

# Antarctic Explorer

Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 23 February–02 March 2024



# Frei Station | South Shetland Islands

DAY 1 | Friday 23 February 2024

Position at 1000 on 23 Feb

Latitude: 62°12.0'S

Longitude: 058°55.0'W

Course: At Anchor

Speed: At Anchor

Wind Speed: S 11kts

Barometer: 1009 hPa

Air Temp: -1°C

Welcome aboard the *Greg Mortimer*! It was a lovely, sunny day as we met at the airstrip. After the plane, with its lovely chinstrap penguin design, touched down on the black gravel runway, we boarded our bus, which brought us down to the beach. Here, a few gentoo and chinstrap penguins splashed in the shallows and preened on the shore – a lovely beginning to our adventure.

Frei Station, King George Island, is our first 'taste' of Antarctica. Although much of King George Island is glaciated, this bay is an area of contrast, for here the terrain is stripped bare by the frequent high winds, revealing a stark volcanic landscape that has its own allure, with small rocky towers and plugs. This will be the last time in over a week that we see anything in the way of civilised activity. It is a bustling little harbour, a small town really, with other ships going about their business, helicopters offloading supplies, and plenty of happenings on shore.

The South Shetland Islands and King George Island were the first to see human activity in the 1820s, not from exploration or scientific study, as many of the stations do now, but as an economic endeavour in sealing. Seal skins were hugely profitable, and as the common story goes, humans hunted the seals to near extinction and the industry went bust. Thankfully, fur seals are in a full rebound today, and in the late Austral summer they are often seen in streams, making their way from South Georgia Island to the South Shetlands.

Once on board, we checked in at reception and were shown to our comfortable staterooms by the housekeeping staff. A delicious Welcome Buffet was served.

First we had the mandatory lifeboat drill followed by a large amount of information from some key players in the Expedition Team as well as our hotel director, Pascal, and the good doctor, Anzor.

We had a lovely first dinner in the restaurant served by the best and friendliest team.

We finished of the evening with the all-important Expedition jacket exchange and the kayakers had their briefing in the lecture theatre.

We can only imagine what it took to reach the ship from our homes in this new age of travel. But finally, we were all together on board, with those challenges behind.

Together we total 109 Expeditioners: 35 from Australia, 2 from Brazil, 2 from China, 2 from India, 2 from Ireland, 3 from Israel, 3 from Malaysia, 1 from New Zealand, 3 from Philippines, 2 from Romania, 6 from Singapore, 1 from United Kingdom and 48 from United States.

Along with the 19 Expedition Team and 83 ship's crew from around the globe. We hope you are as excited as we are, about exploring this incredible environment together.



# Useful Island | Neko Harbour

DAY 2 | Saturday 24 February 2024

Position at 0900 on 24 Feb

Latitude: 64°22.0'S

Longitude: 062°3.0'W

Course: 215°

Speed: 9.7kts

Wind Speed: WSW 27.9kts

Barometer: 1010 hPa

Air Temp: -1°C

Our first day on the Antarctic Peninsula! Finally, we arrive at the most scenic place in Antarctica, the famous Gerlache Strait. The beginning of the day was quite busy, since in order to disembark in Antarctica it is mandatory for all tour operators to provide the IAATO (International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators) briefing.

After this important briefing, all passengers had to do the respective biosecurity cleaning, carefully checking that our clothing had no organic remains. This is how we try to protect the last discovered continent, keeping it free of invasive species.

After lunch we made a beautiful first landing on Useful Island, named after the old whalers, since, from the highest point of the small island, it was very easy to see the whales of the Gerlache Strait and then go out to hunt them.

Fortunately today, this island is instead used by tourists to appreciate the beautiful glacial landscape and to observe the hundreds of gentoo penguins that nest there.

The weather conditions were perfect, the wind was calm and little by little, the sun came out. At one point, it was even a little bit warm, which is not very common in Antarctica. During this landing, the snorkelers and kayakers also began their activities, enjoying the calm waters around the island to explore it and spend a pleasant moment in this pristine nature.

After returning to the *Greg Mortimer*, we had a briefing with Isabelle, our Expedition Leader, about our plans for the next day, since this day was not over yet.

After dinner, we boarded the Zodiacs again to do our first continental landing at Neko Harbour.

Neko Harbour is one of the most impressive places on the Antarctic Peninsula, with high mountains covered by powerful glaciers that flow towards the sea like immense rivers.

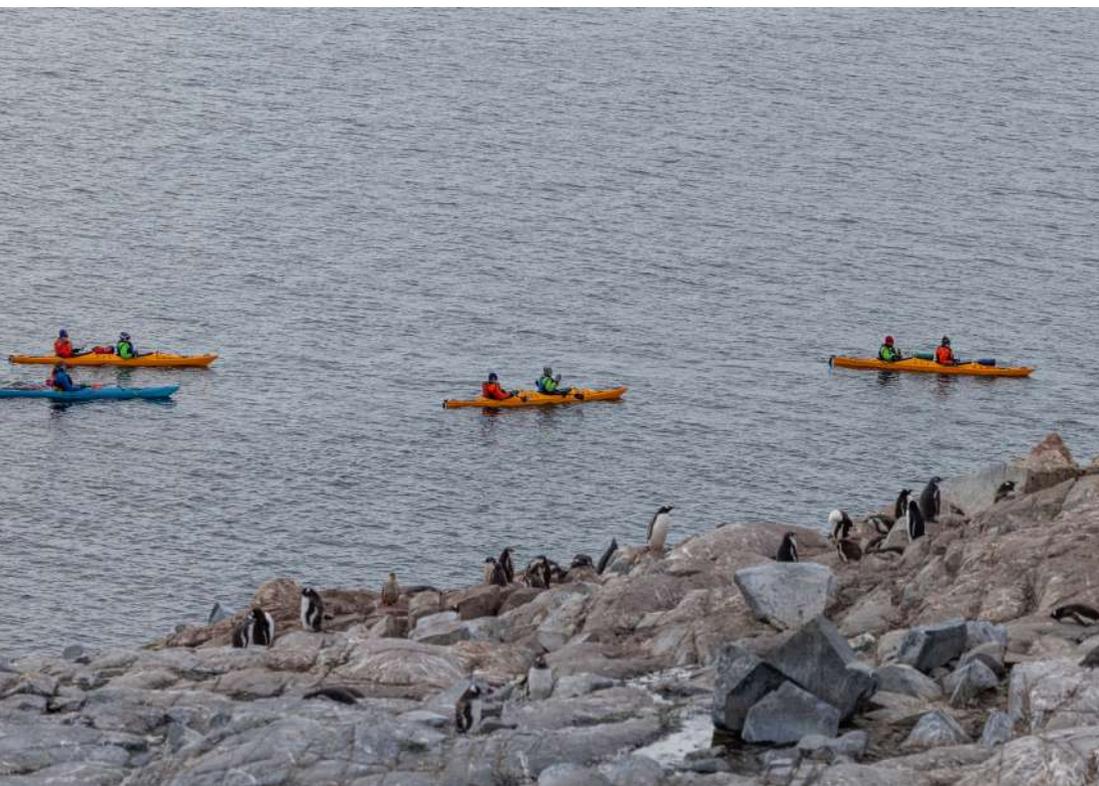
During this landing, we were able to feel the force of those glaciers as well, listening to the loud sound when huge pieces of ice break, or when some of us saw a large calving from the front face of the glacier.

Additionally, Neko Harbour is home to a large colony of gentoo penguins, so once again we were able to see, hear, and smell these fascinating, flightless birds.

Before nightfall, we all returned to the comfort of our beautiful ship to celebrate this successful day and process all the emotions experienced in such a short time.







# Portal Point | Charlotte Bay

DAY 3 | Sunday 25 February 2024

Position at 0730 on 25 Feb

Latitude: 64°33'0"S

Longitude: 061°44'0"W

Course: 253°

Speed: 2.7kts

Wind Speed: SSE 5.4kts

Barometer: 1004 hPa

Air Temp: 1°C

'Good Morning, it's sunny and blowing 30 knots out...'

Awww, music to our ears, well maybe not the 30 knots part!

So, in some strange way the good ship *Greg Mortimer* and her good people are following in the wake of their Antarctic predecessors, the whalers and explorers. For somehow they managed to figure this place out long before the advent of the Windy app, when algorithms belonged to Euclid. The navigators of old would look up to the sky and decide whether to duck for cover, discovering the microclimates of this anomalous peninsula.

An hour later, as the ship slowed to the anchorage near Portal Point, we were floating on a millpond with mirrored reflections of the grandeur enveloping us. En route to our adventure, we were awed by the 'Big-winged New Englanders', aka humpback whales, lateral lunge-feeding on the plethora of krill hovering just below the surface. Another continental landing with still heaps of snow and ice revealed a bit of the underlying Mesozoic granite at the landing site. The aroma of penguin was replaced with the fragrance of fur seal, with the surrounding environs lacking suitable habitat for a penguin colony.

Many of us enjoyed the playful antics of the fur seals playing king of the hill, while some of us appreciated the 'flying penguins', the antarctic shags. Related to cormorants, these blue-eyed beauties swim with their feet instead of their wings, chasing their prey of fish and squid.

Travelling deeper into the ice kingdom of Charlotte Bay during another amazing buffet, with a traffic jam at the sushi section, the occasional humpback was spotted as the photographers attempted to get an acceptable ID photo for HappyWhale.

We boarded our trusty steeds once again, this time for a 'let's see what we can see' Zodiac cruise among icebergs and walls of glaciers. We lucked into some crabeater seals way up on a sizeable berg, taking a nap to digest their favourite meal, krill. Their teeth fit together like a sieve, to perform a similar function as baleen in whales. They can consume 20-25 times their body weight of krill in a year and are considered to be the most abundant wild animal based on biomass, with an overall population estimated to be around 7 million. We also spied an elephant seal non-plussed with his three rowdy fur seal neighbours. We spoke of the blues and hues of the glacial ice, and collected some of the beauties for cocktails later.

Just when we thought we could relax, the Polar Plunge was called, with about 40 brave and slightly crazed of us leaping into the frigid ocean!

As dinner commenced, a large pod of orcas appeared, amazing! Thanks, Antarctica!







# Polar Plunge

DAY 3 | Sunday 25 February 2024









# Pléneau Island | Port Charcot

DAY 4 | Monday 26 February 2024

## Position at 0800 on 26 Feb

Latitude: 65°6'0"S

Course: 296

Longitude: 064°2'0"W

Speed: 3.4kts

Wind Speed: SSW 9.1kts

Air Temp: -2° C

Barometer: 1016 hPa

To summarise the day, it would qualify as very 'Antarctic'. Low clouds, little horizon, strong wind and some sunlight squeezing through the clouds. From the view decks, deployed during the journey through Lemaire Channel at 7am, the 30-knot gusting wind wakes up the last few that the view and the coffee hadn't yet managed to. The distance between the two sides of the channel is 600 metres and about 40 minutes to traverse. What a great way to work up an appetite before the splendid breakfast on board.

As planned, we anchor for our morning excursion near Pléneau Island, where gentoo penguins gather. A true Antarctic site as we love them: icebergs bigger than our houses, more penguins that we can dream of and some surprises, with the presence of few leopard seals around the island patiently waiting for their next meal to come down from the resting rockery. Splitting the outing, half-landing, half-Zodiac-cruising, gives everyone the chance to set foot on land as well as exploring this spectacular iceberg graveyard. Kayakers and snorkellers have a great time paddling and swimming through the channels near the ship. The cold morning ends up with, as usual, an amazing lunch. Has anyone tried the shepherd's pie?

In the afternoon, we landed at Port Charcot. A great place full of history, with more wildlife.

To start with the wildlife - it is possibly the highlight of the trip so far, especially for the activities. The kayakers paddled between most of the antarctic seals, through gigantic icebergs and near a humpback whale!

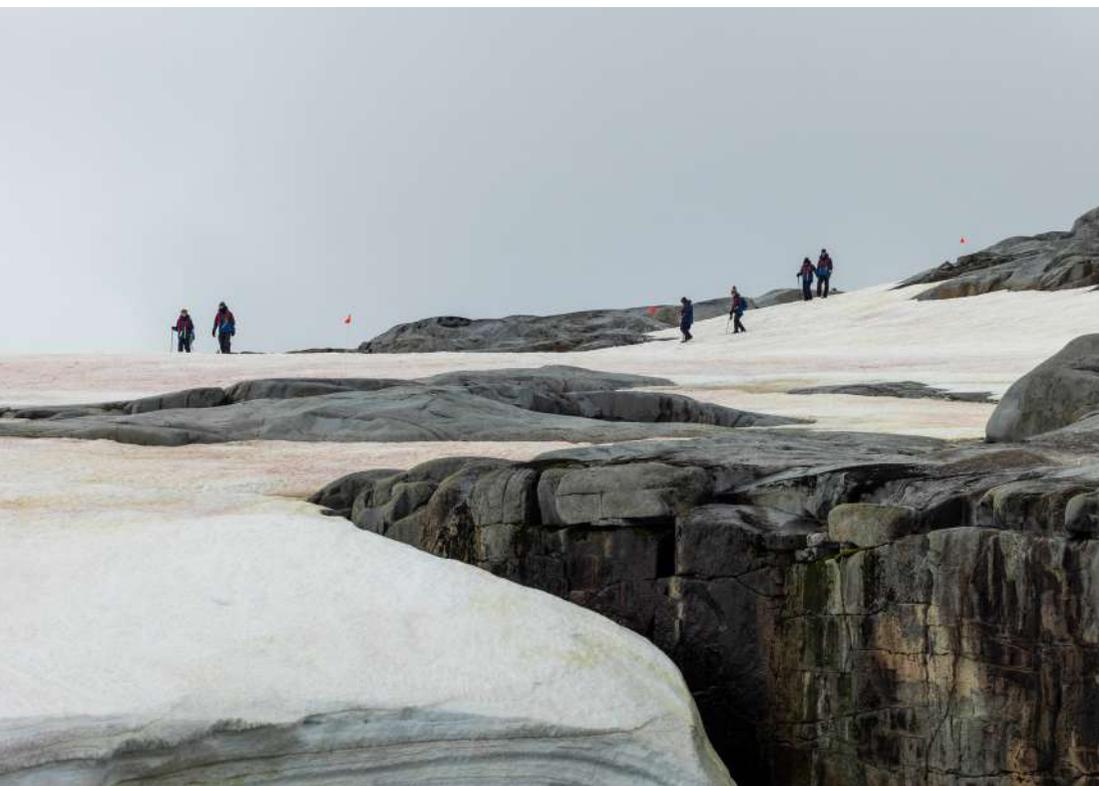
The snorkellers? After the landing, they are snorkelling with a few hundred gentoo penguins feeding in the north bay of Port Charcot; memorable! And a whale comes to greet them on the Zodiac just before witnessing a massive iceberg collapsing into small ice cubes. This afternoon is for them... exceptional!

What about the history of the place? It is hard to imagine how wintering in Antarctica can be. It is summer now and it is already pretty cold. Drastically drop the temperature, remove the sunlight and cover the sea with a thick ice/snow surface and you can maybe have a small idea about where Jean Baptiste Charcot and his crew wintered 120 years ago.

It is hard to imagine the reasons that pushed those adventurers more than a century ago, through such difficult and dangerous southern latitudes. Fortune? Glory? Or just *pourquoi pas?* Only they know. It is important to realise and appreciate the privilege we have now, being able to sail to those places in such luxury aboard the *Greg Mortimer*.

And to cap the day off, we had a BBQ on deck 8, with silly hats and great views as we chomped down lots of yummy food made and served by our best crew.







# Yalour Islands | Flandres Bay

DAY 5 | Tuesday 27 February 2024

Position at 0700 on 27 Feb

Latitude: 65°13'0" S

Longitude: 064°09'0" W

Course: 188°

Speed: 2.4kts

Wind Speed: NNE 12.4kts

Barometer: 1002 hPa

Air Temp: 0°C

After a late night of fun and festivities during the barbecue, we awoke on the morning of 27 February to some true Antarctic weather. Once we got a quick bite to eat at breakfast, we all eagerly awaited an update from Expedition Leader Isabelle on our morning plans.

With the wind and rain creating some rather sporty conditions, it looked as though our morning activities were anything but certain. But due to the great skill and expertise of our incredible Expedition Team, we managed to pull off an excellent landing and Zodiac cruise at the scenic Yalour Islands.

Named for Lt Jorge Yalour, an officer on the Argentine ship *Uruguay*, which rescued the stranded members of the Swedish Antarctic expedition in 1903, the Yalour Islands are a small archipelago that's home to one of the southernmost gentoo penguin colonies in the Antarctic Peninsula. Even more exciting, however, was the colony of Adélie penguins that call the islands home, as it provided us with a great chance to see these cute birds up close.

Following our morning activities, we ventured to the restaurant for a scrumptious lunch. Due to the windy conditions south of the Lemaire Channel, our Expedition Team decided that the best course of action would be to sail northward to Flandres Bay to escape the poor weather further south. This gave us a nice, long afternoon break during which we enjoyed a well-deserved afternoon nap as well as an educational lecture from Paul on the geology of the Antarctic Peninsula.

By around 4pm, our trusty ship, the *Greg Mortimer*, had reached its position in Flandres Bay and our skilled deck department started to lower our Zodiacs. Although the wind and the rain threatened once again to derail our plans for the day, some of us decided to brave the conditions and head out on a Zodiac cruise.

This decision was well-rewarded for those who made it, as we were treated to a stunning cruise filled with massive icebergs, an abundance of leopard and fur seals, as well as a plethora of adorable Wilson's storm petrels.

Once back on the ship, we took some time to warm up and dry off with a trip to the sauna and a drink at the bar. We finished off the day with yet another delectable meal served up by our galley team in the restaurant, and then enjoyed a quick nightcap before bed. Although we are more than halfway through our voyage now, plenty of adventures await us in the upcoming days and we need all the energy we can muster to make the most of our time in the white continent.





# Chinguano Bay & Danco Island

DAY 6 | Wednesday 28 February 2024

## Position at 0730 on 28 Feb

Latitude: 64°31'0"S

Course: 357

Longitude: 062°29'0"W

Speed: 5.4kts

Wind Speed: E 18kts

Air Temp: 0°C

Barometer: 1000 hPa

This morning we were greeted by the steep, icy shores of Chiriguano Bay as the Captain positioned our ship for our next day of expedition adventures. As a protected cove situated on the south-eastern end of Brabant Island in the Palmer Archipelago, Chiriguano Bay offered us some shelter from the fierce winds out in the Gerlache Strait. The bay was named after the Argentine tugboat *Chiriguano* which took part in the survey during the Argentine Antarctic expedition 1948–1949.

As we set out for our morning Zodiac cruise, some snowflakes on our faces made us feel even more connected to Antarctica, far away from the world up there in the north. We cruised along icebergs and noticed the first signs of the ocean surface freezing up – the Antarctic summer is coming to its end!

The small, enclosed bays are the first places to freeze up, and we were just witnessing the first patches of pancake ice around us.

Fur seals, some gentoo penguins, kelp gulls, antarctic terns and Wilson's storm petrels accompanied us during our cruise, and the highlight was the voyage's first sighting of a snow petrel, a beautiful all-white bird associated with the southern Antarctic waters.

Back on the ship, T-A invited us to her lecture 'Penguins – beak to tail', where we found answers to almost all of our penguin questions. These amazing birds are really perfectly adapted to their aquatic environment, switching from their funny walking attempts on land to the most elegant divers when entering the ocean.

The afternoon took us to a landing on Danco Island in the Errera Channel, just off the west coast of Graham Land. It was charted by the Belgian Antarctic expedition under Adrien de Gerlache from 1897–1899, and named after Emile Danco, a Belgian geophysicist and member of the expedition, who died on board the expedition vessel *Belgica* during the survey in Antarctica.

As we approached the island by Zodiac, we were greeted by a very familiar smell: penguins! From the water we could clearly see the numerous colonies sprinkled all over the island, and little black penguin-shaped dots moving along the steep penguin highways. A beautiful hike up the hill brought us closer to the colonies, and we admired once more the birds sitting on their high rocks or navigating the steep, icy surfaces. A longer hike to the viewpoint on top of the island offered beautiful panoramic views over Errera Channel and Graham Land, accompanied by the sound of uncountable penguins all around us.

Back on board we gathered in the bar for our well-deserved expedition drinks and finished the day with the daily briefing and recap, and the delicious dinner in the ship's restaurant.





# Freud Passage | Enterprise Island

DAY 7 | Thursday 29 February 2024

Position at 0740 on 29 Feb

Latitude: 64°31'0"S

Longitude: 062°29'0"W

Course: 357

Speed: 5.4kts

Wind Speed: E 18kts

Barometer: 1000 hPa

Air Temp: 0°C

We started our day with a Zodiac cruise in the Freud Passage, which lies between the gorgeous mountains of Brabant and Kaiser Islands.

The weather was calm and the morning light was beautiful. We observed humpback whales calmly cruising through the glassy waters of Freud Passage and, as we are still close to Gerlache Strait, this is one of the best places for humpbacks in the Antarctic Peninsula.

We also saw several curious fur seals sticking their heads out of the water, observing us.

The Expedition Team and hotel team had prepared a surprise - they brought hot chocolate (with something warming in it if wanted) on a 'special Zodiac' - that's what they called it by radio to keep it a surprise for the guests.

The snorkelling team had caught some plankton for the Citizen Science project and even drank hot chocolate while snorkelling!

What a beautiful beginning to another amazing day in the white continent.

In the afternoon, our Captain and crew moved the ship towards the famous Enterprise Island. It's famous for being the harbour of the Norwegian whaling ships that caught fire and sank over a century ago. So there are a lot of cultural remains like wooden boats, chains, and the most famous being the shipwreck of *Governoren*.

The story of this shipwreck is really interesting. The workers on the ship had a big party celebrating the end of the season - which meant the ship was fully packed with whale oil.

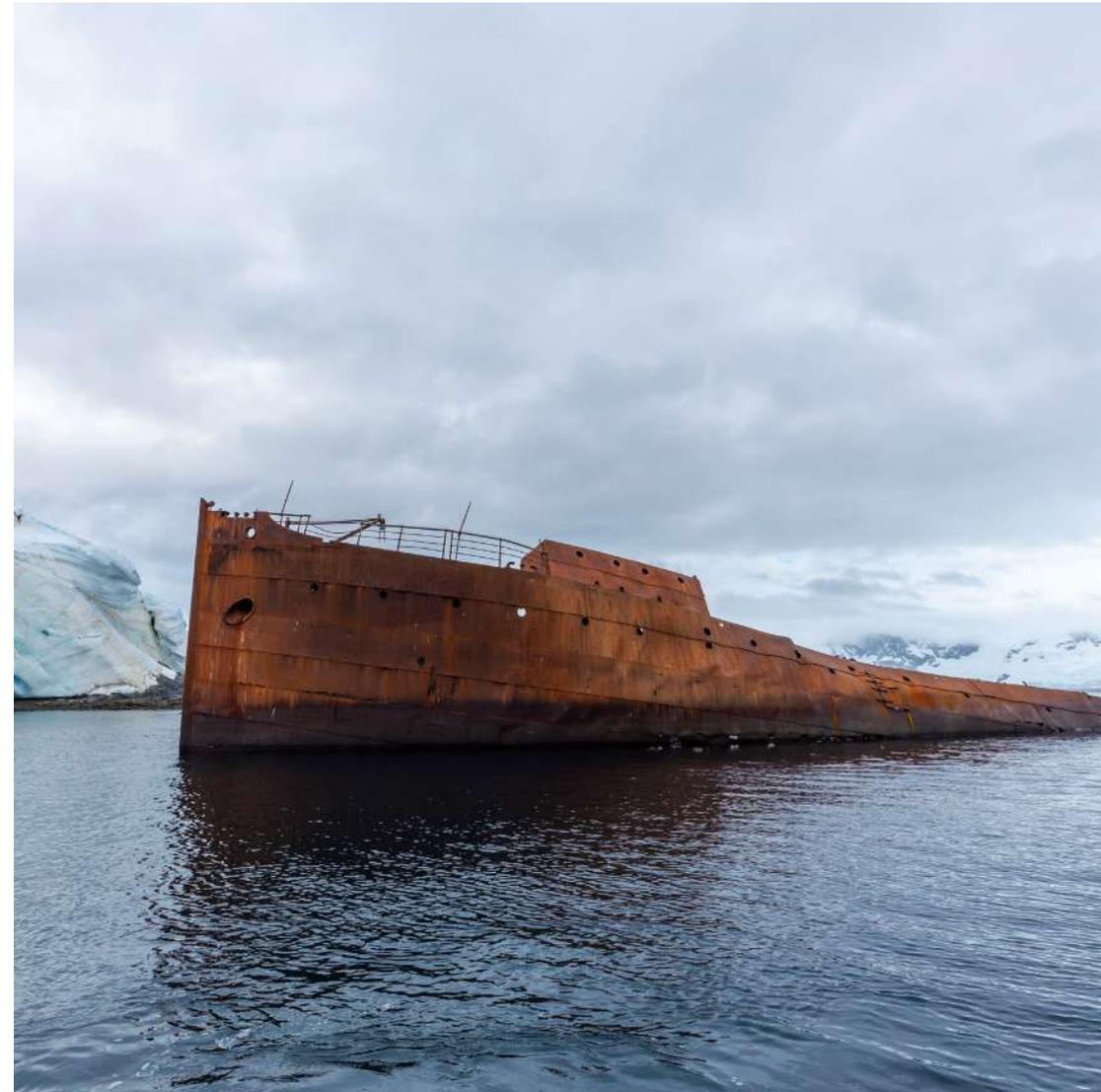
During the party, a fire started and soon the whole ship was on fire. The captain took the decision to run aground, so the ship did not sink and saving the lives of the crew.

As it was happening in a sheltered bay with other whaling ships around, all crew survived and got home safely.

We started our outing with a short landing on the small island where there were two old wooden whaling boats, then hiked uphill, observing the landscape. We then cruised around the rusty *Governoren*, trying to imagine how it looked 120 years ago before the fire happened.

We continued our cruise in the narrow channels between the small islands and enjoyed the company of imperial cormorants, chinstrap penguins and fur seals. We also saw whale bones.

Tired, but happy and filled with emotions, we returned to the ship. Another amazing day in Antarctica came to an end, but we still have a couple more days ahead on this voyage.





# Deception Island | Snow Island

DAY 8 | Friday 1 March 2024

## Position at 0615 on 01 Mar

Latitude: 62°59'0"S

Longitude: 060°33'6"W

Course: 335°

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: W 13 kts

Barometer: 1009 hPa

Air Temp: 2°C

The rising sun painted the sky red with the blood of a thousand whales as we pulled into the heart of an active volcano. Deception Island is haunted by the industrial slaughter of these behemoths of the seas and, in the early morning light, we could feel their presence. Steam rising from the black sands, the rusting remains of the whaling station and the various detritus from more than a century of human activity created a solemn atmosphere for our first landing before breakfast. Such haunting beauty. And all this within the mighty but sleeping custodianship of the active earth. It is the sporadic violence of the volcano stirring below that both protects the memories of the past and curates any future activities that may occur here.

Such an early morning start rearranged our whole day, so there was a pause in activity for the rest of the morning as our trusty vessel moved us toward our afternoon destination. One last time we struck out for our final landing on Snow Island, and what a place to wrap up a fabulous trip! The presence of so many elephant and fur seals reminded us all of the privilege we have had over the week to be up close to so many beautiful wild creatures. Nature has been on full display and we have had a ringside seat to view the daily antics of so many wonderful beasts and birds. And, almost by osmosis, Antarctica crept into our souls and we will never be the same.

The last official event on board was the Captain's Farewell, a chance to thank the Captain and crew, who have mostly been hidden throughout this cruise, but whose efforts made it all possible. So many nationalities among the crew and so many nationalities among the passengers! But, for the last week, we have all been Antarcticans!

As this trip draws to a close, it is fitting to remember that we are now ambassadors for this magical place. The protection and preservation of this icy Valhalla is now readily apparent to us all as we head back home, across the world, and we should advocate for its future. We may live half a world away but so many of our daily activities can have an effect on Antarctica and the rest of the planet. As we have trodden lightly while we have been here, so we can tread lightly when we get home. The penguins, seals and whales will thank us for that!





# Frei Station | King George Island

DAY 9 | Saturday 2 March 2024

Position at 0900 on 02 March

Latitude: 62°12'0" S

Longitude: 058°55'0" W

Course: 112.8

Speed: At anchor

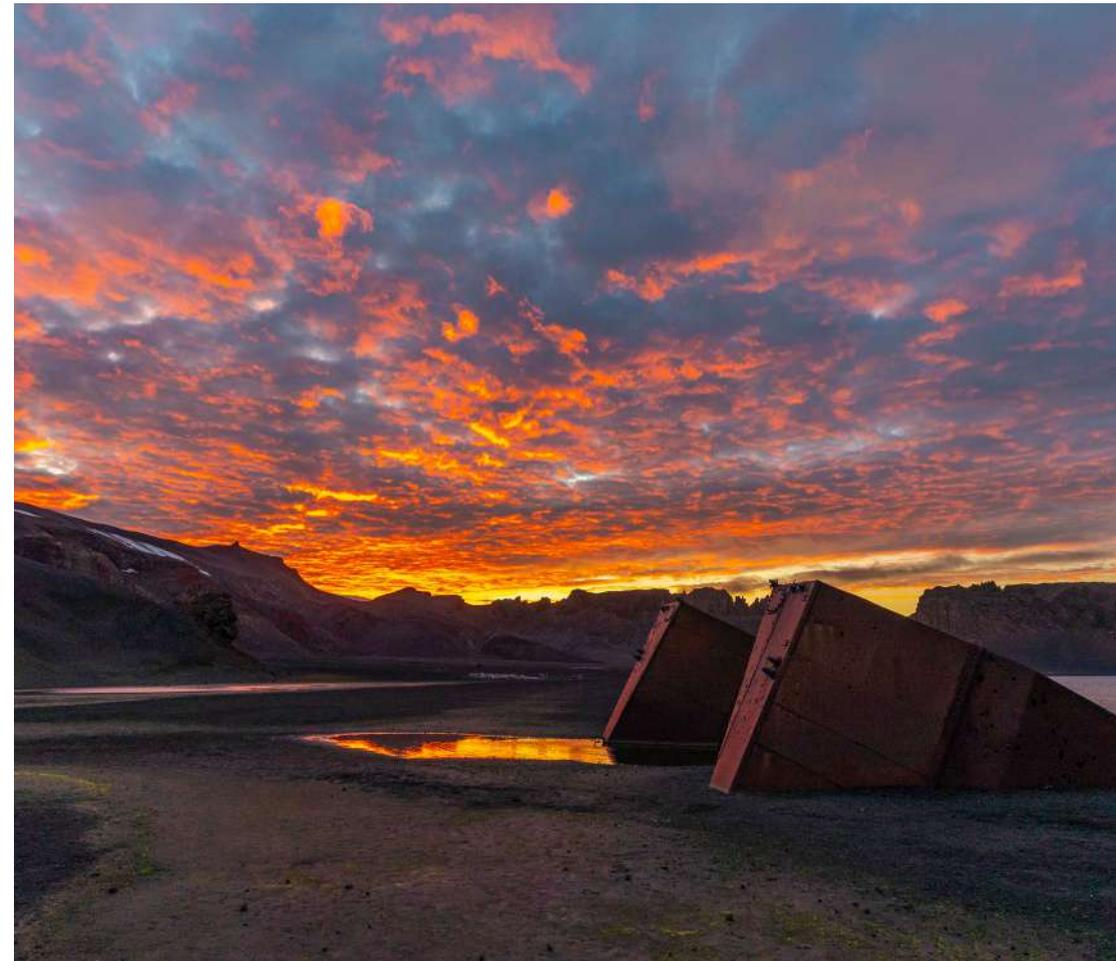
Wind Speed: E 5kts

Barometer: 1004 hPa

Air Temp: 0°C

Disembarkation day.

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



# Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Eloisa Berrier, Eduardo Larranaga, Pablo Passera, Rob Barth, Ivan Klochkov

Number of Kayakers: 16

Total Paddle Outings: 12

Total Distance Paddled: 42 km

Kayakers:	Ashley Adam	Shanoon McCall	Lynette Leong
Ronda Dean	Daniel Adam	Keri McCall	Marc Weinthal
Debra Dean	Dawn Klein-Adam	Robyn Davies	
Stephen Weeks	Michael Hinde	Gregory Davies	
Deb Weeks	Yvonne Moore	Kristav Childress	

## 24/02/2024, PM: Useful Island. Distance: 2.9 km

First outing of the trip! We took some time to practice in the water and make everyone feel comfortable and ready to paddle. As we set off from the west side of the island, there were icebergs all around us. We paddled close to shore and, as we rounded the northern point, we saw a colony of gentoo penguins. On the east side of the island, we entered a canal and channel with shallow waters. There we saw more gentoo penguins and some chinstrap penguins, plus fur seals and Weddell seals. After this, we boarded the Zodiac for a landing. This very tiny island used to be an observatory for whalers during the whaling times because of the strategical view from the top of the hill, hence the name 'Useful Island'.

## 24/02/2024, PM: Neko Harbour. Distance: 1.9 km

Our first day doing activities in Antarctica and we couldn't ask for more! After dinner we went to Neko Harbour and we explored the area with kayaks. We had an amazing session, paddling through brash ice and spending some time floating around icebergs and getting into the expedition mood, where every time we get the chance we go kayaking and it doesn't matter if it's snowing! We stopped for five minutes of Antarctic silence, just to experience a feeling quite similar to what the explorers may have during old times exploring with sailing boats.

## 25/02/2024, AM: Portal Point. Distance: 1.5 km

A morning of clear skies and winds at 5-10 knots. With 12 kayakers, we began our tour about 800 metres off Portal Point, with humpback whales cruising past. We spent some time hanging out and observing these whales, then we paddled towards the glacier to view the fur seals on the rocks. Then we ran a Zodiac shuttle to shore, to allow everyone to step onto the shore for a continental landing. By about 11am the wind had come up to about 20 knots in a westerly direction.

## 25/02/2024, PM: Charlotte Bay. Distance: 4.3 km

We called this one a 'postcard paddle'! Despite the bad forecast, we had just wonderful weather conditions that afternoon – flat, calm water and a lot of sunshine! We decided to paddle to the eastern wall of the bay, and then make a loop back to the ship. As we paddled, we made a couple of short stops to discuss some paddling tips and talked about 'black ice' and glaciers. We also checked out some amazing icebergs on the way. This was a kayak session to remember!

## 26/02/2024, AM: Pléneau Island. Distance: 3.5 km

A great morning at Pléneau Island! We started paddling next to a very calm bay. The day was cold but, for a moment, we had a bit of sunshine. Thanks to our versatile sea kayaks and inflatable kayaks, we were able to explore very shallow areas among a beautiful rock garden. We spotted a few cute Weddell seals hauled out on rocks, and then we reached two gentoo penguin colonies full of fluffy chicks ready to fledge. To finalise this great and calm kayaking session, we paddled towards big blue icebergs and we took the opportunity for a group picture with the stunning background. Afterwards we all went on shore to explore Pléneau Island quickly by foot!

## 26/02/2024, PM: Port Charcot. Distance: 6.6 km

A peaceful afternoon in Port Charcot, with calm seas and a cloudy sky. We spent almost two hours feeling like we were in an open-sky art gallery, because every single piece of iceberg we met was unique and special. This was an amazing kayak session and certainly one of the best in the whole season.

We started kayaking around big icebergs, and some of them in the distance were collapsing. Then we were quiet and got the chance to observe four crabeater seals resting on top of an iceberg. Next we spotted two leopard seals resting on an iceberg and one in the water swimming around us. We kept paddling and, after meeting a big group of penguins, we found a big iceberg with eight more crabeater seals resting on top. It was a really epic session with great wildlife encounters.

## 27/02/2024, PM: Flandres Bay Distance: 3.48 km

It was the outing for the afternoon as the morning was cancelled due to high winds. It was a very rainy day, so it had the energy and feeling of an adventure already! We started in the middle of Flanders Bay, with icebergs around. We had the wind at our back, and the rain and the very low clouds gave us a different perspective of being in Antarctica. We could see some seals in the water, and slowly the wind and rain abated.

To end the day we made a raft and had a surprise hot chocolate from Elo! That gave us the energy to get back to the ship in time for dinner.

## 28/02/2024, PM: Danco Island. Distance: 5.1 km

The clouds were higher and we could see the landscape around Danco Island into the Errera Chanel. Once we hopped into the kayaks, we started paddling close to some brash ice on the northern side of the island. It was the second session of the day, and sea conditions were calm and no swell.

We kayaked among icebergs, and once we arrived close to the shore, we could observe gentoo penguins going back and forth from the land to the sea and coming out of the water.

We continued along the island on the east side all the way to the end, then we turned around to the north in the direction of shallow water and a small island. Here we could see a good number of Weddell seals and few more penguins. After an hour we split the group into the ones who wanted to go for the landing and the ones who wanted to continue kayaking. We paddled for half an hour more in the direction of the *Greg Mortimer*, passing some more icebergs. We boarded the Zodiacs and went to see some whales from a distance. There was some debate about the species but in the end, we agreed it was a humpback whale with an adopted minke whale. Great ending to a great trip!

### 29/02/2024, AM: Freud Passage. Distance: 3.38 km

Another beautiful morning in Antarctica! We started from our Zodiacs in the middle of a huge bay in the Freud Passage. The area was full of gentle humpback whales, and the sea conditions were very calm with no wind. There was a dramatic light due to the stormy clouds around us.

Once we were kayaking, we put on a good pace to reach a group of humpback whales. When we reached them, the whales displayed different movements, which we all had the chance to observe from a close but safe distance. Because there was no wind, we could hear their breathing very clearly. We saw a huge mother with her calf. After this beautiful sighting, the whales started to head in the direction of Anne's Zodiac, where a delicious surprise of hot chocolate was waiting there for us!

### 29/02/2024, PM: Enterprise Bay. Distance: 3.48 km

The kayak team was full and we also had some strong paddlers, so we had a great kayak session together. We started from the Zodiacs by a very small island, and then we took the chance to explore the inside of the bay because the tide was perfect for us, even with the very shallow waters.

We visited a colony of blue-eyed cormorants, where we got the chance to observe some chicks from this season – they were still very small! Then we stopped for a bit to share the story behind the *Governoren* shipwreck that we could see. The ship is partially exposed and well preserved. And the sunken ship has become a symbol of Antarctica and the story of whaling history here. *Governoren* ran ashore in Foyen Harbor after a great fire broke out on board in 1915. The fire is thought to have started after a lamp was knocked over during the ship's end-of-voyage celebration. The massive ship, which was filled with whale oil, burned and sank, with the oils providing great fuel for the flames. The 85 crew members on board were rescued by another whaling vessel. At the end of our trip we got the chance to visit some smaller wooden boats, then came back by Zodiac to the ship for the Captain's Farewell cocktails.





# Paddling Log

Kayak Masters: Eloisa Berrier, Eduardo Larranaga, Pablo Passera, Rob Barth, Ivan Klochkov

Number of Kayakers: 6

Total Paddle Outings: 3

Total Distance Paddled: 6.2 km

Paddlers:	Amanda Duran	Susan Colman	Lynn Stowel
Humberto Duran	Jonathan Colman	Luci Secord	

## 24/02/2024, PM: Useful Island. Distance: 3.2 km

First outing was a V.I.P kayak session, with only one inflatable kayak. Nonetheless, we had a great time on the water, and almost circumnavigated the island! As we kayaked around the channels, we observed plenty of gentoo and chinstrap penguins and some fur seals. Good job, paddlers!

## 24/02/2024, PM: Neko Harbour. Distance: 1.5 km

An evening paddle with time restrictions due to fading light. With three paddlers, we embarked the Zodiac on the marina and, after moving 100 metres from the ship, we hopped into the inflatables. Visibility and time were low, and there was a large amount of brash ice. We picked a path in a loop following the glacier edge to the north and, after about 50 minutes of paddling and enjoying the peace and snow, we made it back to the *Greg Mortimer* by 9pm. During the paddle we saw lots of brash ice and icebergs, plus a few gentoo penguins making their way home.

## 25/02/2024, AM: Portal Point. Distance: 1.5 km

The outing began with an amazing humpback whale encounter! We paddled a little bit away from the ship, and then made a raft to observe whales that were approaching us. It was amazing to be so close to them as they were swimming around; we felt so small next to them. Then we paddled to a little cove to the south of Portal Point to take a closer look at the fur seals and Weddell seals lying on the rocks. We spent some wonderful time observing them, and then hopped to the Zodiac to get to the landing site. What a great paddling session!



# Snorkelling Log

Snorkel Guide: Thomas Gov, Stas Zakharov

Number of Snorkellers: 5

Total Outings: 11

Snorkellers:

Sydney Bunshaft

Caryn Bunshaft

Ronald Bunshaft

Albert Bunshaft

Robert Monteath

## 24/02/2024, PM: Useful Island

Welcome to the snorkelling program! We are super-glad to welcome a family of four, plus Rob, into our program.

As a first outing, we find a nice shallow and sheltered bay to start the snorkelling operations. First 'though' is the chance to make a landing at a gentoo penguin colony. The ground is full of melted snow and penguin poop, but nothing stops us from enjoying the majestic landscape and the new wildlife encounter. After one hour on land, we return to the Zodiac to explore the coast of Useful Island. We encountered a few types of seals, including fur seals, Weddell seals and one shy swimming leopard seal. Heading towards our planned snorkelling site, we realised that a few penguins are getting in and out of the water at the same location. Let's try to see if we get any luck from it. The snorkelling goes very well. Everyone realises that with all the gear, the cold water is manageable, and so we stayed a good 40 minutes in the water, looking at some penguins and enjoying the sea floor. Great first snorkelling and very promising for the coming outings.

## 25/02/2024, AM: Portal Point

We started our day at famous Portal Point, observing unexpectedly good weather. We left the ship and immediately saw a group of feeding humpback whales. We spent some time with the whales, and then put our feet on the seventh continent. After a short but really nice walk, we drove to the sheltered bay for snorkelling. There were a lot of fur seals around, and we were lucky to experience a close encounter with one of those beauties underwater - it came to check us out!

## 25/02/2024, PM: Charlotte Cove

In the afternoon we did an amazing Zodiac cruise in Charlotte Cove. The weather was amazing - calm and sunny. We observed a sleeping humpback whale and plenty of crabeater seals, and we had a nice short snorkel playing in the brash around the iceberg. We enjoyed this day and looked forward to what tomorrow might bring us!

## 26/02/2024, AM: Pléneau Island

Before landing on Pléneau Island, we all went together in the Zodiac to look at the water through the channels on the west side. The water looked very clear and still, and the site looked promising for a great snorkel. At the landing site, a gentoo penguin colony was waiting for us and we got to see our first Adélie penguin (Thomas's

favourite!) While on shore, Stas and Thomas went out with the Zodiac trying to find nice surprises. And they were successful. Two leopard seals were resting on some icebergs, displaying their best sleeping and yawning postures. The place is out of this world! The iceberg graveyard, as we call it - with icebergs bigger than houses everywhere around. What a sight! A remarkable sound can be heard in the middle of the scene... The leopard seal seems to be dreaming! We left him for other groups to enjoy while we cruised back towards those channels to enjoy some peaceful snorkelling. The water was clear and we could see lots of small creatures underwater. A stunning transparent blue piece of ice in the water conclude this outing in a beautiful manner.

## 26/02/2024, PM: Port Charcot

What an outing this one was! Definitely the highlight for most of us, guides included! We've had good snorkelling days but this one will stay with us and be remembered as exceptional. After anchoring the boat on the south part of Port Charcot, we spent an hour ashore to discover the historical site where Jean Baptiste Charcot and his crew wintered in 1914. In the meantime, Stas and Thomas went out scouting the area for a snorkelling place and some nice wildlife to observe. After looking at gentoo penguins at the landing, we jumped in the Zodiac and went out towards the north of the site through the edge of the iceberg graveyard. We first stopped at our famous ice house, looked at some crabeater seals, and then headed to a sheltered bay to snorkel. The raft of penguins enjoying themselves on the bay, spotted by Stas and Thomas on their scouting, was still there! Let's try to get in the water with them... What a success! Swimming in a group of maybe 300 gentoo penguins is a lifetime memory. We enjoyed this for almost 30 minutes before getting back onto the Zodiac. As soon as we got on board, a humpback whale came close to the Zodiac with a feeding behaviour and showed us its tail many times. As if it wasn't enough for the day, a huge iceberg started to collapse from every corner, rolling over unbalanced, making more chunks of ice collapse from it. With our eyes and brains full of emotions, we headed back to the warm *Greg Mortimer*. In honest words from the guides, this was a special, unusual and amazing snorkelling afternoon. Thanks!

## 27/02/2024, AM: Yalour Islands

We were welcomed by overcast skies and rain in the morning in the Yalour Islands, famous for its Adélie penguin colony. We jumped in our Zodiac and drove to the landing spot. Snow was covered with colourful algae - green and purple. We enjoyed the company of Adélie penguins and spent some time with them. After that, we had a short but nice snorkel between the rocks. At the end of the outing, we were lucky to see a breaching leopard seal, which is a truly rare sight.

## 27/02/2024, PM: Flandres Bay

We spent the afternoon cruising between the majestic icebergs of Flandres Bay. We enjoyed observing storm petrels gracefully dancing on the water's surface trying to catch some plankton, and even spotted a massive leopard seal. We ended with snorkelling around the flat and safe iceberg and returned back to the ship - wet and cold, but happy after another outing in Antarctica.

## 28/02/2024, AM: Chiringuano Bay

It was a cold morning stepping out of the ship for a Zodiac cruise, a bit windy and a bit snowy. The snow and the cold was making the sea freeze a little in a formation called pancake ice; a new sight for us. The bay is beautiful,

big glaciers everywhere. We started by observing a few resting fur seals on the rocks, as well as some icebergs, before heading south to check on the mouth of the bay. The glaciers were astonishing, and we played Thomas's favourite game: How tall is the glacier front?! We also found some cormorants, or blue-eyed shags, resting on the rocks. After a little talk, Sydney and Ronald decided to go snorkelling around some pancake ice for a few minutes. As it always happens around ice, the games became quite entertaining and a few minutes in the water turned into half an hour playing with the ice and taking photos standing on some flat ice surface. When it comes to ice, everyone becomes a child!

### 28/02/2024, PM: Danco island

More humpback whales when we stepped out of the ship! We never get tired of them. After enjoying this encounter, we headed to a gentoo colony at the landing site and took a small hike up the hill. After an hour on land, we headed to a super-nice snorkelling site east of Danco Island, where there were some rocky shallows and small, uncharted islands. The snorkelling site was great, with very clear water. A few Weddell seals were resting on the rocks, and a few pieces of ice were aground in the shallows; a perfect snorkelling place! We observed a lot of different kind of creatures including krill, other crustaceans and a couple of ctenophores! These guys are part of the comb jellyfish family and they create their own light. How crazy is that? Once again, a great snorkelling time with great people.

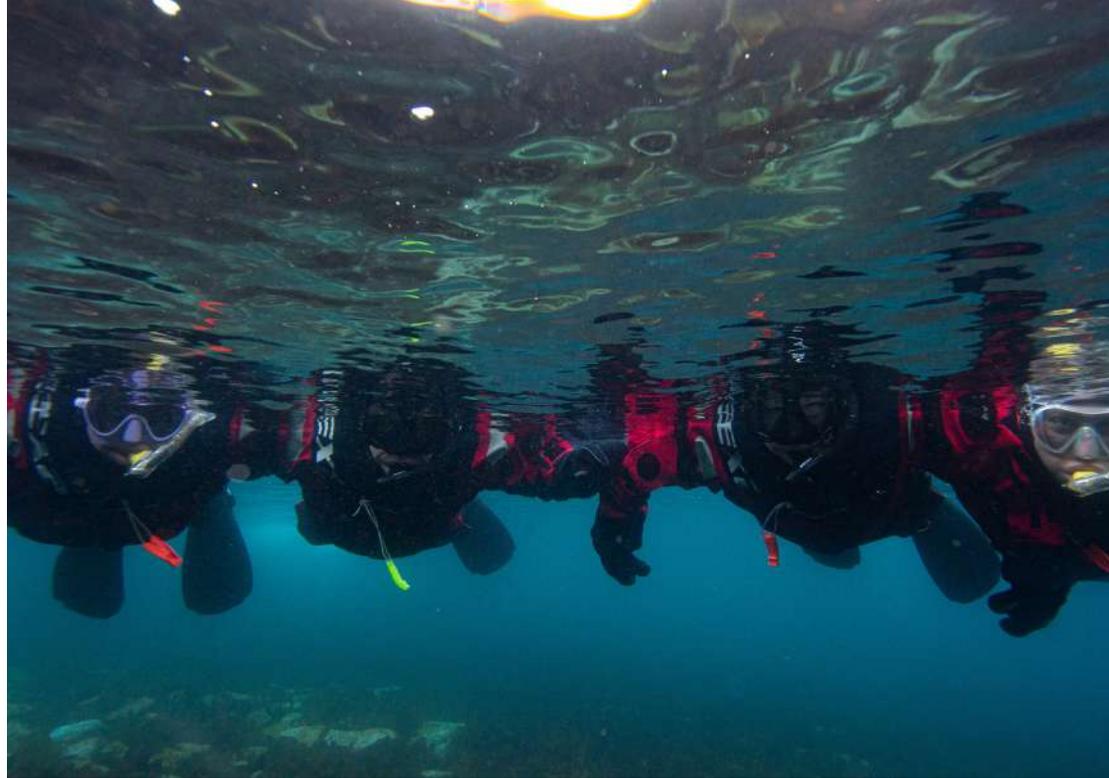
### 29/02/2024, AM: Freud Passage

In the morning we did a Zodiac cruise in Freud Passage. We observed humpback whales calmly navigating through the water, we collected a plankton sample for our Citizen Science program, and even drank hot chocolate while snorkelling! What a beautiful beginning to another day in Antarctica.

### 29/02/2024, PM: Enterprise Island and *Governoren* wreck

In the afternoon we stopped at Enterprise Island for some snorkelling around a shipwreck. What a lovely sight! The water was clear so we had an opportunity to see the whole hull of the ship underwater. We even took a second snorkelling trip away from the ship to observe the whale bones underwater. An amazing day; no more to say!





# Bird and Mammal Sightings

## Bird Species

22 February–2 March 2024

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 1 2

Gentoo Penguin		●	●		●		●	●	●	●
Chinstrap Penguin			●		●			●	●	
Adélie Penguin					●	●				
Black-browed Albatross								●		
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross									●	
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern and/or Southern)		●							●	●
Cape Petrel								●	●	
Snow Petrel							●			
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern)								●		
Wilson's Storm-petrel		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Imperial Cormorant (blue-eyed)				●	●	●	●		●	
American Sheathbill (Snowy)			●		●	●	●			
Skua (Brown and/or South Polar)			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Kelp Gull		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tern (probably mostly Antarctic)		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	

## Mammal Species

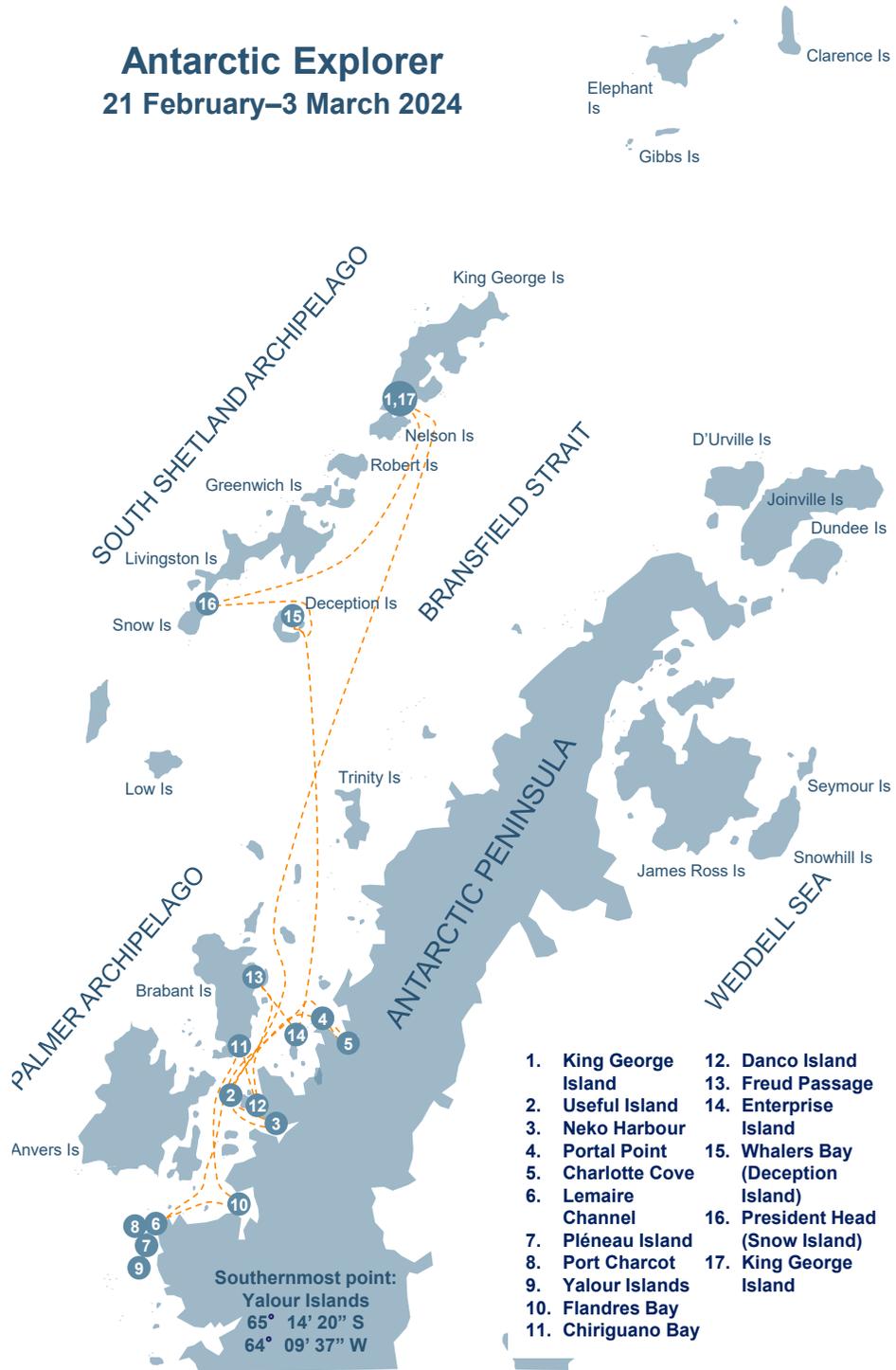
22 February–2 March 2024

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 1 2

Antarctic Fur Seal			●	●	●		●	●	●	
Southern Elephant Seal										●
Crabeater Seal					●					
Weddell Seal			●							●
Leopard Seal			●		●	●				●
Minke Whale		●					●			
Humpback Whale		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Orca				●						
Blue-fin Whale hybrid (most likely)				●						

# Antarctic Explorer

21 February–3 March 2024





# Expeditioners:

Daniel Adam	Andrew Cross	Lyn Harris	James Moore	Shivdeep Singh
Ashley Adam	Toni Darcy	Steve Harris	Yvonne Moore	Ann Sparks
Sue Allison	Narelle Darvill	Lauren Hentschel	Tony Moore	Doug Sparks
Tony Allison	Fred Darvill	Michael Hinde	Sandy Moore	Lynn Stowe
Mary Ann Andrews	Greg Davis	Jennifer Ho	Beth Moreland	Pam Summerfield
John Andrews Jr	Robyn Davis	Julie Hollick	Yee Lin Ng	Tom Summerfield
Thomas Barrett	Debra Dean	Eddie Hollick	Shanise Ng	Michael Tobiason
Edna Ben Izhak Monselise	Ronda Dean	Chris Huon	Silvio Oby Eisenberg	Andrew Turner
Nancy Benning	Patrick Dempsey	Christine Huon	Marian O'Leary Barrett	John Twining
Caryn Bunshaft	Kelly Do	Karla Jensen	Kelly Paul	Bernadette Twining
Albert Bunshaft	Deborah Dunning	Amanda Jensen	Helen Pegler	Patricia Vaz de Carvalho
Ronald Bunshaft	Humberto Duran	Dawn Klein-Adam	Alak Raju Poosapati	Deb Weeks
Sydney Bunshaft	Amanda Duran	Carol Korade	Sarah Praner	Steve Weeks
Helen Cadue	Paul Dyer	Emily Kwek	Dennis Que Pe	Maor Weinberger
Kris Childress	Susan Dyer	Chin Yee Leong	Jennifer Que Pe	Haim Weinberger
Wing Chiu	Lesley Eadie	Jaslyn Loh	Jon Quinn	Hava Weinberger
Jaime Chua	Geoff Eadie	Burny Matthews	Joann Reiter	Deborah Weinthal
Ces Chua	David Elliott	Keri Mc Call	Saahil Relan	Marc Weinthal
Tim Chua	Sue Elliott	Shannon Mc Call	Luci Secord	Ay Wong
Rina Cohen	Nira Garty	Karen Monteath	Jignesh Shah	Hon Foong Woo
Suzi Colman	Diane Grigg	Robert Monteath	Neha Shah	Gobby Yan
Jon Colman	Wayne Hansen	Sue Moore	Bianca Shah	



## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Assistant Expedition Leader: Daniel Stavert

Onboard Expedition Manager: Anne Oeyasaeter

Glaciologist: Gaby Pilsen

Naturalist / Citizen Science Coordinator: Tracey Ann Hooley

Naturalist: Hans Bruning

Marine Biologist: Annette Scheffer

Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Eloisa Berrier

Senior Sea Kayak Guide: Eduardo Larranaga

Senior Sea Kayak Guide: Ivan Klochkov

Sea Kayak Guide: Robin Barth

Sea Kayak Guide: Pablo Passera

Lead Snorkel Guide: Thomas Gov

Snorkel Guide: Stas Zakharov

Expedition Medic: Alan McPherson

Photography Guide: Adrian Wlodarczyk

Zodiac Manager: Ryan Kaempfe

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Reza Rusooly

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Oleg Kapko

Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi

Safety Officer: Sergeii Voina

Bosun: Francis Marvin Linga

Third Officer: Goncalo Alexandre Saraiva Aniceto Costa

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

Support Doctor: Eliana Caro Garzon

Chief Engineer: Sergiy Melynk

Hotel Director: Pascal Joubin

Chief Purser: Pia Blanca Bangug

Executive Chef: Ronwaldo Reyes

Head Waiter: Jemuel Alcantara

IT Officer: Gerry Dcunha

Receptionist: Ana Gabriela Fernandez

Receptionist: Jonathan Valdez

Head Stateroom: Florente Lusomg

Able Seaman: Dan Well Danico

Able Seaman: Jufri Mujahid

Able Seaman: Nikola Georgiev

Able Seaman: Mark Christian Torero

Able Seaman: Joel Noble

Able Seaman: Roberto Ixtan Mejia

Able Seaman/Carpenter: Angelo San Antonio

Deck Cadet: Giuseppe Guidice

## Photography thanks to:

Adrian Wlodarczyk



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