

Antarctic Explorer

Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 14 Feb – 23 Feb 2024



Ushuaia, Argentina

DAY 1 | Wednesday 14 February 2024

Position at 1600 on 14 Feb

Latitude: 54°48.6.5'S

Longitude: 068°17.8'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: NE 3 kts

Barometer: 1016 hPa

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 Expedition 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, Isabelle, and a quick intro from Dr Anzor, and Hotel Director, Pascal, 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 waiting 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 125 passengers (33 Americans, 36 Australians, 13 Canadians, 8 from the UK, 1 Brazilian, 16 from China, 1 from Croatia, 2 from France, 2 from India, 10 from Ireland, 3 from New Zealand along with 82 crew from all around the globe.

Our 20 Expedition Team have a variety of specialities including polar exploration, glaciology, geology, history, marine and terrestrial biology, ornithology, photography, medicine, diving 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 nine days of adventure!





At Sea

DAY 2 | Thursday 15 February 2024

Position at 0800 on 15 Feb

Latitude: 56°14.03'S

Course: 210°

Longitude: 066°56.03'W

Speed: 7.3 kts

Wind Speed: W 34 kts

Air Temp: 4°C

Barometer: 1021 hPa

A somewhat wobbly start to the day as the Drake Passage became our Antarctic 'rite of passage'. With plenty of wind and swell, the movement of our little ship was challenging at times but, in the spirit of adventure, we surged ahead!

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 briefing on Zodiacs was postponed to allow us all to attend when we felt more comfortable and were less sleepy from sea-sickness medications.

Meanwhile, outside the ship, the albatrosses were thoroughly enjoying the wind and waves. T.A. gave a talk introducing the Southern Ocean seabirds and we discovered that the tiniest one we'll meet weighs the same as a piece of toast (Wilson's storm-petrel, 40 grams), and that wandering and royal albatrosses have the largest wingspan of any bird, at 3.5 metres. Some of us then headed to the back of Deck 6, binoculars in hand, and were rewarded with sightings of wandering albatrosses, black-browed albatrosses and southern giant petrels. We logged the data in eBird for our Citizen Science seabird project.

Heading deeper into the Southern Ocean through the morning, the ship's revolutionary X-BOW® and advanced stabilisation continued to serve us well, as did the skill, care and kindness of the bridge team, hotel team and medical team. Happily, every now and then a few new faces emerged from the cabins as people found their sea-legs and began to explore.

After lunch, we met in the lecture theatre to hear from Daniel and Isabelle about the ship's Zodiacs and how we'll be using them to go ashore in Antarctica. We learned about the sailor's grip, and the three-step way to get into and out of a Zodiac. Looking forward to putting these into practice very soon.

Adrian then 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.

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



At Sea

DAY 3 | Friday 16 February 2024

Position at 0800 on 16 Feb

Latitude: 59°04'167" S

Longitude: 064°54'044" W

Course: 156°

Speed: 14.7kts

Wind Speed: WVN 18 kts

Barometer: 1022 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

Our second sea day began a little smoother than the first. A more forgiving sea state brought with it a higher headcount for breakfast.

The prevailing mood was one of relief that the Drake Shake may be finally over! Though, it must also be said that the hardier amongst us were also glad to have finally experienced a taste of what the Southern Ocean is capable of, which was imposing but awe inspiring.

After breakfast, Gabby gave a lecture about Antarctic history, more specifically, who discovered 'Terra Australis' (the Southern Continent). The prevailing narrative is that Captain Cook was the first to circumnavigate Antarctica during his voyage of 1772–1775, and Admiral Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen was the first to sight the actual continent. Yet, there exists oral history, which implies that Polynesians may have been the first to sight the continent, and even make landfall. Fascinating stuff and definitely a topic worthy of further reading when the opportunity arises.

After a buffet lunch we had the mandatory IAATO briefing, which informed us of how we should conduct ourselves when setting foot on the Peninsula. Examples included the distance we should keep from animals, and how to ensure that we do not accidentally litter the landing sites.

Following the lecture, we undertook important biosecurity checks – vacuuming our backpacks, camera bags, and all items of outer clothing – to ensure that we do not unintentionally introduce seeds into the local environment.

The kayakers, paddlers, and divers also had their briefings and set up their equipment, ready for the coming days of activities.

As we ventured further into the bones of the ship, we felt less and less like we were lost in a maze!

Later in the afternoon, Annette gave a fascinating lecture all about the whales of the Southern Ocean, which included all of the species that we are likely to see in Antarctica. It was so interesting to learn about the migration routes for each species, how they feed, what they eat and when (it turns out it is most of the time!). We also received a basic rundown of their morphology, so that when we are out on deck and we spot some whales we have a better chance of being able to identify which species they are.

We met in the lecture room before dinner to receive the first recap, which involved members of the Expedition Team revisiting what we did that particular day and also what may happen the next day.

We all looked forward to getting a better night's sleep for our first landing tomorrow.



Spring Point | Enterprise Island

DAY 4 | Saturday 17 February 2024

Position at 0730 on 17 Feb

Latitude: 63°59'05"S

Course: 173.4

Longitude: 061°8'0"W

Speed: 9.7 kts

Wind Speed: NE 15 kts

Air Temp: -1°C

Barometer: 777 hPa

As soon as we reached the Antarctic Peninsula, we headed towards Spring Point, a very scenic area at north-west side of the Peninsula.

The sea conditions were calm, which allowed us a smooth operation and we all could enjoy the peace from this magical place on earth.

The original plan was to make a short landing on Spring Point, but landing was not possible due to the terrain conditions, so Isabelle, our Expedition Leader, decided to give us the opportunity of a long Zodiac cruise instead.

On our versatile Zodiacs we are able to explore wider areas and look for wildlife. And so we did!

And we hope that everybody on this overcast, calm morning had the chance to observe those huge humpback whales, with their gentle movements in the surface of the sea.

Some of us also saw some fur seals and Weddell seals resting on ice flows; so many wildlife sightings in just our first day in the Antarctic Peninsula.

By the way, Weddell seals are the southernmost mammals of the world, beside humans, of course. So even when we see them looking lazy, do not forget that these marine mammals are extreme!

The same for the humpback whales: the mammals with the longest migration on the planet!

After this fantastic experience, we all (divers, kayakers, and cruisers) came back to the ship for a good and warm meal.

While the *Greg Mortimer* was repositioning towards Wilhelmina Bay, our expert glaciologist, Gaby, told us everything about ice and glaciers!

We reached Foyn Harbour in the beautiful Wilhelmina Bay at around 1700. Right after all Zodiacs were launched, we started another beautiful Zodiac cruise.

The divers and the kayakers also went out to explore the place. During this Zodiac cruise, we visited a very special bay from Enterprise Island, where the *Governoren* lies grounded since the early 1900s. The *Governoren* was an enormous whaling factory ship, with explosive harpoons and capable of processing and storing whale blubber.

The ship caught fire, so the crew decided to wreck the ship in order to be safe and avoid sinking in the cold waters of the Southern Ocean.

Now the shipwreck is a great attraction for not forgetting the wrong, cruel, and unsustainable things that we did in the past.

The last whale sighting we had at the end of this Zodiac cruise was amazing, with four huge humpbacks apparently socialising or communicating, taking their huge pectoral fins out of the water, spy-hopping, and emitting different sounds amongst themselves.





Neko Harbour | Cuverville Island

DAY 5 | Sunday 18 February 2024

Position at 0700 on 18 Feb

Latitude: 64°49'05"S

Longitude: 062°38'0" 21W

Course: 121°

Speed: 8.3kts

Wind Speed: NW 7.6kts

Barometer: 996 hPa

Air Temp: 0°C

A gentle and soothing good morning wafted through the ship from our fairy godmother, half-tempting us out on deck to see humpback whales feeding amongst the icebergs, and half-coaxing us to hit snooze one more time once informed about the minus 3 degrees Celsius air temperature.

Upon arriving at our first stop, Neko Harbour, two snow petrels were discovered on the observation deck and were immediately released by our expert avian team. The second bird had obviously taken quite a liking to this warm iceberg, the *Greg Mortimer*, and returned two more times, causing Hans to run around the decks like a madman while adorned in PPE, quite a sight for those not aware of the situation!

This astonishingly gorgeous nook in Antarctica's Andvord Bay, discovered by the Belgian explorer Adrien de Gerlache during his 1897–1899 expedition, and named after the *Neko*, a Scottish whaling ship and floating factory that operated here from 1911–1924. This was our first 'true' continental landing. Congrats to those of you who achieved your 7th continent visited status!

Some hardy souls opted to head uphill, while others remained in the lowlands admiring the multitude of gentoo penguins (T.A.'s favourite). Greeting parties of the curious orange-billed and white-patch-headed critters, rafted in the water or waddled towards us on land, entertaining all with their antics. The colonies were an earthy red as were the colonialists, eagerly awaiting the 'tag' from their partners so they could clean up their act with a frigid seawater bath, knowing that their chicks will be receiving some lovely regurgitated krill from their sparkly clean mates. Skuas patrolled the area for unsuspecting penguin chicks, also needing sustenance to in turn feed their own little ones.

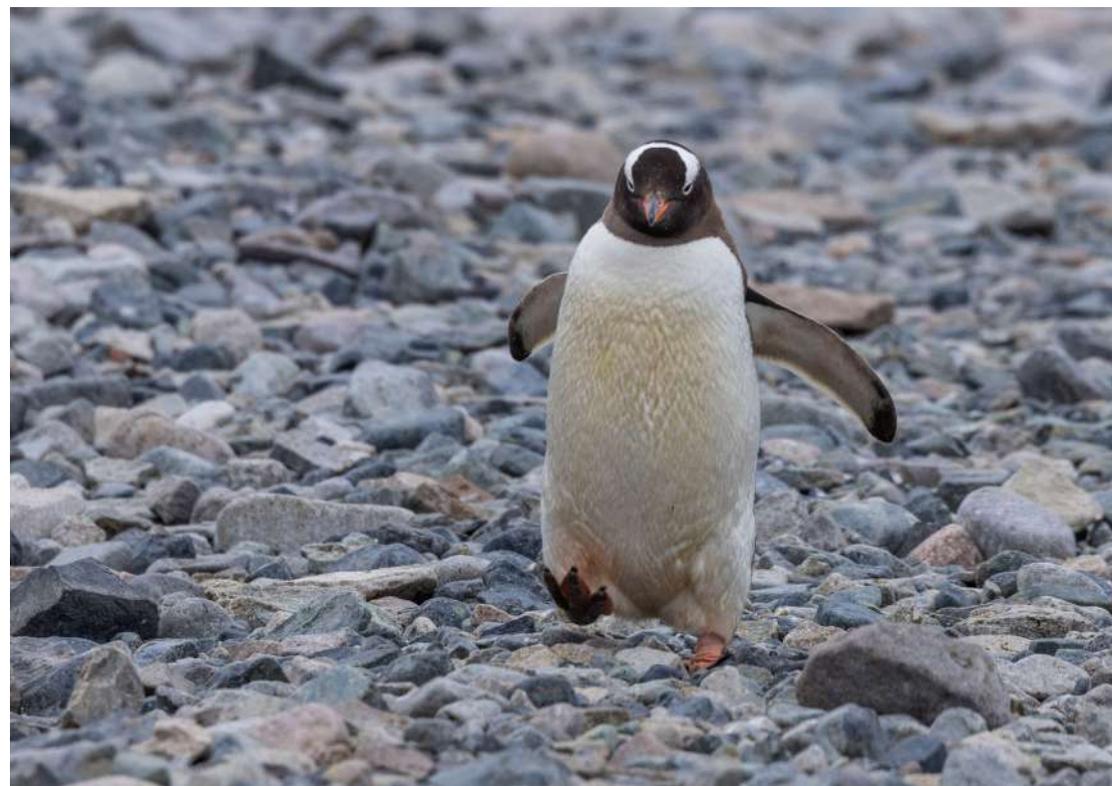
Small calvings occurred joining the symphony of mountains, clouds, lighting and the sea. The scuba divers meanwhile delighted in looking at icebergs, and krill and limpets from below with the occasional tuxedoed torpedo whizzing past. On the surface the kayakers weaved their way around icebergs, spotting seals and a minke whale.

En route to our next stop, Cuverville Island, Weddell seals lazed on bergy bits. An estimated 20,000 gentoo adults and chicks provided a more intimate glimpse of the penguin rituals, with an olfactory experience to boot. A reminder of a different past was littered on the beach in the form of whalebones from the early 20th-century whaling days.

Upon returning to the ship, the much anticipated and dreaded polar plunge was announced. Many brave and slightly whacky souls took a leap of faith, and smiles and shivers abounded!

Just when we thought we could relax, hysterical hats appeared for our frigid BBQ on the top deck, the many smiles re-telling the story of the day.







Polar Plunge

DAY 5 | Sunday 18 February 2024

















Petermann Island & Pléneau Island

DAY 6 | Monday 19 February 2024

Position at 0700 on 19 Feb

Latitude: 65°7'0"S

Longitude: 064°2'0"W

Course: 223°

Speed: 3.8 kts

Wind Speed: WWS 12 kts

Barometer: 1004 hPa

Air Temp: -2°C

To summarise the weather of the day, it would qualify as very 'Antarctic'. Low clouds, no horizon, a lot of snow and strong wind. From the view wings, deployed during the journey through Lemaire Channel at 6am, the 30-knot gusting wind wakes up the last few that the view and the coffee hadn't yet managed to. Six hundred metres between the two sides of the channel and about 40 minutes of traverse; what a great way to work up an appetite before the splendid breakfast onboard.

As planned, we anchor for our morning excursion near Petermann Island, where gentoo and Adélie penguins gather. Some historical artefacts from Charcot's second French Antarctic expedition and the commemorative cross for the loss of three members of the British Antarctic survey in 1982 still remain on the site. Kayakers and divers are lucky to spot a Weddell seal west from the landing site. You have to know, divers had one of the best dives of the trip in a little cove north west of the landing site, full of kelp and small critters.

We return outside to enjoy real Antarctic weather at Pléneau Island after a short lunch break. 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.

After such a day, filled with wildlife and amazing landscape, we should take a few seconds and think about the past. Can you imagine the reasons that pushed those adventurers, more than a century ago, through such difficult and dangerous southern latitudes. Fortune? Glory? 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 on board the *Greg Mortimer*.

Let's take another few seconds to think about the future. It is to us to decide what we want these places to be in some years from now. Please, take the memories home and reflect upon them. We all know the 'small' actions that need to be taken individually. Can we then ask ourselves what needs to be done on a more global scale in order to reverse our daily negative impacts on what is around and inside us? Beauty is in Antarctica, but is also just outside our home. Together, we can take care of it.







Portal Point | Cierva Cove

DAY 7 | Tuesday 20 February 2024

Position at 0700 on 20 Feb

Latitude: 64°28'0"S

Longitude: 061°43'0"W

Course: 153

Speed: 5.1kts

Wind Speed: WNW 3.6kts

Barometer: 753 hPa

Air Temp: -1°C

As we awoke on our last full day of activity in the Antarctic Peninsula, we were treated to stunning views of glassy, ice-filled waters surrounded by humongous glaciers and towering jagged peaks.

After yet another scrumptious breakfast prepared by our talented galley team, we headed out into our Zodiacs for the morning's activities at Portal Point. The bulk of our number ventured to shore for a fun continental landing, where we were all excited to see the large group of fur seals that dotted the shoreline. Meanwhile, the kayakers and divers among us enjoyed a fun morning of paddling and exploring the icy waters near the landing site.

By midday, it was time to return to the ship to rest up and refuel before the afternoon's activities. But before we could do so, we all gathered up on deck 7 for a group photo to help commemorate the wonderful voyage that we've had so far.

Lunch was followed by our afternoon activity, which took place in the scenic waters of Cierva Cove. At Cierva Cove, most of us set off on our Zodiac cruises, paddles, or diving adventures through the bay's ice-filled waters and along its rocky shores.

Here, we were lucky enough to get great up-close looks at Cierva Cove's incredible wildlife, including the countless penguins that call the nearby and aptly named Penguin Island home. During the outing, we even got to zoom around the brightly coloured buildings of Argentina's Primavera Station as we admired its vegetation-covered slopes and the glaciers that surround it.

The best part of the afternoon, however, was definitely the hot chocolate Zodiac, which surprised us all halfway through our cruise. There are few better ways to spend an afternoon than by sipping hot chocolate in Antarctica, so it was no surprise that our chocolate-filled Zodiac cruise in Cierva Cove brought smiles to everyone's faces.

Once back on the ship, we gathered in the lounge for a quick briefing from Isabelle on the plans for the last full day of our expedition. We also enjoyed a fun question-box session and even heard a short recap from one of our fellow Expeditioners about a scenic flight that she had made over Antarctica a few years back.

Following recap, we made our way to dinner, where the galley team once again impressed us with a delectable three-course meal. With full bellies and smiles all around, we headed off to bed to get some rest before the following day's activities. As we catch some zees, though, we'll make our way ever northward toward our next destination: the South Shetland Islands.





Snow Island | Deception Island

DAY 8 | Wednesday 21 February 2024

Position at 0640 on 21 Feb

Latitude: 62°45'0" S

Longitude: 061°8'0"W

Course: 280.4°

Speed: 6.1 kts

Wind Speed: W 15.3 kts

Barometer: 775 hPa

Air Temp: -1°C

After all these last days in the endless white of Antarctica, today's morning greeted us with the view of green and brown hills just a few hundred metres off the *Greg Mortimer's* bow. We had reached the South Shetlands, a group of islands at the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula.

After breakfast we entered the Zodiacs, which took us to the beautiful beach of Snow Island. Just the approach hinted at what was awaiting us – Antarctic biodiversity at its best. Between carpets of green vegetation we marvelled at southern elephant seals and antarctic fur seals in huge numbers. The beaches of Snow Island presented us with a very special feeling of calm and liveliness at the same time, which we soaked in while walking along long stretches of shoreline with wildlife activity surprising us behind each rock.

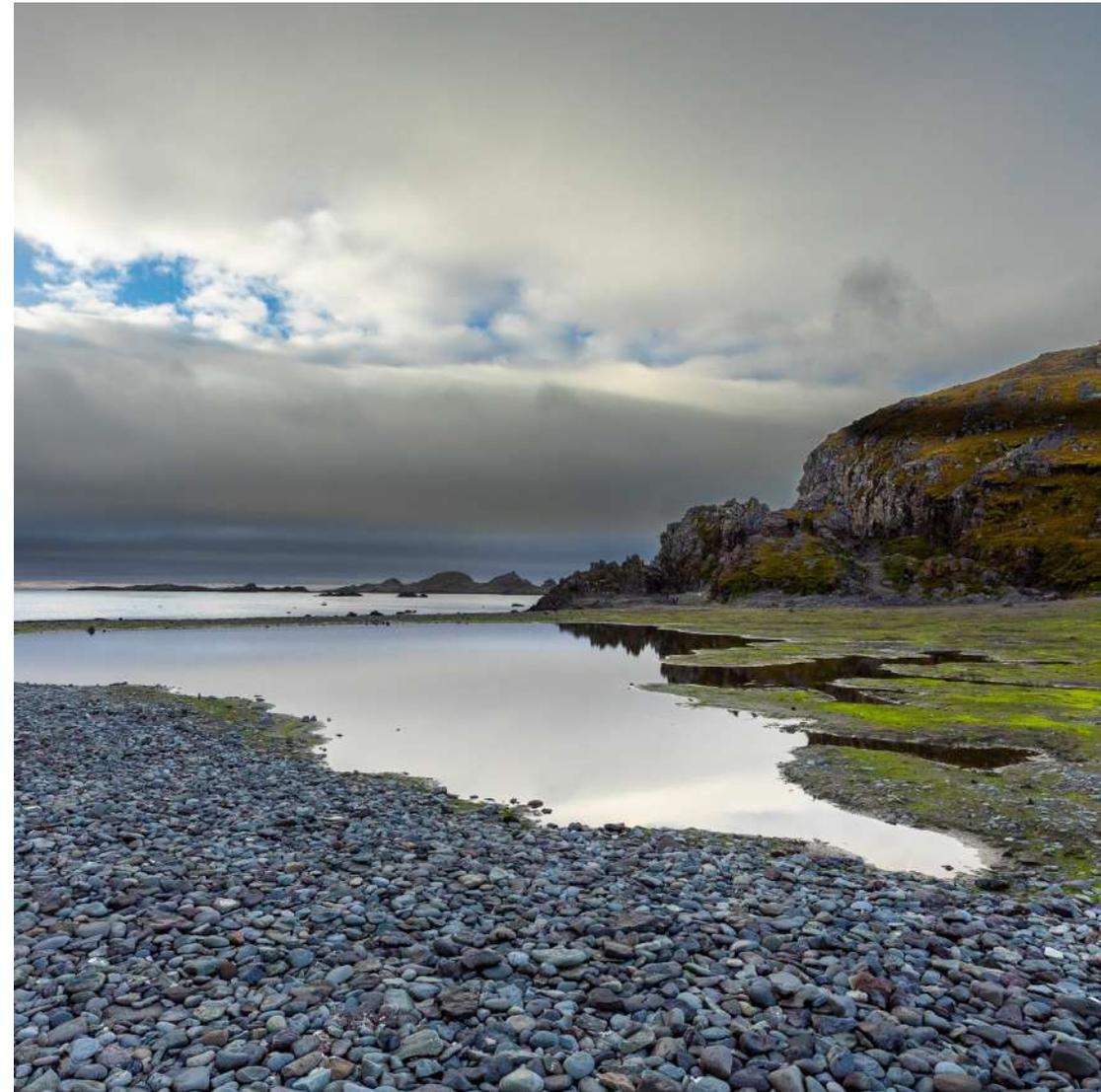
Back on board we got a first glimpse of going back to reality of non-Antarctic life - Isabelle and Daniel gave us the disembarkation briefing about our flights from King George Island to Punta Arenas, scheduled for the next day. But who knows, will these flights really go ahead? As we are still in Antarctic territory, nobody can tell for sure – it all depends on the weather. An update on weather and flight schedule is promised for the evening.

After lunch we reached Deception Island, a very special place combining ice, rock and fire. After entering the vast caldera of the active volcano through the narrow entrance of Neptune's Bellows, the Zodiacs took us ashore and we explored the volcanic beach and its historical artefacts of whaling and Antarctic logistics and science. A hike up to Neptune's Window offered stunning views over the ocean and down sheer cliffs onto an enclosed beach with dark volcanic sand.

Our day finished with the Captain's Farewell Drinks, a tradition of the last voyage day. Each with a delicious drink in our hands, we listened to the farewell greetings of the Captain and his senior officer team who had taken us safely through this amazing voyage. It felt like months ago that we had been here with the Captain's Welcome Drinks, just about to enter the mysterious world of Antarctica. Expedition Leader, Isabelle, gave a captivating end-of-cruise speech, acknowledging all of the Expedition Team who had accompanied us during all our incredible experiences.

A delicious end-of-cruise dinner was followed by a promenade of all the hotel, restaurant and galley team through the restaurant, which allowed us to see and celebrate all the staff who had taken us through these voyage days in such comfort, friendliness and hospitality.

The ship's bar was the perfect place to finish this beautiful day and the amazing voyage.







Ardley Island

DAY 9 | Thursday 22 February 2024

Position at 0800 on 22 Feb

Latitude: 62°12'0"S

Longitude: 058°52'0"W

Course: 216°

Speed: 1.1 kts

Wind Speed: NNW 17.6kts

Barometer: 1005 hPa

Air Temp: -2°C

As the sun struggled to pierce through the thick blanket of clouds, the Expedition Team gathered, their spirits as dim as the morning light. But alas, Antarctica had no intentions of releasing the *Greg Mortimer* from its cloudy grip that day. Yet, undeterred by the lacklustre start, the team, led by the indomitable Isabelle, sprang into action with the enthusiasm of penguins diving into a warm bath.

Amidst the dreary landscape, Eduardo, the team's resident seal enthusiast, regaled them with tales of flippers creatures and their quirky habits. His words were as captivating as a seal's gaze, holding everyone's attention, except perhaps for the occasional distracted glance at the clearing horizon.

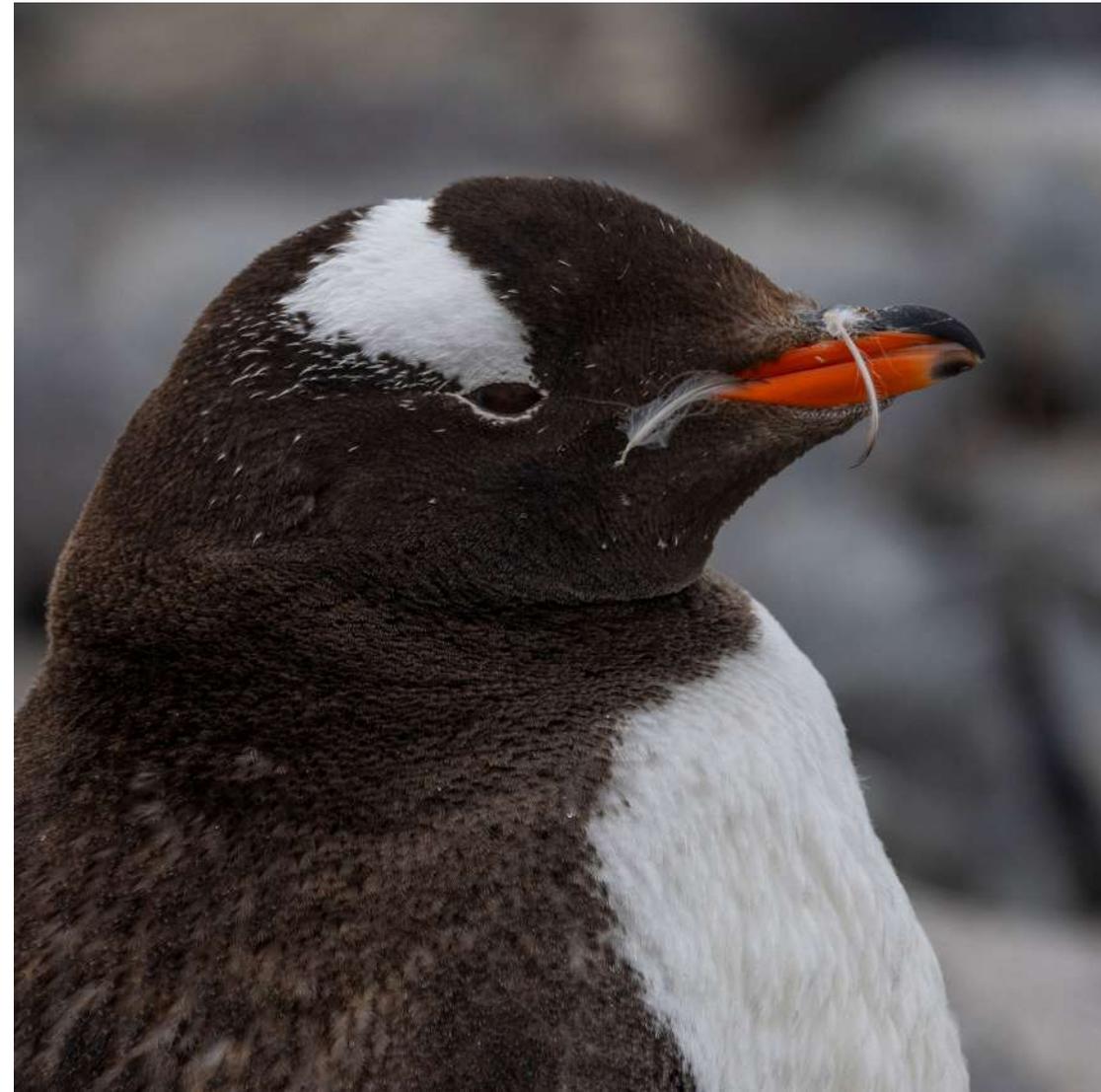
Gaby, ever the strategic mastermind, concocted a plan so convoluted it could have made a labyrinth jealous. Their mission? To see some penguins. Yet, armed with determination and a map that resembled a Jackson Pollock painting, they set off into the wilderness.

And lo and behold, they found themselves surrounded by a waddling parade of chinstrap and gentoo penguins. The sight was enough to thaw even the chilliest of hearts, and the team rejoiced in their penguin-filled afternoon.

Back on the safety of their vessel, Annette took the stage during Recap, her tales of king penguins on Kerguelen captivating the audience. Each word was a brushstroke painting and a vivid picture of her adventures, leaving everyone inspired and slightly jealous of her Antarctic escapades.

But the day's excitement didn't end there. With bellies full from an awesome dinner, T.A. and Gaby decided to entertain the troops with a quiz. The topic? Guessing the length of things. From the length of an iceberg to the size of a krill, the guesses flew faster than a penguin sliding on its belly. And by the end, sides were splitting with laughter, and memories of the day's adventures were etched into their minds forever.

As the night settled over the icy landscape, the team reflected on their day, echoing the sentiments of the great philosopher Ice Cube: 'It was a good day.' And indeed it was, filled with laughter, camaraderie, and more penguins than they could shake a fish at. For in the heart of Antarctica, even the greyest of days could be transformed into a tale worth telling.



Frei Station | King George Island

DAY 10 | Friday 23 February 2024

Position at 1000 on 23 Feb

Latitude: 62°12'0"S

Longitude: 058°55'0"W

Course: 86.7°

Speed: 11 kts

Wind Speed: S 11kts

Barometer: 1009 hPa

Air Temp: 11°C

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



Kayaking Log

Kayak Guides: Eloisa Berrier, Ivan Klochkov, Rob Barth, Pablo Passera, Eduardo Larrañaga

Number of Kayakers: 22 Total Outings: 9 Total Distance Paddled: 43.6 km

Kayakers:	Alfred Knies	Barbara Ellen Alexander	Maria Schlanger
Sarah Billington	Cynthia Knies	John Marshall Leavens	Shammu Gu
Greg Miller	Bart Rutten	Jacqueline Bryant	Xi Gu
Patrick Billington	Kathleen Olson	Philip Bryant	Sue Salisbury
Stacey Richards	Timothy Kotsis	Bradley Ferguson	Jesse Lowe
Malcom Richards	Elle Klein	Steven Birenbaum	

17/02/2024, AM: Spring Island. Distance: 3.2 km

Group 1: We circumnavigated the island, it was our first kayak session. Everybody did it really well and we had a great time in the kayaks. The swell was quite big but it didn't disturb our operation too much. We embarked the Zodiacs and then we explored the area by kayaks for one hour. We saw a few whales in the distance, gentoo penguins swam around us and there was a great chinstraps penguin colony.

It was the first outing of the expedition. We used the Zodiacs as a launch point and end point with the kayakers.

Group 2: We circumnavigated the island. First we did a practice session of some skills in the water. We started on the continental side, with some brash ice and lots of big icebergs from a distance.

There was some swell so we kept some distance from the rocky areas on shore. Not too much wind.

We saw some humpback whales and gentoo penguins in the water. There was also a colony of chinstrap penguins on the north side of the island with lots of krill in the water.

17/02/2024, PM: Enterprise. Distance: 3.5 km

We towed our kayaks to the southern part of the island and hit the water there. We explored tiny islets with lots of fur seals, and gazed upon the beautiful seabed while we were passing shallow waters around them. We paddled to the shipwreck of *Governoren*, a Norwegian whaling factory ship that caught fire and ran aground here in 1915. The Norwegian whalers were celebrating the end of the season and partied too hard. Someone knocked the lamp off the table and the ship full of whale oil was set on fire. Fortunately, the whole crew survived. It was great to approach the remains of the vessel and take a closer look at it. We finished our paddle next to the remains of old whaling boats on the islet next to the shipwreck and we got back in the Zodiac there. That was a wonderful kayaking session!

18/02/2024, AM: Neko Harbour. Distance: 4.6 km

Our third outing in our sea kayaks was very special again. Surrounded by impressive glaciers and a calm breeze, we started paddling towards the inner side from Anvord Bay. We paddled for a bit more than an hour, exploring

the bay among huge icebergs and a bit of brash ice. We saw some penguins in the water washing their feathers and sometimes we even saw them on top of little bergs. Also during this kayak session we had a five-minute break to get a feel for the place and to listen to the silence. These moments are important, considering that in our regular lives this is something quite difficult to find.

After kayaking, we used our Zodiacs to go onshore and step on the Antarctic continent for the first time!

18/02/2024, PM: Cuverville Island. Distance: 5.9 km

Back on the water! This time in the beautiful Errera Channel. Conditions were great again, almost no wind and overcast. We got in our sea kayaks by the *Greg Mortimer* and as soon as the whole group was ready, we started paddling next to huge icebergs. When we reached the island the sound and smell of thousands of gentoo penguins was intense. We observed many penguin chicks, very dirty and asking for food from their parents. This island holds the largest gentoo colony in the area and it was a big privilege to have enough time to circumnavigate it. During this circumnavigation, we met a few fur seals and one lonely, beautiful Weddell seal. The landscape was also very impressive, with glaciers all around and the snow on top of the mountain slopes painted with a pinkish colour. This is due to the snow algae that can grow there. When we reached the other side of the island, we paddled along a very high and vertical cliff, full of bright-orange lichens and green mosses. Before finishing this beautiful kayaking session, we paddled next to the enormous icebergs again. They made us feel very small but full of energy at the same time.

19/02/2024, AM: Petermann Island. Distance: 5.3 km

Conditions were a bit more challenging at Petermann Island. A small, low and rounded island, lying off Graham Land. It was named after a German expedition in 1873–1874 a short distance south of Lemaire Channel and the southernmost kayak session of our trip. The swell was moderate, but we could feel it from the kayaks. We explored a small island a bit more south, where we found one big male fur seal and four Weddell seals resting in the snow. Then we crossed a narrow channel to check a small bay full of grounded icebergs, and then we came back to the northern part of the island where the penguin colonies were. During the time paddling close to the shore, we saw a few Adélie penguins and lots of gentoo. We made a quick stop close to the landing site to observe the initials P:P of a ship named *Pourquoi-Pas* that the French Antarctic Expedition used to overwinter in 1908–1910. Then we finished the outing by playing with the kayaks in the rock garden in the northern part of the island before we disembarked in the Zodiac for a visit to the landing site.

19/02/2024, PM: Pléneau Island. Distance: 4.6 km

Second outing of the day in the afternoon. We used the Zodiacs as a launch point and ending point with the kayakers.

Weather was low clouds and light snow. Wind between 10–15 knots. Sea was choppy for moments.

We started on the northeast side of Hovgaard Island and connected with the south side of Pléneau island. Then we kayaked through the channels in between rocks and shallow water, where we found more protection from the wind.

Some of the wildlife we saw included a Weddell seal resting on the rocks, Adélie and gentoo penguins in a colony on the other side of the island.

20/02/2024, AM: Portal Point. Distance: 5.5 km

It was a beautiful morning – glassy, calm water and dramatic clouds with some sunlight breaking through them. Finally, perfect conditions for paddling! We started our kayaking session straight from the marina of our ship and paddled towards the beautiful glacial face in two separate groups. As we were approaching, we saw a massive and dramatic calving – tons of blue ice crashed into the shallow water. It sounded just like a thunder! We got together next to the cape and took a great group photo. Some brave ladies tried to stand up in their kayaks for this occasion! Then we traversed a little bay where the rest of the Expeditioners were landing and paddled to the little islets full of fur seals! There we hopped into the Zodiacs to go to the landing site. It was great to see everyone on the water paddling all together!

20/02/2024, PM: Cierva Cove. Distance: 5.2 km

It was the second outing of the day. There was some swell but no wind, lots of brash ice and many big and beautiful icebergs. It was very funny to open our own track in the brash ice with the sea kayaks and get the chance to observe the people working at Argentinian Primavera Station. We got very close to the gentoo penguin colony.

21/02/2024, AM: Snow Island. Distance: 2.2 km

Today we used the Zodiacs as a launch point and ending point with the kayaks.

We started on the north side of Hall Peninsula. We paddled close to shore and across a shallow passage to get into the bay. We continued along the coast, avoiding some swell and observing wildlife. We travelled to the other small peninsula to meet the Zodiacs and go ashore for a landing.

There were moderate winds, so we were more protected from wind inside the bay.

We saw many groups of gentoo and chinstrap penguins in colonies. And on the rocks and along the shore we saw elephant seals and fur seals.

21/02/2024, PM: Whalers Bay. Distance: 3.6 km

Amazing last outing, paddling inside a volcano caldera formed by a violent eruption 10,000 years ago on Deception Island! Conditions were a bit challenging from time to time, gusting up to 19 knots of wind, but everybody did a great job and it was very noticeable how much everybody improved their kayaking skills.

Deception Island has been a focus of human activity in Antarctica since the early 1820s when sealing expeditions were very active down here. Also, in 1906–1907 whaling activities started on Deception Island using Whalers Bay as an anchorage for whaling factory ships. Later on, in 1912, the Hektor Whaling Company was issued with a licence to establish a shore-based whaling station. Approximately 150 people worked at the station during the austral summer, producing over 140,000 barrels of whale oil. With kayaks we got the chance to do a downwind session paddling from the north to the south of Whalers Bay, observing all the remains of the history in the bay and whaling activities. We finished by jumping in the Zodiacs and having some time to visit the landing site.





Paddling Log

Kayak Guides: Eloisa Berrier, Ivan Klochkov, Rob Barth, Pablo Passera, Eduardo Larrañaga

Number of Paddlers: 8

Total Paddle Outings: 3

Total Distance Paddled: 10.3 km

Paddlers:	Tamara Rath	Stefanie Bair
Robert Billington	Steven Rath	Marc Israel
Patricia Billington	Steven Blair	Elisa Yu

18/02/2024, PM: Cuverville Island. Distance: 3 km

It was the first outing for the paddling team in our expedition! We towed our kayaks to the Eastern side of Cuverville Island and started paddling from there. While we were loading into the kayaks, we observed humpback whales right next to our Zodiac, floating peacefully right on the surface – what a wonderful start! We began with a short introduction to the basic paddling strokes and got familiar with the kayaks, practised some steering techniques. Once everyone started to feel confident enough, we started to work our way to the northern part of the island, paddling along its beautiful coastline. Some cliffs were surprisingly green and colourful, and at some point, we saw that some parts of the island are just carpeted with hundreds of gentoo penguins – it was so fascinating to observe them from the water! We finished our paddle next to the landing side and hopped into Zodiac, which took us to the beach, where we also had a wonderful time!

18/02/2024, PM: Cierva Cove. Primavera station. Distance: 4.5 km

Today, we used the Zodiacs as a launch and ending point with the kayaks.

We navigated in the direction of the Primavera Research Station, from west to east.

It was the second session of the day. Sea conditions were beautiful with some swell, but no wind.

The cove had a lot of icebergs and some brash ice. We paddled close to these areas, but not directly into them.

We saw many groups of penguins in the water, mainly gentoo. We ended the day at the penguin colony on Primavera Station!

18/02/2024, PM: Snow Island. Distance: 2.8 km

This very rarely visited, remote Snow Island, in the Shetlands archipelago, welcomed us with its dramatic landscape.

We embarked our inflatable kayaks next to impressive basaltic formations and once we all were on the water, we paddled along this beautiful coastline for about 45 minutes. While exploring the site, we saw elephant seals for the first time. These are the largest seal species in the world! We were all very impressed with their behaviour and their vocalisations. The rocks on the coastline were covered with colourful lichens and mosses. After observing the elephant seals, we paddled along the huge glacier front. Before hopping back into the Zodiac, we enjoyed the silence of this unique and wild place!



Diving Log

Diving Guides: Edwin Sargeant, Richard Devaney, Thomas Gov

Number of Divers: 10

Total Outings: 8

Divers:

David Lawler

Russell Keenan

Nigel Green

Joan Green

Alvise Calamai

Patrick Trane

Morgane Mahaud

Brian Murphy

Louise McCormack

Branimir Ambrekovic

17/02/2024, AM: Spring Point. Sprightly Island

Check-up dive! Perfect site to faff around figuring out the amount of weight needed in Antarctica. Slowly the routine will set up and the flow will get smoother. The dive goes well, everyone is getting the hang of the water temperature and the necessary gear for it. Some adjustment on regulator setups and layering are needed but overall, the diving group is getting ready for more dives. Did we have a lucky one? Branimir drops his diving computer to 15 metres of depth and no more than a couple of metres' visibility. But thanks to the skill set and the extraordinary experience from our guide Thomas, the computer is recovered.

17/02/2024, PM: Enterprise Island. Foyen Harbour - Governoren wreck

We geared up next to the wreck in overcast conditions, but the rain held off. After the check-out dive this morning, we were all correctly weighted and had no issues with descending next to the wreck.

The wreck itself is much larger than it looks from the surface. We headed towards the stern, gradually getting deeper, until we arrived at the rudder, which was intact at 18 metres. Heading back towards the bow on the port side, there was a lot of life attached to the wreck. As we got shallower, we could see the rocks that grounded the ship. It was very shallow as we passed by the bow. On the starboard side was a small iceberg, which we had a good look at before undertaking our safety stop and ending the dive. A great dive with lots to see.

18/02/2024, AM: Neko Harbour

All the divers had their first landing at Neko Harbour among the gentoo penguins; a few decided to hike up the mountain to the first level and inspect the magnificent views.

We then had our first dive on an iceberg around the brash ice and in the middle of the bay. Conditions were as good as they get, with air temp at 3°Celsius and water temp at a balmy -1°Celsius with absolutely no wind and the sun making its first appearance since we left Ushuaia.

Everyone is getting into the swing of things and with dive operations now getting easier, we are now able to enjoy these magical locations and all they have to offer!

18/02/2024, PM: Cuverville Island

After landing into a gentoo penguin colony we went to dive on the shallow water of the bay, aiming to come up following the bottom towards the place where the penguins are going in and out of the water. Decent-sized icebergs are floating around us, and the bottom is covered with krill and other small marine life. Arriving to the penguin shore (for most of us), it is hard to spot such agile and fast swimmers, but it has been a success for some.

19/02/2024, AM: Petermann Island

After heading out from the ship, we did a brief landing so we could visit the gentoo penguin colony. Then we drove around the island until we reached a canyon. It was a little choppy en route, but inside the canyon was sheltered. We geared up, rolled backwards into the water and began the dive. We followed the wall on our right-hand side, and reached the maximum depth of 20 metres. The visibility was approximately 15 metres, which enabled us to just about see the bottom. The wall was teeming with kelp and starfish, and we saw a few large nudibranchs and limpets. We reached our safety stop just before the end of the canyon and surfaced to see the nearby surface support Zodiac come to pick us up. A very interesting dive, with a water temperature of 0.5 degrees Celsius.

19/02/2024, PM: Pléneau Island

Pléneau started off as a Zodiac cruise and we spotted a friendly leopard seal, who curiously circled the Zodiac for about 30 minutes, playfully and inquisitively spy-hopping and resting on top of the water. Brian decided it would be a good idea to fasten his go-pro camera to the Zodiac oar so that he could get it under water without losing his hand! This, whilst at first seemed comical, turned out to be the best-worst idea of the trip, enabling him to capture some incredible footage of the playful seal underwater!

Once the interaction had finished, we went to the landing site on the other side of the island and cruised amongst the giant icebergs before conducting our dive operations in a shallow shoal closer to the ship. This turned out to be one of our best days out of the trip so far!

20/02/2024, AM: Portal Point

The landing at the spectacular Portal Point, where the British used to start their trip south back in the 1950s, was very enjoyable. We are the first ones of the day to step on this shore, which surprised even the few fur seals resting on the rocks. We headed north and found a shallow bay to have the first dive of the day. A non-healthy-looking chinstrap penguin is witnessing our backrolls into the water. A nice rocky bottom filled with kelp and small critters such as limpets and isopods.

20/02/2024, PM: Cierva Cove

The initial plan was to do a short Zodiac cruise, but we got a little carried away after seeing a large leopard seal sleeping on an iceberg. We watched it for a few minutes, until in the distance we saw whales blowing, so we headed in their direction. It didn't take long to catch up with them. Initially it was two humpback whales idly feeding. Then they dived, and we saw another two whales that seemed to be sleeping on the surface. We watched them for around 10 minutes, before deciding to find a suitable iceberg to do our final dive. We were quite short on time, and agreed to make it a fairly short dive. After gearing up quickly, we all jumped in and posed in front of the chosen iceberg for a group photo. Then we descended and spent the next 15 minutes circling the iceberg. The visibility was probably the best we've had on the entire trip. Not surprising, considering the depth at this location was around 150 metres. After surfacing, and climbing back aboard the Zodiac, we navigated our way back to the ship. A lot of brash ice had built up whilst we were diving, which meant that we had to find a suitable route through it. The Zodiacs are very sturdy in this kind of environment. A great final dive in Antarctica!



to Ushuaia

Antarctic Explorer

13 February – 23, 2024





Expeditioners:

Peter Adams	Peter Collen	Mickey Holland	Louise Mc Cormack	Bart Rutten
Barbara Alexander	Dione Cowell	Greg Hope	Nia Merriman	Sue Salisbury
Branimir Ambrekovic	Emily Cross	Sharon Hope	Greg Miller	Mariah Schlanger
Steven Bair	Judith Cruickshank	Wenjin Huang	Hing Ying Mok	Marion Searle
Stefanie Bair	Ashley De Souza	Mark Israel	Hing Mok	Jie Shen
Julie Balogh	Ericka De Souza	Bec Johnston	Bill Mountford	Lingzhen Shen
Dan Bell	Eduardo De Souza	Russell Keenan	Brian Murphy	Dennis Stalker
Sarah Billington	Meg Donnelly	Elle Klein	John Natoli	Nakul Toshniwal
Patrick Billington	Tony Donnelly	Cynthia Knies	Pete Newman	Rachna Toshniwal
Pat Billington	Maria Emery	Alfred Knies III	Kate Olson	Patrick Trane
Bob Billington	Anthony Emery	Timothy Kotsis	Julia Pullen	Ross Vaughan Jr
Steven Birenbaum	Krista Fazackerley	Annetta Kuntz	Yingying Qi	Jiayao Wang
Anne Bown	Brad Ferguson	Wai Hung Kwong	Steve Rath	Yizhi Wang
Jackie Bryant	Marianne Gill	David Lawlor	Tam Rath	Jue Wang
Philip Bryant	Robert Gill	Trish Lawrence	Stacy Richards	Donna Warner
Frank Bunnik	Linda Gray	Debbie Leavens	Malcom Richards	Anna Webster
Summer Bunnik	Nigel Green	John Leavens	Jann Robertson	Brad West
Sacha Bunnik	Joan Green	Flora LeBlanc	Gary Robertson	Steven West
Sandra Cain	Xi Gu	Teresa Leung	Marion Roelvink	Paul Willis
Colin Cain	Shanmu Gu	Xiao Lin	Anne Rohrer	Yim Wong
Alvise Calamai	Colin Henke	Tony Long	Marcus Rose	Diane Wowk
Jennipher Card	Karen Henke	Rosemary Lopez	Yola Rose	Steve Wowk
Peter Collen	Verity Hodges	Jesse Lowe	Devin Rudnicki	
Pamela Collen	Leon Hodges	Morgane Mahaud	Tiffany Rusin	



Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Assistant Expedition Leader: Daniel Stavert

Onboard Expedition Manager: Anne Oeyasaeter

Glaciologist: Gaby Pilson

Naturalist / Citizen Science Coordinator: Tracey Ann Hooley

Naturalist: Hans Bruning

Marine Biologist: Annette Scheffer

Mandarin Speaking Guide: Zhongyuan Chen

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

Dive Team Leader: Edwin Sargeant

Dive Guide: Thomas Gov

Dive Guide: Richard Devanny

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

Deck Cadet: Giuseppe Guidice

Photography thanks to:

Adrian Wlodarczyk

