low-angling sun. Summer has ended, and there is a chill creeping into the air, a reminder of the icy-cold destiny that awaits Antarctica in the months ahead.





# Devil Island & D'Urville Monument

DAY 6 | Thursday 14 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 14 Mar

Latitude: 63°45.0'S

Longitude: 057°21.2'W

Course: Adrift near Devil Island

Speed: 4 kts

Wind Speed: 13 knots W

Barometer: 978 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

A day of discovery in the Weddell Sea

Today marks another extraordinary day of exploration and adventure aboard our expedition vessel. As we continue our journey through this icy wonderland, each day brings new discoveries and unforgettable experiences that leave us in awe of the natural world around us.

Our day began with an early start as we set out to explore Devil Island, home to one of the largest colonies of Adélie penguins in the region. Despite the cold and snowy morning, our spirits were high as we embarked on our various activities. Some of our group ventured ashore for a scenic hike, while others took to the water in kayaks to circumnavigate the island, and still others paddled among the ice floes, encountering a diverse array of wildlife along the way.

Throughout our exploration of Devil Island, we were treated to incredible sightings of leopard seals, fur seals, and towering icebergs, each one a testament to the unique beauty and biodiversity of the Antarctic wilderness. These encounters served as a reminder of the importance of preserving this fragile ecosystem for future generations to enjoy.

As we continued our journey towards D'Urville Monument, we took advantage of the opportunity to participate in Citizen Science initiatives aimed at better understanding the Antarctic environment. Gathering on deck 8, we engaged in cloud observations and bird surveys, contributing valuable data to ongoing research efforts.

The highlight of our afternoon was a full exploration of a previously uncharted landscape of glaciers and rocks, where we were greeted by the sight of our first gentoo penguin colony. But the surprises didn't end there—our exploration was accompanied by the thrilling presence of a group of humpback whales, engaged in a mesmerising display of hunting and feeding activity.

Back on board, our adventure continued as the Expedition Team organised a 'Happywhale workshop', introducing us to another Citizen Science program focused on whale and seal photo identification. Learning how to contribute our photos to scientific research initiatives was both enlightening and empowering, reminding us of our role as stewards of the Antarctic environment.

As the day drew to a close, we bid a fond farewell to the Weddell Sea, our hearts full of gratitude for the experiences we had shared and the memories we had created. With excitement and anticipation, we set our course for the West Antarctic Peninsula, eager to continue our journey towards the elusive Antarctic Circle and whatever wonders await us there.





# Lindblad Cove & Curtiss Bay

DAY 7 | Friday 15 March 2024

## Position at 0700 on 15 Mar

Latitude: 64°12.3'S

Longitude: 063°32.8'W

Course: Adrift

Speed: 9 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots N

Barometer: 973 hPa

Air Temp: 2°C

We said goodbye to the Weddell Sea in our overnight transit from the Antarctic Sound and around to the western side of the Peninsula, with the focus of our trajectory now on reaching the Antarctic Circle at 66° south.

This morning saw another slew of fantastic encounters with humpbacks. As we swung off Bransfield Strait into Charcot Bay at first light, the variety of humpback behaviours outside the windows of the gym were a welcome distraction from the monotony of stationary bikes, treadmills, and rowing machines. They were cruising the waters, resting, feeding, and even sleeping as we ship-cruised through the translucent haze spilling down from the peaks of the Antarctic Peninsula into Lindblad Cove. Plenty of fur seals were in full display on icebergs, with cameras pointed their way also.

The afternoon's activities began with focusing on and celebrating the mainstay of the Antarctic food chain – the humble krill. Heather's informative talk on *Euphausia superba*, to give it its formal name, gave us much to think about on these unsung heroes of the oceans. The largest single-species biomass on earth, krill reminds us that something so tiny can be numerous enough to power the largest mammal on the planet – the blue whale. Soon, we have a chance to see them in action again, as our afternoon unfolds in Curtiss Bay. Here we find another calm afternoon, with plenty of brash ice moving around through fields of bergs. The rim of the mountains of the peninsula cut a striking contrast to the rocky desert landscape of the Weddell Sea. Kayakers and paddlers do battle with shifting ice, snorkellers, and divers revel in the clarity of the water, and the sharpness in the air as we zip back to the ship reminds us once again that winter is on its way.

The snorkellers had a record-breaking 40 minutes in the water, in a beautiful cove with kelp gulls and cormorants aloft.

The kayakers had a minke whale encounter, in among the outrageous sculptures of ice that bob around in the water.

And for those not involved in a specific water activity, the afternoon was still spent on the water in a mellow Zodiac cruise around the bay, with plenty of brash ice to keep staff members in the driving seats on their toes.

It feels like the days and interactions with Antarctica cannot get any better – but they do! And the wildlife continues to nudge us with surprise and wonder as another full day of adventure and experiences slowly wound down for everyone on board the *Sylvia Earle*.

*Kia kaha* and Hhappy adventures.





# Palaver Point & Recess Cove

DAY 8 | Saturday 16 March 2024

Position at 1000 on 16 Mar

Latitude: 064°09.5'S

Longitude: 061°47.2'W

Course: Variable

Speed: Variable

Wind Speed: 4 knots NE

Barometer: 984 hPa

Air Temp: 2°C

We were woken up this morning by Peter's voice on the dingdong, welcoming us to Two Hummock Island and Palaver Point with the call of penguins.

After a filling breakfast we were ready to go ashore and explore Palaver Point. But as usual, Antarctica is full of surprises, and we had to change our plans. Instead of landing, we set off to explore on a Zodiac cruise.

The Zodiac glided across the frigid waters, its rubber hull slicing through the waves as we ventured to Palaver Point. The weather was misty, snowy and windy. Our eyes widened as we approached the rocky shore. Antarctic fur seals were around in great numbers. Some stretched out in the snow, while others playfully annoyed their neighbours.

Suddenly, a chorus of chinstrap penguins emerged, their black-and-white plumage a stark contrast against the snow. We marvelled at their agility, sliding effortlessly on the snow, and waddling up the slopes, like true mountaineers.

As we continued exploring, we gazed at the towering glaciers with their ancient blue crevices and the massive icebergs they calved. But we were soon distracted, as multiple humpback whales emerged. Waving their large flippers up in the air at us and showing their flukes before diving to the depths of the ocean and disappearing. Good Happywhale times!

Even though it was a spectacular morning, the wind chill made it a chilly morning and so the Captain repositioned the ship so we could all get back on board quickly.

After a warm shower, a refuelling lunch and learning everything on composition and light from our photographer, Scott, we headed out once again to explore. A combined Zodiac cruise and landing at Recess Cove. Some of us boarded the Citizen Science Zodiac and participated in the FjordPhyto project, which involved a lot of scientific gear. Even a humpback whale got curious as to what was going on. Some of us went for a lovely paddle and enjoyed the beautiful Antarctic scenery above the water, while others got to enjoy the underwater world and snorkel with a Weddell seal. And we all got to be amazed, after a slightly slippery and steep climb up a snowy hill, by the splendid view of the glacier and the icebergs surrounding Recess Cove.

We ended this wonderful day of exploration in the lecture theatre with a recap of the day, where we learned new things about phytoplankton and the history of the Gerlache Strait.

Rich with experiences and memories that will hold a special place in our hearts forever, we cruise further south where new adventures are waiting for us.





# Damoy Point | Lemaire Channel | Wordie House

DAY 9 | Sunday 17 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 17 Mar

Latitude: 64°43.5'S

Longitude: 068°03.6'W

Course: Adrift

Speed: Adrift

Wind Speed: 4 knots NE

Barometer: 989 hPa

Air Temp: 5°C

The day dawned bright and clear with just the right number of clouds for interest as we approached Damoy Point.

This scenic spot held a special connection for us, being our esteemed Expedition Leader's old stomping grounds. A welcoming committee of gentoos and a sunbathing fur seal set the scene for truly idyllic exploration. The mountains gleamed in the low-angle sun while giant petrels made periodic flyovers.

Many of our team made the ascent to a beautiful summit with views down into Port Lockroy. The bay there was artfully decorated by our colourful kayakers, and we sent imaginary postcards home while bathing in the spirit of adventure that puts us in this place after the regular human residents have retreated for winter.

Although we could easily have spent the entire day soaking up the incredible beauty of Damoy it, was soon time to clamber back through the piles of brash ice and pile everyone into the 'last' Zodiac to make our anticipated passage through the imposing Lemaire Channel.

We assembled on deck to record the moment for posterity through the lens of Scott's camera, then settled into the upper decks of the ship to be awed, overwhelmed, and impressed by the indescribable drama of the land- and sea-scape we found ourselves in. Numerous humpback whales vied for our attention, and a lonely leopard seal lay prone on a floe surrounded by the detritus of his last meal. But ultimately, it was the scenery that stole the show.

Thanks to a democratic vote by the E-Team, our afternoon involved a visit to Wordie Hut and Vernadsky Station. Here we found a piece of living history, and a maze of channels to explore that held a different feel to the places we have been so far. Soft mosses cushioned the edges of the low, rocky islands, and the calm water invited us to investigate. The kayakers found some drama, with a leopard seal pursuing and playing with an unfortunate penguin. We all learned the importance of not playing with your food, as the penguin made an unlikely escape and leapt to relative safety on the rocks. Around the same time the divers had a different kind of drama, but fortunately the worst outcome of the day was for the penguin that was 'leopard sealed'.

Safely back on board, we learned about Toby the Pig's incredible survival amongst Charcot's crew of bacon-starved sailors, and prepared for our journey across the Antarctic Circle.





# Antarctic Circle & Detaille Island & The Gullet

DAY 10 | Monday 18 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 18 Mar

Latitude: 66° 03.3' S

Longitude: 067° 16.9' W

Course: 210°

Speed: 9.2 knots

Wind Speed: 7 knots NE

Barometer: 993 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

Waking up to another day in Antarctic paradise, excitement was building throughout the ship. Today is the day! We are finally crossing the Antarctic Circle. After a quick breakfast, up to deck 8 observation lounge we went, awaiting the crossing. As we head further south, we are mesmerised by the abundance of seals and whales swimming among the big tubular icebergs. We could not have asked for a more perfect day to be out on deck. With mimosa in hand, the countdown starts 10... 9... 8... 7... 6... 5... 4... 3... 2... 1 and the ship's horn doing the honours of signifying our crossing.

As we continued our journey south of the Antarctic Circle, we took advantage of the opportunity to participate in Citizen Science initiatives aimed at better understanding the Antarctic environment. Gathering on deck 8, we engaged in cloud observations and bird surveys, contributing valuable data to ongoing research efforts.

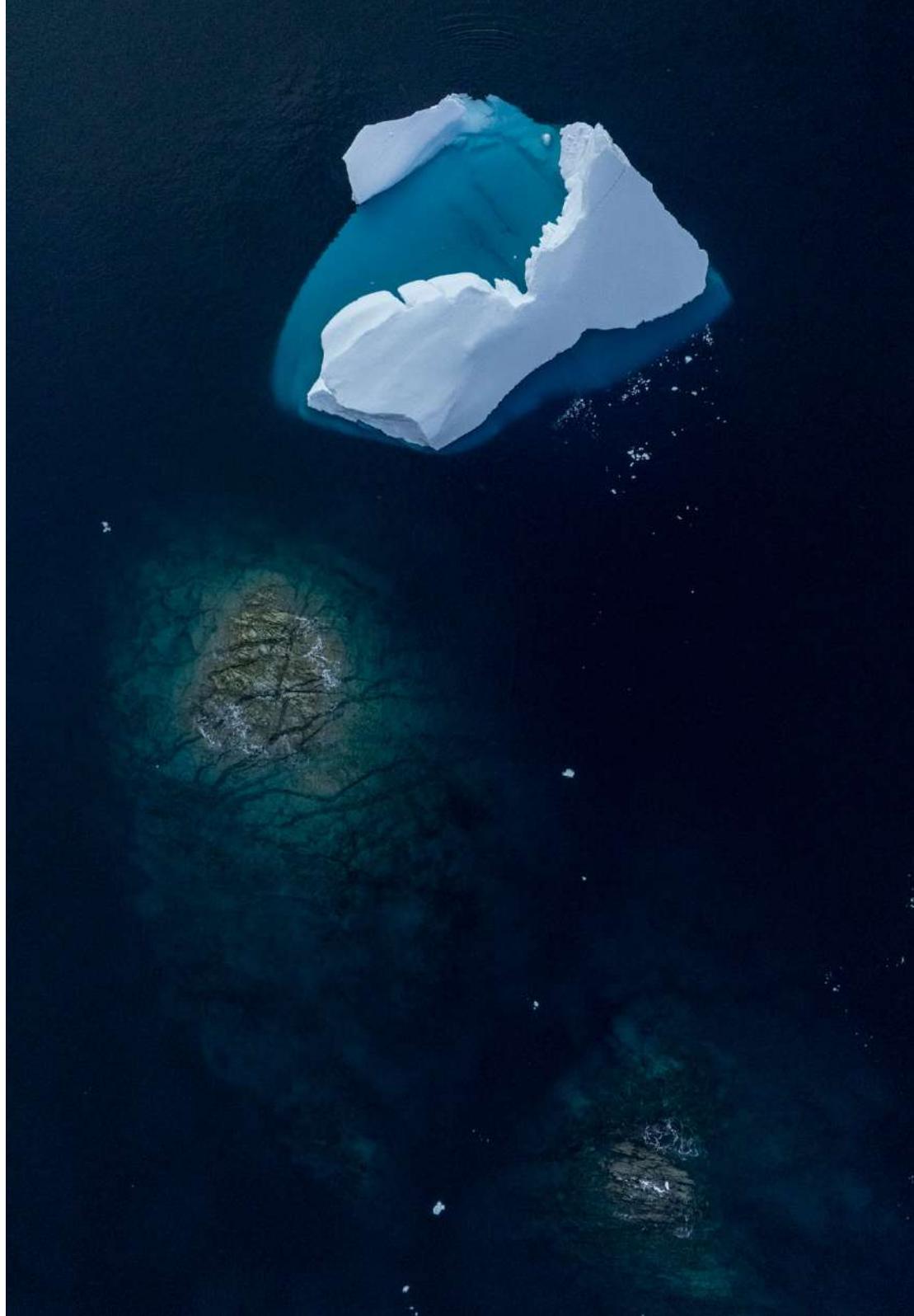
After an early lunch, it was time to explore Detaille Island. Blue skies and minimal wind created perfect conditions for a Zodiac exploration, and the chance to explore the island and 'Base W', the hut that lives on the island. Crabeater seals by the hundreds call the area home and were easily spotted sunbathing on ice flows. Some even swam over to check out the kayakers and Zodiacs nearby. On shore we got a slice of history while exploring the old hut, which gave us a glimpse on the harsh living conditions they survived throughout winter.

Our kayakers had yet another unforgettable paddle, with seals surrounding them, followed by a few close encounters with humpback whales. They were not the only excitement, though; the snorkellers were lucky to have a juvenile Weddell seal playing with them as they explored the cold waters south of the Antarctic Circle.

Back on board, the adventure continued as we made our way towards 'the Gullet'. The outside decks have never been so busy, with everyone taking in the beauty of the scenery below the circle. Weaving through icebergs, the Captain slowly but surely gives us the perfect backdrop for an evening drink. As we see the narrow passageway approaching, it really shows perspective of how big Antarctica's landscape really is.

As the day drew to a close, our hearts were full of gratitude for the experiences we had shared and the memories we had created. With excitement and anticipation, we prepare for what adventures await us beyond the circle.





# Horseshoe Island & Blaiklock Island

DAY 11 | Tuesday 19 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 19 Mar

Latitude: 64°49.5'S

Longitude: 067°42.9'W

Course: Variable, ice nav.

Speed: Variable, ice nav.

Wind Speed: SSE, force 3

Barometer: 992 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

As we woke, our journey continued south below the Antarctic Circle. The sun was hidden behind thick cloud, but we had calm seas and a light breeze – perfect conditions for our morning landing at Horseshoe Island. Straight after breakfast we were into the mudroom and onto the Zodiacs. As we cruised towards our landing, the dog-like faces of crabeater seals popped out of the water here and there, and Weddell seals peacefully snoozed on the rocky shoreline. Fur seals bickered with each other on the beaches.

We explored 'Base Y', a well-equipped British scientific base, established in the late 1950s. It was occupied from 1955–1960, and was used as a base to survey geology, meteorology and topography. Inside, it was like a time capsule with old tins of food, coffee, even a jar of Marmite.

The snorkellers explored a sheltered cove, spotting bright-red sea urchins and collecting some brash ice for their evening cocktail. The kayakers had a lovely paddle, including a minke whale encounter, and plenty of crabeater seals. The divers too had their own underwater seal encounter!

We had been mentally preparing ourselves since last night, as we knew what was next... the polar plunge. Maybe some of us had second thoughts, as we gathered in the mudroom, the chilly wind blowing up our dressing gowns. But peer pressure and bit of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) worked its magic, and 40 brave souls took the plunge.

After re-warming and re-fuelling over lunch, we headed out again for a stunning Zodiac cruise through the Jones Channel, at Blaiklock Island. We passed crabeater after crabeater as they lay on the ice. Crabeaters forage for krill primarily at dusk, dawn, and nighttime, so it seemed that we had arrived during their snooze time. We also managed to locate the burial site of Giles Kershaw, a gyrocopter pilot who passed away during an expedition here in 1990. His grave is located on a natural X-shaped rocky intrusion, and a plaque with 'guardian of solitude' marks his resting place.

During evening recap, Marcos reminded us of the approaching Autumn equinox, and Heather wowed us with Antarctica's amazing mosses. Scott asked us to start contributing to our voyage slideshow and entering the photo competition, and Ashley briefed us on tomorrow's activities. We will be continuing south on the trail of UK scientific bases with, no doubt, more adventures along the way.





# Stonington Island & Red Rock Ridge

DAY 12 | Wednesday 20 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 20 Mar

Latitude: 68°12.4'S

Longitude: 067°16.5'W

Course: 105°

Speed: 4.6 knots

Wind Speed: N Force 3

Barometer: 983 hPa

Air Temp: 4°C

Waking up to the crisp Antarctic air, we knew today held the promise of extraordinary experiences. With the Antarctic Peninsula stretching before us, our destination for the day was the captivating Stonington Island, nestled in the remote reaches of Marguerite Bay, still well within the realms that lie south of the Antarctic Circle.

Stonington Island beckoned with its unique blend of history and natural beauty. Home to the East Base of the United States and the British Antarctic Survey Station E, this rocky outpost offered us a playground unlike any other. Setting foot on the island, we were greeted by a mesmerising panorama of towering icy cliffs and rugged mountains as our morning backdrop. The morning unfolded with our usual menu of activities, from leisurely free roaming ashore, to paddling, kayaking, diving, and snorkelling!

Rejuvenated by our morning escapade, we reconvened on board for a one-of-a-kind experience: an Antarctic barbecue. Against the backdrop of stunning vistas, we savoured delicious dishes and shared laughter, some music, and once again appreciated the unique opportunity to be amid the icy splendour that only this place can offer.

As our vessel charted a course towards Red Rock Ridge, anticipation swirled in the air. Located at a staggering 68°17'S, this remote locale marked the southernmost point of our voyage—an achievement to be celebrated. But it wasn't just the latitude that captivated us; it was also the sheer majesty of the place itself. We were greeted by a landscape of unparalleled grandeur. Towering granite cliffs, seemingly infinite icebergs of seemingly infinite shapes drifted lazily in the frigid waters. Wildlife abounded, with fur seals basking on rocky outcrops, Adélie penguins jumping onto ice floes, dozens of crabeater seals, and even some whales!

As the day was ending, nature bestowed upon us one final gift: the sight of many whales encircling our ship. It was a moment of pure magic, a reminder of the untamed beauty that surrounded us. Our daily recap brought insightful information from our Expedition Team, and the plans for tomorrow: We will slowly but surely start making our way north. Gathering for dinner and surrounded by a sunset that only Antarctica can offer, we reflected on the day's adventures with awe and gratitude.

What new wonders would tomorrow bring; can it get any better? The possibilities are as endless as the horizon itself. And so, with hearts full of wonder, we drifted into dreams of another day of adventure on the farthest reaches of the earth.







# Polar Plunge

DAY 12 | Wednesday 20 March 2024



















# At Sea & Armstrong Reef

DAY 13 | Thursday 21 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 21 Mar

Latitude: 66° 50.9'S

Longitude: 068° 19.4'W

Course: 033°

Speed: 12 knots

Wind Speed: S Force 3

Barometer: 988 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

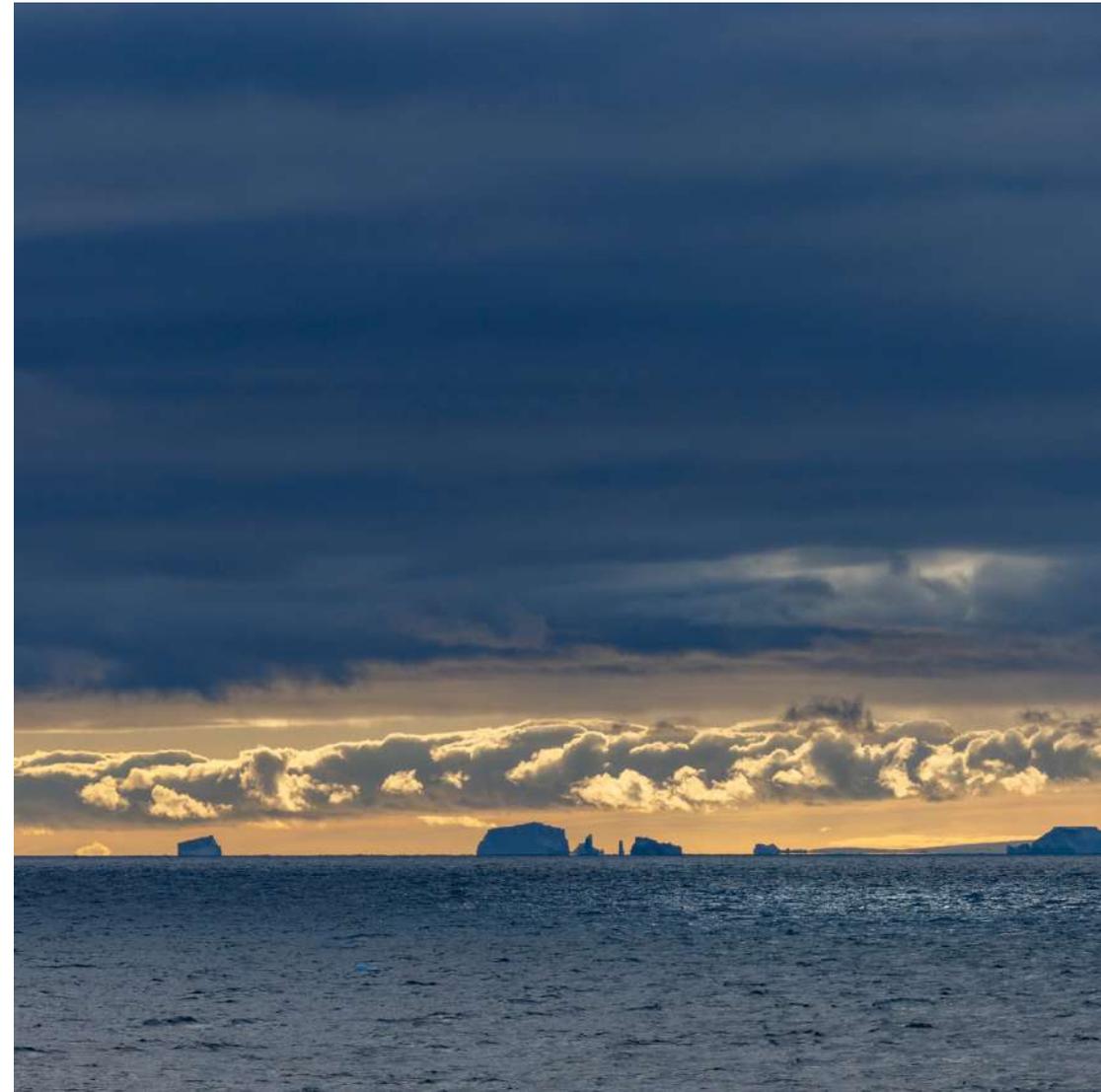
Beams of light pierce through the clouds as the sun moves slowly over the horizon and reveals stunning mountain ranges and a sea of icebergs. Antarctica has been kind to us for another day as the weather continues to surprise and delight us with its good nature.

Ben enlightened us with tales of a bygone era, the history of whaling and the emergence of the Antarctic Treaty. Peter and Marcos conducted a fascinating workshop on phytoplankton and discussed the results from the Citizen Science projects, being conducted in the field during this voyage.

Outside the sun was shining and the wind was decreasing as we cruised steadily north to our afternoon destination: Armstrong Reef. We were in uncharted waters so to speak, another exploration to a place many of us had not been before. Myriad shallow channels filled with fur seals, giant petrels and cormorants perched up on the rocky archipelago. Beyond the islands a gathering of icy sculptures lines the shores. We watched in awe as we were dwarfed by these impressive ice giants with their deep blue hues and light-snow-capped surfaces.

The excitement didn't end with our adventures in the polar wilderness. Back on board, dinner was interrupted by a flurry of activity as our polar collective auction kicked off. Ben and Aamon at the podium waving the gavel, as eager bidders battled for memorabilia, experiences and unique pieces of Antarctica that can only make those present reflect on their amazing journey. The most sought-after item was the chance to sit in the Captain's chair and drive the ship across the Drake Passage; truly something worth acquiring. But when the excitement settled, we had raised more than \$8000 for a worthwhile cause.

We are exposed to new wonders every day, and this visual feast for the senses is truly extraordinary as we reach destinations very few have ever seen before. A privilege to say the least and one for the memory bank as we continue north. Waking up each day with a sense of expectation, joy and bewilderment, you don't even need to be on a Zen Zodiac to reflect on how much this place changes your mind, body and spirit.





# Day at Sea & Melchior Island

DAY 14 | Friday 22 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 22 Mar

Latitude: 64°26.8'S

Course: 050°

Longitude: 064°28.1'W

Speed: 8.9 knots

Wind Speed: S Force 3

Air Temp: 4°C

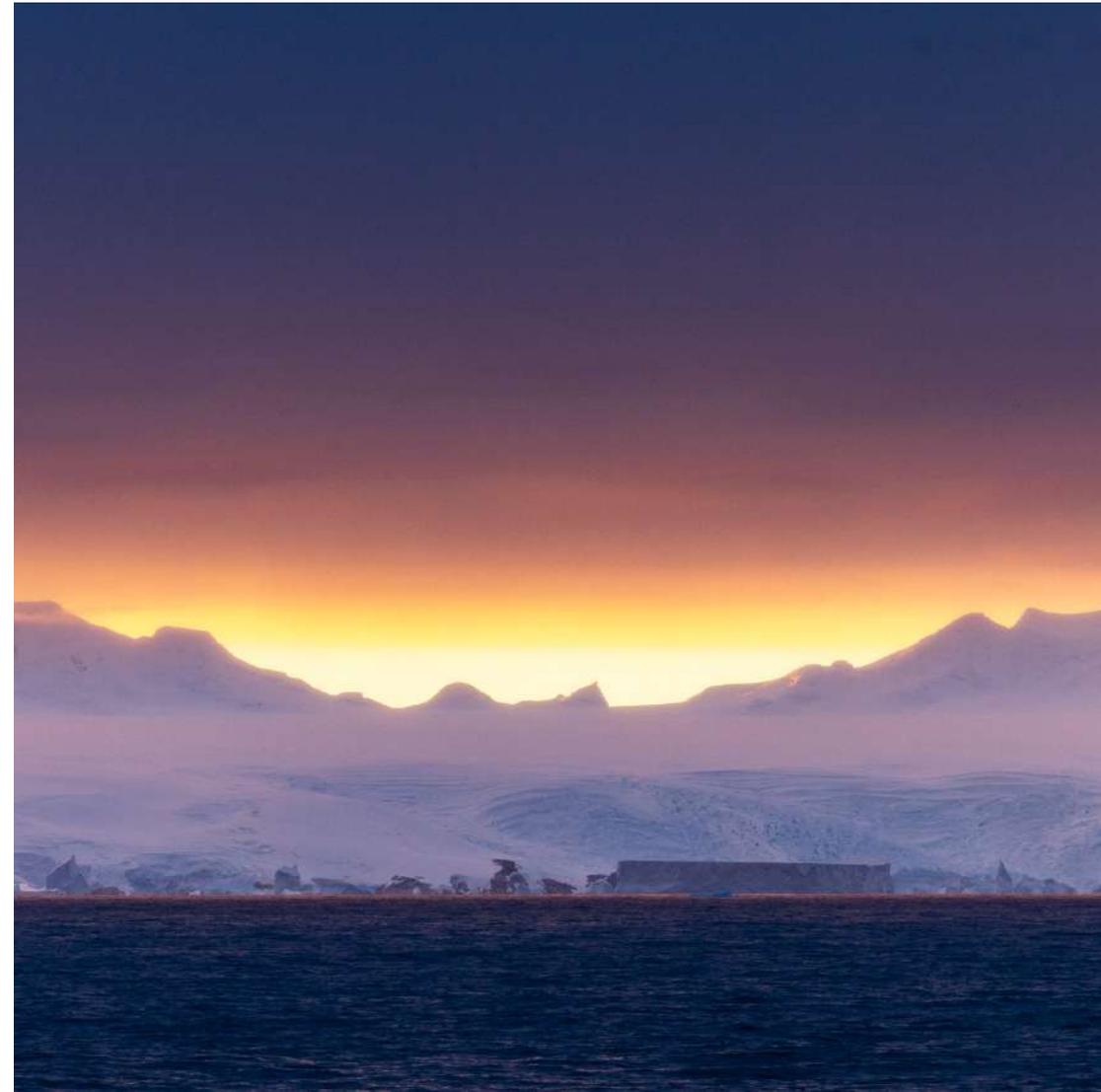
Barometer: 989 hPa

The first (or second) full day of austral autumn, 22 March, dawned foggy with a touch of snow. We were on the move to the Melchior Islands, our last stop in Antarctica. During our morning transit we were entertained by Heather's otherworldly talk on the extremophile terrestrials inhabiting the southern continent; creatures, which if they were large enough would be monsters – springtails, tardigrades, and nematodes. And who knew that Antarctica was the best place on earth to search for meteorites? These chunks of extra-terrestrial rock may have brought the earliest organic molecules, or even the first cells, to earth!

Following Heather, Ashley described her trajectory to becoming an Antarctic adventurer and regaled us with tales of her life at Rothera, a British Antarctic research station, complete with recordings and video. The talk provided a better idea of what life at the huts we visited would have been like, although Rothera is much larger. We repaired to lunch and readied ourselves for our last Zodiac cruise.

Finally, a Zodiac cruise, a kayak, and a snorkel to remind us that we were in Antarctica! A light snow and brisk breeze accompanied our little vessels wending their way through the alphabetical channels. The abundant fur seals seemed to enjoy the new pow – jousting, cavorting, and sliding around the fresh snow under impressive ice walls. Some of the seals remained motionless for so long, the fresh snow on their backs turned them into silverbacks. The snorkellers and divers were surrounded by our swimming pinniped friends. As we went from monument to lighthouse, two humpback whales surfaced close to our Zodiacs. Most Zodiacs were visited by an Uber Drinks Zodiac – Ashley and Barbara supplementing their income with a new Antarctic side gig. And the lucky kayakers got to watch the whales feed and get closer and closer as they paddled back to the ship in the bracing snow and wind. It seemed like everyone was happy to get back to the ship to warm up.

We then headed into the Drake and started to feel the increasing swell. The snow continued to blow and collect on the deck. After dinner, the evening climaxed with the dulcet tones of passengers, E-Team and crew creating community through music. A snow bear (the frozen version of water bears about which Heather told us) was raised on the observation deck. Snow angels and snowball fights provided additional cool entertainment. The new day was ceremoniously received by the ritual decapitation of the snow bear, the head of which then was presented to the Captain and his crew on the bridge. May your last days on the ship continue to be fantastic!





# Day At Sea & Drake Passage

DAY 15 | Saturday 23 March 2024

## Position at 0600 on 23 Mar

Latitude: 62°09.7'S

Course: 350°

Longitude: 63°60.2'W

Speed: 9,9 knots

Wind Speed: SW Force 7

Air Temp: 6°C

Barometer: 987 hPa

As we started our journey back north towards Ushuaia, we were lucky enough to have a calm Drake Passage. Not quite a Drake lake but not a Drake shake either!

Almost finished with our great adventure on the 7th continent. As we gently cruise through the waves of the sea, we are remembering all the experiences we have had over the last couple of weeks.

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 the world and are considered one of the most treacherous voyages a ship can make. 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 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). Our day unfolded with a series of engaging activities, from our disembarkation briefing to a couple of lectures.

We started off with 'Confusion Scurvy' during the era of polar exploration by Linda, an incredible story of exploration and scurvy.

During the afternoon the Expedition Team was busy with exercises, to great amusement to the passengers, but it's also reassuring to know that the team trains and prepares for any possible incident.

Ashley gave a presentation of how the *Sylvia Earle* is operating behind the scenes of the comfortable hotel department.

Today was also the perfect time to share stories, and exchange contact and photos with the new friends made onboard.

Marcus and Peter took us to deck 8 in the afternoon for our final e-bird survey, putting to the test our knowledge learned during our expedition.

Tonight, we are retreating to our cabins, with a little nostalgia and dreading tomorrow morning, as this will conclude the end of this unique and extraordinary journey, for now. We will head back home with our hearts full of gratitude from this experience and already dreaming of our next expedition.



# Day at Sea & Drake Passage

DAY 16 | Sunday 24 March

Position at 0700 on 24 Mar

Latitude: 57°59.1'S

Longitude: 065°18.9'W

Course: 350°

Speed: 9 Knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots W

Barometer: 975 hPa

Air Temp: 8°C

It was smooth with just a bit of swell on the Drake Passage today. Waves gently buffeted the ship on our port side as we headed north to Ushuaia, back to the world of people again. Today was packed with knowledge and storytelling. Nicole started the morning with an inspiring and uplifting lecture on the history and impact of women in Antarctica. The amazing contribution women have made to science, exploration and adventure in this area is exceptional, and much appreciated.

Ben enlightened and entertained us with a recollection of the time he was 'beset's on a ship in East Antarctica. They endured days of uncertainty, held fast in the sea ice, until finally rescued by a helicopter from a Chinese ice-breaker ship. The Australian team and their mascot, 'Stay', were transferred to the Aurora Australis research vessel. Drama on the high seas always makes for a great story.

Peter was keen for a bird survey despite the cloudy weather, and was rewarded with a variety of seabirds including petrels, albatross and prions.

Throughout the afternoon the bridge graciously held tours. Captain Artem was happy to explain some of the technology and systems they are employing on the *Sylvia Earle*. Two passengers (Lucy and Melanie) had bid at auction to drive the ship on the Drake Passage and did so today. Not everyone can say they have done that.

People disappeared to pack their luggage and started to reappear for the activity slideshows and farewell toasts. All the activities had been blessed with good weather and interesting locations.

Tonight, we had a Captain's Farewell, a final goodbye from the Aurora E-Team and our wonderful voyage slide show. The photos captured so much of the beauty and majesty we had experienced on our journey. Thank you, Scott, and all the contributors. We enjoyed our last dinner, and a thank you to the hardworking crew, who tirelessly look after all our needs. A couple of birthdays were also celebrated today: Dirk and Jay. We met as fellow Expeditioners; we leave as friends tomorrow morning. It has been an exceptional voyage. Thank you.



# Ushuaia | Disembarkation

DAY 17 | Monday 25 March

**Position at 0700 on 25 Mar**

Latitude: 54°52.05'S

Longitude: 067°59.2'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: Variable

Barometer: 1012 hPa

Air Temp: 11°C

Today we heard very early in the morning, at 6am, Ashley's calm voice to wake us up on our final and disembarkation day. The Beagle Channel was still in the dark and we could see already the lights of Ushuaia ahead of us. We packed our stuff and headed down for breakfast to have enough energy for our travels today.

We said goodbye to all our new friends we made on this wonderful expedition and waited to be called down for our transports. This time we won't be using the Mudroom and the Zodiacs, but the gangway on Deck 4 as we are docked in the port of Ushuaia.

On time at 8am we heard Barbara's voice over the speakers and the moment came when we had to leave. Our luggage waited already on the pier, as well as the buses and the whole Expedition Team waved us goodbye. With a lot of fantastic experiences and memories, we are all heading in different directions, but we will see each other again.



# Kayaking & Paddling Log

Kayak Masters: Vanja, Hodei, Tracy, Sigurd and Eamon

Number of Kayakers: 20

Total Outings: 13

Number of Paddlers: 7

Total Distance: 65.79 km

Kayakers:	Rob Karoly	Jay Tatikonda
Grega Gimpelj Domjanic	Niel McMullin	Joanne Collet
Marko Sulak	Penny McMullin	Melainie Jane
Rick Hughes	Cintia Pino	Lauren Koenig
Sue Hughes	Frederic De Selliers De Moranville	Ben Barnes
Dalton G Johnson	Julia Pomazkina	Thahn Nguyen
Margarite Karoly	Rob Reynolds	Vu Ky
Paddlers:	Annette Wong	Robyn De Wit
Lucy Armstrong	Leesa Abrams	Kara Johnson
Judith Langweiler	Andrew Barrowman	

## 12/03/24, PM: Snow Hill. Distance: 4.2 km

We always hope for great conditions for our first outing. Well, this afternoon Snow Hill was too perfect! What this means is that it was so still, sunny and glassy calm that every outing after this was cursed to be more 'Antarctic'. Anyway, we enjoyed this spectacular afternoon. The paddlers went to see the hut first, then slipped smoothly into the sea. Just beautiful. The kayakers started on the water, then visited the stylish Swedish hut. We rounded our first icebergs and got to know each other and our kayaks. It's fair to say by the end of the outing we were happy with our decision to be kayakers and paddlers. The guides, however, were concerned about what foul weather was to come in days ahead. They did not need to worry; it turned out this voyage was to be blessed.

## 13/03/24, AM: The Naze. Distance: 5.8 km

Picture-perfect conditions for our second outing as well. There was no option to kayak and land, which was a great as it meant we could all paddle in peace with no Zodiac logistical interruptions. The sheltered bay of The Naze was scattered with icebergs so that became our focus, drifting from one to the next. The strange thing was that there was no wildlife here. I think we saw one Weddell seal on the rocks and a handful of birds, but that was all. Still, it was a rewarding paddle that burned off some of the galley's fine desserts.

## 14/03/24, AM: Devil Island. Distance: 6.8 km

It was snowing lightly for our paddle outings this morning. A big group of kayakers decided to do the hike to a great viewpoint high on Devil Island. The handful who did join were rewarded with an interesting circumnavigation around the whole island. Leopard seals were spotted within minutes of leaving the ship. A fur seal was dominating a piece of ice real estate and scaring the much bigger leopards off it. It seems on land at least, the fur is brave. We saw at least four more leopards and several fur seals behind the island.

## 15/03/24, PM: Curtis Island. Distance: 4.8 km

A new area for the kayak guides but it looked interesting as we slowly approached with the ship. We headed out from the marina in our little plastic ships and set a course for the round, snowy island to our west. The island was surrounded by large, gorgeous bergs in all different shapes and colours. We soon realised why. The island had many small, rocky little islets around it as well, and it was shallow. We also discovered that a decent tidal current brought lots of ice from nearby glaciers, and the bergs had likely gotten stranded around this snowy island obstacle. Wildlife was living here also; we spotted seals, many birds, and a minke whale was seen by some. The outing was coming to an end, but we wanted to stay longer. We waited for a pickup and watched some Adélie walking around on an iceberg. They were getting the courage up to jump in, with these strange, colourful aliens floating near them and staring at them so intently. Our Uber Zodiac arrived, but so had a lot of ice, gathered thick between us and the ship. We did not have to overwinter, but it was slow going.

## 16/03/24, PM: Recess Cove. Distance: 4.7 km

The wind in Bransfield Strait disappeared when we entered the protection of Recess Cove. A huge iceberg greeted us on our arrival. We launched off the rear of the ship and headed towards some rocky islets near the coast; the water was super clear here and we found some channels to glide through. We made some distance this afternoon and were soon out of sight from the ship. Lots of brash ice had gathered around the point and the quiet and the scenery was spectacular. We turned back towards the ship and the landing sight. The paddle group was out on the water as well, enjoying their own route from the landing site. Some humpback whales were spotted in the distance, cruising past slowly. The kayakers who wanted to made the continental landing; others stayed on and paddled some more.

## 17/03/24, AM: Damoy to Lockroy. Distance: 3.8 km

There was a decent wind blowing as the brave few kayakers left the shelter of the ship. The destination, Port Lockroy, was downwind, so we were in luck. The first stop was to explore the small bay at Damoy, where the historical hut is located. Then as we cruised past Casabianca Island, we watched the gentoo penguins all huddled on the rocks, some still in their moulting stage. Some giant petrels were spotted on shore and occasionally in flight. Rounding the corner to Lockroy, we faced some wind but persisted forwards. Our reward was the shelter of a few rocky islands there. The British base is located on one and a decent gentoo colony on another. We could see the remains of whale bones scattered onshore amongst the penguins. We used the Zodiac to return and had a curious cormorant keep up with us for a lot of the way.

## 18/03/24, PM: Wordie Hut. Distance: 3.33 km

Today's outing was short but sweet, as in short in distance. The group paddled from the ship between two of the many Argentine Islands. Lots of penguins swimming in rafts beside us. We headed towards the Ukranian station of Vernadsky. As we approached, we saw a leopard seal lurking near the rocky shoreline. It was curious at our strange, colourful vessels. Then its attention was refocused and it started darting around and suddenly appeared with a penguin in its mouth. It was like a wildlife documentary on water, and we had front-row seats. What a gory but fascinating spectacle. It flung the poor penguin around in the air. We rafted up to better view the carnage. We eventually were collected by a couple of Zodiacs and transferred to the historical Wordie House to have a look at the museum-like hut. It is in an amazing set of small channels, which today had another leopard seal seemingly guarding the hut. A memorable outing.

### 18/03/24, PM: Detaille Island. Distance: 4.96 km

South of the Circle now and the scenery was magnificent. We could not ask for better conditions. The sun was out, and the sea was glassy calm. To make it better we were at a site that had it all for kayaking and paddling. The kayakers set out for a giant iceberg archway they had spotted from the ship. The paddlers went to explore closer to the islands after landing to see Detaille hut. Whales! Humpbacks were spotted near the archway and there was a long silence as we watched the gentle, sleeping giants. Cruising past more bergs we saw crabeater seals on ice on our way to the main island. Here there were channels and gaps to explore before we finished next to a berg that at first had 12 seals frolicking about it, but that number soon multiplied to 40 or more curious crabeaters. It was a spectacle to witness and the end to a perfect outing.

### 19/03/24, AM: Horseshoe Island. Distance: 6 km

We were offered an option to kayak and then land to see the historical hut on shore, or to stay on the water and paddle some more. The group was drawn to some sculptural icebergs directly behind the ship and so that was our initial direction. Admiring the bergs, we aimed for the rocky point and cruised along the shoreline. There were crabeater seals resting or swimming near ice floes. At one point a curious minke whale appeared beside us then seemed to dive right underneath a few of our kayaks. Some left to see the hut and amazing green malachite of the landing site, whilst a few remained to watch penguins and fur seals from our kayaks. We then paddled back to the ship. The paddle group had a very similar experience but on a different stretch of coast, and they had more time on land.

### 19/03/24, PM: Blaiklock Island. Distance: 5.5 km

This was going to be new territory for everyone; even the ship had not been to this location. She dropped us off in the calm brash ice and we kayaked and paddled while the ship slowly repositioned further west. It was novel to watch the ship slide by at about the same speed as us. At one point we had to stop to let it pass. On the ice there were plenty of resting crabeater seals, and a few in the water as well, playing about. The floating ice was thick in places, so we took care not to get stuck in it. The main reason we chose this new location was that we were all looking for a grave site. Yes, an adventurer and pilot Giles Kershaw was laid to rest here after crashing his microlite aircraft nearby in 1990. It was a beautiful area and a view of the giant glacier from the grave site was spectacular. A sombre but lovely outing in amazing conditions.

### 20/03/24, AM: Stonington Island. Distance: 6.3 Km

Blessed again with great conditions, we had kayakers and paddlers on the water again today. The water was very clear close to the shore of Neny Island. Lovely grey granite rocks with black intrusions below and beside us. We crossed the passage towards the huts, and we could see the fairly active glacier dominating the scene behind Stonington Island. It must have been very close when the huts were constructed. We glided past penguins and seals. Those who wished to visit the huts on land got off the water, and the rest of us continued a very relaxed paddle.

### 20/03/24, PM: Red Rock Ridge. Distance: 4.4 km

This was a new spot for most of the guides. Hodei had been here and assured us we were in for a good surprise. He was correct. Kayaking from the ship we could see sheltered waters among many small rock skerries and islets. Ruling each little rocky kingdom was at least one or two brave fur seals. Then there were the penguins. Hundreds of Adélie's either on land or swimming and feeding. They were hilarious. Jumping and sliding off little ice growlers and brash. They swam past us in rafts and then launched themselves onto land or ice. Very entertaining. We explored rocky bays and followed the islands out from the point. Impressive blue icebergs shone with the setting sun on them; beautiful. Another new favourite kayak location.

### 22/03/24, PM: Melchior Islands. Distance: 5.2 km

This was our last chance to paddle or kayak and most everyone was keen despite the bitterly cold wind and icy snow that awaited us. The wind seemed to increase as we departed the ship, but we were determined to get one more outing done. Both groups found sheltered locations at either end of Gamma Island. The kayakers started near the Argentine summer base of Melchior. The paddlers near a small rocky island with some proud fur seals on it. Fur seals dominated this area; there were so many of them swimming with us and watching us from their snowy ledges. It was snowing consistently, and we were covered in white. Our glasses and goggles needed constant wiping. The wind was strong, and cold, so we hugged the coastline. The kayakers stayed out a little longer and were rewarded with two feeding humpback whales that turned and passed by the awestruck group. This was a great way to finish an excellent voyage. We returned to the *Sylvia Earle* to rewarm and rest before tonight's kayak karaoke.





# Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guide: Eddie Hauzer, Rosie Leaney

Number of Snorkellers: 4

Total Outings: 13

Snorkellers:

Elizabeth Capaldi

Nick Hatherly

Emily Nyhan

Daniel Wylie

## 12/03/24, PM: Snow Hill Island

A beautiful afternoon with glassy water and sunny skies. After some time on land to explore the historical and geological attractions, we met Eddie and Rosie on shore. Being quite a muddy island, the water along the shore was brown and we knew there would be zero visibility; however, just to check out our gear, it would do the job. We picked a site for our beach entry, and as we were heading towards it, the unmistakable head of a leopard seal popped up. We made the decision not to do the checkout snorkel. Instead we headed over to ensure the divers had safety cover, then explored the different shape and colours of the bergy-bits grounded in the bay. It was amazing to peer into the blue and see the hidden 90 per cent of these bergs.

## 13/03/24, AM: The Naze

Attempt number two at our shakedown snorkel! This time the only seals on shore were one Weddell and one fur seal. So we had the green light to get in the water. We lowered ourselves over the edge of the Zodiac slowly into shallow water where we could stand up. Once we were happy in our gear, we swam over to a growler, and spent some time admiring this from underwater. A little bit of troubleshooting with gear took place, and that is exactly what the shakedown is for. Water temp: 1-degree Celsius

## 13/03/24, PM: Vortex Island

This was an exploratory site – meaning none of our team, not even the Captain, had been there before. After a short landing to view the Adélie colony, we submerged ourselves in the icy water (less than 1-degree Celsius!), to see those rafts of Adélies zoom by through the clear blue water; amazing! We didn't want to leave the water, but eventually had to get back onto the Zodiac. We cruised back to the ship with big smiles on our faces.

## 14/03/24, PM: D'Urville Monument

We set off on a Zodiac cruise to explore the rocky coastline. Gentoo penguins porpoised around our Zodiac, and we could see their colony on the rocky shore. We stopped to watch a few humpback whales feeding – lunging on their sides with the glacial backdrop – what a sight! Cruising back along the coast, Eddie spotted a 'helmet' jelly. With great excitement, we put our GoPro cameras in the water to film its gorgeous pink and orange hues, with an alien-like body form. Em and Dan got kitted up and slid into the water, exploring on the edge of the brash ice. They spotted a ctenophore and even had a few gentoo penguins buzzing past. It was our coldest snorkel yet, at 0-degrees Celsius.

## 15/03/24, PM: Curtiss Bay

A lovely sunny afternoon with calm water. We spent some time scouting around the ice and rocky shore, until we found a beautiful bay. Bright-green mosses and orange lichens decorated the rock faces, and through the clear water we could see kelp and coralline algae. Snorkellers swam all around this little calm bay, finding limpets, snails, krill and kelp. It was a stunning underwater 'landscape'.

## 16/03/24, AM: Palaver Point

A windy and snowy morning! But that doesn't stop the snorkellers! We began with some whale-watching, a couple of sleepy humpbacks breathing on the surface. Then off to the rocky shoreline where we found a queue of chinstraps looking like they might jump in the water at any moment. Looks like a promising snorkel. We continued scouting around to the northeast of the bay, where it was more exposed to the wind, and had a number of fur seals hauled out on land. We opted to go back to the penguin site, where it was more sheltered. Snorkellers had a good 30 minutes investigating the rocky shoreline in beautiful, clear water. The penguins, however, opted to stay dry and did not take the plunge!

## 16/03/24, PM: Recess Cove

Nice calm conditions, a quick 'continental landing' then off to scout for a snorkel spot! We got in on the east side of a small island, next to a pebbly beach. A Weddell seal eyed us from its resting spot on the beach, and eventually undulated into the water. It seemed curious about us, edging closer, but then as the kayaks rounded the corner, it backed off. Once the kayaks left, it made a beeline for the snorkellers and spent about 10 minutes playing 'hide and seek' behind an iceberg, or staring at the snorkellers with its huge eyes! What an experience; everyone had smiles on their faces!

## 17/03/24, AM: Damoy Point (in Dorian Bay)

A little bit windier today (15 knots) but the water was a balmy 2-degrees Celsius! After a little time exploring the landing we headed to Casabianca Island, just offshore. We swam around the rocky coastline on the southwest side – Dan spotted a polychaete worm. We waited to see if some of the resident gentoo penguins were going to jump in for a swim, but they opted to stay dry. There was a Weddell seal in the water on the other side of the bay, but it did not deem us worthy of further investigation. After 35 minutes in the water, we had a splashy Zodiac ride back to the ship.

## 18/03/24, PM: Detaille Island

Our first snorkel inside the Antarctic Circle! We did a Zodiac stop to observe some curious behaviour of crabeater seals swimming in circles around an iceberg. Then a quick visit to the fascinating 'Base W' before heading just around the corner into a secluded bay for our snorkel. Beautiful, calm conditions, clear water, and we were even visited by a very small, young Weddell seal who seemed intrigued by us! It then hauled out onto the rocks only 15 metres from our Zodiac, and began to sing softly. Just gorgeous.

### 19/03/24, AM: Horseshoe Island

Another flat, calm day, with a secluded bay to snorkel. A couple of crabeaters were hauled out on a large ice floe about 50 metres away, but they did not deem us interesting enough for further investigation. However, we did observe some antarctic sea urchins, like bright-red pin cushions moving slowly across the rocks. Liz even saw one fish – a lucky find for an antarctic snorkeller!

### 20/03/24, AM: Stonington Island

The water was a bit murky around the island, so we went for a swim on the adjacent coast. Adélie penguins gathered on the shore but were reluctant to come in. A few Weddell seals snoozed on the beach, and didn't move an inch. The incoming tide brought with it some brash ice, which we snorkelled through – an interesting sensation!

### 21/03/24, PM: Armstrong Reef

This was an exploratory snorkel, as none of the team had been here! The low-lying, rocky islands were dotted with fur seals, and we found a nice, sheltered spot where there were a few of them in the water. They were very curious about us, but we weren't sure if they were too happy with our presence, so we backed off a little and explored the rocky reef.





# Dive Log

Dive Guides: Darren Clarke and Freya Dooley

Number of Divers: 5

Total Outings: 13

Divers:

Kathryn Britnell

Jett Britnell

Bob Lichenstien

Mark Owens

Asia Shin

## 12/3/24 Snow Hill Island

After our first steps on Antarctica visiting Snow Hill Island and the historical hut, it was time to get into the water for our first dive. We checked our equipment on the ship and made sure it was all working before heading ashore in our drysuits. After exploring the area for a suitable site, we decided on a shallow area with the focus on a nice grounded iceberg. A very silty bottom with a max depth of 10 metres made the perfect area to check our equipment and drysuits were all working well. It was exciting to see our first iceberg under the water and we even spotted brittle stars, starfish and an exciting sea spider!

## 13/3/24 Vortex Island

An exciting afternoon, with Bob the only one keen enough to brave the cold today. Vortex Island was a new site for us so we left the ship with ambitions of finding a new, exciting dive site. We spotted our first Adélie penguins on ice flows and found a shoreline to dive with hopes of seeing some in the water. We descended down and found a strong current taking us away from the penguins, but still lots to explore along the seabed. A highlight being the ctenophore we spotted on our safety stop.

## 15/3/24 Curtiss Bay

Another new dive site to explore this afternoon... after checking equipment and getting into drysuits on the ship, we set off to explore the bay. After finding a shallow area that looked to have good visibility and lots of life, we kitted up and got in the water. After a couple of setbacks, we were left with Asia and Bob diving, who spend 25 minutes exploring the area. Lots of kelp, brittle stars and starfish were easily spotted and the clear visibility made it an enjoyable dive.

## 16/3/24 Palaver Point (Two Hummock Island)

It was a cold Antarctic morning, yet Bob stayed keen to dive. After the usual equipment check and drysuit wearing, we jumped in the Zodiac and set off in the snow. We found a sheltered area near the snorkellers and jumped in after gearing up. It's the first time I think it felt warmer under the water! A nice sloping bottom covered in kelp and limpets. We spend about 25 minutes exploring and spotted more starfish and even the excitement of an antarctic cod.

## 17/3/24 Damoy Point

Another beautiful morning in Antarctica to explore beneath the depths! This morning at Damoy Point we had an exciting wall dive planned. We geared up and jumped into the water to explore. A steep wall full of life and colour was a nice change from our other dives. Long kelp hung down from the shallow depths and made a great home for little critters like limpets, snails and starfish. During the safety stop we discovered a rock covered with limpets, and counted at least 30 before having to end the dive.

## 19/3/24 Horseshoe Island

Today we set out with the goal of diving with some wildlife, either seals or penguins. After exploring the Island, we spotted countless fur seals, both in the water and on land/ice, which looked playful. Mark and Bob prepared for the dive and jumped in a shallow bay. Small icebergs had gathered in the area and made good entertainment to navigate around. A curious Weddell seal came to say hi and showed us their agility and speed in the water. Mission complete for the day!

## 20/3/24 Stonington Island

After some time shore exploring the huts and enjoying the scenery, time to go diving. Another new site to explore, we started scouting the area to look for potential wildlife encounters for our dive. We discovered Adélie penguins nearby and started to prepare in hope of jumping in the water near them. After descending to a rocky bottom, we saw brittle stars and countless small sea urchins; we even spotted some starfish mating! Definitely the highlight.

## 21/3/24 Armstrong Reef

After exploring the islands that form Armstrong Reef, we spotted some playful seals in the water. We decided snorkelling would be a better option, to try and get some time in the water with the beautiful creatures. After some average encounters with fur seals, we found some curious Weddell seals in a shallow area that were more entertaining. A fun afternoon it was, observing the seals swim around the shallows.

## 22/3/24 Melchior Island

Our last outing in Antarctica and it was a goodie! A cold and snowy afternoon made worth it by the fun dive we had. We found a sheltered area filled with fur seals - both in and out the water. We jumped in, stayed shallow and spent around 20 minutes watching the seals play in the water. They swam around us and wondered what weird creatures we were.

The Dive Guides thank you for being part of the dive group during your voyage! We hope you enjoyed your time exploring the depths of the cold Antarctic waters.



# Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	March											
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Gentoo Penguin			●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
Chinstrap Penguin			●					●		●		
Adélie Penguin				●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Macaroni Penguin									●			
Magellanic Penguin	●											
Wandering Albatross (Snowy)	●	●	●									
Royal Albatross		●										
Black-browed Albatross	●	●	●			●	●					
Grey-headed Albatross		●	●									
Light-mantled Albatross		●	●									
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern or Southern)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cape Petrel			●				●			●		
Snow Petrel										●		
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern Fulmar)			●				●	●		●	●	●
Prion sp. (most likely Antarctic in Antarctica)	●	●						●				
White-chinned Petrel			●									
Sooty Shearwater	●											
Wilson's Storm-petrel	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Black-bellied Storm-petrel		●	●									
Imperial Cormorant	●											
Magellanic Cormorant (Rock Shag)	●											
Antarctic Cormorant/Shag			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Skua (Brown or South Polar)				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Chilean Skua	●											
Kelp Gull	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Bird Species	March											
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Antarctic Tern			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
South American Tern	●											
Dolphin Gull	●											
Snowy Sheathbill			●	●	●	●	●					●

Mammal Species	March											
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Antarctic Fur Seal			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Southern Elephant Seal			●	●	●							
Crabeater Seal						●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Weddell Seal					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Leopard Seal				●		●				●	●	●
Minke Whale							●	●	●	●	●	●
Fin Whale			●									
Humpback Whale			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Orca				●	●						●	

# Weddell Sea & Across the Antarctic Circle

8 - 25 March 2024





# Expeditioners:

Leesa Abrams

Lucy Armstrong

Jennifer Armstrong

Ben Barnes

Andrew Barrowman

Susan Bisailon

Coralie Bishop

Kathryn Britnell

Jett Britnell

Beverly Brock-Alexander

Daniel Browder

Elizabeth Capaldi

Dominant Chung

Joanne Collett

Frederic De Selliers De Moranville

Robyn De Wit

Grega Domjanic

Susan Gowlett

John Gowlett

Simone Hatherly

Nicholas Hatherly

Andrew Hornby

Shona Hornby

Richard Hughes

Pamela Hughes

Marian Jackson

Paul Jackson

Gunther Jacobsen

Melanie Jane

Kara Johnson

Garrat Johnson

Nancy Jones

Timothy Jones

Marguerite Karoly

Robert Karoly

Lauren Koenig

Patricia Lai

Judith Langweiler

Vu Ky Le

Michael Le Captain

Angela LeCaptain

Robert Lichtenstein

Leigh Lilischkies

Kathleen Loveweitz

Wayne Mahall

Shawn Malott

Regina Olson

Neil McMullin

Penelope McMullin

John Medhurst

Nicola Medhurst

Jennifer Mikkelsen

Mary Murray

Erik Newcomb

Thanh Nguyen

Le Mai Thi Nguyen

Emily Nyhan

Dallas Olson

Mark Owens

Yulia Pomazkina

Robert Reynolds

Alan Richards

Leora Robertson

Steven Robertson

Alister Rolland

Yana Rudakov

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Dirk Selderyk

Asia Shin

Marko Sulak

Jayanth Tatikonda

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Annette Wong

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## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Ashley Perrin

Assistant Expedition Leader: Elena Wimberger

Onboard Expedition Manager: Barbara Ostwalt

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ana Prado Padro

Naturalist: Heather Chrystie

Naturalist: Peter Wimberger

Historian: Ben Maddison

Geologist: Marcos Goldin

Photography Guide: Scott Portelli

Expedition Medic: Linda Steutel

Mountain Guide: Jane Morris

Lead Kayaking Guide: Eamon Larkin

Senior Kayaking Guide: Sigurd Davidsen

Kayaking Guide: Tracy Gibson

Kayaking Guide: Hodei Orueta Ruibal

Kayaking Guide: Vanja Davidsen

Lead Snorkel Guide: Eddie Hauzer

Snorkel Guide: Rosie Leany

Zodiac Master: Nicole Genoud

Dive Team Leader: Darren Clarke

Dive Guide: Freya Dooley

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Artem Kolmykov

Chief Officer: Sergio Saldanha Hernandez

Second Officer: Yevhenii Zolotarov

Deck Cadet: Vladislav Klaptenko

Safety Officer: Alexandru Chiriac

Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan

Ship Doctor: Jose Muller San Juan

Chief Engineer: Luis Gil

First Engineer: Warlito Verzosa

IT Officer: Valentin Cojocar

Hotel Director: Alex Barkar

F&B Service Manager: Narendra Seeram

Head Bartender: Lloyd Laylo

Chief Purser: Josephine Blanco

Executive Chef: Rosauro Soriano

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: Eduardo Aloyan

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Scott Portelli

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Eddie Hauzer

