

# South Georgia and Antarctic Odyssey

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 3 December - 22 December 2024

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South Georgia and  
Antarctic Odyssey

3 December - 22 December 2024

# Ushuaia

DAY 1 | Tuesday 3 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
54°48.3' S  
**Longitude:**  
068°17.5' W

**Course:**  
Alongside  
**Speed:**  
0 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
20 knots SW  
**Barometer:**  
996 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
12°C

Embarkation can be just as hectic and full of activities as any expedition day, and today was no exception. We had an early embarkation at around midday which meant a rare daytime transit of the Beagle Channel.

First thing on the agenda was the Welcome event and to meet our Expedition Team in the lecture theatre. Next was the mandatory lifeboat drill.

After casting off, we were treated to a calm and seasonable afternoon with no shortage of spectacular views. Along the Chilean and Argentinian coast, we could see small 'ranchos' on the rolling hillsides, cattle and sheep grazing on new spring grass.

After our first yummy lunch on board, it was time for other briefings – this time the mandatory IAATO, Zodiac and bosecurity briefing followed by biosecurity cleaning of outer gear and Muck Boot exchange.

One more important thing had to be done before rest was awaiting – the jacket exchange, perfectly managed by Ana and her team.

Onboard we total 67 Expeditioners, with nationalities representing Australia (28), Austria (1), Canada (4), China (4) Singapore (2), Thailand (2), UK (8), USA (18), along with 17 Expedition Team and 86 ship's crew from all over the world.





# At Sea

DAY 2 | Thursday 4 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
54°00.7' S  
**Longitude:**  
064°04.1' W

**Course:**  
340°  
**Speed:**  
8.6 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
25 knots S  
**Barometer:**  
1000 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
6°C

Vicky's morning presentation delved into the unique aspects of the Falklands. Her talk covered everything from the region's diverse wildlife, to the challenges faced by its inhabitants. Her enthusiasm for the islands was contagious, sparking curiosity and a sense of wonder about the landscapes and wildlife we hoped to encounter.

A historical perspective on the Falklands by Jonathan transported us through time, illuminating the islands' complex past. He recounted tales of early explorers, the islanders' resilience, and the political struggles that have shaped the Falklands. His ability to weave historical events into a compelling narrative left us with a deeper

appreciation for this remote and rugged archipelago.

Later, Sue captivated us with her presentation on wind, tides, and weather. Drawing from her experiences in round-the-world yacht racing, she explained how these natural forces affect navigation and life at sea. Her stories of races influenced by shifting winds or unpredictable tides added a dynamic, real-world perspective to the science, helping us feel the raw elements of the journey.

A highlight of the day was spending time on deck with Vicky, observing the seabirds that gracefully accompanied our ship. Her expertise brought each bird to life, from the soaring albatross, to shearwaters and giant petrels.



# West Point & Saunders Islands

DAY 3 | Thursday 5 December 2024

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**Latitude:**

°51.15.7' S

**Longitude:**

060°52.629' W

**Course:**

116°

**Speed:**

10.5 knots

**Wind Speed:**

20 knots S

**Barometer:**

1009 hPa

**Air Temp:**

7°C

After gearing up in the mudroom, we took a short shuttle to shore where we were welcomed by the island's caretakers.

Our first hike led us over rolling hills to a breathtaking albatross colony, home to around 2,000 breeding pairs of black-browed albatross, as well as 500 pairs of rockhopper penguins. The scenery was mesmerising, with the birds gliding gracefully above and the rugged landscape stretching out before us. We experienced first hand the weather of the Falkland Islands, experiencing all four seasons within a few hours on shore. Some of the more adventurous members of the group opted for a longer trek around the island, where we enjoyed the unique plant life and even spotted a few Magellanic penguins along the way.

After our morning adventures, we returned to the ship for a well-earned lunch, but there was little time to rest.

A 2.5-hour boat journey took us to Saunders Island, where we were greeted by a stunning white-sand beach teeming with wildlife. King penguins, Magellanic penguins, gentoo penguins, rockhopper penguins, and black-browed albatrosses all called this beach home, as well as the lovely couple who own the island.

While some stayed along the shore appreciating the penguins, some took a scenic walk to another albatross colony, where the view of the beach and the blue waters below was simply spectacular.



# Stanley

DAY 4 | Friday 6 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
51°26.3' S  
**Longitude:**  
057°34.5' W

**Course:**  
176°  
**Speed:**  
9.3 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
15 knots SSW  
**Barometer:**  
1012 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
6°C

Upon entering Stanley Harbour conditions improved and we could see snow-dusted slopes and then a familiar looking vessel lay ahead—our sister ship the *Greg Mortimer* at anchor, waiting for us to cosy up and have a visit.

Our historian, Jonathan, gave us a tour of the town during the morning, while others wandered through the museum and downtown on their own, posing for photos at the whalebone arch and cathedral along the way.

Stanley's commercial offerings were explored as well, not only for souvenirs but also the liquid consumables on offer at the Globe and Victory pubs.

The jetty was a busy place with Zodiacs coming and going from both ships, but also because of the big gabbing

gaggle of red-jacketed guides circulating about. For the rare moment the two ships were in port together, the teams took the chance to visit and catch up.

This included a hello to the founder of Aurora and namesake of our sister ship: Mr Greg Mortimer himself, who was present and serving as their Expedition Leader.

Inevitably the time came for us to depart for further horizons. The sea lions who greeted us at the dock had relaxed into a cuddle puddle of snoozing cuteness and barely lifted a flipper at our passing.

As the wind picked up at our backs it was easy to believe that Mother Nature was bidding us farewell and following winds as we returned to the ship for lunch, and the Captain set course for South Georgia.









# At Sea

DAY 5 | Saturday 7 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
52°26.270' S  
**Longitude:**  
052°06.9' W

**Course:**  
100°  
**Speed:**  
12.5 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
32 knots S  
**Barometer:**  
1006 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
3°C

During the morning the dulcet tones of Sir Richard Attenborough introduced us to South Georgia with amazing imagery gave us a taste of what's to come in a day or two's time. That was followed by everyone's favourite holiday activity – vacuuming – during which sneaky hitchhiking seeds from the Falkland Islands were consigned to the rubbish bins.

That done, we could tuck into lunch with a virtuous glow of self-righteousness.

After lunch the intrepid Citizen Scientists gathered on deck 8 for a cloud survey. Unfortunately, the sea state meant they couldn't get outside on the decks, but they did still

manage to confirm that the grey stuff above us was indeed cloud. These observations from earth's surface help confirm data collected from passing satellites and hence calibrate NASA observations for data-deficient areas of our planet.

As we rock and rolled through the swells, Grant introduced us to the amazing world of technology contained on our phone cameras. The star of the show was the fantastic snout view of the rarely seen antarctic pig!!

Vicky then talked on amazing seabirds with salty snot, including those that were occasionally seen soaring the waves outside the window.



# At Sea

DAY 6 | Sunday 8 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
53°05.8' S  
**Longitude:**  
043°53.6' W

**Course:**  
931°  
**Speed:**  
13.1 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
16.8 knots SSW  
**Barometer:**  
995 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
1°C

The morning's tranquillity was interrupted in the best way possible by shouts of excitement as keen-eyed observers spotted the unmistakable signs of marine giants nearby. Pods of whales were sighted, their powerful exhalations creating plumes of mist against the icy backdrop. We paused to admire these magnificent creatures, with some passengers capturing remarkable photographs of their graceful dives and arched flukes.

By mid-morning, the anticipation of reaching South Georgia was amplified when we encountered our first iceberg. This was no ordinary chunk of ice; it was a massive tabular berg, its towering walls and flat upper surface testament to its origins in Antarctica's ice shelves. The sighting of this

pristine, floating fortress was a moment of awe for all on board and served as a reminder of the untamed beauty that lies ahead.

As the day unfolded, more tabular bergs appeared on the horizon, each unique in shape and size. The naturalists on board provided fascinating insights into their formation and journey through the Southern Ocean, sparking thoughtful discussions among the guests.

Inside, the lecture series continued, preparing us for the wonders and wildlife of South Georgia. From albatross and seals to the island's rugged terrain, the anticipation was palpable as we inched closer to our next destination.







# Fortuna Bay – Stromness Bay | Jason Harbour

DAY 7 | Monday 9 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
53°56.2' S  
**Longitude:**  
036°59.7' W

**Course:**  
100°  
**Speed:**  
9.1 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
37 knots SW  
**Barometer:**  
988 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
2°C

As we approached our beach landing, the first hiking group got a firsthand experience of walking through a colony of fur seals and newly born pups... literally one pup was born right in front of us as we stepped off the Zodiac... followed by a cheeky skua sneaking in and taking the placenta for lunch. Nothing is wasted in this land.

As the first hiking group heading up the Shackleton Walk, we turned around and saw the ship slowly make its way out of the bay. Up we went through the tussock grass and on to the rocky landscape past Crean Lake and up to the pass.

Meanwhile the second hiking party were getting ready to tackle their own fur seal beach experience and learning all about the fur trade, and the whaling station of Stromness that remained operational until 1961.

The sun continued to shine and the wind behaved itself, so we were able to get the kayaks finally into the water and the snorkellers out doing their investigating of the underwater landscape.

The rest of us did a landing among the fur seals with their newly born pups and wandered over to the small refuge hut that was built in 1911 for mail deliveries to and from the whaling stations in Stromness Bay.







# Hercules Bay | Godthul

DAY 8 | Tuesday 10 December 2024

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**Latitude:**  
54°11.8' S  
**Longitude:**  
036°34.5' W

**Wind Speed:**  
5 knots NW  
**Barometer:**  
1000 hPa

**Course:**  
306°  
**Speed:**  
0 knots

**Air Temp:**  
2°C

Hercules Bay was named by Norwegian whalers after *Hercules*, a whale catcher that visited the bay in the early 1900s.

The Expedition Team provided guests with their personalised interpretation, as we glided on our Zodiacs towards the open-ended amphitheatre of the bay. Sheer cliffs appeared as gigantic cake layers rippling into sweeping curves. We bypassed colonies of macaroni penguins to reach the impressive waterfall flowing down to the beach below. Giant petrels patrol the penguin entry points, waiting for opportunities to pounce.

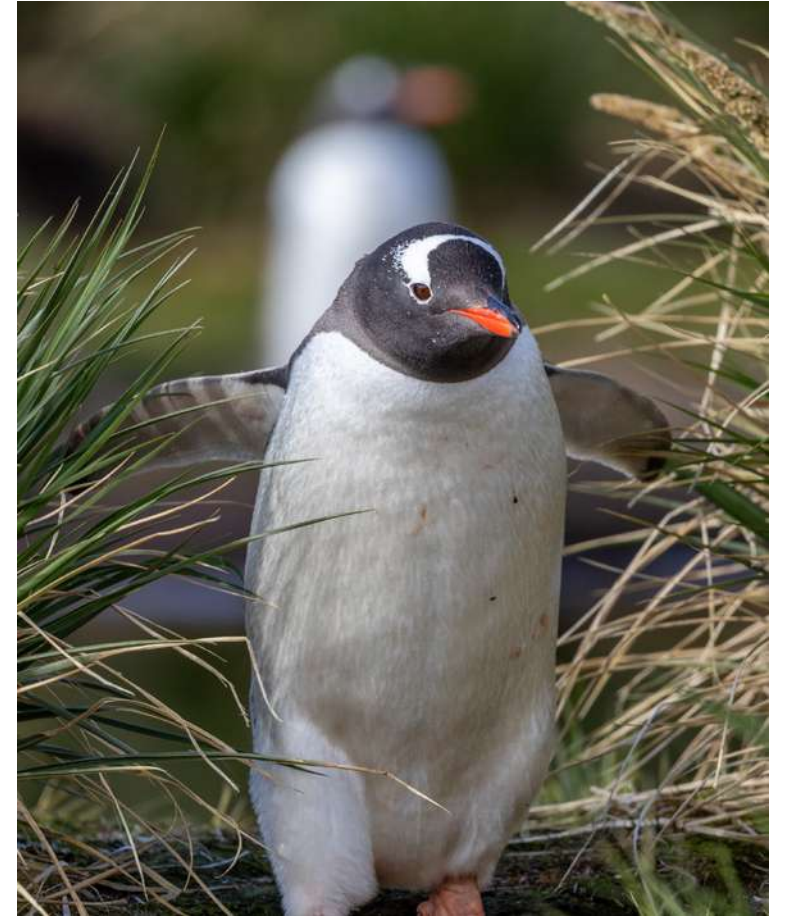
Dodging giant kelp forests on the ocean surface the Zodiacs rounded the northernmost headland of Hercules

Bay and we came upon our first blue-white iceberg hanging there in the swell.

Godthul (Norwegian for 'Good Cove'), our afternoon's destination, is situated to the south of Grytviken.

Having dodged fur and elephant seals occupying our landing beach, we climbed the gentoo penguin highway up the narrow access path. Gentoo parents descend and ascend to their colonies feeding their chicks here twice daily. South Georgia Heritage Trust's (SGHT) recent eradication of the introduced ships' rat, and the reindeer (announced 18 May 2018) have contributed to their population increase.







# Maiviken Bay–Grytviken Bay | Ocean Harbour

DAY 9 | Wednesday 11 December 2024

**Latitude:**

54°12.2'S

**Longitude:**

036°25.4' W

**Course:**

250°

**Speed:**

4.6 knots

**Wind Speed:**

Calm 3 knots

SW

**Barometer:**

1010 hPa

**Air Temp:**

4°C

For those who chose to rise early, the day began with another invigorating adventure. A two-hour hike from Maiviken to Grytviken offered stunning views and the chance to immerse ourselves once more in South Georgia's rugged beauty.

Upon arrival in Grytviken, we gathered at this historic whaling station, a stark reminder of the island's industrial past. The weathered structures and machinery told stories of a time when whaling was a dominant industry, leaving an indelible mark on this remote region.

At the whaling station's edge lies the grave of Sir Ernest Shackleton, the legendary polar explorer. Jonathan shared the fascinating history of this remarkable figure, whose adventurous spirit and resilience continue to inspire.

In the afternoon, we embarked on a captivating Zodiac cruise, a paddle on kayaks and a snorkel in Ocean Harbour, where nature is reclaiming the remnants of human activity. The rusting hull of the *Bayard* wreck, a relic of the whaling era, now serves as a haven for wildlife. Imperial shags have transformed the wreck into a nesting site, their black-and-white plumage contrasting beautifully with the bright-green tussock grass that has taken root on the ship.

As we glided through the water, we marvelled at the resilience of the natural world. Fur and elephant seals lounged on the shoreline, while seabirds such as antarctic terns and kelp gulls soared above us, filling the air not only with their calls, but also their smell!









# St Andrews Bay | Gold Harbour

DAY 10 | Thursday 12 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
54°22.9' S  
**Longitude:**  
035°54.0' W

**Course:**  
176°  
**Speed:**  
2.2 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
3.9 knots NE  
**Barometer:**  
1014 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
4°C

Our first stop, St Andrews Bay, is home to one of the largest king penguin colonies in the world. As we arrived, we were immediately struck by the vast numbers of penguins - thousands of adults tending to their chicks and young penguins exploring their surroundings.

The sheltered bay, with its towering cliffs, created a stunning backdrop for this wildlife spectacle. In addition to the penguins, we also observed seals and seabirds, making it a true highlight of our journey.

Next, we visited Gold Harbour, a more remote and rugged location but equally captivating. The harbour is known

for its dramatic cliffs, pristine beaches, and breathtaking views.

One of the standout features of Gold Harbour was the presence of male elephant seals, many of which were engaged in fierce territorial battles. The loud roars and physical confrontations added an intense dimension to the scene.

Some of us took a short walk to a nearby headland, where we were rewarded with panoramic views of the harbour and its surrounding landscape. The rugged terrain and the isolation of the location made it feel wild and untouched, a perfect contrast to the energy of the elephant seals.







# At Sea

DAY 11 | Friday 13 December 2024

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**Latitude:**  
55°51.8' S  
**Longitude:**  
038°26.9' W

**Course:**  
240°  
**Speed:**  
13.3 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
27.4 knots NW  
**Barometer:**  
1013 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
3°C

First activity of the day was a presentation given by our Onboard Expedition Manager, Anne. This information session in the library covered other Aurora destinations and voyages in the coming seasons, from the Arctic to Antarctica, and the Mediterranean.

Our special guest Lindsay Gordon then presented a comprehensive lecture on plastics pollution, the history of plastics, the nature, extent, and possible solutions to this growing global crisis. It was inspiring to hear of the work of 'Parlay for the Ocean' ([www.parlay.tv](http://www.parlay.tv)), the global environmental organisation Lindsay works for, and learn about pioneering epidemiologist Dr Shana Swan, who

has been researching the significant negative impacts of plastics on human health.

After lunch, Jonathan gave his first lecture on the life of Sir Ernest Shackleton. This spanned his early years as an apprentice seaman on a square rig vessel sailing around Cape Horn, to becoming a qualified officer on troop ships and how this led to his role on the British National Antarctic Expedition aboard the RSS *Discovery*. The presentation then covered Shackleton's own expedition to Antarctica's Ross Sea region aboard the *Nimrod*, which reached within 90 miles of the South Pole. The lecture concluded with the icy drama of race to the South Pole between Scott and Amundsen.



# At Sea

DAY 12 | Saturday 14 December 2024

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**Latitude:**  
57°21.26' S  
**Longitude:**  
046°17.52' W

**Course:**  
258°  
**Speed:**  
12.6 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
25 knots NW  
**Barometer:**  
1008 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
4°C

This morning we were immersed in the life of Sir Ernest Shackleton (Part II). Jonathan, our very knowledgeable historian, spoke at length and in detail of both the crowning achievements and epic failures that marked the life and expeditions of Shackleton.

Afterwards, the bridge opened for tours of the nerve centre of our state-of-the-art expedition ship, with real-time weather and chart data glowing on multiple monitors. Our time on the bridge, observing the crew, and learning a bit more about the Captain's duties, gave us a better understanding of the ship's operations. To top off the

afternoon, a delicious tea with amazing sweets was served!

Jocelyn, the ship's resident biologist and botanist, provided an informative lecture on the 'Who, What, Whys' of whales. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and her knowledge profound. She focused on shape, function, and sound as she guided us through the lives of whales that call these waters home. Although the view was limited, prions and the occasional albatross accompanied the ship. Seas were calmer and a number of guests ventured outside with Vicky to conduct a seabird survey.

# Point Wild | Chinstrap Camp

DAY 13 | Sunday 15 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
60°29.72' S  
**Longitude:**  
054°10.85' W

**Course:**  
210°  
**Speed:**  
13.8 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
26 knots WNW  
**Barometer:**  
1000 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
3°C

Frank Wild is largely overlooked by popular histories, noted as Shackleton's trusted second-in-command on the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, what we know as the *Endurance* Expedition, but he was the most decorated polar explorer of his era, awarded the Polar Medal five times over the course of his Antarctic career.

For over four months from 24 April to 30 August 1916, through the depths of winter with the mercury dropping as low as  $-45^{\circ}\text{C}$ , Wild and his crew were marooned on the rocky spit of land hunkered under jagged cliffs that now bear his name. The 22 men left behind as the *James Caird* departed crammed into a makeshift shelter made from

overturned lifeboats, surviving on a diet of seal, penguin, limpets and kelp.

His extraordinary resourcefulness and determination were key in keeping the crew alive, maintaining health and morale, until their rescue by the Chilean navy vessel *Yelcho*.

Nosing our Zodiacs tentatively through the brashy surge to draw close to wave-washed rocks on the fogbound headland was a rare opportunity to get close to the land walked by such tenacious characters, feel the echoes of their resilience, and a profound connection to this most wild of places.







# Hydrurga Rocks

DAY 14 | Monday 16 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
62°44.85' S  
**Longitude:**  
058°38.10' W

**Course:**  
240°  
**Speed:**  
14 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
9 knots SW  
**Barometer:**  
998 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
2°C

After breakfast, Alpine Guide Sean gave an informative lecture on the geology of Antarctica, providing a deeper understanding of how the continent's isolated landscape formed over millions of years.

After lunch, Howard and Jonathan spoke about their roles in the making of the animated film *Happy Feet*. It was fascinating to hear about the behind-the-scenes work and the inspiration behind the film, giving us a new perspective on the movie's creation.

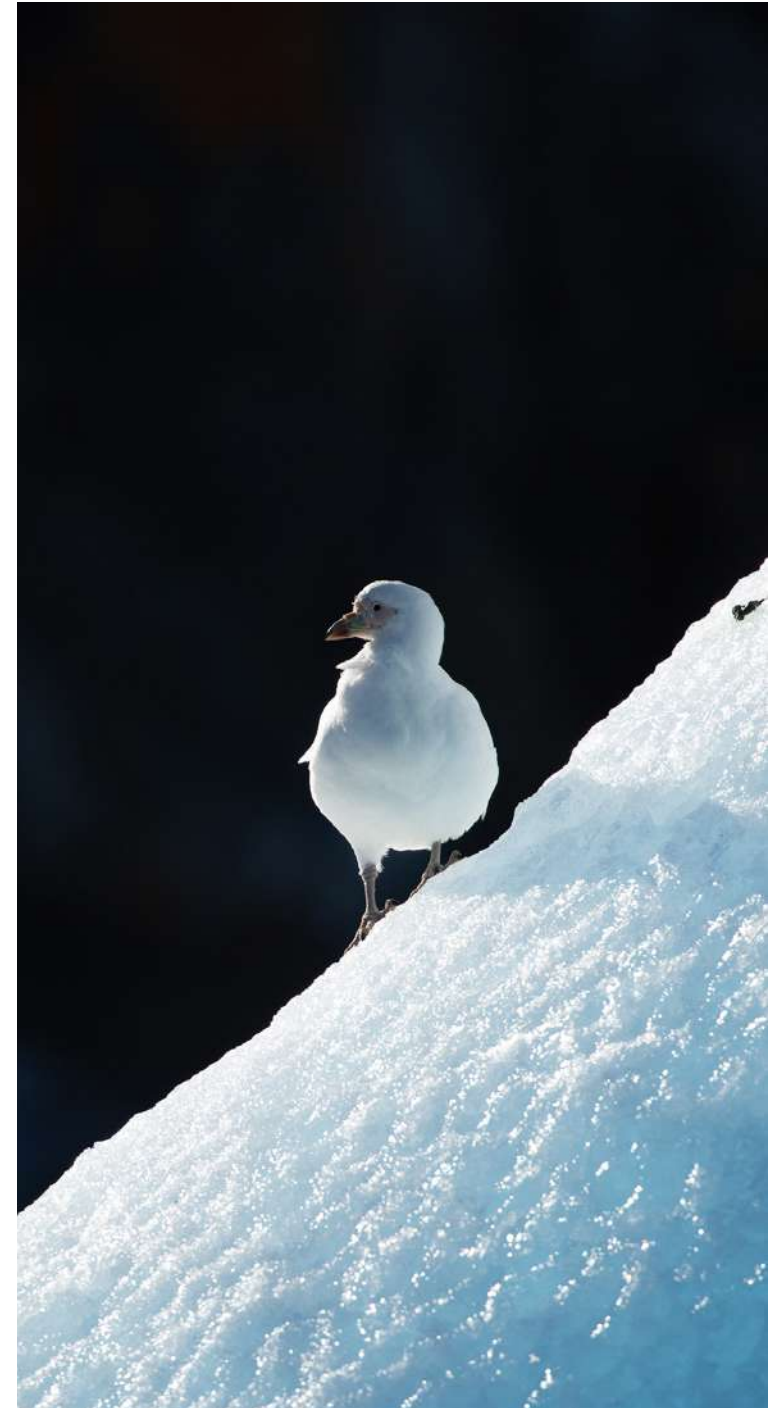
In the afternoon, we visited Hydrurga Rocks, a small group of islands east of Two Hummock Island in the Palmer Archipelago. Here, we explored the rocky terrain and saw our first chinstrap penguin rookery, complete with fluffy

chicks. A few Weddell seals were spotted resting on the snow, adding to the excitement of the visit. The weather was unexpectedly warm, with clear skies and light winds, making us regret the extra layers we had packed. Instead, we were reapplying sunscreen to protect ourselves from the sun.

Back on board, we took the group photo and enjoyed some beverages in the sun, taking in the surrounding views as more whales were spotted. We ended the day with a screening of *Happy Feet*. After hearing Howard's talk earlier, we appreciated the film even more, making for a fun and memorable conclusion to the day.







# Brown Station | Melchior Islands

DAY 15 | Tuesday 17 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
64°46.72' S  
**Longitude:**  
063°04.85' W

**Course:**  
175°  
**Speed:**  
6 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
24 knots NW  
**Barometer:**  
1006 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
1°C

The morning involved a 'split landing'. Half the time was spent on land watching gentoo penguins, and a steep hike with rewarding views in the environs of Almirante Brown Station, a summer-time Argentine base. The other half we cruised through the ice and impressive landscape surrounding the base, including the massive glacial seracs backing Skontorp Cove. In addition, some lucky souls got out on the Citizen Science Zodiac to help achieve the first FjordPhyto sampling of this trip.

No-one, however, could believe how curious and unfazed the rafts of gentoo were as they bathed and paddled around first the Zodiacs coming and going from the landing

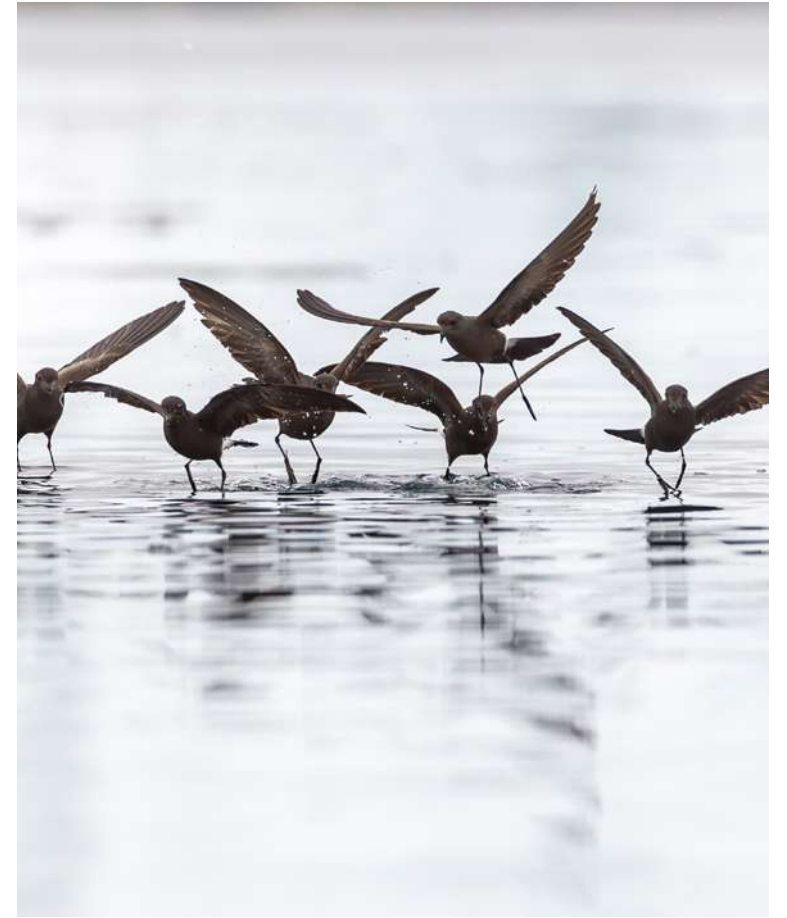
site, and they even stuck around to enjoy a swim with the snorkies!

Heading out of Paradise Bay, winds began to pick up as promised, to what looked like a full-on gale. After lunch, though, just as we arrived at our afternoon destination the winds dropped... just as predicted. Who knows what witchcraft is being practised on the bridge to keep avoiding getting skunked by bad weather.

We spent the afternoon cruising around the Melchior Islands, in awe of the diverse display of sheer glaciated slopes and nooks and crannies, where fast ice still remains along with the animals that depend on it – Weddell seals.







# Enterprise Island | Recess Cove | Graham Passage

DAY 16 | 18 Wednesday 2024

**Latitude:**  
64°25.2' S  
**Longitude:**  
062°01.1' W

**Course:**  
068°  
**Speed:**  
4.2 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
18 knots W  
**Barometer:**  
987 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
1°C

In the morning the snowshoers got up in the grey light on to a lovely ridge above the wreck of the *Guvernøren* with views out into the Gerlache Strait.

We learned the history of the wreck, which was related to an incident back in 1915. At the end of a successful whaling season, the ship crew threw a party that got a little out of hand. They partied so hard that they knocked a lamp off a table and the ship caught on fire. Miraculously the captain grounded the ship at Foyen Harbour and the entire crew of 85 got off unscathed and were rescued by another whaling ship.

The snorkellers were able to swim by the wreck and see the hull from beneath the sea.

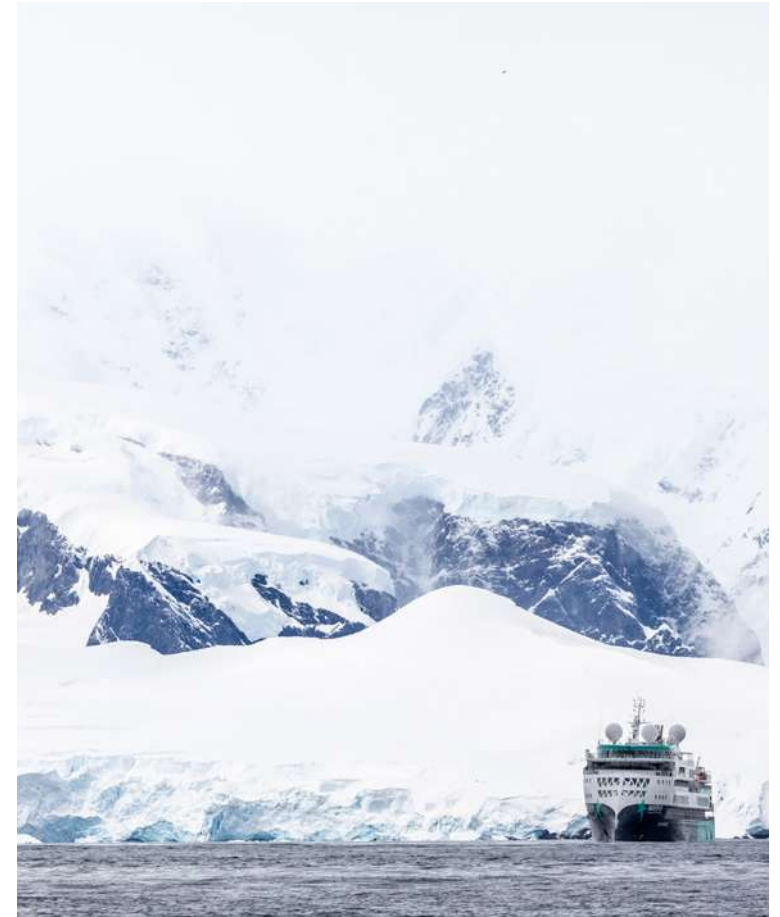
Other Zodiacs headed out to see three humpback whales breaching and a leopard seal.

We only just got back to the ship when it was announced that it was time to do the polar plunge. So, a few of us brave souls went to change into swimwear and face the cold Antarctic waters. What a buzz, and then to be greeted with warm towels and a shot of Sambuca.

The afternoon continued with more snorkelling, kayaking and a shore excursion to Recess Cove, where we could see over to the glacier face. Zodiac cruising bought us to our first sighting of a crabeater seal.







# Orne Harbour | Fournier Bay

DAY 17 | Thursday 19 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
64° 30.71' S  
**Longitude:**  
62° 23.84' W

**Course:**  
278°  
**Speed:**  
1 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
13 knots ESE  
**Barometer:**  
982 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
2°C

Following the short Zodiac cruise through swirling icebergs and brash ice, hikers were welcomed by a relaxed crabeater seal and a number of chinstrap penguins. We then zigzagged through the snow-covered slope to the top of the ridge between Orne Harbour and the Errera Channel, accompanied in some cases by those chinstrap penguins. At the top of the ridge beneath the Spigot Peak we enjoyed the expansive view towards both Cuverville and Ronge islands. Penguin colonies chorused our efforts, and humpback whales ghosted slowly just beneath the water's surface.

During the welcome lunch break on board the *Sylvia Earle* we crossed the Gerlache Strait, with plans to enjoy our final Zodiac cruise of the calm waters of Fournier Bay before heading north across Drake's Passage.

Fournier Bay provided stunning views of snowcapped mountains and icebergs, one in particular Herculean-sized. The Zodiac Citizen Science team gathered samples ready to be studied on the way back to Ushuaia, as kayakers paddled their last strokes.







# At Sea

DAY 18 | Friday 20 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
61°53.36' S  
**Longitude:**  
064°07.5' W

**Course:**  
351°  
**Speed:**  
12.3 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
17 knots ESE  
**Barometer:**  
997 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
2°C

We are at sea again, crossing the legendary Drake Passage as we make our way back to the world beyond the Southern Ocean. Despite its reputation, the Drake has been relatively kind to us, offering calmer waters for reflection on the incredible journey we've shared.

The day on board also gave us the chance to reflect on our impact on this fragile part of the world during a thought-provoking discussion about sustainability. As visitors to these remote and precious ecosystems, we carry the responsibility to tread lightly, and today was a reminder of how we can all contribute to preserving this region for future generations.

Later in the day, activity participants gathered to relive the highlights of their experiences. Stories were shared, laughter echoed, and memories were etched a little deeper into our minds. It was a warm and fitting way to celebrate our shared adventures.

The day concluded with a special farewell from our Captain, who reflected on the voyage and the bonds we've formed as a team of explorers.





# At Sea

DAY 19 | Saturday 21 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
57°19.24' S  
**Longitude:**  
065°43.71' W

**Course:**  
352°  
**Speed:**  
11.2 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
7.5 knots NE  
**Barometer:**  
1007 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
4°C

Well, sadly the expedition is in its final days as we approach the end of the Drake Passage crossing. Soon enough we will be back in our own beds and enjoying the comforts of home... but not quite yet!

Lindsay kicked off the day's formal activities with a discussion of sustainability, focusing on Sylvia Earle's favourite emotion: hope! It's easy to lose this in the daily avalanche of environmental bad news, so it is refreshing and powerful to refuse to give up and to focus on the things we can all do.

Jocelyn then took us even further south than we have been in the last few days with a fascinating lecture on life in McMurdo and South Pole stations. Sleeping in a tent at

-80°C and races 'around the world'. Difficult to do, but it may have inspired some to try and join the 300 Club!

All this listening burned a lot of calories, so it was just as well we had a fantastic shepherd's pie served up as part of the usual smorgasbord of lunch.

Digestion of that was aided by the story of the Weddell Sea's mummified seals. A super-interesting detective mystery delivered by Leo (who wasn't wearing his kilt!).

Following a nice cup of tea (and perhaps a wee lie down) various members of the E-Team delivered a series of mini-lectures, filling in some more information about the amazing places we have visited.



# Ushuaia

DAY 20 | Sunday 22 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
54° 48.48' S  
**Longitude:**  
068° 18.51' W

**Wind Speed:**  
6 kts NNE  
**Barometer:**  
1007 hPa

**Course:**  
Alongside  
**Speed:**  
Alongside

**Air Temp:**  
6°C

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

We have travelled 3,527 nautical miles together.





# BBQ

















# Polar Plunge















# Snorkelling Log

Guides: Freya Dooley & Thomas Gov

## 9 December, PM – Jason Harbour

Our first snorkelling outing at Jason Harbour in South Georgia was a truly unforgettable experience. For many in the group, it was their first time facing the icy waters of the Southern Ocean, and the challenge of mastering the drysuit added an extra layer of apprehension.

The underwater world was nothing short of breathtaking. A forest of golden kelp swayed gracefully beneath the surface, its long, flowing strands dancing with the rhythm of the gentle waves. Exploring this vibrant marine ecosystem felt like stepping into another world, where life thrived in harmony with the harsh conditions of the sub-Antarctic environment.

Adding to the magic, a few fur seals zipped playfully around us. Their sleek, agile movements were

mesmerising to watch, as if they were performing just for us. Then came the probable highlight of the outing: a giant petrel landed right on the water next to us. This magnificent seabird lingered with us for over ten minutes, its presence calm and inquisitive.

## 10 December, AM – Hercules Bay

Once on the Zodiac we went for a Zodiac cruise that was full of diversity to say the least! Macaroni penguins, fur seals, elephant seals as well as the geological scenery of the mountains above rich with lichen, moss and tussock... however, we can't forget the plankton-rich waters!

After cruising for a few hours, we geared up into hoods, gloves, fins and masks to explore a little cove rich with life. In the water, curious seals swam by checking us out and the kelp was home to lots of little critters. After braving the chilly waters for 30





Number of Snorkellers: 8

Total Outings: 12

Snorkellers:

Jonny

Li

Lindsay

Nina

Mary

Jason

Emma

Elisha

minutes, it was back to the ship to enjoy some lunch and rest up for our afternoon outings!

### 10 December, PM – Godthul

After warming up back on the ship, we were well rested and back into our drysuits before jumping on the Zodiac to be shuttled to shore. We were greeted by a beach full of fur seals looking very active.

Once ashore, we went for a stunning hike up a hill through the tussock to a gentoo rookery where we saw some little chicks, and appreciated how high up these guys build their nests!

Back on the Zodiac we made our way to our snorkel spot, which consisted of a small cove with curious fur seals and a stunning waterfall in the background, and eagerly slipped into the water.

The seals torpedoed by us and a group of gentoo penguins even came

to say hi. After 40 minutes in the water, we headed back to the ship to warm up and share footage of our incredible seal-filled snorkel!

### 11 December, PM – Ocean Harbour

We began by cruising through Ocean Harbour in South Georgia, a wildlife haven teeming with activity. Along the way, we marvelled at the abundant fur seals, including the rare sight of a white pup, as well as impressive elephant seals lounging on the shores. Penguins were everywhere! Both gentoo and king penguins could be seen, accompanied by a variety of seabirds soaring above and on the water.

The grand finale of the outing was a refreshing snorkel in a tranquil, sheltered cove. Here, playful young fur seals darted through the water around us, while a large male curiously approached, giving us a

close encounter to remember. The underwater world was just as lively, with a rich abundance of plankton swirling in the water. Both Freya and Thomas collected samples for the onboard Citizen Science lab, contributing to important research efforts.

### 12 December, PM – Gold Harbour

After our unforgettable morning at St Andrews Bay, we made our way to Gold Harbour. Blue skies and low winds were the perfect start to this afternoon's activities.

On the Zodiac we went for a cruise to check out an impressive hanging glacier that flowed into a stunning waterfall.

With careful driving, we made it into the lagoon below, allowing us to appreciate the size of this giant cliff of ice.

In the water we saw some more

stunning kelp forests and lots of plankton life drifting around, and some got a closer view of curious fur seals playing around us. Back on board we started to prepare ourselves for the coming days at sea, and left South Georgia with a new appreciation of the wild world.

### 15 December, PM – Elephant Island

We started with a short Zodiac cruise while waiting for the tide to allow a landing. On our search for a good snorkel spot we encountered our first leopard seal, hunting along the coast potentially looking for a nice penguin for lunch.

After a few hours we were greeted by a small minke whale, who was very inquisitive and surfaced next to our Zodiac a few times to check us out. With excitement, we quickly geared up and slipped into the water near the Zodiac in the hopes of getting a closer look.

After one final swim by, the minke left and we had nothing to see except a few gentoos swimming around.

### 16 December, PM – Hydrurga Rocks

Today, we embarked on a Zodiac cruise among the towering icebergs, hoping for a glimpse of whales in the strait. We turned our attention to the water and set out for a snorkelling session in a secluded cove.

The calm cove, nestled below a colony of nesting blue-eyed shags, provided the perfect spot for our underwater exploration. Surrounded by small growlers, we experienced the magical sight of ice beneath the surface for the first time. The vivid blues and intricate textures of the submerged icebergs created an otherworldly atmosphere, making this an unforgettable snorkelling outing.

### 17 December, AM – Brown Station, Paradise Bay

We made our first continental landing, where we did a short walk up to a viewpoint offering stunning views over Paradise Bay (a well-suited name). Back on the Zodiac we geared up with our first stop to explore a nice piece of ice in the water.

The clear blue waters gave us a new appreciation to icebergs and the pure size of them under the surface. Back into the Zodiac we headed back towards the station with hopes of getting to snorkel with some of the gentoos that we spotted earlier. After slipping in the water, we were soon surrounded by hundreds of curious gentoos, torpedoing around us and coming up close to check us out.

### 18 December, AM – Enterprise Island

Cruising through the delicate ice formed by the previous night's snowfall, we entered a small, tranquil lagoon. This lagoon once served as a station for cutting whale blubber, a sobering reminder of the industry that thrived here.

After a brief stay, we returned to the wreck for a second snorkel. Swimming around the *Guvernøren* was a surreal experience, with the rusty hull telling tales of its fiery end.

### 18 December, PM – Recess Cove

A small ice floe became our first stop, a perfect spot for group photos!

Immersing ourselves in a sea of ice,

we embraced the playful spirit of the moment. We climbed onto small chunks of sea ice, balanced on their slippery surfaces, and even brought back sparkling Antarctic 'diamonds' as souvenirs. The experience was pure joy, and time seemed to vanish as we played and explored.

Incredibly, this turned out to be our longest snorkelling session yet, with 45 minutes in the chilly water. The fun kept us warm, and the magic of the moment made us forget the cold entirely. It was an outing we'll cherish forever—a perfect blend of adventure, laughter, and the unique wonders of Antarctica.

### 19 December, AM – Orne Harbour

On land the team had set up a walk to a viewpoint over the Gerlache Strait where we spotted whales.

On the Zodiac we geared up to slip in the water, first exploring a small iceberg, where we got the chance to see the krill feeding on small bits of algae that live on the bottom of the ice. After a quick snorkel here, we moved our eyes to the surface in hopes of spotting some whales to swim with.

After a few short interactions with humpbacks, we had no luck so decided to head towards a rocky ledge where the clear waters gave us a nice view of some kelp and benthic species. Limpets and starfish were abundant in this area, but the highlight has to be the big ctenophore that was spotted, allowing us to see its beauty up close as it lights up and drifts around in the swell.

### 19 December, PM – Fournier Harbour

After cruising through some small channels and stopping to enjoy a well-earned hot chocolate, we spotted a magnificent iceberg - probably one of the biggest of the trip.

After getting drenched in the winds, back to some more calm areas to get in for a quick snorkel to see what lies underneath.

A few keen snorkies got in to enjoy our last snorkel, where they saw some planktons and nice algae, and even spotted some copepods!

A great ending to our trip!









# Snowshoeing Log

Guides: Dan Phillips, Sean Waters

## 16 December, PM – Two Hummock Island

Our intrepid team landed at a new site for snowshoeing at the southeast end of the island. Beautiful weather for our first snowshoe outing with Angelika, Fabian, Bill and Greg. We made our way up a gently rising spur for around 1.5 hours, crossing several crevasses, to a high point at 105 metres. From there we had magnificent views over the Gerlache Strait to the Danco Coast in the east, and west towards Brabant Island. A fantastic start to the snowshoe program on the peninsula. We travelled 2.37 kilometres, in 2 hours and 16 minutes.

## 17 December, AM – Almirante Brown Station

Another fine weather day for the snowshoe team, this time in the outstanding Paradise Bay – aptly named if you are a penguin! We landed at the deserted Brown Station among the gentoo penguins and strapped our snowshoes on before making our way up to the end of the general landing track. From there we headed off on a zigzag track around the plateau above the base. Although not hugely high (80 metres above sea level), this is surrounded by a gobsmacking vista of mountains and huge cascading glaciers. We trekked 4 kilometres over 2 hours and 20 minutes, taking in several small peaks.





Number of Snowshoers: 7

Total Outings: 4

Snowshoers:

Angelika Kausche

Fabian Kausche

Bill Barret

Greg Barton

Jonny Bierman

Ben Monkhouse

Lindsay Gordon

### 18 December, AM – Enterprise Island

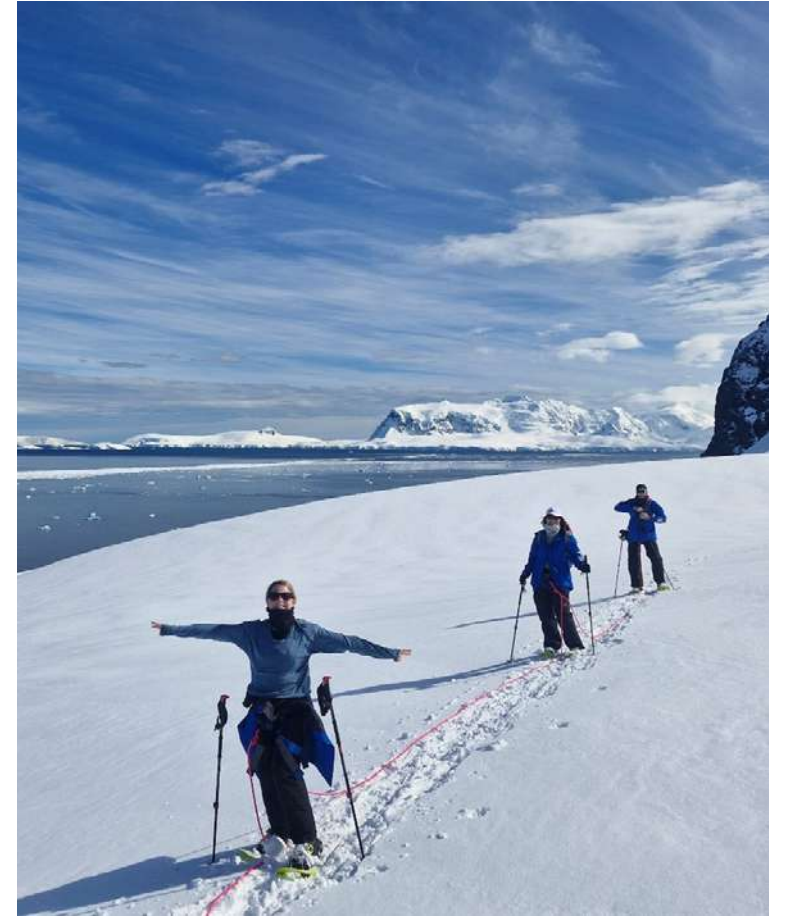
After the cancellation of camping last night we all felt well rested and a little smug when we found 12 centimetres of fresh snow on the ship's decks this morning. Our small team was joined at Enterprise Island/ Foyn Harbour by Jonny, Ben and Lindsay for a snowshoe to near the top of the island. Starting near the wreck of the *Guvernøren*, an old whaling ship which succumbed to inappropriate partying, we landed in thick new snow from two days ago. Although much cloudier than previous days and with little wind, it was warm on the uphill leg. Our reward was beautiful views of the continental Antarctic Peninsula, in every shade of grey imaginable. The downhill went quickly, interspersed with an impressively violent mid-air skua fight. We covered approximately 2 kilometres over 1.5 hours and reached a high point of 105 metres.

### 19 December, AM – Orne Harbour, Spigot Peak

Another beautiful blue-sky morning in Antarctica. The Captain and Expedition Leader have certainly done a fantastic job of picking the best weather for us. In the wonderful surrounds of Orne Harbour our team of nine headed for the general landing site on the east side of Spigot Peak and sweated our way up to the saddle with the rest of our passengers. After assessing the mountaineering capabilities of the chinstrap penguins, we set off on our own, roped up and snowshoed. The snow was harder than we had experienced previously and we traversed around on the west-facing slopes, getting a taste of the good grip the snowshoe crampons can offer. Up to another small saddle we had great views east into Orne Harbour and west into the Errera Channel, where several humpback

whales cruised gently north in the mirror-calm bay. Heading down to the Errera Channel we completed the crossing of the small peninsula and were picked up by Sergei in a completely different spot to where we started. A fine outing to wind up our snowshoe adventures. We travelled 1.7 kilometres over 1 hour and 50 minutes, with a high point of 90 metres.









# Kayaking Log

Guides: Michael and Lisa

## 9 December, PM – Jason Harbour 5km

Amazing first day of paddling, with calm weather and fantastic sealife in the water. Grand vistas of snow-capped peaks surrounded us while giant petrels swooped down to check us out. Breathtaking mountain scenery surrounded us as the group got acquainted with their kayaks and each other in this first outing of our grand adventure which really set the stage for things to come.

## 10 December, AM – Hercules Bay 5km

We had a fantastic paddle to a macaroni penguin colony, with both fur and elephant seal weaners lounging on the beach. We paddled to the rhythm of kelp fronds breathing with the ocean currents around

us. One particularly curious fur seal lazed about the group in kelp beds, nuzzling the side of kayaks and showing off his slow acrobatic swimming, saying 'Don't you wish you could do this?' Kayaking here made us feel as if we could.

## 10 December, PM – Godthul 6km

Beautiful sunny afternoon paddle with a passage behind a grounded iceberg. At times it was like paddling in a boiling cauldron of seals as they cavorted around us through the kelp. We were also joined by a few gentoos as we glided along beaches that were lined with fur seals and the occasional raft of elephant seals snoozing in the sun and oozing with sounds that would have had teenage boys laughing uncontrollably.



Number of Kayakers: 8  
Total Paddle Outings: 10  
Total Distance Paddled: 65 km

Kayakers:  
Greg  
Christian  
Witcha  
Paveena  
Maria  
Brayden

Kirsten  
Larry

### 11 December, PM –Ocean Harbour 7km

A nice paddle among the seals and rock gardens/canyons. We glided through one fun slot canyon in our kayaks and had an upwind grind up towards the wreck of the coal tender *Bayard* and a sealer's graveyard. It was worth the effort to ride the downwind run back towards the ship and have more rock gardens to explore.

### 12 December, PM – Gold Harbour 5km

Bright sunshine greeted us with quite warm conditions (10 degrees or so) as we as we paddled out around the rock gardens at the headlands to the bay. We then followed the rim of the bay to see all the king penguins and seals on the beach as we paddled to the lagoon, where we rode the swell over the bar into the waterfall-filled lagoon. Sunshine, warmth and

calm seas were a fantastic send-off to paddling in South Georgia. Dinner as a group at the Rockhopper really capped off a big day and jelled the kayak group nicely.

### 15 December, PM – Elephant Island 8km

The fog lifted, allowing us to get a paddle out along a couple of normally exposed bays and giving us some great views of glaciers, a large colony of chinstrap penguins and some Weddell seals lounging on the snow across a lagoon. Entry to the lagoon proved to be a surf ride over the reef, but exit was overly risky to attempt.

### 16 December, PM – Hydrurga Rocks 6km

Beautiful, warm sunny day to paddle amid sea ice and around the big chinstrap colony at Hydrurga. Great little circumnavigation with a deep dive into an iceberg graveyard that

even had a couple of Weddell seals napping on the rocks. Spectacular mountain views all around on this oddly warm day in the Gerlache Strait.

### 17 December, PM – Melchior Island Group 9km

We all paddled in changing weather around fantastic grounded icebergs and through rocky canyons. We had a few Weddell seals and some chinstrap penguins along the way, with some gigantic blue glaciers as a backdrop. It was very nice to have the whole crew out, getting some superb video footage along the way as well.

### 18 December, PM – Recess Cove 7km

Apparently a site pioneered by Howard Whelan, our current EL, it was a fun place to paddle in brash ice and look for Weddells on ice floes. We managed to find a couple

of agreeable seals, one very spotty and one quite blonde, who posed for pictures and didn't seem to mind us grinding our way through the brash ice.

### 19 December, PM – Fournier Bay Paddle 7km

Four paddlers went for a largely open-water crossing on a beautifully sunny afternoon with massive vistas all around us. We were quite some distance from the shoreline, which may have been good since the shoreline was largely rimmed by glaciers that were grumbling loudly in the sun. Glacial thunder, icebergs with cathedral windows, and blue skies gave us a big send-off for our last paddling trip.





# Bird & Mammal Sightings Falklands

Bird Species	December						
	3	4	5	5	6	6	7
Magellanic Penguin	●		●	●			
Gentoo Penguin					●		
Rockhopper Penguin (Southern)			●	●			
King Penguin				●			
Wandering Albatross							●
Black-browed Albatross	●	●	●	●		●	●
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern and/or Southern)	●	●	●	●			●
Cape Petrel		●	●				
Fulmar (Southern)		●					
Wilson's Storm-petrel			●				
Imperial Cormorant (Blue-eyed Shag)	●		●	●	●		
Rock Shag			●	●	●		
Kelp Gull	●		●	●	●		
Dolphin Gull	●			●	●		
Chilean Skua				●			
South American Tern	●		●		●	●	
Kelp Goose	●		●	●	●		
Upland Goose			●	●			
Falkland Steamer Duck				●	●		

Bird Species	December						
	3	4	5	5	6	6	7
Crested Duck			●				
Magellanic Oystercatcher			●	●	●		
Turkey Vulture			●	●	●		
Striated Caracara (Johnny Rook)			●	●			
Variable Hawk			●				
Austral Thrush			●		●		
Long-tailed Meadowlark			●	●	●		
Dark-faced Ground Tyrant (Newsybird)			●	●	●		
Blackish Cinclodes (Tussacbird)				●			
House Sparrow					●		
Correndra Pipit			●				

Mammal Species	December						
	3	4	5	5	6	6	7
Southern Sea Lion					●	●	
Sei Whale				●			
Peale's Dolphin							●
Commerson's Dolphin				●			●
Unidentified Whale			●				



# Bird & Mammal Sightings South Georgia

Bird Species	December							
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
King Penguin			●	●	●	●		
Gentoo Penguin			●	●	●	●		
Macaroni Penguin				●				
Wandering (Snowy) Albatross		●					●	
Black-browed Albatross	●	●					●	●
Grey-headed Albatross								●
Sooty Albatross		●						
Light-mantled Albatross	●	●	●			●	●	●
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern and/or Southern)	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Cape Petrel	●	●		●	●	●		●
Fulmar (Southern)								●
Blue Petrel							●	
Prion sp. (likely Antarctic)	●	●			●		●	●
White-chinned Petrel		●						
Sooty Shearwater		●						
Great Shearwater		●						
Wilson's Storm-petrel		●		●				
Diving petrel sp.						●		

Bird Species	December							
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
South Georgia Shag (Blue-eyed Shag)			●	●	●	●		
Kelp Gull			●	●	●	●		
Brown Skua			●	●	●	●		
Antarctic Tern			●	●	●	●		
South Georgia Pintail			●	●		●		
Snowy Sheathbill				●	●	●		
South Georgia Pipit				●	●			

Mammal Species	December							
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Antarctic Fur Seal			●	●	●	●		
Southern Elephant Seal				●	●	●		
Humpback Whale	●	●		●				
Fin Whale							●	●
Unidentified Whale	●							

# Bird & Mammal Sightings Antarctica

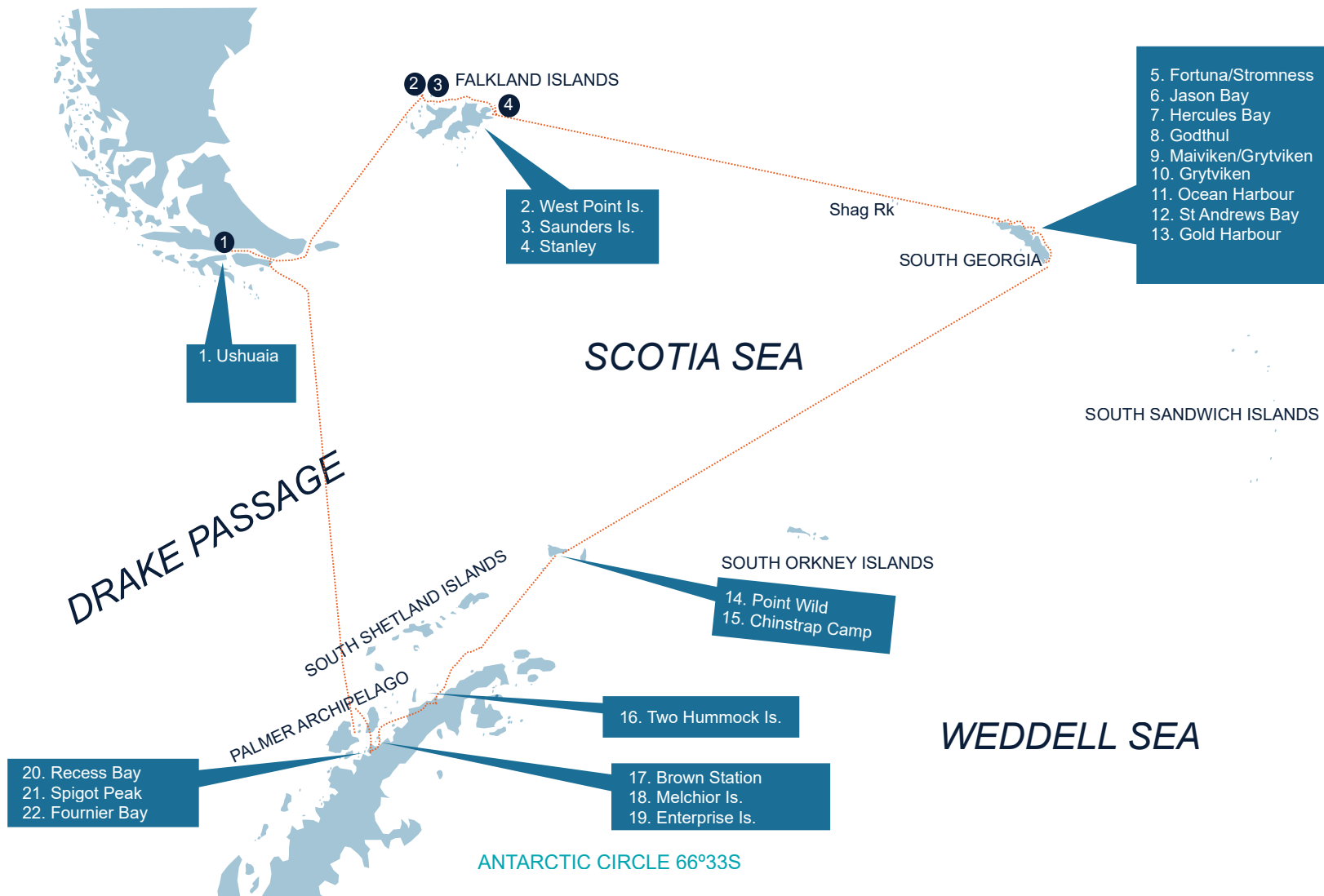
Bird Species	December						
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Gentoo Penguin	●		●	●	●	●	
Chinstrap Penguin	●	●	●	●	●		
Adélie Penguin		●			●		
Wandering Albatross (Snowy)							●
Royal Albatross						●	
Black-browed Albatross	●					●	●
Grey-headed Albatross							●
Light-mantled Albatross						●	●
Sooty Albatross						●	
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern or Southern)			●			●	●
Antarctic Petrel	●						
Cape Petrel	●	●	●		●		●
Snow Petrel							
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern Fulmar)	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Prion sp. (most likely Antarctic)	●					●	●
White-chinned Petrel						●	
Wilson's Storm-petrel	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Black-bellied Storm-petrel						●	

Bird Species	December						
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Imperial Cormorant (Blue-eyed Shag)		●	●	●		●	
Skua (Brown or South Polar)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kelp Gull	●	●	●	●		●	●
Tern sp. (most likely Antarctic)	●	●	●	●	●	●	
South American Tern							●
Snowy Sheathbill	●	●	●			●	

Mammal Species	December						
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Antarctic Fur Seal	●						
Southern Elephant Seal	●						
Crabeater Seal				●			
Humpback Whale	●	●	●	●			
Orca	●	●	●				
Unidentified Whale							●



# Map



## South Georgia and Antarctic Odyssey

3 December - 22 December 2024





# Our Expeditioners

Lourdes Fema Acuna

Bill Barrett

Greg Barton

Jonny Bierman

Catharine Bonython

Larry Canipe

Charles Clarke

Mahendra Desai

Nalini Desai

Jason Drever

Mary Drever

Annalise Elliott

Keith Fender

Susan Fender

Elizabeth Flint

Keith Flint

Annette Flower

Hwee Leng Gan

Lindsay Gordon

Christian Hambach

Glen Imber

Supriya Karnik

Amod Karnik

Fabian Kausche

Angelika Kausche

Margaret Kelly

Maria Kneitschel

Duncan Lamb

Greg Lane

Nina Lenger

Elisha Lorizio

Emma Lorizio

Yue Ma

Hugh MacKinnon

Benjamin Monkhouse

Lisa Nunn

Gary Nunn

Sharon O'Connor-Clarke

Brett Patterson

Witcha Pichitpichatkul

Trace Polglaze

Bingyi Qian

Russ Ramsay

Lynette Richards

Ian Richards

Cathy Roche

Liz Roche

King Hoe Seo

Nimrat Sidhu

Gurbir Sidhu

Stuart Smith

Tania Spry

Mark Spry

Kathy Stockton

Xiaotian Teng

Paveena Uapongkitikul

Kirsten Van Riper

Sudhir Wahi

Shalini Wahi

Jinsu Wang

Joan White

Deborah Wickham

Robert Wickham

Glenys Wilkinson

Wilber Williams

John Wilson

Brayden Zoucha

## Expedition Team

Expedition Leader: Howard Wheelan

Assistant Expedition Leader: Leo Solbelzon

Onboard Expedition Manager: Anne Oeyasaeter

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ana Prado

Marine Biologist/Naturalist: Jocelyn Fenstermacher

Naturalist/Ornithologist CSC: Vicky Inglis

Naturalist: Sue Crafer

Historian: Jonathan Chester

Photography Guide: Grant Thomas

Expedition First Responder: Belinda Denchfield

Lead Kayak Guide: Michael Gray

Senior Kayak Guide: Liza Deziel

Alpine Guide: Dan Phillips

Alpine Guide: Sean Waters

Lead Snorkel Guide: Thomas Gov

Snorkel Guide: Freya Dooley

Zodiac Master: Serghei Hinchu

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department

Master: Artem Kolmykov

Chief Officer: Andrey Gilevskiy

Second Officer: Vlad Nicolescu

Safety Officer: Yevhenii Zolotarov

Bosun: Leo Francis Marzan

Ship Doctor: Jose Alejandro Muller San Juan

Chief Engineer: Luis Edgardo Gil

First Engineer: Warlito Verzosa

IT Officer: Mikhail Volkov

Hotel Director: Balvant Singh

Chief Purser: Caroline Sabrina Papenfuss

F&B Service Manager: Narendra Seeram

Head Bartender: Irene Gayta

Executive Chef: Rosauro Soriano

Sous Chef: I Gusti Ketur Purnawirawan

Hotel Controller: Romat Nurhidayat

Receptionist: Angela Manuel

Receptionist: Erliza Mae Balagot

Head of Stateroom: Florante Lusong

Deck Cadet: Rodrigo Vigario Pinto

Able Seaman/Carpenter: Lexter Fadriquela

Able Seaman: Anthony John Bros

Able Seaman: Muhammad Karier

Able Seaman: John Paul Sibug

Able Seaman: Rosendo Cruz

## Photography thanks to:

Grant Thomas









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