

# Falkland Islands, South Georgia & Antarctic Peninsula

Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 14 March–2 April 2024



# Ushuaia, Argentina

DAY 1 | Thursday 14 March 2024

Position at 0800 on 14 Mar

Latitude: 54°48.5'S

Longitude: 068°17.7'W

Course: Anchor

Speed: Anchor

Wind Speed: NNW 14 kts

Barometer: 997hPa

Air Temp: 8°C

Here we are in the stunning town of Ushuaia, 'el fin del mundo', the end of the world.

The wharf was abuzz this afternoon with arrivals, departures, fishing vessels unloading their catch, and all sorts of activity. Our Expeditioners were met by the Aurora team and had their photos taken for our 'photoboard' to help us learn each other's names. Drinks and a buffet awaited us in the Elephant Island Bar, then our hotel team helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and settle into our 'home away from home'. It had been a long couple of days of travelling, and many of us probably wanted to crawl into the comfort of our beds, but there was no time to rest just yet!

After a welcome briefing from our Expedition Leader, Daniel, and a quick intro from Dr Anzor and hotel director, Pascal, Onboard Expedition Manager, Anne, then gave us some handy hints about life on board.

Finally, the all-important safety drill. The sound of the ship's horn signalled us to don bulky orange lifejackets and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed our crew up to deck 7, where the polar-class life vessels sit (they can hold 136 people each, for 5 days!). With the safety drill completed, we were cleared to begin our journey.

As *Greg Mortimer* sailed away from Ushuaia, we made our way to the dining room to enjoy a delicious dinner, prepared by our talented galley team and served by our smiley and welcoming wait staff.

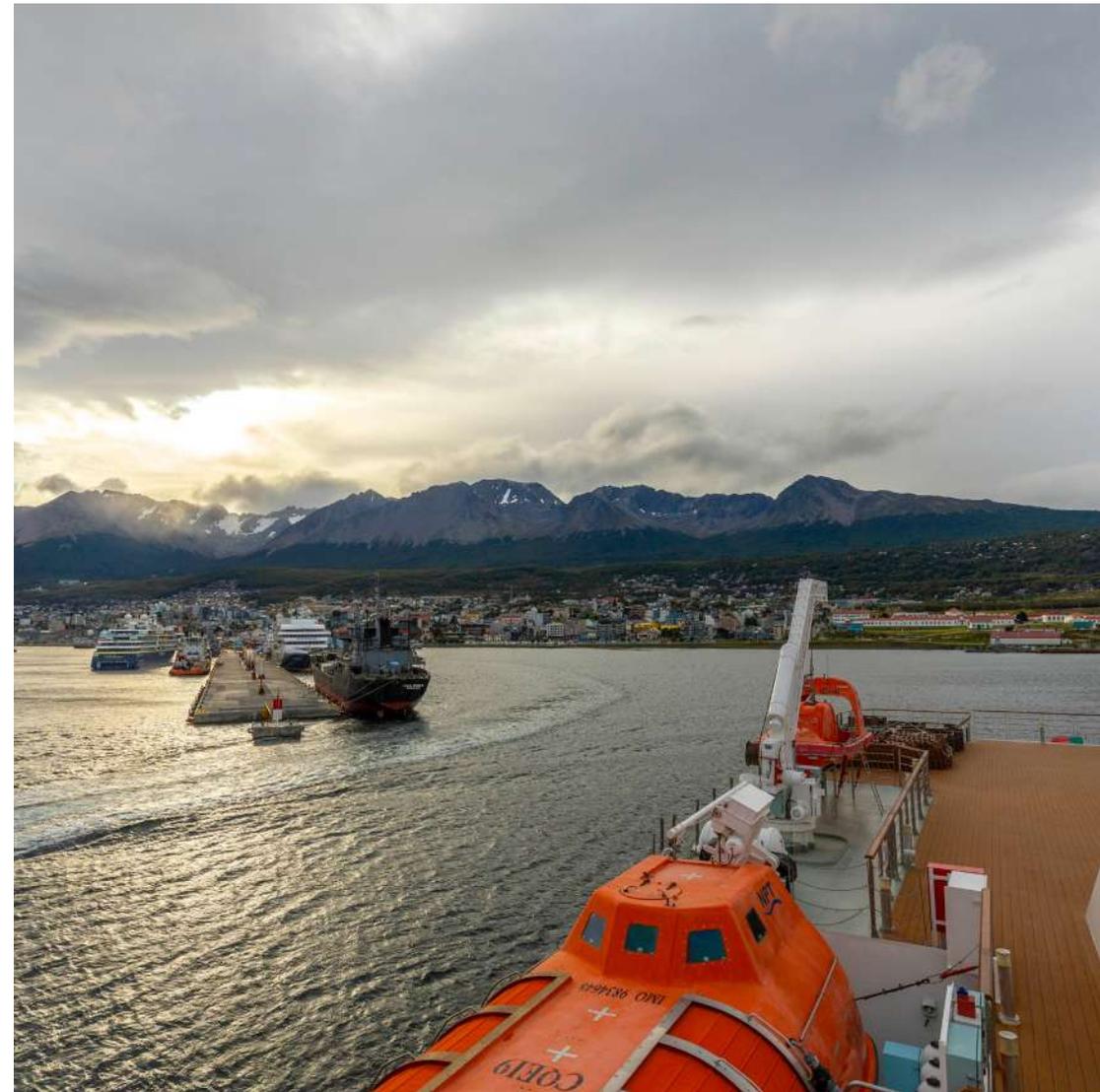
The last task was a jacket swap, so that we can cope with whatever weather Antarctica decides to throw at us.

So, we'd had our last glimpse of town life, knowing that from now on we are more likely to see a colony of penguins than a crowd of people.

Together we total 109 passengers: 21 Americans, 62 Australians, 2 Canadians, 11 British, 1 French, 1 German, 2 Indian, 2 Israeli, 2 Dutch, 3 New Zealanders and 2 Swiss, along with 83 crew from all around the globe.

Our 22 Expedition Team have a variety of specialities including polar exploration, glaciology, geology, history, marine and terrestrial biology, photography, medicine, snorkelling and kayaking.

After the many hours of travel to reach the *Greg Mortimer*, it's time to kick back, breathe in the sea air, and get excited for the next 20 days of adventure!





# At Sea

DAY 2 | Friday 15 March 2024

## Position at 0900 on 15 Mar

Latitude: 57°0.0'S

Course: 160°

Longitude: 065°22.0'W

Speed: 10.3kts

The 'Drake Shake' with seabirds in our wake!

The first full day of our expedition, and Daniel woke us just ahead of breakfast with news that we were now well and truly in the much-anticipated Drake Passage and that the wind was blowing at 47 knots!\* Hmmm, that might explain the difficulty keeping the coffee inside the coffee cup... With plenty of wind and swell, the movement of our little ship felt challenging at times, but the excellent stabilisers and wave-piercing X-BOW® design made for a much more comfortable ride than it otherwise would have been.

For those who found their sea legs early, it was exciting to explore the breakfast buffet (so many choices). For others, a lie-in was a much more appealing and completely understandable. Our 'Plan A' morning briefings on biosecurity and Zodiacs were postponed to allow us all to attend when we felt more comfortable and were less sleepy from sea-sickness medications.

Meanwhile, outside the ship, there were albatrosses everywhere! T-A gave a talk introducing the Southern Ocean seabirds and we discovered that the tiniest one we'll meet weighs the same as two AA batteries (Wilson's storm-petrel, 40 grams), while the wandering and royal albatrosses have the largest wingspan of any birds, at 3.5 metres. After the talk, 28 of us grabbed beanies and binoculars and headed to deck 6 for an eBird Citizen Science survey. For some of us, this was our first ever face-to-beak meeting with an albatross.

After lunch, Adrian introduced us to expedition photography and shared these top tips for making the most of whatever photography gear we've brought with us (from phones to professional cameras):

- Use a fast shutter speed for wildlife
- Use a large F-stop for landscapes
- Get close to the water with your camera when in the Zodiacs (don't fall in, though!)
- Change your perspective to mix up the shots
- Get out on deck – there are opportunities happening all the time
- And, maybe most importantly, put the camera down from time to time. Stand, look, take it all in. The very best photo is the one inside your head.

Throughout the afternoon, the sea state settled and albatrosses continued to follow in our wake, giving photographers plenty of opportunities to put their skills to the test. And the snorkel and kayak teams began their preparations for getting in/on Antarctic's icy waters in just a couple of days' time.

Wind Speed: SW 34.7 kts

Air Temp: 0°C

Barometer: 991 hPa

The Captain's Welcome topped off our first full day together and we raised a glass to all the great adventures ahead.

\* To convert knots to km/hr, multiply by 1.852, then stand back and enjoy the smug feeling of having pushed through such strong winds!



# Approaching Antarctica

DAY 3 | Saturday 16 March 2024

## Position at 0800 16 Mar

Latitude: 61°35'0"S

Longitude: 063°51.0"W

Course: 171°

Speed: 13.1 kts

Wind Speed: SSE 9.4 kts

Barometer: 980 hPa

Air Temp: -2°C

The second sea day. The wind had settled overnight. Slowly, we become a little more familiar with our surroundings, our new home, the *Greg Mortimer*. Through a benign progression we have melted into becoming more comfortable and we start to relax, allowing our minds to be increasingly aware of where we are, and where we are headed.

We are officially in Antarctic waters, passing biological and political borders through the night. It's a good time to think. It's an even better time to reflect.

The morning begins with briefings, both IAATO and Zodiac operations, which give a deeper meaning to the unique nature of our destination, and subsequently the potential dangers of operating in the conditions that she provides. We aren't in Disneyland, and there are repercussions to actions down here. Someone plays classical music on the piano in the main bar, its subtle tones reminding us that art belongs here as well. We are all here together, and we will leave together, so we must explore together, and this in itself will help mould our story. I watch as individuals stare out of windows, seemingly peaceful and content in their solitude as they absorb the gravity of both our journey and destinations.

The first iceberg is seen. Through the fog she emerges, drifting quietly by. Where has she been? As the snow beings to fall she slips on by, leaving only her imprint in our memories. She will become something to reflect on later. There will be more, but she was the first. An impression is made.

The lectures of the day are cause for more reflection. The history of Antarctica is covered, as well as the human presence. We look back at the past, and we analyse the more recent decisions made in the political spectrum regarding this critical and essential mass of ice. We reflect on how we fit into this picture. Over the coming days, we will see how small we really are.

We gather on the aft deck as seabirds fly by through the streaming snow. Cape petrels, grey-headed albatross and prions all glare at us as they use the updrafts from the ship, seeking out sources of potential meals. No such thing as a free meal here.

Afternoon tea is served. Choices need to be made. Our minds contemplate a different type of reflection, the one staring back at us in the mirror if the food keeps coming. We choose the scone with jam and cream anyway. Antarctica is once in a lifetime. This is special.

And in the very near future when we reflect back on our journey, the smiles on our faces are what we will remember most.



# Paradise Harbour | Neko Harbour

DAY 4 | Sunday 17 March 2024

Position at 0700 on 17 Mar

Latitude: 64°50'0" S

Longitude: 062°56'0" W

Course: 150°

Speed: 4.4 kts

Wind Speed: SSE 2 kts

Barometer: 1006 hPa

Air Temp: -4°C

Our first day in Antarctica could not have been better! After two exciting days in the wild and changing Drake Passage, we finally arrived at the Antarctic continent, a great dream for everyone. The good energy of all of all on board made this day truly magical.

In the morning, we did a spectacular Zodiac cruise in Paradise Bay. We managed to drive for two hours through the dense brash ice. We were able to see the Argentine summer base 'Brown Station' up close, and then we continued towards Skontorp Cove, driving alongside the impressive cliffs, made up of a very particular geology that I dare not comment too much on. On these cliffs, we were also able to see the beautiful antarctic shags finishing their breeding season. They will soon abandon their nests but will return to the same spot next summer.

Despite the difficulty involved in driving the Zodiacs between brash ice, the Zodiac drivers took us to amazing places. The weather was perfect, without wind, which allowed us to appreciate the beautiful reflections in the sea of the icebergs and mountains. In addition, to our good luck, the sun began to shine. After this first experience and once everyone was back on board, the *Greg Mortimer* began to navigate through the dense ice towards our afternoon destination.

We arrived at Neko Harbour after travelling through incredible landscapes, with towering mountains covered by imposing glaciers that descend towards the sea like gigantic rivers. At Neko Harbour, we set foot on the Antarctic continent.

The afternoon, like our morning, was perfect, without wind and with a very special light. We enjoyed a calm disembarkation, where we observed the gentoo penguins up close and contemplated the unique landscape of Andvord Bay. Some took a walk to appreciate the beautiful view from up the hill and, every now and then, we could hear the loud cracks of the glacial ice that always tries to make its way towards the sea, sometimes with strong calvings that even generate tsunamis on the coast of Neko Harbour.

Others were lucky enough to see the majestic humpback whales up close, which is a privilege, as they will soon begin their long migration to the tropics.

The day was not over. After returning to the ship, many found the courage to jump into the icy waters of Antarctica by doing the polar plunge. The feeling and excitement of this experience is unique and no doubt those who jumped felt very energised afterwards!

Well done, everyone!









# Polar Plunge

DAY 4 | Sunday 17 March 2024











# Hydrurga Rocks | Cierva Cove

DAY 5 | Monday 18 March 2024

Position at 0700 on 18 Mar

Latitude: 64°10.0" S

Longitude: 061°32.0" W

Course: 29.3

Speed: 5.8kts

Wind Speed: E 10kts

Barometer: 1011 hPa

Air Temp: -4°C

As we awoke from our slumber to the soothing whisper of Daniel's voice, the morning light emerged onto Hydrurga Rocks, casting its glow over the icy landscape. It was a beautiful day in the neighbourhood and perfect for exploring the wonders that this remote corner of the world had to offer.

As our small boat approached Hydrurga Rocks, the anticipation grew. The rugged islands were home to various animals and adorned by the magnificent Antarctic landscape. As we all disembarked the ship, exploring the area within our designated activity, the air was filled with excitement and curiosity. On shore, the fur seals greeted us with their playful antics, their sleek bodies gracefully gliding through the icy waters. Weddell seals lazed on the rocks, their deep, soulful eyes capturing our hearts. And amid the rocky terrain, the chinstrap penguins waddled, their black and white plumage a stark contrast to their surroundings. Whales emerged from the depths of the ocean, spy-hopping and lunge feeding, as the sound of their powerful exhales echoed through the air, creating a symphony of nature's melody. From the shore, Zodiacs, and kayaks, we just watched in silence, mesmerised by the beauty and tranquillity of these gentle giants.

After a delicious lunch, we found ourselves in Cierva Cove, the home of Primavera Station, where the surrounding landscape was quintessential Antarctica. As we embarked on our Zodiac exploration, we navigated through the glassy waters filled with brash ice, growlers, and towering icebergs sparkling like diamonds. The gentoo penguins porpoised around us, jumping in and out of the water as leopard seals waited and hid like rocks in anticipation along the dramatic coastline, carved by glaciers. Then suddenly the sleeping rocks awoke and the leopard seals started feasting on the gentoos, thrashing their bodies back and forth, ripping their skin back, and devouring their lifeless bodies (a full description for those who missed it). With glimpses of minke whales in the distance and snoring leopard seals on ice, it was time to head back to the ship and decompress our mind-blowing day.

As the sun set behind us, we traded our stories of adventure at dinner as we filled our bellies with wonderful cuisine in anticipation for what tomorrow brings. Sweet dreams, good people. Tomorrow another adventure awaits!







# Astrolabe Island | Gourdin Island

DAY 6 | 19 March 2024

Position at 0700 19 Mar

Latitude: 63°15'0" S

Longitude: 058°48'0" W

Course: 099.6°

Speed: 6.5 kts

Wind Speed: SSW 5.8kts

Barometer: 1007 hPa

Air Temp: -2°C

Just when we thought Antarctica couldn't surprise us anymore, we were proved wrong with another fantastic day along the Antarctic Peninsula. Chinstrap and gentoo penguins, fur and leopard seals, massive icebergs, and dramatic mountains... and so much more!

The day started off with calm seas and a relatively comfortable temperature of -2°C, making it perfect for further exploration. Captain Maxim steered us towards the imposing vertical walls of the Devil's Teeth on Astrolabe Island, our destination for the morning. This 4.8-kilometre-long island sits 22.5 kilometres northwest of Cape Ducorps on the Trinity Peninsula.

Our landing was nothing short of incredible, with fur seals and chinstrap penguins, some slippery rocks, but breathtaking views!

On the water, snorkellers had an unforgettable time with some playful fur seals, while paddlers and kayakers enjoyed navigating through narrow channels and witnessing the penguins' playful dives.

Back on board the *Greg Mortimer*, we gathered on deck 7 for a group photo to commemorate the day's adventures and having been part of this amazing voyage. Smiles all around!

During the midday recap with Gaby, we learned the fascinating history behind the name 'Astrolabe,' tracing it back to the French expedition led by Jules Dumont d'Urville in the early 19th century.

T-A introduced us to the kelp gull, and Elo treated us to captivating videos of humpback whales and their feeding habits. So much to discover; so much to marvel at!

Our next stop was Gourdin Island, the largest in a cluster of islands and rocks just a mile off the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Discovered during a French expedition in the 1830s and named in honour of Jean Gourdin, a member of the expedition, the island greeted us with a charming mix of gentoo and chinstrap penguin colonies, intriguing volcanic formations, and sweeping views of the surrounding landscape.







# Elephant Island | Point Wild

DAY 7 | Wednesday 20 March 2024

Position at 0745 20 Mar

Latitude: 61°40'0"S

Longitude: 054°44'0"W

Course: 271.2°

Speed: 10.7 kts

Wind Speed: SSE 6.8 kts

Barometer: 1000 hPa

Air Temp: -2°C

Today is our last day in Antarctica. It was an ambitious plan - to land on famous, but hardly accessible, Point Wild on Elephant Island.

As we woke up, our beautiful ship *Greg Mortimer* was approaching the channel between Elephant Island and Clarence Island, being the last two islands of South Shetland Archipelago.

Just the very last tiny pieces of land and only the open ocean ahead.

As we approached the channel, we saw multiple fin whales. This area is a well-known feeding ground for the second-largest animal on the planet!

We enjoyed observing these giants and went for breakfast.

Elephant Island has quite a history behind it. It was discovered in January 1821 by the famous First Russian Antarctic Expedition led by Fabian von Bellingshausen and Mikhail Lazarev, and was first named Mordvinov Island.

But there's another story behind Elephant Island that made it famous.

The island became a refuge for the British expedition led by Ernest Shackleton in 1916.

Their ship *Endurance* was trapped in the ice in the Weddell Sea, and then sank. After spending months on drifting ice and small boats, Shackleton's team reached Cape Valentine on Elephant Island. After camping there, they moved to Point Wild, as it has a better protection from the storms.

They named this place Point Wild after Shackleton's officer Frank Wild. Shackleton sailed to South Georgia in a tiny lifeboat, while Frank Wild was left on Elephant Island as a leader of the team, who camped there waiting for rescue.

After reaching South Georgia, Shackleton and his men had a long walk through the mountains before they reached a whaling station. They sailed to Punta Arenas and started the rescue expedition in order to save the people on Point Wild, who were waiting for Shackleton's return.

The ship *Yelcho*, under command of Captain Luis Pardo and with Shackleton aboard, reached Point Wild on 30 August 1916 and rescued Wild and his people.

The bust of Captain Pardo on Point Wild is the most significant monument in the South Shetland Island group.

The weather in this place is very challenging and it's a very rare occasion to land here. We were lucky enough to

come in very calm weather conditions and all Expeditioners successfully landed on Point Wild and greeted the bust of Captain Pardo.

We were honoured to touch this piece of land that has truly inspired a large part of Antarctic exploration history.





# At Sea

DAY 8 | Thursday 21 March 2024

## Position at 0800 on 21 Mar

Latitude: 59°43'0" S

Course: 36.4°

Longitude: 048°29'0" W

Speed: 11.2kts

Wind Speed: W 22 kts

Air Temp: -4°C

Barometer: 998 hPa

The morning of 21 March found the vessel in the long swell of the Southern Ocean with moderate following dark seas.

We had left Elephant Island in our wake during the night, and the fin whales that had gathered in its rich waters to feed. Our course was chosen with care to pass between two storm systems.

We were crossing the same wild body of water that Ernest Shackleton and a few of his men had to navigate in a small, converted lifeboat after their ship the *Endurance* was lost.

The crew escaped the ship onto the moving pack ice that crushed the *Endurance* in November 1915. As the pack ice broke apart, they made an arduous crossing in two lifeboats to Elephant Island. The austerity of their landing site was still fresh in our memories.

One of the *Endurance* lifeboats was reinforced, and a small party then set out on the 720-nautical-mile crossing to South Georgia, to seek help for the rest of the crew left on Elephant Island. The seamanship required to make such a crossing in a small wooden craft was clear to all who watched the wild water of the Southern Ocean from the stable decks of the *Greg Mortimer*, as we retraced their crossing to South Georgia.

Just after dawn, the deck team were able to take us close to the largest iceberg on the planet. The berg known as A23a broke from the Filchner-Ronne ice shelf in 1986. It was grounded for many years on the seabed in the Weddell Sea, but floated free in 2020. The tabular berg is about 3,900 square kilometres in area. The ocean currents and westerly winds pushed the huge mass of ice past the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, and into the Southern Ocean in November 2023. We sailed past the almost-40-nautical-mile western edge of the ice wall for many hours.

A rare southern right whale surfaced near the berg during our transit. These whales were almost hunted to extinction, and it was a great joy to see what we hope is a return of these creatures. Three lonely penguins were also seen standing on the sheer-faced 80-metre-high berg. Where they had scaled the berg was not clear, but we wished them well for the downward climb or high dive.

The afternoon allowed time for two Citizen Science surveys of birds and clouds, and closed with a fascinating presentation from Gina Chick on her time alone in the Tasmanian wilderness. Her reflections on the need for a connection with nature were facilitated by long-time Australian presenter, Richard Moorcroft. The conversation resonated with many on board, who felt a new connection during our voyage to this wild and powerful place.





# At Sea

DAY 9 | Friday 22 March 2024

## Position at 0930 on 22 Mar

Latitude: 57°07'3" S

Longitude: 041°53'3" W

Course: 059

Speed: 11.2kts

Wind Speed: SW 27kts

Barometer: 999 hPa

Air Temp: -1°C

It was our second sea day since we left Elephant Island and Point Wild behind, continuing to follow the footsteps of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his team. It was hard to imagine that those brave men were sailing these vast and harsh waters just on a lifeboat, without all the sophisticated tools that we have nowadays!

Despite the fact that we spent the whole day at sea, it was full of remarkable events that were building up our excitement.

After a delicious breakfast, our historian, Avi, gave us a lecture about women in Antarctica. She shared so many fascinating stories of different heroic ladies participating in expeditions in Antarctica and playing a significant role in exploration of this remote continent.

Sea days are great just to take time to rest and process everything that happened during the trip so far, time to process photos and emotions. However, even though we were not getting off the ship, it felt busy throughout the day.

The lunch was followed by a lecture from our naturalist Katya. She gave a talk about commercial fisheries in Antarctica and how this affects the fragile ecosystem of the Southern Ocean. We discovered some sobering facts about krill – humans are still fishing these crucially important creatures, doing damage to the very base of the food chain, affecting penguins, whales, seals, and other creatures. We hope that this situation will change for the better as the number of people who are aware of this process will grow.

Of course, there is no sea day without bird surveys! Our passionate Naturalist T-A, gathered keen birders on the outer deck to observe and count seabirds soaring around the ship. They saw different albatrosses and other magnificent birds, the dwellers of the open oceans.

The afternoon was exciting as well. Our naturalist Alan gave an amazing presentation about his first visits to Antarctica! It is amazing how many incredible stories this humble man hides within himself! He used to come down here many years ago with the British Antarctic Survey, carrying out various research and doing ice diving. He shared some amazing stories about life on their station and showed magnificent footage of Antarctica's underwater world.

This talk was followed up by images review and critique from our expedition photographer, Adrian. We had a great chance to get some professional and useful advice on photography with specific examples!

What a busy and exciting sea day! Everyone was excited as we were getting closer and closer to South Georgia – the next chapter of our expedition.



# Drygalski Fjord | Cooper Bay

DAY 10 | Saturday 23 March 2024

Position at 0600 on 23 Mar

Latitude: 58°06'8" S

Longitude: 036°29'3"W

Course: 054°

Speed: 10.5 kts

Wind Speed: WSW 22 kts

Barometer: 1008 hPa

Air Temp: -1°C

We have said a final farewell to the Antarctic Peninsula and finally reached the gorgeous shores of South Georgia. This subantarctic paradise has already greeted us with incredible sights.

Our morning was an ode to exploration as we embarked on a journey through the awe-inspiring Drygalski Fjord, named after the intrepid German explorer and geographer, Erich von Drygalski, who came to the island on his polar expedition in 1901–1903 on board the ship *Gauss*. Did you know that he even has a crater on the moon named after him?!

As we cruised through the fjord, our senses were treated to a symphony of natural marvels. Cascading glaciers painted the landscape with their icy fingers, while fresh fallen snow adorned the rugged peaks that loomed overhead. The crisp, invigorating breeze whispered tales of centuries past, reminding us of the ancient history etched into the very rocks of South Georgia's mountains. It was very impressive seeing these steep mountains that are home to some of the oldest rocks on South Georgia.

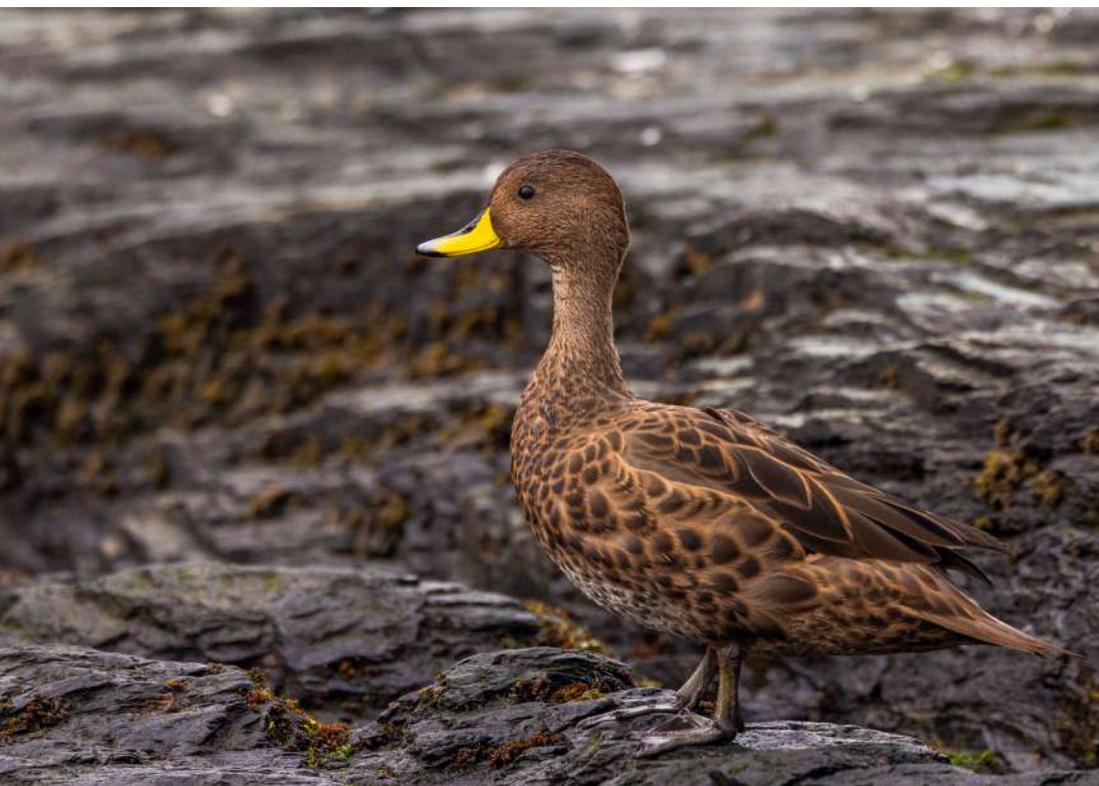
In the afternoon, our thirst for adventure led us to the enchanting shores of Cooper Bay. Here, amid the rocky outcrops and icy waters, a thriving ecosystem awaited our discovery. Our trusty Zodiacs carried us closer to the heart of this vibrant world, where we were greeted by a bustling congregation of wildlife.

King penguins strutted along the shoreline with regal grace, their vibrant plumage standing out against the stark backdrop of snow and rock. Macaroni penguins spread out along the green slopes, and gentoo penguins darted through the waves with effortless agility, while giant petrels rested on the surface of the blue waters. We even saw a resting leopard seal on the dark rocks!

It's been a marvellous first day here in South Georgia and we cannot wait to see what tomorrow brings.













# Grytviken | Godthul

DAY 11 | Sunday 24 March 2024

Position at 0600 on 24 Mar

Latitude: 54°13'3"S

Longitude: 036°28'2"W

Course: 126°

Speed: 4.7 kts

Wind Speed: SW 18kts

Barometer: 1009 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

We awoke to an almost cloudless sky, a finger of tenacious fog clutching the ridges and mountain tops from the west. In Captain James Cook's words, shortly after claiming South Georgia for Great Britain in 1775, 'The wild rocks raised their lofty summits till they were lost in the clouds.'

The good ship *Greg Mortimer* was fortunate to arrive on the heels of a snow squall, which dumped a multi-dimensional perspective of this vertiginous backdrop to Grytviken, '...and the valleys lay covered with everlasting snow.' Contrary to Captain Cook's impression of this narrow island, 'The inner parts of the country were not less savage and horrible', our group of long-hikers experienced a sublime sanctuary of mosses, grasses and lichens nestled and dwarfed in the mire of the Bore Valley, below the towering peaks and snow-covered scree slopes. We luxuriated in moments of silence at Deadman's Cairn as song began to fill the void, floating on the occasional gusts.

Meanwhile, the whaling station bustled with activity, bold fur seal pups bluff-charging the red and blue visitors between wrestling bouts with one another.

These nearly weaned furballs vocalise to identify themselves to their mothers and vice-versa, a cacophony of hilarity.

By 1825, an estimated 1.2 million pelts had been taken to Canton in China, and London, for the fur market, the fine underfur worked into felt for making hats. The sheer abundance of this species is a testament to the resilience of an animal almost wiped off the face of the planet, the population now over 3 million and growing.

The carcasses of the whaling era, ships, pressure cookers and buildings rusting on land and sea are now being reclaimed by nature. Between 1904–1965, a total of 175,250 whales had been processed on South Georgia. In the 1920s when factory ships overharvested, causing a dip in the price of whale oil, Grytviken diversified, resuming harvesting of elephant seals for their high-quality oil.

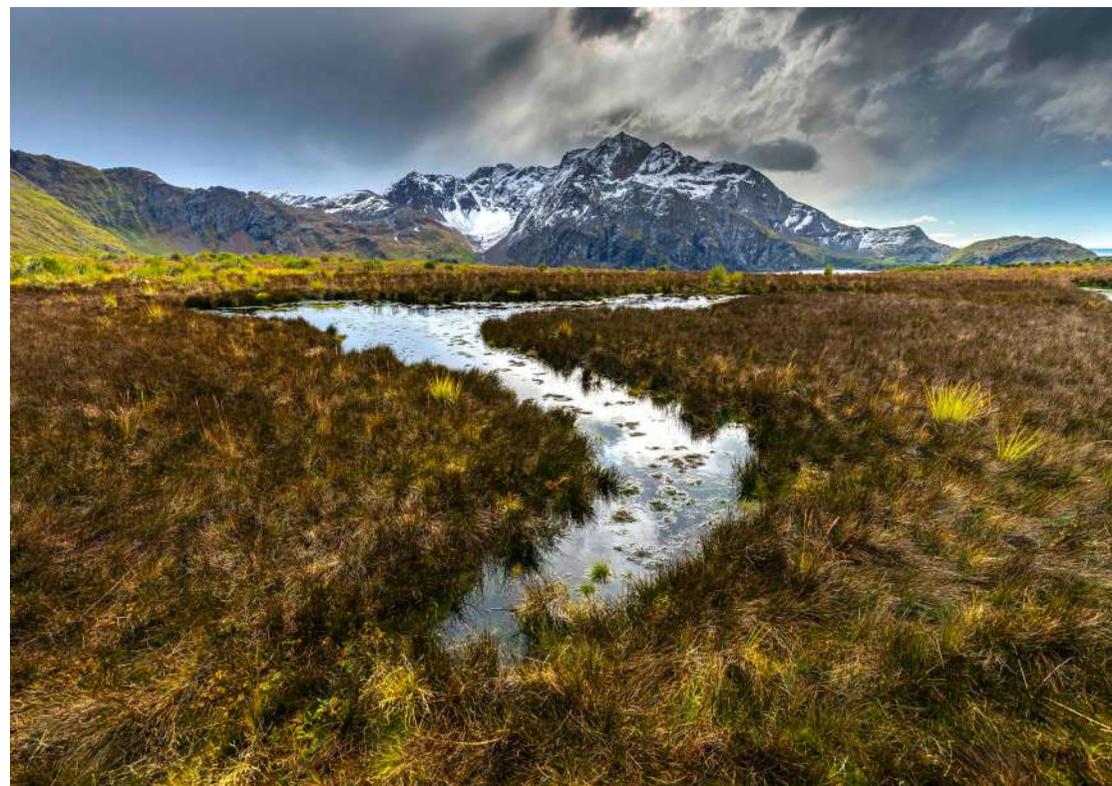
At the cemetery, respect was given to the many who gave their lives in these dangerous professions, as well as the explorers who succumbed to disease and exposure, and even one Argentine officer killed during the Falklands War

We headed to Godthul, 'Good Cove' in Norwegian, and it was good indeed. We tiptoed between the ubiquitous fur seal pups and gentoo penguins, dodging camouflaged resting giant petrels and hungry South Georgia pipits,

on our way through the tussock maze. A few king penguins seemed not at all amused with the commotion. Waterfalls and icebergs complemented the perfection of this place.

'I believe it is in our nature to explore, to reach out into the unknown. The only true failure would be not to explore at all!' Ernest Shackleton



















# Fortuna Bay | Possession Bay

DAY 12 | Monday 25 March 2024

Position at 0600 25 Mar

Latitude: 54°01'3"S

Longitude: 036°49'8"W

Course: 111°

Speed: 6.4kts

Wind Speed: SSW 14kts

Barometer: 1021 hPa

Air Temp: 1°C

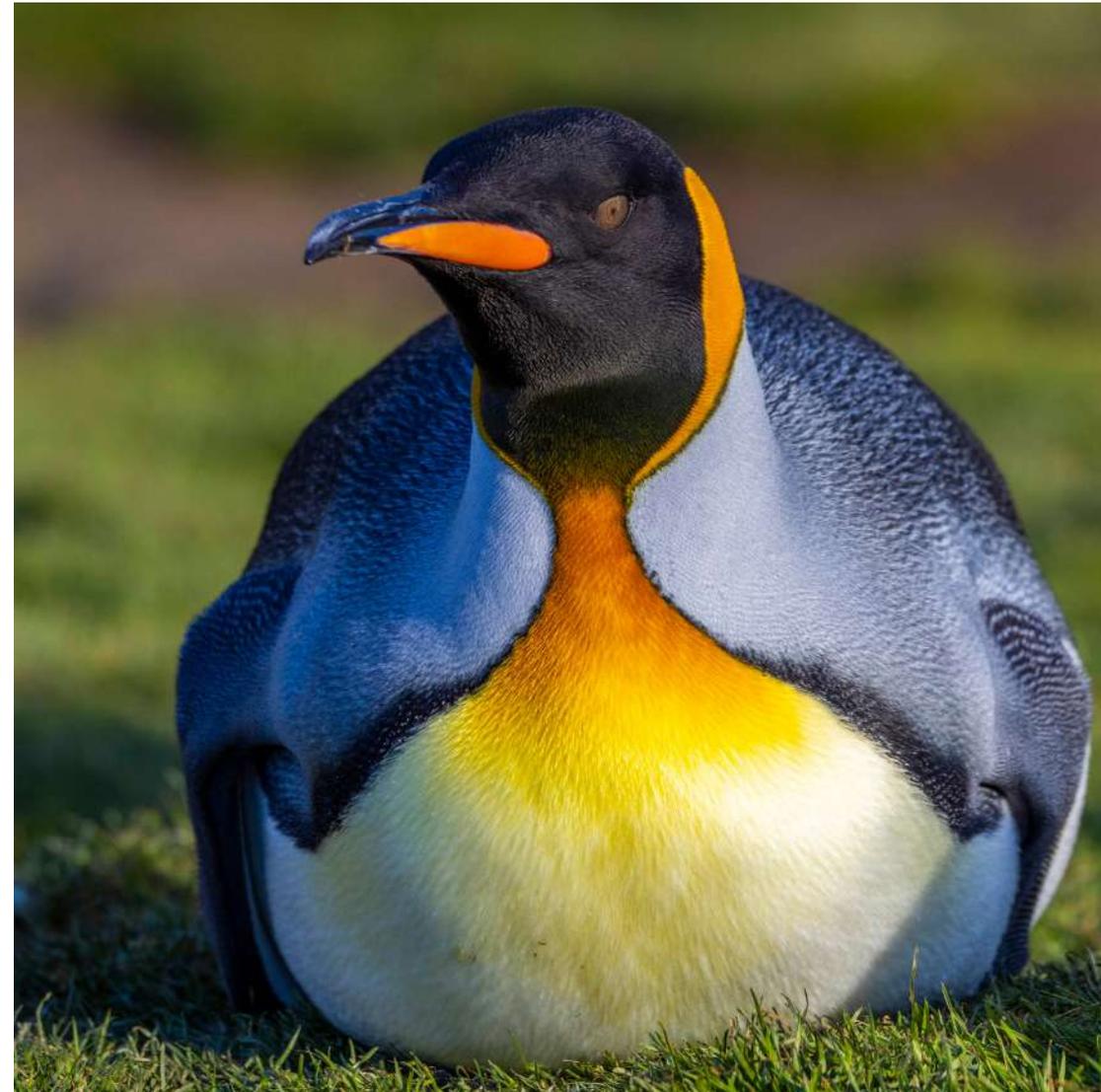
What a morning!! One of our staff members who has been to South Georgia several times commented on the perfect mix of weather and wildlife today. Fortuna Bay delivered to all today what felt like an immersion in a National Geographic documentary.

Fortuna Bay is a 6-kilometre-long fjord leading to the heart of South Georgia's rugged interior. At the head of the bay, the Konig Glacier sweeps up to join the Neumayer Glacier with a backdrop of massive ice and mountainous rock ramparts. At the foot of the glacier a giant colony of 40,000 pairs of king penguins all squawked furiously. As we landed on the beach, gasps arose from all. The sun was shining, the mountains had a light frosting of fresh snow, the waters bubbled like a cauldron with small fur seal pups, and king penguins strutted all around. South Georgia does not get much better than this. A scattering of elephant seals completed the picture, as well as the ever-present skuas, always on the hunt for vulnerable penguin chicks. The final leg of Shackleton's route across the island passes here from Breakwind Ridge across the beach at Fortuna Bay and up over the pass to Stromness.

Back on our cosy ship after a delicious lunch featuring the firm favourite of sushi, we were recharged for our afternoon adventure at Possession Bay, named by Captain James Cook in 1775. In HMS *Resolution*, Cook made the first landing, survey and mapping of South Georgia. As mandated by the Admiralty, on 17 January 1775 he took possession for Britain and renamed the island 'Isle of Georgia' for King George III. Although the sun had disappeared behind the clouds, Possession Bay provided the calm waters we needed for a landing and was enjoyed by all who landed on Brighton Beach. This beach was named by Discovery Investigations personnel during their 1926–1930 expedition after Brighton, a popular seaside resort in England, as the beach was as crowded with fauna as its namesake was with people. Indeed today, the shore was abundant with cute young fur seals greatly outnumbering the penguins. Slumbering peacefully at the far end of the beach were young elephant seals. It was easy to pick our way through without disturbing the wildlife, and the freedom to meander around the vast area was welcome.

However, Captain Cook was not so impressed: 'The wild rocks raised their lofty summits until they were lost in the clouds, and the valleys lay buried in everlasting snow. Not a tree was to be seen nor a shrub even big enough to make a toothpick'.

We were so lucky to have enjoyed such a great day on South Georgia.









# Right Whale Bay | Salisbury Plain

DAY 13 | Tuesday 26 March 2024

## Position at 0700 on 26 Mar

Latitude: 53°59'0" S

Course: 240°

Longitude: 037°37'0" W

Speed: 8.2kts

Wind Speed: S 14 kts

Air Temp: 3°C

Barometer: 1012 hPa

Nothing beats sunrises in South Georgia and this morning we have a wonderful light over high mountains covered with snow and ice. There are icebergs on the water and it reminds us that we are still sailing in the subantarctic region.

It is time to explore and even the windy conditions can't stop us for long. After waiting to assess the local wind, waves and swell, we get the go-ahead to embark the Zodiacs for an adventure in Right Whale Bay. This attractive bay is just 2.4 kilometres wide and includes moraine beaches and areas of shoal occupied by marine mammals and birds, as well as a rich variety of plant life. In earlier times, southern right whales were particularly abundant here and the bay is named after them.

One of the highlights of Right Whale Bay is the king penguin colony. The colony is made up of about 25,000 breeding pairs of penguins and it stretches up the hill from the beach. We also enjoy watching penguins swimming and porpoising near the tidal zone. At this time of year, big numbers of fur seals haul out on the shores of the bay as well, and we enjoy watching plenty of pups playing around the rocks and in the shallows. This place is known as a nesting site for light-mantled albatrosses, and other breeding bird species include giant petrels, brown skuas and snowy sheathbills. What a place to watch wildlife!

In the afternoon we have to cover the distance to reach our next destination, the famous Salisbury Plain. This is a broad glacial coastal plain in the northern part of South Georgia and it is a truly extraordinary site! It was first visited in the early 19th century by sealers, but now all the animals here are protected. High mountains and glaciers form a unique landscape and the vegetation is rich and diverse here as well. We are ready for another Zodiac cruise to explore along the coast, and we see beautiful beaches filled with plenty of birds and fur seals. The place is very impressive as it is a breeding site for as many as 60,000 breeding pairs of king penguins, making it the second largest king penguin colony in South Georgia. Southern elephant seals and fur seals also use this location as breeding grounds.

In the evening we left the area of South Georgia for the Falklands. There are many more adventures ahead!





# At Sea

DAY 14 | Wednesday 27 March 2024

## Position at 0800 on 27 Mar

Latitude: 53°45'2" S

Course: 276°

Longitude: 041°45'0"W

Speed: 12 kts

Wind Speed: WSW 23 kts

Air Temp: 4°C

Barometer: 1011 hPa

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

Starting the day off, we learn about what goes on up in the bridge, where all the important decisions are made and how this expedition is made possible. With the skilled Captain and his crew, looking out onto the horizon day and night from their high vantage point, this is how we are able to have a carefree adventure!

Navigating the wild subantarctic seas, we realise just how vast and terrifyingly beautiful this ocean is; with rough seas and wind the vessel is pushed and pulled, the fog creates a mysterious and unknown journey, and the addition of wildlife further adds to the beauty of it all!

An unsung hero of this wildlife is none other than kelp, a keystone to all life down in these icy domains. These kelp forests provide protection, a home, and a food source for countless species; home and protection to a wide array of invertebrates and fish, and a food source for larger marine animals such as seals, birds and whales, while also absorbing and holding carbon, important for the future of global warming!

Kelp also acts to reduce the power and energy of storm-driven tides and surges, keeping shorelines relatively calm and helps with the prevention of coastal erosion.

As we continue to traverse the high seas and look upon the magical life it exudes, we get an insight from a different perspective of life from Gina. We look into how we can connect with nature and ways in which we can show appreciation for where we are and what we have seen, and by just taking a moment of silence and listening to our surroundings, can be enough to change our perspective of life and let us grow and heal!

As the day progresses we learn more about the wildlife, with the intricacies of diving petrels and the importance of krill, to learning how hard it must have been to explore these regions back in the day just in terms of accessing fresh food and fighting off the symptoms of scurvy!

As the day turns into night, we race back in time to the heroic age of explorers and come across a character by the name of Duncan Carse, an explorer and actor who surveyed the hazardous glacier and mountain terrain of South Georgia, leading to the first detailed map of this island, which proved of immense value during the conflicts in the Falkland Islands in 1982. Our next destination...



# At Sea

DAY 15 | Thursday 28 March 2024

## Position at 0950 on 28 Mar

Latitude: 53°2'0"S

Course: 274.3°

Longitude: 49°24'0"W

Speed: 11.8 kts

Wind Speed: 25.5kts

Air Temp: 5°C

Barometer: 1020 hPa

On our second full sea day between South Georgia and the Falklands~Malvinas, we awoke to a *Greg Mortimer* that was rocking and rolling in the swell and wind of the South Atlantic Ocean.

As we cruised our way ever westward, we were treated to a full schedule of activities to keep us entertained and engaged on this final week of our voyage. The day started off with a scrumptious breakfast, as per usual, courtesy of our talented galley and restaurant team.

Afterward, we gathered in the lecture theatre for an insightful presentation by Amy of 'Hungry Humpbacks,' where she regaled us with stories about her time working as a whale researcher on South Georgia. During the lecture, we learned all about what whale research entails and we even found out what data we can gather from tagging and tracking whales.

Amy's lecture was followed by a buffet lunch in the restaurant, which was as delectable as ever. Once lunch was all said and done, most of us made our way to our cabins to make the most of a free hour or a mid-afternoon nap.

Soon enough, though, it was time to gather again in the lecture theatre for a presentation from Gaby on Antarctica's role in Citizen Science, where we learned all about the information that scientists can gather from Antarctic ice cores. This was followed by a fun bird survey with T-A up on the outer decks, where we searched for seabirds soaring above the Southern Ocean.

The afternoon wasn't quite over yet though, as we still had a delicious afternoon tea to enjoy at the Elephant Island Bar. Afterward, many of us joined a presentation with Gaby, Ryan and Liz in the library about Aurora's other destinations, where we started to plan our future expeditions.

As the evening drew to a close, it was time to head to the lecture theatre for our evening recap and briefing for tomorrow's plans. At recap, we saw underwater photos and videos from our snorkellers, learned about how waves form from Ivan, and enjoyed another bird of the day from T-A.

Recap was followed by a stellar dinner in the restaurant where we all enjoyed a fabulous three-course meal among friends new and old. To cap off the night, those of us who still had our sea legs ventured back to the lecture theatre for a riveting edition of bar trivia with Liz, where we tested our knowledge on all things trivial in the pursuit of eternal trivia glory.

And with hopes for more adventures to come, we shuffled off to bed for a good night's sleep as the *Greg Mortimer* continued its westward journey.



# At Sea towards Falklands~Malvinas

DAY 16 | Friday 29 March 2024

## Position at 0900 on 29 Mar

Latitude: 52°2'0"S

Course: 292.6°

Longitude: 055°47'0"W

Speed: 9.6 kts

Wind Speed: WNW 28.7 kts

Air Temp: 8°C

Barometer: 1004 hPa

The last couple days at sea have been a great opportunity to reflect and remember our trip so far. For some of us, it may have been editing and looking over photos, for others it may have been writing a diary. Whatever the method, hopefully everyone had a chance to rest and rejuvenate for some action-packed days in the Falklands.

Since leaving South Georgia we have been steadily punching into some fun swell with varying sizes, from 3 to 4 metres.

There are many ways to entertain yourself on a sea day for some its multiple games of backgammon, for others its mostly just sleeping, but for those that are keen to learn, there were countless opportunities put on by the Expedition Team. We started the day with a great lecture from T-A about what wildlife we can expect to see in the Falklands.

Next up was one for the photography enthusiasts on board, as Adrian taught some basic photo editing techniques to make those snaps we have taken really highlight the angles, tones and colours. And all of this before lunch!!

After lunch we had a hot topic of the trip answered by Pascal and the hotel department – ‘how do you keep the salad so fresh?’

Among the lectures we also had a couple of cloud and seabird surveys and finished off the afternoon with little game called ‘How big is it?’

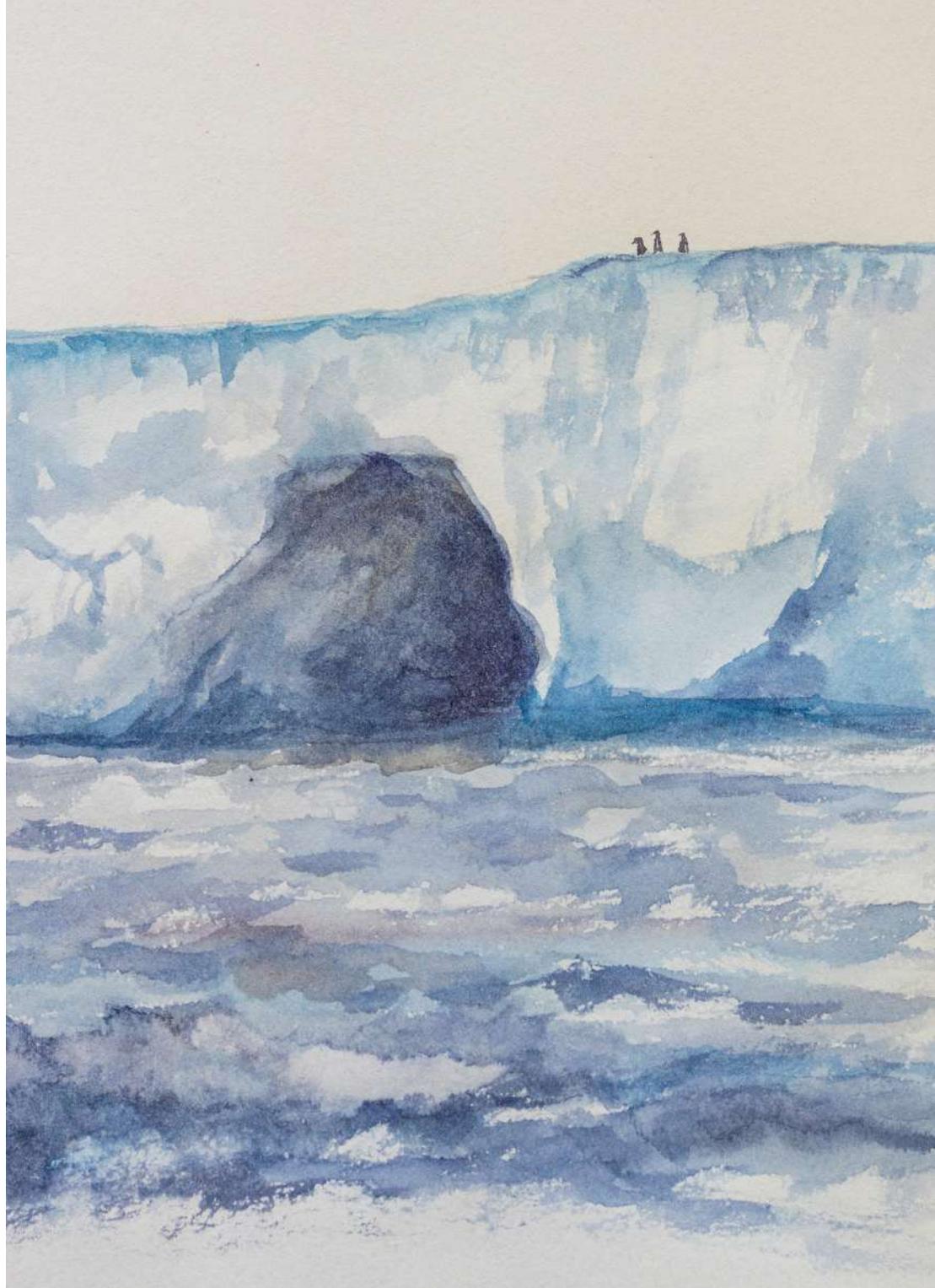
Now that we are safely through most of our sea days, it's worth knowing why people get seasick and what's actually happening in our body when we feel that slight spin in our head and need to run to the bathroom really quick. So, all that's really happening is that our eyes and balance mechanisms are miscommunicating. The human balance mechanism resides in the inner ear, so when the sea is making the ship move, our balance mechanism tells us everything around us is moving while our eyes are focused on the still cabin around us. This confuses the brain, so it reacts by releasing stress-induced hormones. These make us feel nauseous. After about two days of this, most people start to feel better as the brain adjusts and stops releasing the hormones.

Don't worry though; we are about to have a couple of days break from the sea days.

So, on the whole it seems everyone had a restful, educational, entertaining, relaxing, fulfilling and active day and we're all ready to get off the ship in the Falklands.







# Gypsy Cove | Stanley

DAY 17 | Saturday 30 March 2024

## Position at 0700 on 30 Mar

Latitude: 51°41'0"S

Longitude: 057°49'0"W

Course: 221°

Speed: Alongside

Wind Speed: WSW 22 kts

Barometer: 1009 hPa

Air Temp: 0°C

Stanley – the port with penguins and pints.

A gorgeous sunrise this morning, and everyone had a spring in their step after a calm night's sleep. Thanks, Captain Maxim, for putting all that anchor chain out (176 metres!) and securing us here overnight while the wind howled out in the ocean.

During breakfast, we sailed through The Narrows into Port Stanley, our first port of call in the Falklands~Malvinas, and we were ready for a big day exploring. First up we headed to Gypsy Cove, taking the bus with signage that helpfully said 'To the penguins!' At Gypsy Cove we enjoyed stretching our legs in the sunshine and we met some Magellanic penguins, who peered nervously out from their burrows. They'll soon be heading to sea to spend the winter months feeding off the coast of Argentina, before returning here to start breeding again in the spring.

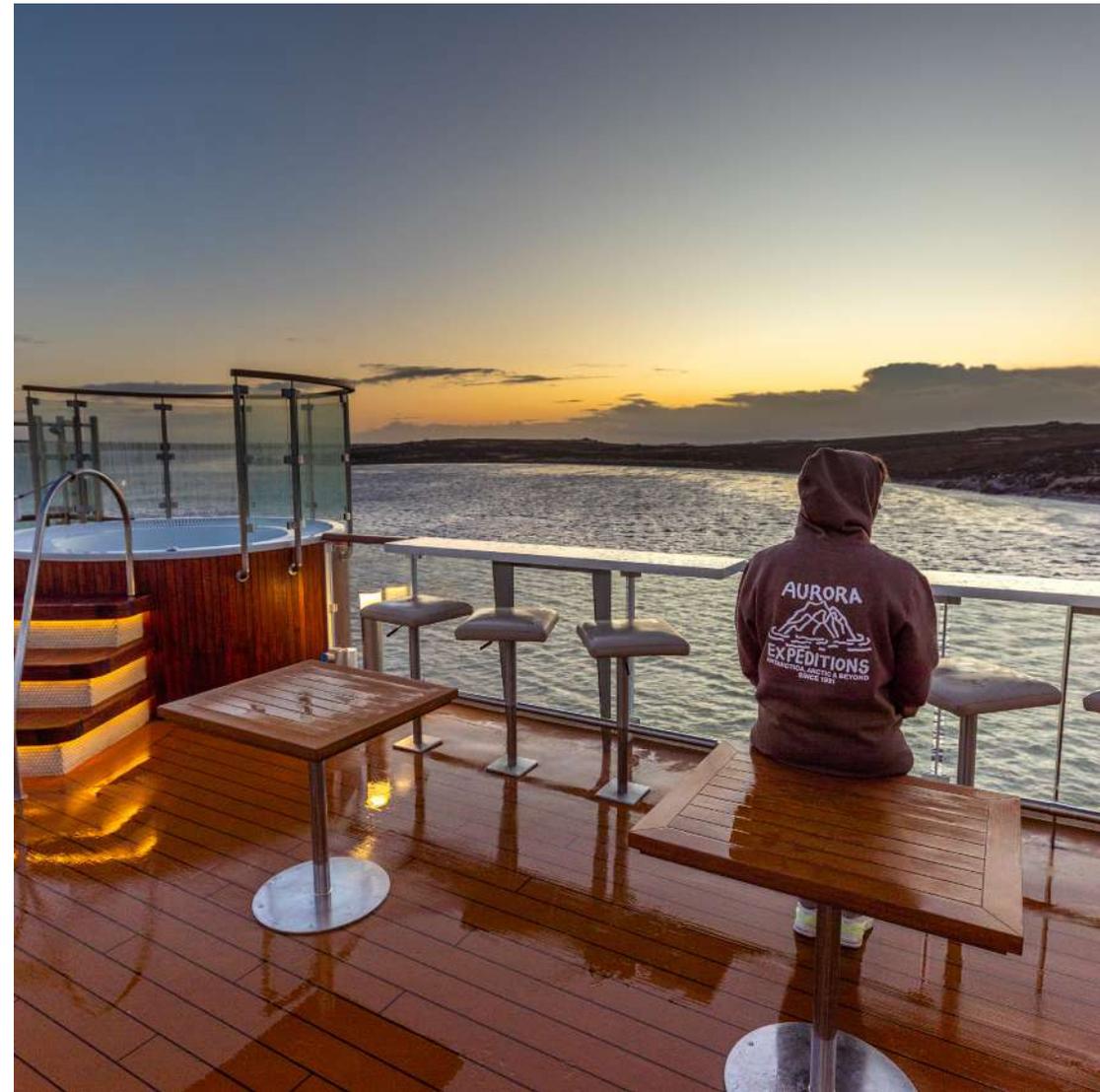
For those up for a longer walk, the morning continued with an exploration of Engineer's Point and good views of the wreck of the *Lady Elizabeth* as we hugged the coastline back towards Stanley. We enjoyed the easy tracks and the joyful abundance of geese and ducks along the way, including meeting upland geese and the astonishingly fat, flightless and characterful Falkland steamer ducks.

Back in town, things felt a little strange as we confronted buildings, cars, cafes and shops for the first time in weeks. Some of us considered what it might mean to soon be returning to the 'real world'. Maybe it's more just a case of returning to the 'other world', given how real our experiences here have been over the past few weeks? When we are in our various homes some time from now, all this – the icebergs, the whales, the rawness of the Southern Ocean, the biting cold, the seabirds and, especially, the friends we've made on this expedition – will still be very, very real things existing in this world.

An afternoon consuming pints of freshly brewed Falklands beer may have helped many of us with our adjustment from one world to the next! Others explored the museum, enjoyed stocking up on Falklands wool, dyed in brilliant colours, or just found a quiet spot at the waterfront to rest, relax and contemplate.

In the evening after dinner, we joined Emma and Richard in the lecture theatre for a deeply inspiring conversation about resilience and the power of truly embracing life, especially when things change unexpectedly.

We can't ever know what the future holds, but no-one can ever take from us the extraordinary experiences of being here on this expedition together. Thanks, Stanley, for nurturing us all gently back towards the 'other world' today.





# West Point Island | Saunders Island

DAY 18 | Sunday 31 March 2024

Position at 0730 on 31 Mar

Latitude: 51°20'0"S

Longitude: 060°40'0"W

Course: 166°

Speed: 1.5 kts

Wind Speed: W 15kts

Barometer: 1009 hPa

Air Temp: 5°C

Good morning, good people!

Waking up to the smooth tones of Daniel's voice, we opened up our curtains, went onto our balconies, and took in the breathtaking views and natural wonder of West Point Island. We have arrived in the Western Falkland Islands and it does not disappoint!

Greeted by the lovely caretaking couple, Kiki and Tees, we made our way up the green hillside towards the back side of the island. As we hiked along the trail, we breathed in the crisp, clean ocean air, as we made our way to the rockhoppers and black-browed albatross nesting grounds. As we got closer, black-browed albatross soared through the sky, leading us to the cliffside point where their colony awaited. Making our way through the winding tussocks, we were once again greeted by the hundreds of rockhopper penguins and black-browed albatross. Unfazed by our presence, their playful antics warmed our hearts and brought smiles to our faces as we watched them hop around and soar through the sky, paying no attention to us at all.

As our time drew to a close, we reluctantly made our way back towards the landing site, and to our surprise, we were welcomed into the tiny cottage by Kiki, who had prepared traditional British tea and cakes for us to enjoy in their garden. Whilst outside, the sun emerged from behind the clouds and the sweet aroma of flowers and chamomile filled the air.

Saying goodbye to Kiki and Tees, we reluctantly made our way back to the ship and we were en route to Saunders Island. Hoping to find lee from the strong westerly winds among the peaks of the island, Captain Maxim navigated us to the calmest area he could find, as Daniel assessed the conditions. Coming into position, it was apparent that we wouldn't be able to get off the ship due to the 40-knot winds between us and the abundant wildlife inhabiting the rolling green hills and white sandy beaches. The scenery was reminiscent of a postcard, with vibrant colours painting the landscape.

Almost like they were conjured up from Poseidon, Commerson's dolphins started swarming our bow and surfing our wake as we navigated through the waves. As we sailed past Saunders Island, many of us made our way to the outer decks to see the spectacle of dolphins and tried not to be blown away! Escorted by dolphins, we left the Falkland Islands and our journey is soon coming to an end. With some motion in the ocean, we're headed towards Ushuaia, with another full day at sea ahead. We carry in our hearts a renewed sense of responsibility to protect these very wild places and remember we are all connected.





# At Sea

DAY 19 | Monday 1 April 2024

## Position at 0700 on 01 Apr

Latitude: 52°52'5" S

Course: 216°

Longitude: 062°46'7"W

Speed: 11.2 kts

Wind Speed: WNW 18kts

Air Temp: 7°C

Barometer: 1019 hPa

The sea had settled a little overnight and the clear dawn found the *Greg Mortimer* working her way through small but steep waves towards the tip of Argentina. The high winds had changed the plans for what we had hoped to be a visit to the cove on Saunders Island on the west of the Falklands~Malvinas the previous afternoon.

However, it had been a real pleasure to see the Commerson's dolphins play around the ship in Saunders Cove. It was a joyful and fitting send off for the ship as we turned the bow for Argentina.

During the first part of the crossing the wind was still brisk, allowing the black-browed albatross and shearwaters to follow the ship with their graceful soaring. We had a wonderful time watching the albatross at West Point at their nesting site the day before, and it was with a new appreciation and fondness that many took the chance to admire them during the dawn light. We talked of many things while standing on the stern that morning. We talked of the effect on people of moving in and with this wildness.

We talked of the calmness that this longer time at sea can bring and a re-evaluation of priorities as we sail towards our land lives.

The day at sea also provided time to finish off conversations and thoughts that had been woven through this voyage, with presentations by Gina Chick and Richard Moorcroft, and Elo, our lead kayak guide.

The Captain's Farewell reception was of the same mood. A genuine sense of having shared something special, and a real gratitude for the time together. Our voyage photographer had captured the mood and wildness of the voyage and shared his work and thoughts in a well-received presentation. The last dinner on board was also a time to enjoy the company of new friends, and give heartfelt recognition and thanks to the crew who had taken such good care of us during the voyage.

The evening found us in the shelter of the Beagle Channel and happy to have shared a journey into wildness.



# Ushuaia

DAY 20 | Tuesday 2 April 2024

Position at 0700 on 2 Apr

Latitude: 54°48'5" S

Longitude: 068°17'9" W

Course: Pier

Speed: Pier

Wind Speed: W 12.2 kts

Barometer: 1001 hPa

Air Temp: 8°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 Guides: [Elo Berrier](#), [Rob Barth](#), [Edu Larranaga](#), [Liz MacNeil](#), [Ivan Klochkov](#)

Number of Kayakers: 17

Total Paddle Outings: 12

Total Distance Paddled: 47.1 km

Kayakers:	Nancy Incoll	Gina Chick	Amanda Fleming
John Navis	Greg Incoll	Sian Hebron	Nilaya Sabnis
Sally Navis	Ellizabeth Trollop	Max Seigal	Rachel Cleary
Keith Dunbar	Jonathen Trollop	Chelsea Brisson	
Emma Learmonth	Marcia Murchison	Robyn Groeneveld	

## 17/03/24, AM: Paradise Bay. Distance: 3 km

Our first outing was just magnificent! As soon as we got off the ship, we realised that there was thick brash ice everywhere. We managed to find a small patch of open water to get in our kayaks and out on the water (or should we say out on the ice?) right in front of the Argentinian Brown Station. There we spotted our first penguins, right next to the station. It was a bit challenging but so much fun to paddle in thick brash, and we worked our way through, staying in single file. Shortly after, we passed the station and turned to the south, and we found amazing cliffs with a little cormorant colony and guess what... more brash ice! Most of us started to feel very hot from working hard with the paddles, pushing the kayaks through the ice. The landscape and the light around us were spectacular and it was so nice to find a patch of open water here and there. Gliding on the water in silence was so special. Eventually we turned our bows back towards the ship and reached the Zodiacs next to it. What a great introduction to kayaking in Antarctica!

## 17/03/24, PM: Neko Harbour. Distance: 3.5 km

The weather was beautiful with just enough sun poking through the clouds to give the area a nice glow. We began the paddle by meandering our way through some icebergs, and almost straight away we saw two whales! The humpbacks were relaxed and slowly swam past around 50 metres away. This was just the first sighting of the day! After the whales swam past us, we continued to kayak among the icebergs until we saw the snorkellers hanging out with some more humpback whales. As we paddled over, we saw the whales approaching the Zodiacs and so we begin to investigate. We stopped paddling and observed the whales from a safe distance as they spent the next 45 minutes putting on a show, spy-hopping and rolling around right next to the Zodiacs. It was an incredible moment for everyone involved – we've never seen anything like it! After the whales finally left, some of us went ashore and the rest of us had a very reflective paddle back to the ship.

## 18/03/24, AM: Hydrurga Rocks. Distance: 4.4 km

A beautiful morning at Hydrurga Rocks! This remote little island lies at the entrance of the Gerlache Strait. It is very sensitive to winds and swells, but today the weather conditions were perfect. We did a short transit on our Zodiacs from the ship towards the island. Once we were closer, we got in our kayaks and started exploring this

unique, rocky place. Many chinstrap penguins were moulting on their colonies, and we even saw a huge elephant seal hauling out. Some young fur seals were using the place to rest. By the time we reached the other side of the island, we came across three huge humpback whales feeding. The sea was full of krill, which we could see from our kayaks, and we even could smell it! After circumnavigating the whole island, some of us went ashore for a short landing while the rest of us kept on paddling back to the ship. What's certain is that today we experienced the immensity of this wild place.

## 18/03/24, PM: Cierva Cove. Distance: 6 km

Kayaking in Cierva Cove was a surreal experience! We split into two groups – the 'chargers' and the 'cruisers' – each went their separate ways ready to explore what the beautiful cove had in store for us. Liz and Rob went with the six kayaks cruising, while Ivan charged forward with five kayaks. As we paddled through the icy waters, the pristine beauty of the surroundings – including the towering icebergs – created a magical atmosphere.

Navigating through the ice and rocks along the shoreline, we watched the gentoo penguins porpoising and leaping in and out of the water, while a leopard seal hid, awaiting its sneaky attack. Liz explained how the gentoo penguins meet their bloody fate in the mouth of a leopard seal, but today there would be no show of this brutal death, so we paddled on.

Our kayaks glided through narrow channels, weaving between the frozen obstacles and the rocky islands left over from the receding glacier at the back of the bay. The silence was interrupted only by the occasional crackle of the ice breaking or by the snoring of a leopard seal asleep on an ice floe. What a beautiful day in the neighbourhood!

## 19/03/24, AM: Astrolabe Island. Distance: 5.2 km

Astrolabe Island had a spectacular range of summits to explore. We began the trip by scouting down the side of the mountains until we found a nice channel to paddle through. This was the home of a curious leopard seal, who followed us through and had a good look around. Once we were out of the wind, we headed south to watch some curious fur seals playing in the water, and we even spotted some Weddell seals resting on the rocks. As we made our way back around some islands, we joined up with the other crew and decided to try another smaller channel to get to the other side. Everyone smashed it and had a great time with a bit of a challenge thrown in. After a lumpy exit onto the Zodiacs, it was back to the ship for a well-earned hot chocolate.

## 19/03/24, PM: Gourdin Island. Distance: 5.2 km

We were at anchor off Gourdin Island, a small, rocky outpost at the northernmost fringes of the Antarctic Peninsula. This area is exposed to the Southern Ocean and her stormy moods, swells and wind waves. The weather was not the best – quite windy outside – but we took the chance to use the shelter from the south part of the island and enjoyed a nice exploration by kayak.

Gourdin Island was discovered by a French expedition in 1837–1840 under Captain Jules Dumont d'Urville. The island is unique as it is home to three species of breeding penguin – Adélie, gentoo and chinstraps.

We spent time in the little bays and channels, having fun with the kayaks and practising our skills – great training for South Georgia! We were lucky enough to see a leopard seal eating a penguin, and a few more swimming and

patrolling the penguin colony very close to our kayaks.

A great end was a nice, warm hot chocolate that we drink in the kayaks while contemplating this amazing place and celebrating maybe our last outing in Antarctica.

### 20/03/24, AM: Point Wild, Elephant Island. Distance: 3 km

The last paddle in Antarctica - and what a place for it! Many of the Expedition Team have been coming here for years just to land on it, let alone have the conditions to kayak there. We started on the swelly side of the point and made our way around the corner into the sheltered bay of Point Wild. From here we did a lap around the bay, taking in the wildlife and scenery. After checking out the bust of Luis Pardo and taking a quick group photo, it was time to head back to the ship, passing through a narrow channel. On the way to the ship, we had to paddle through some dense brash ice that had formed from a large glacier calving very recently. Another awesome experience!

### 23/03/24 PM— Cooper Bay Distance: 3.5 km

A great start in South Georgia! The swell conditions were pretty rough, but we did everything we could to go out and explore the southern part of this amazing island. As soon as we got into the kayaks, a beautiful southern right whale popped out to welcome us. We followed the whale for a moment and then we visited the macaroni penguin colony.

We also paddled among the rocks and the kelp forest, observing all sort of animals including elephant seals, fur seal pups, king penguins, gentoo penguins, giant petrels and three huge leopard seals, one of whom followed us for a while. Our first kayak outing in South Georgia couldn't have been better – well done, team!

### 25/03/24 AM — Fortuna Bay Distance: 1.5 kms

A short-but-sweet paddle along the shores of Fortuna Bay. The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day in the neighbourhood. We didn't make a lot of distance, but just floating along in the water we saw king penguins and baby fur seals swimming around our kayaks. As the winds started to pick up, we charged our way towards the lee of the shore. Elo picked us up, then dropped us off on shore with time to see the thousands of king penguins. What an amazing morning!

### 25/03/24 PM — Possession Bay Distance: 2.7 km

We really enjoyed this quiet kayaking session. Possession Bay is very rarely visited, yet has a lot to offer. We paddled along surrounded by hundreds of cute fur seal pups, among very impressive geology and next to huge hanging glaciers. The place was overwhelming and the atmosphere was so peaceful, with a very light breeze and some snow. We really enjoyed the silence and we listened to the music of nature, including the sounds of the playful fur seals and the gulls flying all around us. The movement of the calm sea created a perfect song.

### 26/03/24PM — Salisbury Plain Distance: 4.5 km

This was our last outing in South Georgia, and it was amazing! The conditions were quite windy, but we managed to find a little sheltered cove to the west of the main king penguin colony. We towed our kayaks upwind and hit the water next to the rocky headland. In the cove there were hundreds (if not thousands) of penguins. And fur seal pups were swimming in the water and hanging out on the rocks. It was incredible to paddle among them, a true celebration of wildlife! Once we had spent enough time gazing at the animals, we got out of the cove and turned our kayaks to the east. We paddled downwind along the beach, which was also full of penguins. It felt amazing to let the wind just carry us towards the main penguin colony! Once we reached it, we turned our bows into the wind to maintain the position next to the ship. The wind started to pick up, so we decided to traverse the open water and find shelter in the lee of the ship. It was a bit challenging to work our way through the gusting wind, but the team did great! That was a kayaking session to remember!







# Paddling Log

Paddle Guides: Elo Berrier, Rob Barth, Edu Larranaga, Liz MacNeil, Ivan Klochkov

Number of Paddlers: 4

Total Paddle Outings: 4

Total Distance Paddled: 17.6 km

Paddlers: Nilaya Sabris Kallan Roi  
Nancy Downs Melanie Heaphy

## 17/03/24, AM: Paradise Bay. Distance: 3 km

Our first adventure on the water began with an amazing morning in paradise! It was hard to start the session because the bay was full of brash ice, so we used our kayaks like an icebreaker to open a way through. Then we did some refresher training about paddling technique before we set off to explore.

We were close to the Argentinian Brown Station and we chatted with the scientists who were working there. We paddled close to the shoreline observing the penguins jumping into the water, and we visited the antarctic shag colony where there were still some adults and their chicks from this season. Then we paddled all the way back to the ship through the brash ice. Well done, team – great way to start!

## 17/03/24, PM: Neko Harbour. Distance: 3.5 km

Our second opportunity to go out with the inflatable kayaks. The weather was great, not windy at all, and the waters in Neko Harbour were very flat and calm. At the start, Elo told us we could call the whales if we all wished it from the bottom of our soul. And magically, after paddling for 10 minutes, we heard a whale! After another 10 minutes, we had three humpback whales next to our kayaks. We paddled very slowly, just observing them and taking the chance to use the kayaks as a great platform to observe wildlife.

We kept paddling around icebergs, and we found two crabeater seals. Then we paddled back to the ship and we jumped in the Zodiacs to get the chance to do our continental landing in Antarctica. What a great first day in Antarctica!

## 18/03/24, AM: Hydrurga Rocks. Distance: 3.1 km

A beautiful morning at Hydrurga Rocks! This remote little island is at the entrance of the Gerlache Strait. It is very exposed to winds and swells, but today the weather conditions were perfect. We embarked from our Zodiacs and started our third session, exploring this unique, rocky place. Many chinstrap penguins were moulting at their colonies, and we even saw a curious Weddell seal in the water. Some young fur seals were using the place to rest or to practice their fighting skills. By the time we reached the other side of the island, we came across three huge humpback whales that were constantly feeding. The sea was full of krill, which we could see – and even smell – from our kayaks. After circumnavigating the whole island, we went onshore for a short landing.

## 18/03/24, PM: Cierva Cove. Distance: 3.9km

This was the second outing of the day. There was no swell and no wind, and the cove was filled with brash ice and many big and beautiful icebergs. It was fun to join the sea kayakers to play around the rocks, practising, our manoeuvres and skills. We got the chance to see the people working at the Argentinian Primavera Station, and we got very close to the gentoo penguin colony. But the highlight of the outing was finding a flat iceberg and stepping on it! We each did our own landing from the kayaks onto the safe and stable iceberg. Well done, team – every day better and better!

## 19/03/24, AM: Astrolabe Island. Distance: 5.3 km

This was our last paddling session in Antarctica! It was a great way to finish the paddling program, with plenty of swell and wind to practice all our new skills. Everybody felt safe and comfortable in the kayaks.

The island had spectacular geology to explore, and felt very wild and exposed. We found a nice channel to paddle through, and everyone did really well working with the big swell. The island is home to many curious fur seals and Weddell seals, and we got the chance to observe them from the kayaks. When we were making our way back to the ship, the wind picked up and made for challenging paddling, but everyone smashed it! Well done, team – a great experience in Antarctica with kayaks.





# Snorkelling Log

Snorkel Guide: Thomas, Stas, Rémi

Number of Snorkels: 16

Total Outings: 11

## Snorkellers:

Chloe Sheldon

Emma Carey

Megan Cosmai

Sandra Broom

Sabrina Gilroy

Elle Addison

Elijah Mayr

Jill Crosley

Eliza Beare

Tyson Mayr

David Sharpe

Bella Gareh

Christopher Wheatley

Sophie Ellison

Dana Karlin

Paloma Skerlavaj

## 17/03/24, AM: Paradise Harbour

First outing and first Zodiac cruise in Antarctica! We stepped into the Zodiacs from the side gate, and what a sight! The bay lives up to its name – there are icebergs everywhere, and so much ice on the water that in some places we can't even see the water itself. What an introduction to Antarctica!

We slowly drive through the brash ice, allowing us to find some amazing wildlife. Day one, outing one and we spot gentoo penguins, imperial shags, a Weddell seal and even a leopard seal Bonus of the morning was that we got to put our feet on land, on the actual Antarctic continent near some fearless penguins. The first snorkel was a success, the gear fitted well and the cold was tolerable... or was it? The first look at the clear Antarctic water blew our minds, cooled our extremities and we worked up an appetite for the great lunch on *Greg Mortimer*.

## 17/03/24, PM: Neko Harbour

The afternoon was a moment that will stay with us for a long time. After a short landing on the Antarctic continent once more, we headed towards the end of the bay, where our guides spotted three humpback whales. They were resting at the surface between the icebergs. What a peaceful sight to witness those three giants resting just under the surface.

After about 10 minutes, they seemed to wake up and moved towards us... the show was just starting. They kept passing under our Zodiacs, spy-hopping right next to us. Three 15-metre whales around our two small Zodiacs but it did not feel threatening at all; on the contrary, it looked like they just wanted to know who we were and tried to communicate with us. We could not even leave the area; they were all around us. After about 30 minutes, they slowly started to move away, allowing us to finally breathe and to start realising what just happened. Some of us decided to try some snorkelling by the shore, where gentoo penguins were entering and exiting the water. All of us who got in the water had the chance to be in the water with those penguins, marking the end of a memorable day.

## 18/03/24, AM: Hydrurga Rocks

This morning we arrived at the infamous Hydrurga Rocks, a little rocky archipelago of inlets and outcrops. With abundant wildlife, the landing proved to be spectacular, and everyone enjoyed meeting the fur seals and chinstrap penguins. We then headed out on a Zodiac cruise, with picturesque icebergs and plenty of whale action at hand! The icebergs were enormous and indescribably beautiful, and the humpback whales were in full action, with a few glimpses of bubble-net feeding on the surface. We were dumbfounded by thoughts of how it's possible for a 45-tonne whale to breach fully out of the water. Amidst the whale frolics, the chinstraps were in full force, keeping us company while we zoomed on by. Having lost track of time through all the excitement, we skipped the snorkel operation and stayed warm, but ready to take on the afternoon!

## 17/03/24, PM: Cierva Cove

The afternoon came and we found ourselves in Cierva Cove, an Argentinian research base atop the cliff side, and a cove with a graveyard of icebergs dense with brash ice. In just the first few minutes of our Zodiac cruise, we found ourselves watching the raw and confronting moments of nature with a leopard seal predation on a penguin. We enjoyed the brutal show and continued our journey in search of a snorkelling location away from the massacre! Continuing to see more and more leopard seals, we had to widen our perimeter, and relocate far away outside of the cove, and find some deep-water icebergs to observe. Finding the ideal iceberg is always tricky, but with persistence we prevailed. After glimpsing the magical icebergs from a different perspective, it was time to do some modelling, keeping us entertained with uncoordinated limbs, a few were able to straddle some small bergs and balance atop to get away from the freezing water. A lovely outing filled with laughter and excitement!

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

A new day once again greeted us with calm seas, although it was a little overcast. Astrolabe Island offered beautiful scenery and a colony of chinstrap penguins waiting to be watched. Amid the waddling feet of chinstraps, and the charging chaos of the fur seals, we hopped onto the island in dry suits for a little hike, not knowing what was waiting around the corner for us!

After a quick Zodiac tour through tight picturesque channels, and navigating past stunning tabletop icebergs, we made it to a magical snorkelling haven. With sleeping Weddell seals on the shores on one side, chinstrap penguins staggered around the place on the other, and seal pups frolicking in the water, this protected cove felt like the best place on earth! Water visibility could not have been better as the team rolled into the icy waters. Immediately the fur seals showed interest and displayed beautiful, tranquil movements, and graceful twists and turns, so pleasing to the eye. Sadly, the time had come to leave these waters, but with full hearts and grateful smiles we knew a new adventure would await!

### 19/03/24, PM: Gourdin Island

As we moved on for an afternoon outing, we found ourselves in the stunning Gourdin Island. Enormous tabular icebergs gave us an appreciation and understanding of just how vast Antarctica really is. Adélie penguins were on the menu today as the leopard seals showed us the meaning of the circle of life, a confronting and raw moment, yet thrilling and beautiful at the same time! The leopard seals were out in numbers this afternoon, unfortunately meaning our party was left stranded in the boat. Luckily, we had brilliant views and, after an extended and arduous photo shoot, nothing but smiles and laughter engulfed the team!

### 24/03/24, AM: Grytviken

The home of whaling history, Grytviken was a special place for many of us and offered plenty to explore. Starting off with a sensational hike up the base of picturesque mountains, blue skies led the way up, and then muddy ground led to a slip and slide back down again! Past the church and down to town, we sent off postcards to our loved ones, explored the museum and visited the cemetery to see Shackleton's grave. Then before we knew it, it was time for lunch back at the ship!

### 24/03/24, PM: Godthul

With full bellies, it was time to explore Godthul. A short but initially steep and hard walk through the thick tussock left us puffing and sweaty! Once again, the weather held out and we were left with an astonishing 360-degree view. From our vantage point, we were left speechless as we looked out over the bay littered with icebergs, as well as the lake and a gentoo colony at the base of more mountains. After more trips and falls down the pothole-ridden slope, we finally made it to the Zodiac, ready for a swim!

We found an inlet in the bay that was filled with fur seals and only had a small swell, making it an ideal place to start. Eager to take the plunge, we were ready to go in moments, matching the seal pups' energy! Chaotic seal soup is one way to explain what we witnessed, and although we only had a short time in the water, every moment was pure joy! Engulfed and overwhelmed by seal pups, we were left in awe as these agile swimmers zoomed past us with such grace and speed. Our only challenge was working out where to look! A beautiful introduction to the wildlife that South Georgia has to offer, seen from below.

### 25/03/24, PM: Possession Bay

After an amazing morning at Fortuna Bay, where we were surrounded by fur seals and king penguins on land, we jumped into the Zodiacs in Possession Bay, without quite knowing what the place would offer. The wind was strong in the bay, making the Zodiacs hard to manoeuvre, but the place turned out to be mind-blowing! A king penguin colony covered the flat section above the beach, and there was a beautiful waterfall in the background. Trying to find a sheltered place, we headed north of the bay, where a nice little cove offered us a shelter from the wind. King penguins and fur seals were resting on the beach as we got in the water. Soon these penguins and fur seal pups were in the water with us, looking at us with curiosity, and making this snorkel a special one. Seeing the first king penguins underwater is a sight that can never be forgotten.

### 26/03/24, AM: Right Whale Bay

We started our day in Right Whale Bay, where a small but beautiful king penguin colony awaited us. Although the weather conditions were challenging, we were still able to find calmer water for a relatively peaceful Zodiac cruise, though unfortunately no landing was possible. After observing the penguins and seals on shore, we found the best possible snorkelling location in the area and sprang into action to dive in. Our first look at king penguins underwater was an exciting moment and, of course, there were seal pups to keep us well and truly entertained. A couple of curious petrels also came to hassle us unaware humans! But this was nothing compared to what was yet to come in the afternoon...

### 26/03/24, PM: Salisbury Plain

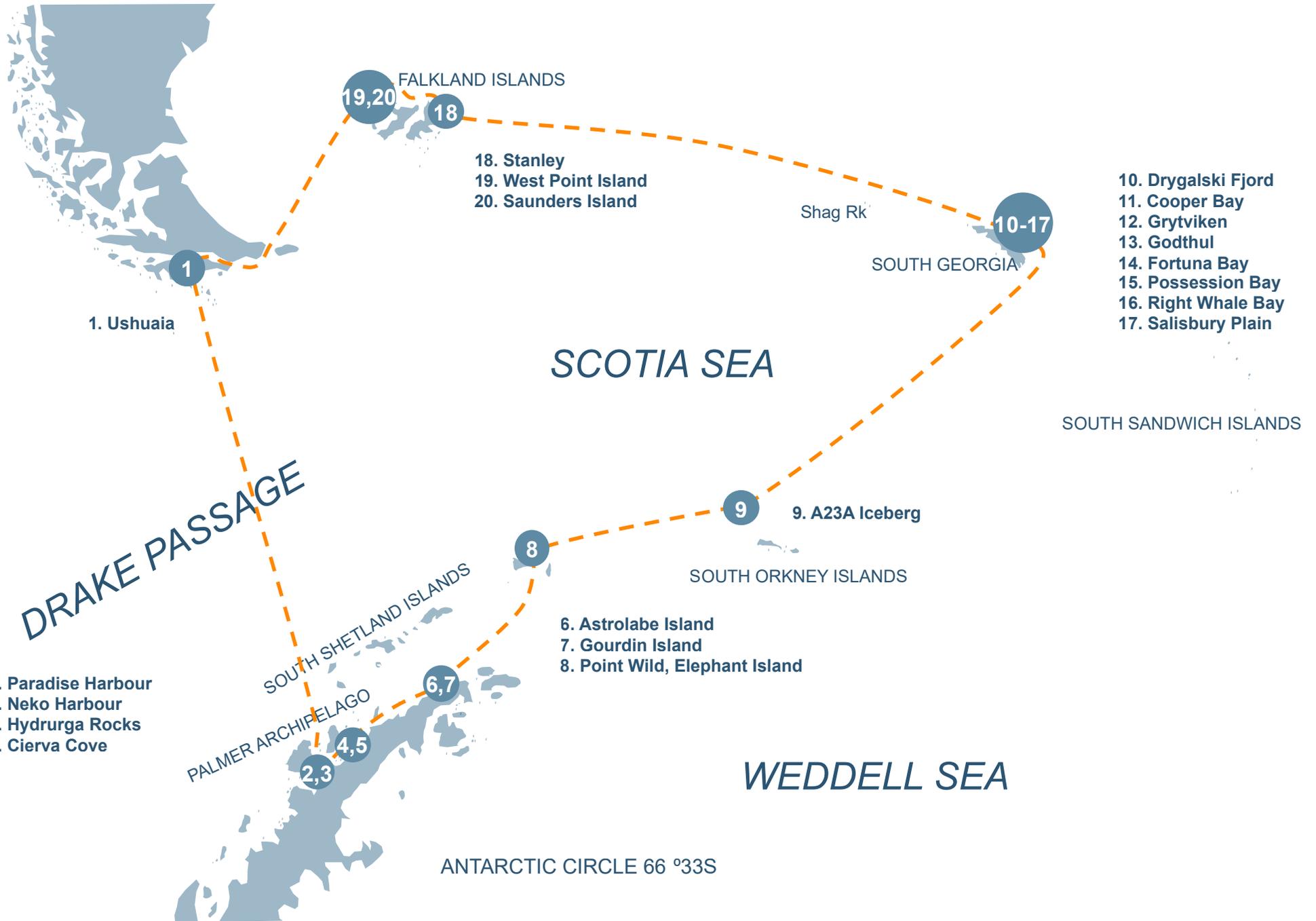
'A plain full of penguins yet none in the sky, a chaotic soup of kings and pups satisfying the eye' – a short poem to describe the indescribable!

We spent the afternoon cruising along the everlasting Salisbury Plains, a colony of roughly 80,000 pairs of king penguins singing their songs. We found a tiny bay, thick with a tangled mass of kelp, thousands of fur seal pups breaking the surface, and the kings like bullets through the water – a beautiful chaos to behold. Finding a slightly less crowded snorkelling location with no Zodiac traffic, we took the plunge for our last hurrah. Engulfed by hundreds of king penguins and fur seals and looking in every direction, we are left with bewilderment and gratitude, as this had been the best snorkel yet. What an amazing way to say goodbye to South Georgia!











# Expeditioners:

Elle Addison	Emma Carey	Sabrina Gilroy	Richard Morecroft	Steve Shelton
Paul Alwine	Sue Caron	Robyn Groeneveld	Erryn Morris	Clare Sherlock
Binnie Alwine	Annterese Caulfield Reid	Darko Gudelj	Marcia Murchison	Paloma Skerlavaj
Leela Amaraneni	Gina Chick	Suzanna Hardman	John Navis	Linda Smith
Brad Amaraneni	Rachel Cleary	Melanie Heaphy	Sally Navis	Mark Staley
Con Aroney	Maria Cocolas	Emma Hebron	Jude Pain	Jenniffer Staley
Trish Aroney	Steven Cocolas	Kathy Hirasuna	Chris Pain	Graham Steele
Steve Avery	Megan Cosmai	Alan Hirasuna	Jo Petito	Christina Steele
Jeanine Avery	Jill Crosby	Gregory Incoll	Steve Petito	Sarah Taylor
Deidre Beard	Karl Davies	Nancy Incoll	Ingrid Petts	Vanesa Tihic
Eliza Beare	Louise Davies	Dana Karlin	Laura Preese	Jonathan Trollip
Ana Bierens de Haan	Nigel Diepering	Emma Learmonth	Annette Rae	Elizabeth Trollip
Jolanda Bonazzola	David Downs	Linda Lubinsky	Margaret Rae	Marina Watts
Monika Bonazzola	Nancy Downs	Peter Lubinsky	Dave Reid	Chris Wheatley
Jeremy Bower	Keith Dunbar	David Lythall	Kallan Roi	Andrea White
Sally Bowles	Catherine Edwards	Judith MacGregor	Nilaya Sabnis	Lee Willis
Chelsea Brisson	Sophie Ellison	Catherine Maud	Padmaja Sakhamuri	David Willis
Tony Broom	Nick Evans	Tyson Mayr	Prasanth Sakhamuri	Paula Wilson
Sandra Broom	Amanda Fleming	Elijah Mayr	Olaf Schuermann	Barry Wilson
Capucine Burki	Gabrielle Ford	Chloe Mazille	Max Seigal	Tony Zamir
Denise Burns	Olivia Ford	Geraldine Millar	David Sharpe	Michal Ziv Zamir
Gary Burns	Bella Gareh	Ronald Moore	Chloe Sheldon	



## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Daniel Stavert

Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Assistance Expedition Leader Trainee: Lelia Cataldi

Onboard Expedition Manager: Anne Oeyasaeter

Glaciologist: Gaby Pilson

Naturalist / Citizen Science Coordinator: Tracey Ann Hooley

Naturalist: Hans Bruning

Naturalist: Alan McPherson

Marine Biologist: Ekaterina Uriupova

Historian: Avi Schluter

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: Liz McNeil

Lead Snorkel Guide: Thomas Gov

Snorkel Guide: Stas Zakharov

Snorkel Guide: Remi Ritchie

Expedition Medic: Mari Fleri

Photography Guide: Adrian Wlodarczyk

Zodiac Manager: Ryan Kaempfe

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Reza Rusooly

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Maxim Makarovskiy

Chief Officer: Andrey Zakalashnyuk

Safety Officer: Vladimir Kolesnikov

Bosun: Bobby Payumo

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

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: Angelo San Antonio

Able Seaman: Roberto Ixtan Mejia

Able Seaman: Mark Christian Torero

Able Seaman: John Noble

Deck Kadet: Giuseppe Guidice

## Photography thanks to:

Adrian Wlodarczyk

Tyson Mayr

