

Deep Weddell following Nordenskjöld

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 25 March–6 April 2024



Ushuaia

DAY 1 | Monday 25 March 2024

Position at 0700

Latitude: 54°52.05'S

Longitude: 067°59.2'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: Variable

Barometer: 1012 hPa

Air Temp: 11°C

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

We stepped off the catamaran into the chilly wind and a little rain of an Ushuaian autumn, but the warm *Sylvia Earle* awaited us with a welcome spread of drinks and snacks. With everyone checked in, Elena (Assistant Expedition Leader) announced that we would be casting our lines and leaving the dock. Many of us gathered out on deck to witness this occasion, which marks the beginning of our adventure!

Once underway, we met our Expedition Leader, Ashley, in the lecture theatre, and were introduced to a few of our Expedition Team. There are 18 'E-Team' in total, with various specialties including: ornithology, marine biology, geology, glaciology, photography, history, medicine, kayaking, snorkelling, mountaineering, mountain rescue, and SCUBA diving. In addition to our E-Team, we have 84 wonderful ship's crew, from all corners of the world, here to look after everything from your cocktail order to the engines of the ship.

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

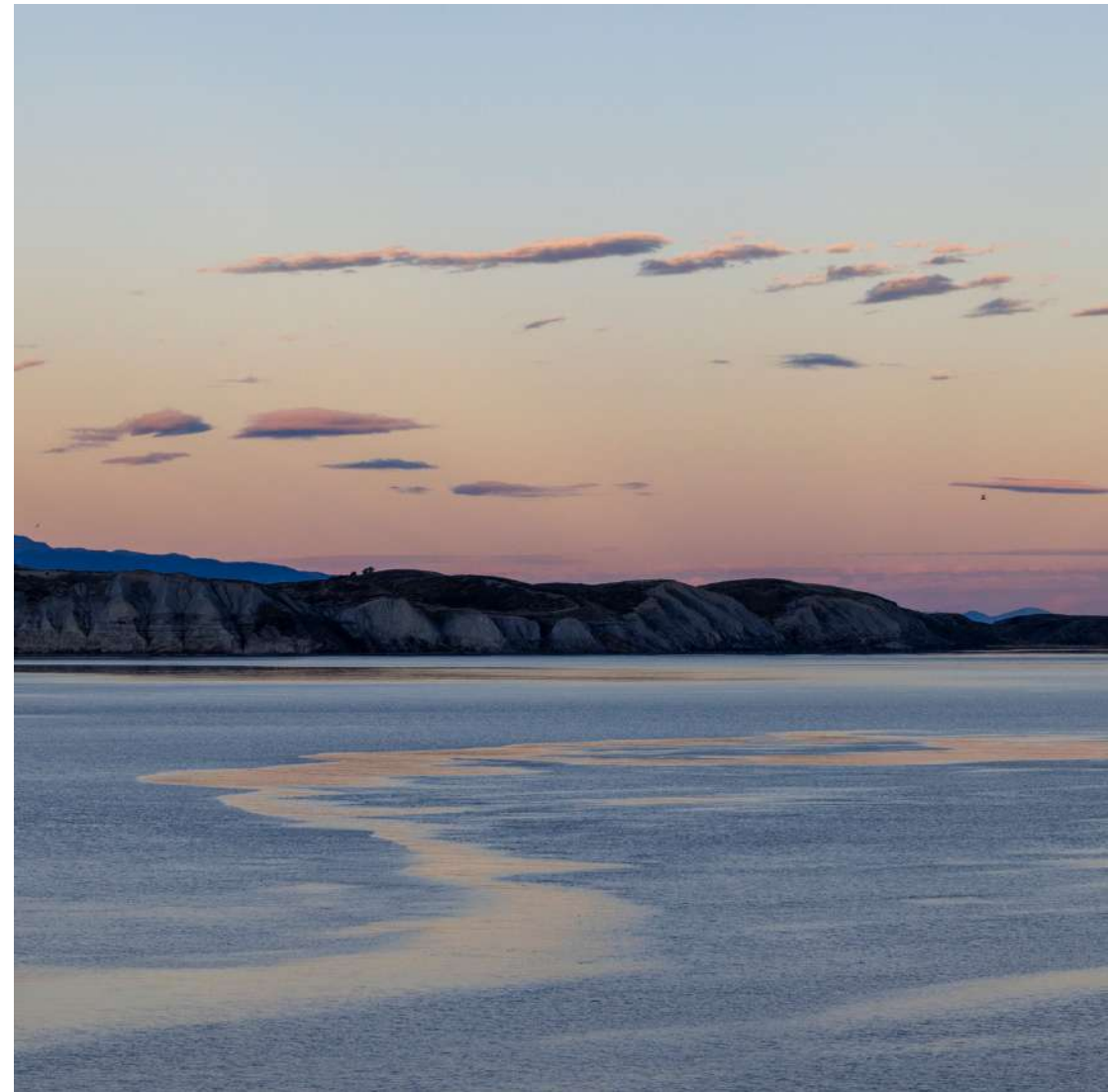
The sound of seven short, one long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes, grab our bulky orange lifejackets and gather at the muster station to sample our safety gear. Our safety officers and crew guided us up to the lifeboats to get us familiar with their whereabouts. Once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

We total 89 Expeditioners from all over the world including Australia, Italy, Canada, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, China, UK, USA, and Mexico.

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

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

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



At Sea & Crossing the Drake Passage

DAY 2 | Tuesday 27 March 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 56°25.3'S

Longitude: 064°02.1'W

Course: 134

Speed: 14 kts

Wind Speed: NW Force 4

Barometer: 994 hPa

Air Temp: 10°C

We all gathered in Ushuaia, for reasons unique,
But a common location was what we did seek;
A magical land, soon would be unfurled,
Yet it already felt like we were at the bottom of the world.

Beginning in the Beagle, we cruised the channel to its mouth,
Headed for Antarctica, we were on our way south;
Day One at sea, as we entered the Drake,
We'd be forgiven for thinking that this was a lake;

With a following sea and indiscernible swell,
Everyone was out and about, all feeling quite well.
We had entertainment with lectures from some E-Team staff,
Peter and Linda with a seabird 'duet', each taking a half;

Marcos convinced us that rocks really are cool,
And Ben's lecture on history plunged us into old school;
To a time of flat earth, the globe in its early creation,
Of (possible) first inhabitants and then European navigation.

Sprinkled amongst this were fit-outs and briefings for some,
Who've signed up for an activity of water-based fun;
Citizen Science programs began with a bird survey session,
And yes, having one's head in the clouds can be a profession.

On board guest Saunders gave a final presentation,
About Shackleton's *Endurance* – a story sensation;
And if our passage continues to be mellow and mild,
Tomorrow we may find ourselves not far from Point Wild;

However, our expedition is in the footsteps of another explorer,
Although Ashley's ice charts are looking full-up before her...
With wind direction and pack ice not as we'd like them to be,
A question mark hangs over accessing the Weddell Sea;

Yes, we'd love to make it happen and we'll be doing our best,
But Mother Nature's in charge, and down here we're her guest;

So how far we can follow in the footsteps of our man?
Nordenskjöld, that is, as we keep tweaking the plan;

With each day that begins, so too things will change,
But a memorable adventure? Now this we can arrange;

So keep an open mind and a spirit of wonder,
As we all journey forth into this icy land down under.

Kia Kaha and Happy Adventures,
Jane... in the rain again.



At Sea, Point Wild & Elephant Island

DAY 3 | Wednesday 27 March 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 60°19.5'S

Longitude: 055°12.0'W

Course: 134

Speed: 14 knots

Wind Speed: W Force 5

Barometer: 983 hPa

Air Temp: 5°C

We woke up to find ourselves rolling along under cloudy skies, and a new sharpness in the air tells us that we are in Antarctica. The craggy north coast of Elephant Island starts to loom out of the sea-mist, as we head for the iconic and appropriately named Point Wild. Surveying the intimidating coastline, we appreciate anew the suffering of the men of the *Endurance* as they made their way out of the ice of the Weddell Sea in those three tiny boats 108 years ago. The Captain and bridge team do an amazing job to bring the ship in close to the western side of Point Wild, where we can get a good view of the site underneath the towering cliffs where Shackleton's men set up camp while awaiting rescue in the winter of 1916. We can also see the Chilean memorial to Captain Pardo, whose ship the *Yelcho* finally rescued the men from Elephant Island after their 138 days of survival. The Captain repositions the ship to the eastern side of the point, and here we witness the skill entailed in this type of close-in manoeuvring of the ship. Katabatic winds start to drop off the 500-metre-high mountain tops above us, adding to the difficult conditions of a rising sea and running onto reefs and rock outcrops in the sea. Soon we are executing a sharp U-turn and pulling away, heading out to sea with a greater appreciation of why the *Endurance* men called it 'Hell-of-an' Island.

As we round Cape Valentine and enter the passage between Clarence and Elephant Islands, we have an extraordinary encounter with the wildlife. Literally thousands of penguins and hundreds of whales are rushing through the water, gorging themselves on the millions of krill that have appeared here, probably the tail end of a massive krill swarm that we later see a satellite image of in our recap. This was jaw-dropping in its intensity as fin and humpback whales spouted and lunged all around the ship, accompanied by battalions of chinstrap penguins leaping across the sea. As we headed across Bransfield Strait towards the Weddell Sea, the sea picked up considerably, but we nonetheless gathered for our mandatory IAATO, biosecurity and Zodiac briefings, and made our acquaintance with the mudroom to fit our Muck Boots. Late in the afternoon, and with some powerful swell reminding us of the power of the Southern Ocean, Marcos and Ben took us through the drama and history of the Nordenskjöld Swedish South Polar Expedition, which did an enormous amount of important geological and geographical exploration in the Weddell Sea area in 1902 and 1903. In our daily briefing, Ashley showed us 'The Chinese Dragon' of weather fronts rolling across our region, shaping the possibilities ahead of us over the Easter weekend.





At Sea & Paulet Island

DAY 4 | Thursday 28 March 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 63°27.0'S

Longitude: 056°31.5'W

Course: Various

Speed: Various

Wind Speed: N Force 6

Barometer: 989 hPa

Air Temp: -2°C

Barbara woke us with classical music and welcomed us into the Weddell Sea. As we ate breakfast, Ashley and the bridge team monitored the wind and ice conditions on our approach to Paulet Island. Would this morning be our first landing? The wind and ice soon answered that question; they were not in favour of us setting foot on land, and with that we cannot argue. So, as always, we have a 'plan B'. Captain navigated us to the edge of the sea ice, where we watched crabeater seals, snow petrels and kelp gulls among this blue and white city of icebergs. The dark, volcanic Paulet Island loomed in front of us, and we got a glimpse of the stone hut built by survivors of the wrecked vessel *Antarctic*.

We got a taste (literally) of early Antarctic exploration, as Barbara taught us how to make pemmican – as close as we could get to the original survival food (with a veggie option too!). History came to life inside our very own version of Paulet Hut, constructed inside our empty swimming pool. We gathered inside 'Pool-et Hut' for a storytelling by Ben, completely in character with sooty face and a replica vintage balaclava, and a serving of warm 'hoosh'.

Our ship cruising continued with a trip into Hope Bay, where we were treated to more humpback whale sightings before lunch.

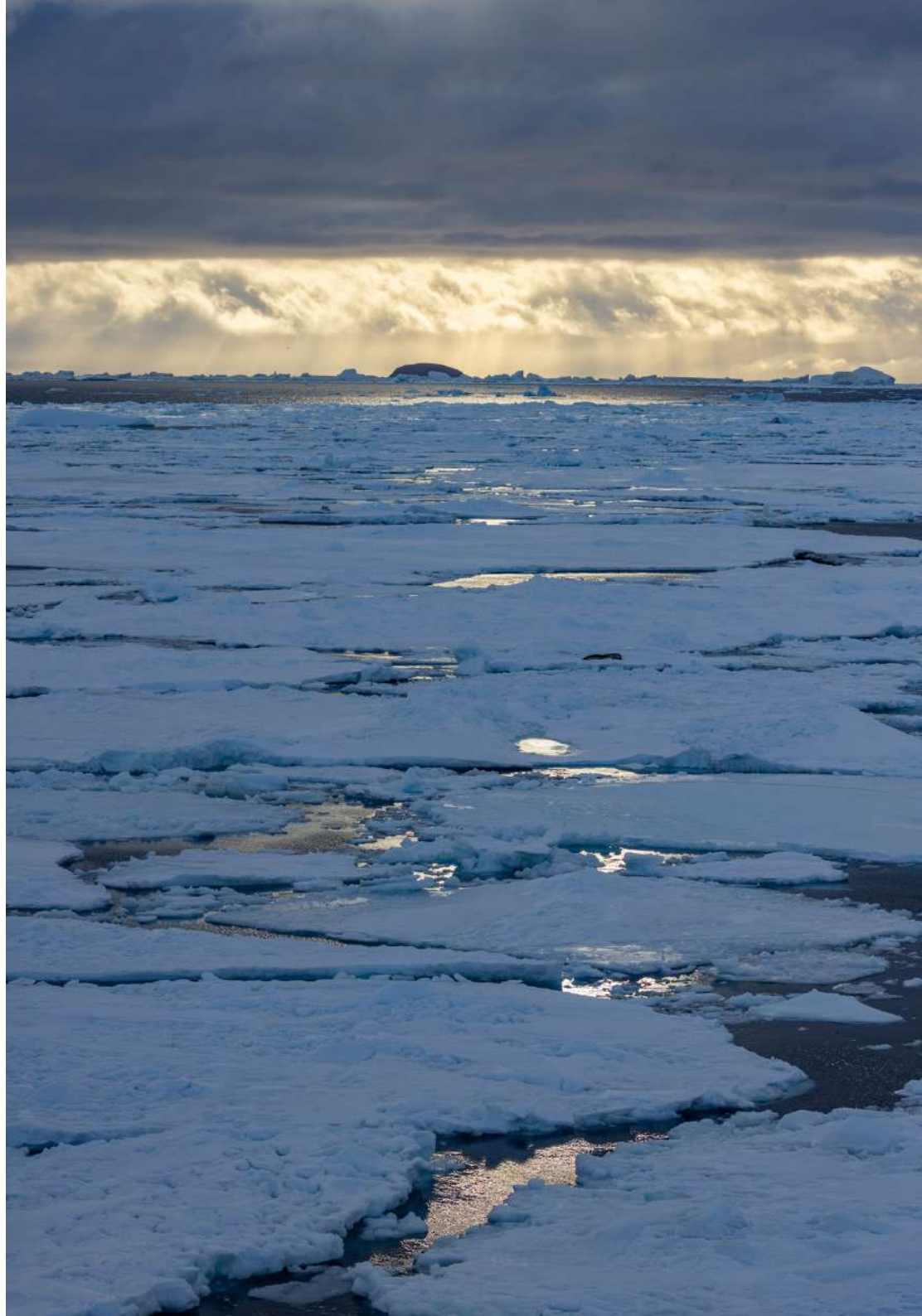
Scott then taught us about the amazing photography features of our smart phones, and some handy tricks like turning the phone upside down instead of squatting, and turning the grid on to get a straight horizon and improve composition.

Marcos and Nicole had an impressive turnout for our 'Happywhale' workshop, where we learned about how we can contribute to marine mammal conservation through our photographs (keep your cameras ready!). The cool thing about this project, is that it has already informed real change, such as a voluntary 10-knot speed limit in the Gerlache Strait, to reduce boat strikes on whales.

There was no time to rest today; it was straight to an eBird survey, and then to recap. Heather brought to us the global significance of sea ice, Marcos introduced us to Deception Island, and Ben recounted the whaling history of this incredible active volcano. Ashley gave a summary of the weather and ice factors at play, which are controlling our every move on this expedition.

Finally, our Antarctic ambassadors alerted us to the presence of a legal krill fishing fleet within view, and within whale feeding grounds. It gave us important food for thought: whales cannot live without krill, but humans can.





Deception Island, Telefon Bay & Whalers Bay

DAY 5 | Friday 29 March 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 63°02.7'S

Longitude: 050°09.4'W

Course: 130

Speed: 5 knots

Wind Speed: SE Force 5

Barometer: 983 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

The entrance to Neptune's Bellows was in sight as the ship prepared for a tight manoeuvre, literally between a submerged rock and a hard place. But we were confident the Captain could thread the needle, so to speak. Whale blows in all directions as the sun rose over the horizon. A great way to start the day.

An active volcano; who would have thought this is what a voyage to Antarctica would entail?

As we trek across the volcanic terrain to the edge of a crater, a sense of isolation and unnerving quiet came over the landscape. This place resembled a cold, barren moon more than an earthly landscape. As we peered over the edge, the crater walls dropped below us, glacial run-off frozen in time creating intricate, abstract patterns. The path heading higher up the ridge line to a viewpoint revealed the beauty of this sleeping giant. The landscape was shrouded in a fresh layer of snow, resembling a fine art drawing.

In an instant, the skies opened, and the clouds dissolved under a polar sun, increasingly brighter at each moment. The caldera lit up with earthly colours, ageing ruins, and life emerging from its slumber. Seals began to make their presence known and the odd penguin walked along the shoreline, and skuas and gulls flew across the whaling station. We had arrived at Whalers Bay. Filled with history and an era almost forgotten, remnants of the whaling days were present all around. What was day-to-day life like at Whalers Bay; a cold uninviting rocky outpost, or a thriving settlement?

The steam rising from the shoreline and the structures slowly being consumed by the volcanic landscape had an eerie feel to it as we left the rusty metal and windswept wood debris behind. The clear sight of volcanic activity and the knowledge that the last big eruption was in 1970 brought these thoughts to mind. But back to our 'safe haven' we went.

We finished the day with Marcos and Peter in the Citizen Science lab showing us the multifaceted views of diatoms under the microscope. Explaining their importance in the food chain, and for the survival of all species on this blue planet was enlightening to say the least.

History, science, photography, wildlife, and nature all wrapped up into something we like to call an expedition. Tomorrow brings another exciting day.





Recess Cove & Palaver Point

DAY 6 | Saturday 30 March 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64°04.2'S

Longitude: 061°48.1'W

Course: Variable

Speed: 4.8 knots

Wind Speed: E Force 4

Barometer: 979 hPa

Air Temp: 2°C

The adventure felt real this morning as we awoke from slumbers that may have been accompanied by the scraping of Antarctic sea ice along the hull of the ship. We rested in comfort knowing that the *Sylvia Earle* is designed for these types of conditions, but also with the thrill of excitement that came from this tangible reminder of our location in one of the most remote places on the planet.

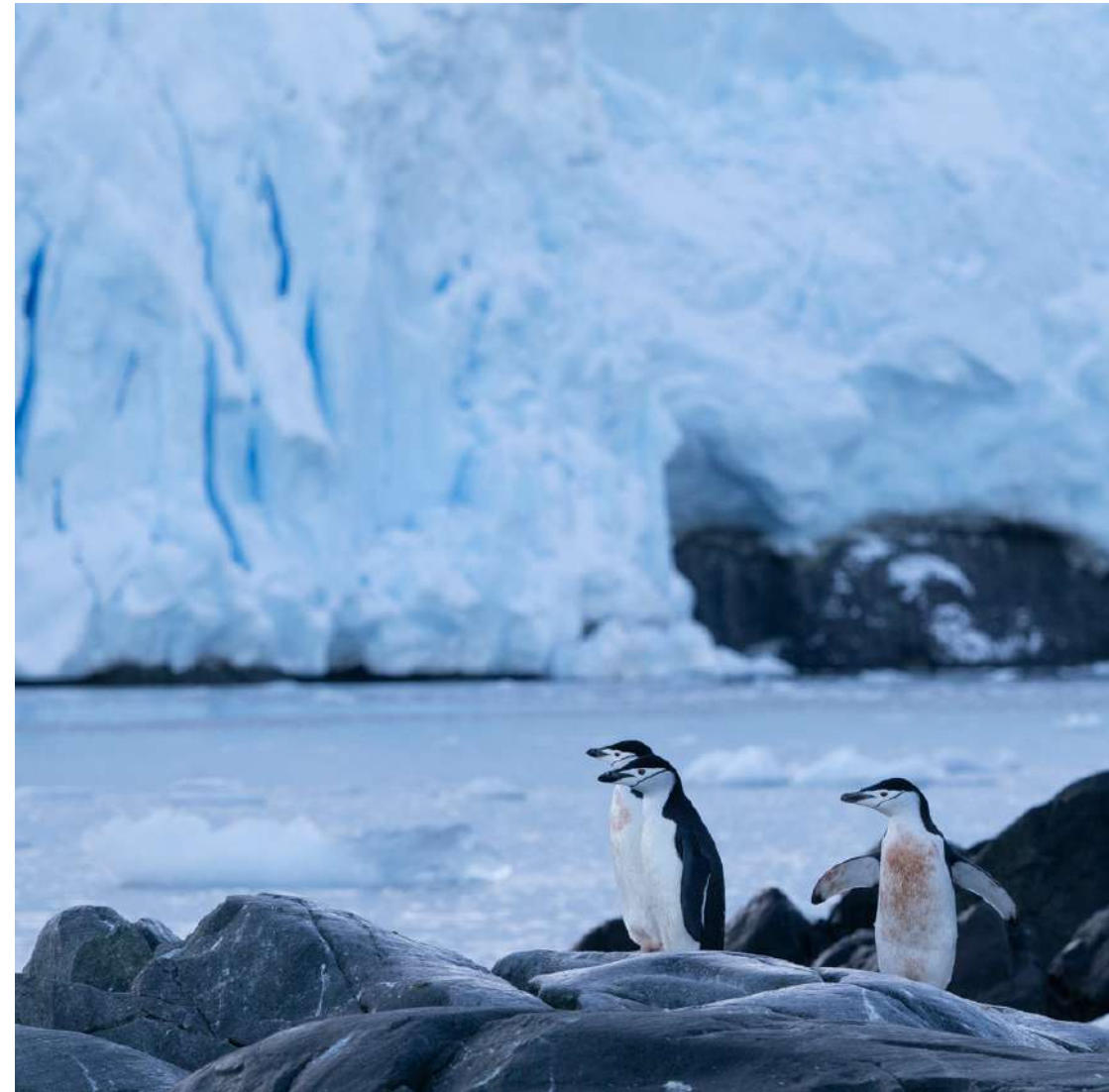
The day dawned with the promise of calm weather, at least in our well-chosen location. Palaver Point was our landing for the morning, and it positively bustled with chinstrap penguins and feisty fur seals. Many of us made a pilgrimage to the highest point, where the expansive view was awe inspiring. Out on the water the kayakers, snorkellers and divers enjoyed good conditions, and the divers even reported seeing the wonderful krill, lynchpin of the Antarctic marine ecosystem, in good numbers below the surface.

After a delicious lunch back on board we headed out again, this time for a Zodiac cruise and short mainland landing at Recess Cove. Conditions could not have been better, with golden light cascading softly down in a way only possible at the higher latitudes of our planet. With Zen Zodiacs and Citizen Science well under way, many of us were treated to sightings of majestic humpback whales, who were evidently enjoying the afternoon just as much as we were. Active feeding behaviours among the brash ice and bergy bits were witnessed from many Zodiacs, and even from the ship.

On shore, we celebrated our first, and possibly only, opportunity to stand on the mainland of the Antarctic Peninsula. We turned our gazes to the towering glacier fronts and high peaks around, and soaked up these wonderful polar moments.

The fun did not end back at the ship, as we embraced the clement conditions and geared up for the long-awaited polar plunge. A total of 27 brave souls bared not-quite-all and leaped into the icy seas, emerging invigorated and 'refreshed'. With all fingers and toes accounted for, it was time to fill up the sauna then troop down to recap, making an Easter cookie on the way.

All in all, this was an Antarctic adventure day to remember, and one that will stay in our pictures and memories for years to come.





Polar Plunge

DAY 6 | Saturday 30 March 2024











Damoy Point | Peltier & Lemaire Channel

DAY 7 | Sunday 31 March 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64°42.0'S

Longitude: 063°01.1'W

Course: Various

Speed: 4.5 knots

Wind Speed: NE Force 5

Barometer: 972 hPa

Air Temp: 1°C

While the Captain and his bridge team were navigating through ice and snow in the Neumayer Channel, we all woke up to another beautiful day in Antarctica. Happy Easter!

We started with navigating our Zodiacs through brash ice towards Damoy Point. There was a lot of it and our Zodiacs really had to push hard. We even needed Freya and Elena in the frigid water to help the Zodiacs through the ice at the landing site, speaking of girlpower! Once ashore, we stepped into history at Damoy Hut. Built in 1975 by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and used as a transit station for BAS staff, stores had to be flown south from the skiway on the glacier above the hut to Rothera Research Station when sea ice prevented access by ship. We also got to enjoy the gentoo penguins waddling ashore.

But that was not the only adventure! While some of us went back to the comforts of our ship, most of us stayed in the Zodiacs cruising towards Port Lockroy and Jougla Point, where we got to observe more gentoo penguins, some Weddell seals and old whale bones. Whether it was from the ship, in a Zodiac, a kayak or in a drysuit in the icy waters, the wildlife and views were spectacular. And for those who still had not had enough, we continued to explore through the Peltier Channel on an Easter egg hunt!

Content with all these new experiences and memories, but frozen to the bones, we went back to the ship for another adventure: the BBQ. Surrounded by stunning views we enjoyed some fine culinary BBQ cuisine, and silly hats, out on the decks.

In the afternoon, the ship glided through the crystalline waters of the Lemaire Channel. We gazed at the towering mountains and the glaciers with their ancient blue crevices. But we were soon distracted when humpback whales emerged from the depths. They were very active, waving their pectoral fins up in the air, spy-hopping, lunging, and showing us their flukes before diving to the depths again. Utterly majestic and otherworldly. At the end of the Lemaire Channel, the Captain easily manoeuvred the ship around and we got to enjoy it all over again.

As we sailed back north, we enjoyed a fine dialogue with our Antarctic ambassadorship team, reflecting on some of the challenges Antarctica faces. And at recap we learned some very interesting facts on whale barnacles and antarctic mosses.

We had a lot to talk about during dinner, as it was yet another spectacular day in Antarctica!





Paradise Harbour, Brown Station & Bulls Bay

DAY 8 | Monday 1 April 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64° 47.7'S

Longitude: 063° 08.5'W

Course: Various

Speed: 6 knots

Wind Speed: Variable

Barometer: 975 hPa

Air Temp: 0°C

Having breakfast during sunrise has become a nice custom. As we got to Paradise Bay, we could see why they called it that; the glacier scenery was amazing, the water was calm and fortunately, ice did not cover our destination.

The small Argentinean Brown Station was on the side of a big ice shelf. The station reminds us what we human beings are willing to do to go back home, for love, even when in the future it may not work.

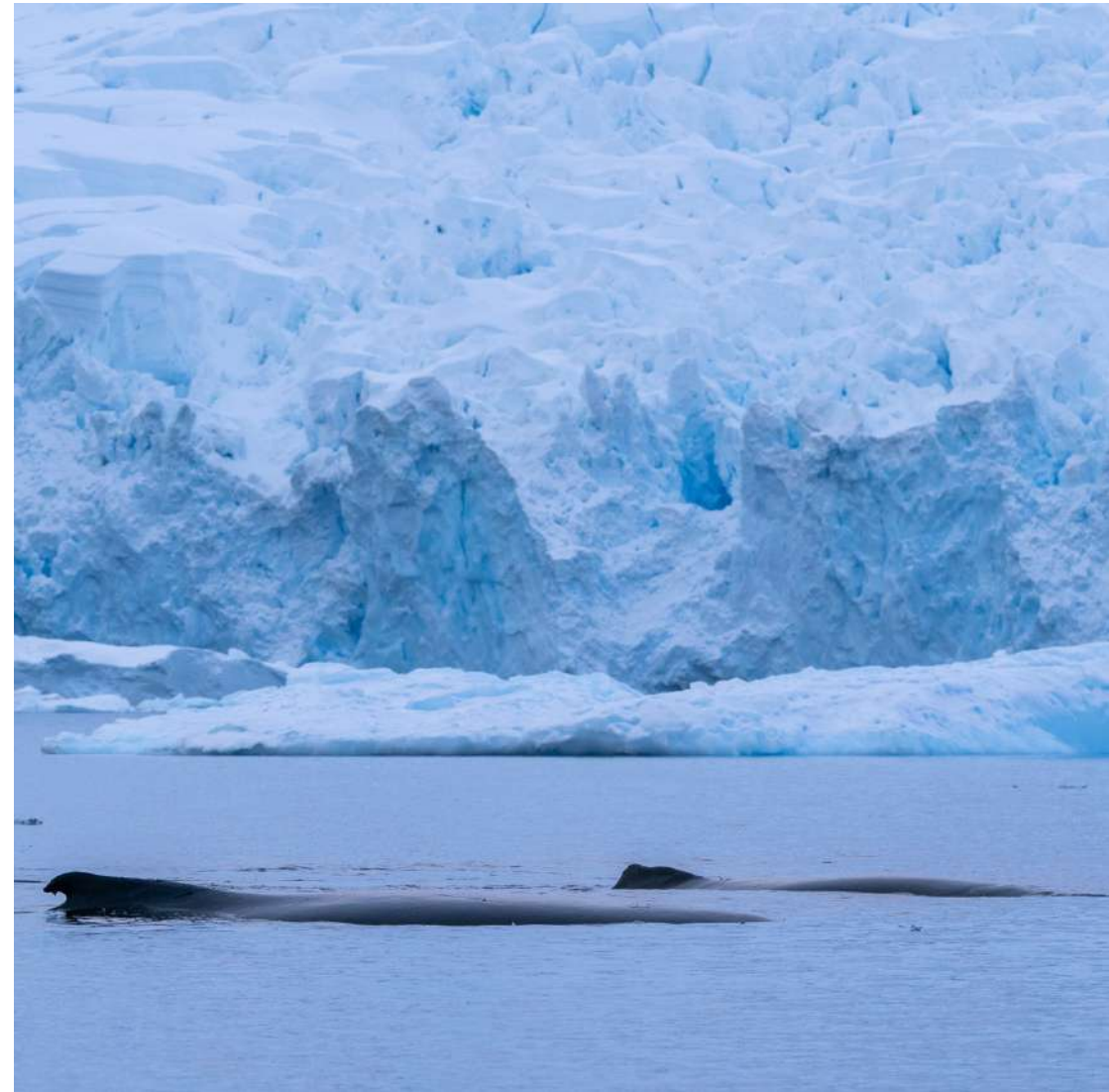
There we were on our Zodiac with its amazing E-Team who, took us for exploration in the vicinities of the station, around Skontorp Cove with the immense and dramatic glacier. Even, out of the blue, we could land and visit a little bit of the surrounds of the base. Some of us took the Zen Zodiac with Ben; others the Antarctic Ambassador Zodiac with Nicole and others did some Citizen Science with Marcos. In front of the Shag Wall, divers were diving and snorkellers were swimming, exploring the depths of the icy waters and encountering unique marine life. The crystal-clear waters provided a surreal experience, showcasing the beauty and diversity of the underwater world.

The kayaking team had a beautiful adventure. Gliding through the calm waters surrounded by towering glaciers and majestic icebergs was a truly awe-inspiring experience. The tranquility of the bay, coupled with the breathtaking scenery, made kayaking a memorable highlight of the day.

After lunch, Saunders told us about his expedition looking for *Endurance* in the Weddell Sea; what a great adventure! Later, we prepared to do a ship cruise by Bulls Bay, but the fog was rolling in and giving us a truly Antarctic experience. Anyways some of us were there up on deck 8 watching and looking for orca, without luck, but we had a nice time together.

Peter and Marcos hosted a fascinating workshop on phytoplankton, shedding light on the crucial role these microscopic marine organisms play in the Antarctic ecosystem. We learned about the diversity of phytoplankton species, their importance as the base of the marine food chain, and their role in carbon sequestration and oxygen production. We could play with the microscopes, see some samples, and identify some species.

Scott gave us a lecture about photo composition, enhancing our photography skills and capturing the stunning Antarctic landscapes with artistry and creativity. The lecture covered fundamental principles of composition, such as the rule of thirds, leading lines, symmetry, and perspective, providing practical tips for framing compelling shots.





Hannah Point, Livingston Island & Half Moon Island

DAY 9 | Tuesday 2 April 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 62°44.7'S

Longitude: 060°33.8'W

Course: 340°

Speed: 4.8 knots

Wind Speed: SW Force 4

Barometer: 972 hPa

Air Temp: 0°C

The day dawned under clearing skies and gentler seas than the previous evening. We were bound for Hannah Point on Livingston Island. The name Livingston has been in use since the 1820s, but it's unknown from whence it arose, although it can't be after the famous Dr Livingstone, who was famously greeted by Stanley much later in 1871. Hannah Point's derivation, on the other hand, is known. The *Hannah* was a whaling vessel in the 1820s, the period when sealers descended on the South Shetlands and the other subantarctic islands, killing approximately 7 million seals in just a few years, 1 million of those in the South Shetlands. Most austral seal species' populations have recovered to the point where they are no longer considered endangered, although some populations after decades of recovery again seem to be in decline for unknown reasons. Hannah Point was still quite flush with post-breeding and moulting gentoo penguins, and a few chinstraps, although the few macaronis who breed there must have been wearing their invisibility cloaks. There were a few southern giant petrel chicks still looking fluffy. But the stars of the show were the moribund, moulting *Mirounga* (elephant seals). It is thought the genus name *Mirounga* is derived from the Australian Aboriginal word for seal, *miouroung*. The biggest attraction (literally) was the massive, battle-scarred male recovering from an undoubtedly busy mating season, as Linda described during recap. She provided us with a new vision for 'beachmaster.' On the *Sylvia Earle*, our beachmasters are female! At the other end of the beach, Marcos was describing the fossil plants, showing evidence that forests cloaked the region 40 million years ago. The snorkellers were pioneering a new snorkel area and the divers were finding examples of polar giants.

After another wonderful lunch, we sat down to a post-lunch recap and an auction of the book describing the discovery of the *Endurance*, which, due to your generosity, raised \$500 for the crew fund; Thank you! The crew on this ship are amazing and work incredibly hard for all of us. The sun peeked through the clouds as we pulled into the sheltered waters of aptly named Half Moon Island. The island provided us with thousands of steps of free roaming. Four species of seal were seen by various groups – elephant, gur, Weddell and a crabeater. We were able to explore Camara Station and watch the gentoos frolic off the beach, some even doing the backstroke. As the afternoon progressed, the everchanging light on the glacier mesmerised many of us. The kayakers returned to the ship, some in a state of subdued euphoria (and they had not even licked a pyrosome). The evening's sunset over Half Moon Island continued the light show, exploding into trails of red, orange, pink and yellow, providing a fitting end to another spectacular day!





Edinburgh Hill & Drake Passage

DAY 10 | Wednesday 3 April 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 62°35.4'S

Longitude: 059°59.2'W

Course: Anchored

Speed: Anchored

Wind Speed: N Force 5

Barometer: 978 hPa

Air Temp: 5°C

One last Antarctic adventure.

As the first rays of sunlight appeared, we awoke aboard our *Sylvia Earle*, with a tinge of nostalgia tugging at our hearts. Today marks one of the culminations of our Antarctic voyage—a final chance to immerse ourselves in the wonders of this pristine wilderness.

Our destination for the day was nothing short of spectacular: Edinburgh Hill, a breathtaking volcanic plug rising proudly from the sea in the eastern edge of Livingston Island. Its sheer cliffs, adorned with majestic hexagonal basalt columns, stand as a testament to the raw power of nature's craftsmanship. This geological structure occurs in many types of igneous rocks, as the lava cools down and contracts, forming uniform and evenly distributed cracks.

Setting out on our fleet of Zodiacs, we embarked on an unforgettable exploration around this place. Some of us seized the opportunity to snorkel, dive, and kayak in these ice waters, surrounded by the towering glaciers nearby.

Returning to the ship, we were greeted by a sense of nostalgia as we realised this was our last outing. But the adventure was far from over. After indulging in a delicious lunch, we eagerly anticipated the packed afternoon that lay ahead.

Gathering in the ship's lounge, we were treated to an enlightening presentation by Ashley, delving deep into the inner workings of our vessel, the *Sylvia Earle*. From propulsion systems to navigation controls, we gained a newfound appreciation for the engineering marvel that had carried us safely through the icy Antarctic waters.

Minutes later, we enthusiastically participated in our daily Citizen Science contributions—a seabird survey and cloud observation—providing valuable data for ongoing research projects. Our efforts add in time to the collective understanding of this ecosystem.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was undoubtedly the much-anticipated bridge tours. Ascending to the nerve centre of our vessel, we marvelled at the intricate instrumentation and advanced technology that guided us through the infamous Drake Passage.

As evening approached, we gathered in the lecture theatre for our onboard tradition: the daily recap and briefing. The Expedition Team provided invaluable insights and updates, preparing us for the adventures that awaited us on the morrow.

With a brief respite before dinner, we settled in for Part 2 of Shackleton's Movie, captivated by the tale of Antarctic exploration and human endurance. As the credits rolled, we retired to our cabins, hearts brimming with cherished memories and minds enriched by new experiences.

As we drifted off to sleep, the echo of the voyage's adventures lingered in our minds, mingling with the anticipation of the journeys yet to come. Until tomorrow, Expeditioners.





Drake Passage

DAY 11 | Thursday 4 April 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 58°41.8'S

Longitude: 61°53.0'W

Course: 337°

Speed: 14 knots

Wind Speed: SW Force 3

Barometer: 975 hPa

Air Temp: 5°C

We had the chance to sleep in this morning as we were at sea, but then we got a glimpse of the sunrise, and we were wide awake. Many had rising around 7am to see a beautiful orange glow appearing in the east, over a smooth and gentle Drake Passage.

Although no outings today, we still had plenty of things happening on board.

Peter enlightened us about those gentle giants that we had seen so much of. A fascinating insight into the life, death, and exciting times of whales.

A group of the housekeeping team held a towel-folding workshop this morning. It was fun and a little tricky for us novices to try to create the cute animals that they seemed to make so easily with the different-sized towels.

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

Peter, Linda, and a keen team, headed up on deck to conduct a final eBird survey. They were rewarded with sightings of prions, petrels and the many types of albatross including a rare sooty one.

Marcos had a survey as well, but the subject was a bit more stationary: clouds. They were easier to spot, and the information we gathered would assist NASA with its satellite imagery of this area. It was our little input into the planet's meteorological data.

Heather informed us with the wonderful world of biology in Antarctica. From the smallest of lichens to grasses and mosses, Heather entertained us with the life found on the Antarctic continent. It is tough flora that can survive down there.

Throughout the afternoon, the sea started to develop some bigger waves and we could see that this might be the edge of the bad weather we were outrunning. The ship had been going at a good speed all day to get us across the passage safely.

Tonight, we had a Captain's Farewell, a final goodbye from the bridge team and our wonderful voyage slide show. The photos captured so much of the beauty and majesty we had experienced on our journey. It is hard to put

into words the feelings we now have for Antarctica, but the photographs really did do it justice. Thank you, Scott and all the contributors. This evening we steamed into the Beagle Channel and back to the world we knew before Antarctica.



Ushuaia

DAY 12 | Friday 5 April 2024

Position at 0600

Latitude: 67°36.9'N

Longitude: 068°01.6'E

Course: 286°

Speed: 4 knots

Wind Speed: NNW Force 8

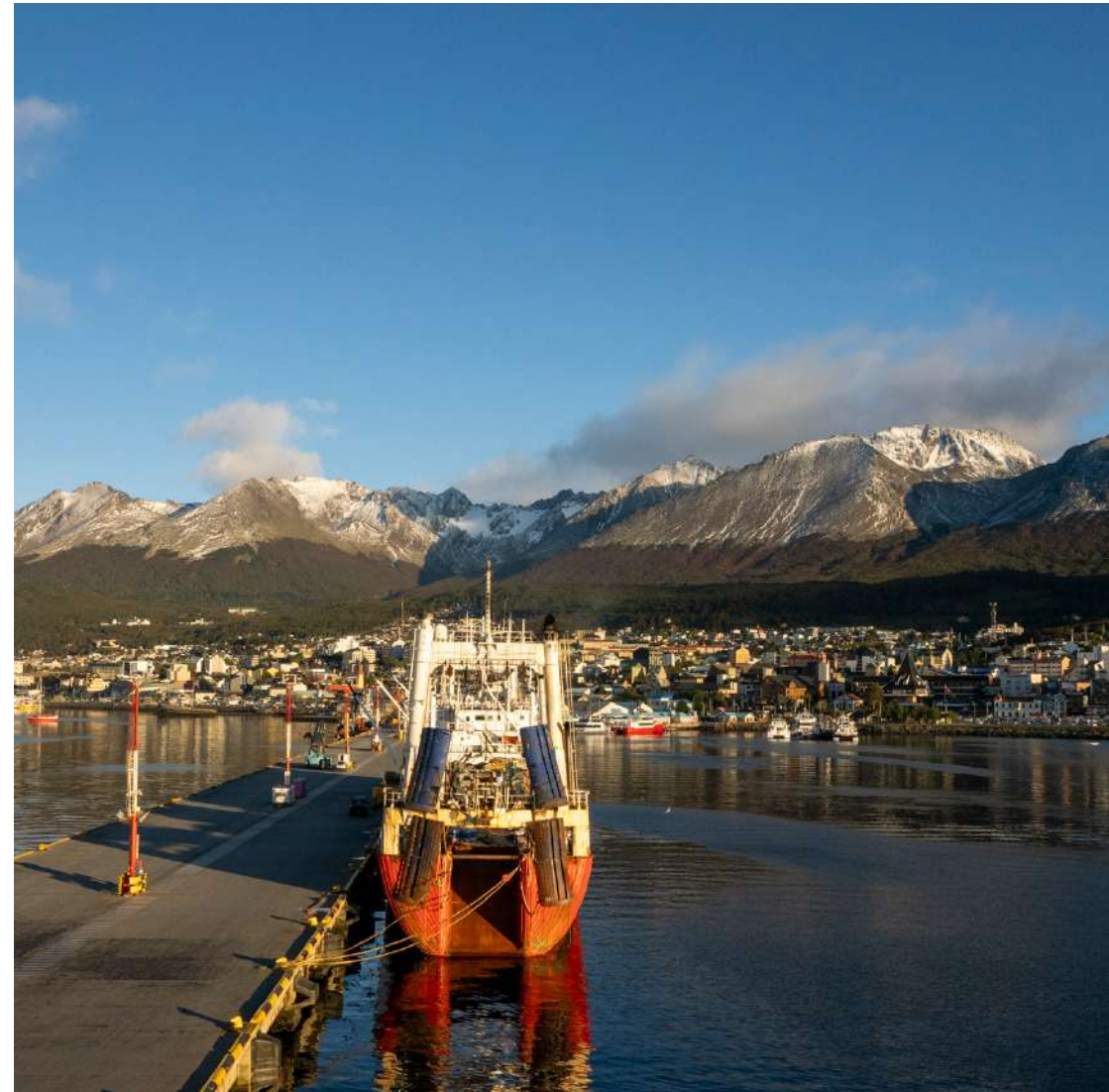
Barometer: 989 hPa

Air Temp: 4°C

As the last day of our Antarctic expedition unfolds, the Beagle Channel becomes our pathway to escape a looming storm. The clock strikes 2am, and the winds are howling at 60 knots, reminding us of nature's power as we navigate our way through the darkness. As dawn breaks, we find ourselves docking at the Ushuaia port, greeted by the rising sun casting its warm glow over the Andes, extending a welcoming embrace. Despite the early hour, anticipation fills the air, promising an incredible day ahead filled with adventure and discovery. Over breakfast, Jane treats us to her captivating tale of life and work in the Antarctic interior, painting vivid pictures of her experiences amid the frozen expanse. Ashley follows suit, regaling us with her own adventures at the Rothera Research Station, each story a testament to the resilience and spirit of exploration that thrives in this remote region.

After a hearty lunch, we split off into various groups, each eager to make the most of our final hours in Ushuaia. Some of us embark on a leisurely stroll along the Ushuaia Bay, taking in the sights and sounds of the local birdlife. Others opt for a delve into the city's rich history at the museum, while a few brave souls set out for the Martial Glacier, embarking on a breathtaking hike through the Fuegian forest.

As evening descends, we gather one last time to bid farewell to Antarctica, our ship, and our fellow travellers. The voyage slideshow serves as a poignant reminder of the countless memories we've shared, each frame capturing moments of laughter, awe, and camaraderie that have defined our journey together. As we part ways, there's a sense of bittersweet nostalgia lingering in the air, mingled with the excitement of future adventures yet to come. For each of us, this expedition has been an unforgettable chapter in our lives, a testament to the boundless wonders of the Antarctic wilderness, and a promise of more extraordinary journeys on the horizon. Until we meet again, may our paths cross in the tapestry of future adventures.



Kayak Log

Kayak Guides: Sigurd & Eamon

Number of Kayakers: 10

Total Paddle Outings: 9

Total Distance Paddled: 42 km

Kayakers:

Ursula Reinstein

John Fawcett

Samira Marouf

Saunders Carmichael-Brown

Charles Kronsten

Kathryn Wills

Patricia Calvo

Joan Smith

Karen Hollands

Laura Meares

29/03/24, AM: Deception Island, Telefon Bay. Distance: 4.9 km

Deception island is an eerie and moody landscape. The fresh dusting of snow on the black rocks gave it even more definition. This was our first outing in the kayaks and the group did very well. It was a little windy with minor swell. We fought against it initially and later drifted back to the ship easily. The volcanic mountains were our constant backdrop and reminder that we were in fact, inside a caldera, kayaking. It was a good test of our clothing choices and we got used to our kayaks and paddle partners.

29/03/24, PM: Whalers Bay. Distance: 3.8 km

The attraction of a lot of history on land meant that only about half the group joined us this afternoon. Still, it was an enjoyable kayak beneath the tall cliffs at the end of Whalers Bay. We had fur seals sleeping on the beach and even one swimming in the water with the kayaks. Cormorants and snowy sheathbills were seen among the rocks as we paddled past. There was time to go to land and stretch the legs as well. A short kayak but a good all-round outing.

30/03/24, AM: Palaver Point. Distance: 4.2 km

A small rocky bay awaited us here on Two Hummock Island. It was full of fur seals and chinstrap penguins. We paddled away from the ship and soon had penguins swimming in rafts to and from the shore. A group of chinstraps were standing on the rocks, deciding who would be the first brave bird to jump in the water; very funny. Rounding into the bay we could see, hear and definitely smell the fur seals lining the shore. A large glacier enters this same bay, so we admired it from a distance. Most of the group then went to land and hike to a view while Pat and Joan stayed on to watch some humpback whales sleeping peacefully. A special moment on a glorious weather day.

30/03/24, PM: Recess Cove. Distance: 4.7 km

Recess Cove rarely disappoints us. Today was no exception. In fact, it was very calm but had a lot more ice than usual. We snuck off the back of the ship and into some rock channels. From there we entered the steady flow of ice. Navigating our way through sparse brash ice we could see that we were moving with it. It was all okay

because it was the direction we wanted, and it led us to open water. It also led us to whales! At first, we saw a couple cruising on our right, then further out a humpback launched itself into the air, breaching close to 80–90 per cent out of the water. Astounding. We turned to see it better and, with the sun low in the sky, the scene was beautiful. We saw more whales around in other directions. It was hard to leave today, and no-one wanted to go onto land. Spectacular outing.

31/03/24, AM: Damoy Hut to Peltier. Distance: 10.8 km

This was to be an adventurous outing: a journey from Damoy Hut and chasing the ship down the Peltier Channel past Port Lockroy. After a short visit to the historical hut, we entered the kayaks and started negotiating the ice. So much brash and bergy bits had gathered near Damoy. We got behind the ice barrier and found clear water along the coast. There we saw gentoos huddling on the rocky edge. The snow was falling, and visibility was very low; we lost sight of the ship. As we rounded the point towards Port Lockroy, we luckily had a break in the weather, the clouds lifted, and we could see the mountains behind the base Lockroy. At Jouglia Point we saw the remains of whale bones and a beautiful Weddell seal. With no noise but our kayaks we heard the Weddell seal, singing its otherworldly song. The Peltier Channel is long and straight; we were lucky it was calm today. It was great to actually paddle a good distance. Ashley and the Easter Penguin (Eddie) met us with Johncy, handing out hot chocolates. Soon after, we saw a big leopard seal who was watching us. It was time to jump into a Zodiac anyway and we got some good photos of it from a little higher up.

01/04/24, AM: Paradise Harbour. Distance: 5.2 km

Never was the name more apt for the days kayaking. The weather was perfect, with not a breeze and blue skies appearing through the high clouds. We started outside the Argentinian Brown Station and watched the gentoo penguins who now seemed to run the station since the team has left. We cruised past the cliff that normally nested cormorants; they too had left, or at least were out hunting. There was a spectacular scene around the corner. Huge mountains looked down on us with many hanging glaciers. The cove in front of us (Skontorp Cove) was full of brash ice from glaciers that fell into the cove. We paddled into it a little and had a few moments of silence to appreciate the scene. We were blessed today. The kayak finished with all of us admiring a lone gentoo preening itself on a small piece of ice, oblivious of us. A sweet way to finish the outing.

02/04/24, AM: Hannah Point | Distance: 2.3 km

The wind was not an issue here this morning, but the swell at the ship was substantial. The guides slipped the kayaks straight off the back of the ship. We started paddling closer to shore. It wasn't long before we could see and even hear the elephant seals that lay on the rocky beach. Some huge males were among the pile of seals. Further along the rocky and mossy headland, we saw the fluffy chicks of the giant petrels. Many of them were in nests among the chinstraps and other seabirds. The waves were crashing on the islands at the point, so we finished our journey here. Some stayed on the water and others walked on land to see the giant seals from another angle. Very much a wildlife outing. Getting the kayaks back on board was interesting.

02/04/24, PM: Half Moon Island | Distance: 6.3 km

There was a bit of swell at the ship, so we found shelter beneath the cliffs in Half Moon Bay. From there we paddled into the wind and swell a little before turning and gliding to the other side of the bay. We could see a lot of the seals and penguins as we cruised the shoreline. At the point, we snuck through an exciting gap in the rocks and found the other side to be calm and with no swell. Lying on the rocky beach were Weddell, elephant, crabeater and fur seals, all in one area; amazing. The Weddells just lazed on the rocks while the fur seals swam with us and were very curious and active. The young elephant seal, well it just lifted its massive head slightly and went back to rest. Another good paddle, full of variety.

03/04/24, AM: Edinburgh Hill. Distance: 4 km

This was an exciting day for all of us. Guides included. We were paddling in a new site. The imposing tower of Edinburgh Hill rises steeply at the end of a little headland. The whole paddle would be centred on viewing it from all angles. We watched it grow as we got closer; we admired the patterns of the basalt columns that shot up out of the water and twisted and warped. The swell was big but what we call gentle, not at all threatening or choppy. We rounded the giant rock tower to the northern side; here there is a long and impressive glacier and ice cliffs. We finished around here and zoomed back to the ship, happy to have paddled, but a little sad to be heading back on this last paddle.





Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guides: Eddie Hauzer, Rosie Leaney

Number of Snorkellers: 10

Total Outings: 8

Snorkellers:

Lois Appleby

Alex Black

Steve Brown

Ceci Junco Villatorro

Misty MacDuffee

Mark Seldon

Dale Steedman

Kelley Tausch

Dave Thompson

Sofie Van De Bijlmer

29/03/24, PM: Whalers Bay

Success! The visibility was a lot better at Whalers, and all 10 of us got to do our first Antarctic snorkel... inside a volcanic caldera. Not many people can say that. We started just to the east of Kroner Lake, and swam north-east towards the shore. On the dark, sandy bottom lay a graveyard of whalebones, relics from the prolific whaling station here. Everyone emerged dry and happy – a successful first snorkel in Antarctica.

30/03/24, AM: Palaver Point

A stunning, calm morning with golden sunshine. As we drifted on the Zodiac, a few humpbacks fed peacefully around us – we could hear their loud blows and see the detail on their tail flukes as they dived. After a hike inland to view the chinstrap penguins, we plunged into the lovely, clear almost 2-degrees-Celsius water. A curious fur seal investigated us, and a few chinstrap penguins zoomed by. There was plenty of 'small stuff' too – a salp, ctenophores, krill, zooplankton. After just under 30 minutes in the water, we cruised back to the ship, stopping on the way to watch a raft of gentoo penguins flying through the water around our Zodiac.

30/03/24, PM: Recess Cove.

After setting foot on the official continent of Antarctica, we Zodiaced to a small offshore island for our snorkel. We hauled ourselves out on a large, flat ice floe, just like a group of blue and yellow seals. We played in the brash ice, pushing chunks around and using them as swimming floats.

31/03/24, AM: Damoy Point

A brief visit to Damoy Hut, then off we went for a true Antarctic snorkel, surrounded by brash ice, with snow falling on top of us. We scouted around Casabianca Island, where some gentoo penguins, shags, and a beautiful white-morph giant petrel resided. Then we headed to the adjacent shore for our snorkel, and slipped into the icy water. Penguins waited on the rocky edge, pondering whether to jump in. Some of us were lucky enough to be buzzed by a penguin underwater, while others enjoyed the variety of small stuff – krill, amphipods, ctenophores.

01/04/24, AM: Paradise Harbour

Welcome to paradise! First we had a few Zen minutes admiring the glacier front, then cruised along the cliff edge to see the shag nesting area. We dropped into the water just the other side of Brown Station, hoping to see some gentoos in the water. We then repositioned ourselves to snorkel the Shag Wall. The steep cliffs dropped off onto the blue abyss, down to over 200 metres! But there was plenty of life to see on the rocky cliff: limpets, snails, luscious beds of algae, and a few pink and orange starfish.

02/04/24, AM: Hannah Point

After a stroll among the elephant seals in Walker Bay, we were picked up and zoomed around to the other side of Hannah Point. Here, the water was clear enough to see the bottom of the shallow bay. The carpeting seagrass looked a little different now we have travelled further north to the South Shetlands.

02/04/24, PM: Half Moon Island

The water was calm and clear in the protected bay at Half Moon Island, and we snorkelled close to the landing site. Starfish dotted the rocks, and Steve was particularly happy to find a 'scrum' of them, so, came back for the camera. These are actually known as the scrumming starfish. A small fur seal dropped in and briefly showed itself. We enjoyed the jungle of algae, limpets and snails that adorn the seafloor.

03/04/24, AM: Edinburgh Hill

What a sight the basaltic columns of Edinburgh Hill were! We cruised around the towering volcanic formation, each angle stranger and more beautiful than the next. We had a snorkel along the shoreline to the west of the 'hill' over the large boulders. It was described as a 'Zen' experience, floating over large boulders, and being rhythmically lifted up and down by the rolling swell. A wonderful last outing together.



Dive Log

Dive Guides: Darren Clarke and Freya Dooley

Number of Divers: 6

Total Outings: 6

Divers:

Karen Johnson

Trevor Barrenger

Kerry Vess

Kristin Cathcart

Evan Johnson

Jordan Johnson

29/3/24 - Whalers Bay Deception Island

After an amazing first outing at Telefon Bay, the excitement was building for our first dive! On the ship we got into our drysuits and checked all our equipment was in good working order. We loaded up the Zodiac and went to scout the historical site of Whalers Bay. The point of our dive was to check out our equipment and perfect our buoyancy. After gearing up, the buddies jumped into the water and were pleasantly surprised by the amount of life they discovered. We saw whale bones, brittle stars and a variety of little critters. It was a good first dive to test our equipment in the cold waters of Antarctica.

30/3/24 Palaver Point Two Hummock Island

A stunning morning surrounded by mountains and glaciers. Karen and Trevor joined this morning for their second dive to fine tune buoyancy and hopefully see some antarctic wildlife under the water. After getting into drysuits and into the Zodiacs, off we went to find our dive site. With a slight delay caused by whales! We found a gradual sloping bottom with a depth of around 10 metres. Once under the water they discovered an abundance of life hiding in the incredible kelp forests. Some of the favourites being a sunstar and white nudibranch.

30/3/24 Recess Cove

This afternoon we had the aim of perfecting buoyancy and getting comfortable in the water. After getting into drysuits and checking equipment on the ship, we loaded our equipment onto the Zodiac and set off to find an interesting site. This afternoon we had Kerry, Jordan, Kristin and Evan braving the cold waters. Once the buddies were ready, they backward rolled into the water, ready to go. Under the water, lots of little critters were seen including a variety of starfish, some icebergs and, of course, the beautiful kelp living down here.

01/4/24 Paradise Harbour Brown Station

Another stunning morning down on the Antarctic Peninsula and the perfect opportunity for a dive. All six divers joined this morning for a dive along 'Shag Wall' named after the shag colony living above the site. Under the water was a stunning wall with lots of life, and even a nearby iceberg was a cool feature of the dive. The highlight has to be an octopus that was spotted hiding among the rocky and kelp bottom.

02/4/24 Half Moon Island

After a morning off from diving, exploring Hannah Point and the elephant seals there, we were all eager to get back into the water for another exciting dive. All six divers joined this afternoon for a dive around the stunning Half Moon Island. After exploring around the small island to find the best spot, we decided on a sheltered area that looked to have reasonable visibility. After gearing up, everyone was in about 5 minutes apart and exploring the site. Some of the highlights were a sunstar, antarctic cod, brittle stars and limpets.

03/4/24 Edinburgh Hill

Our last outing! And a goodie it was. A new dive site for us and Karen and Trevor were keen to explore with us. After appreciating the overwater beauty and crazy formations, it was time to find an area to dive. There was a bit of swell around the area, but we found a nice area with a bit of depth that looking like it could be interesting. Once in the water, the buddy pair explored the site and were impressed by the life and critters living there. A dive site definitely worth visiting again!

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



Mammal Sightings

Mammal Species	March-April												
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
Antarctic Fur Seal			●	●	●	●	●	●	●				
Southern Elephant Seal			●							●			
Crabeater Seal				●	●	●	●			●			
Weddell Seal				●		●	●	●	●				
Leopard Seal				●		●	●	●					
Southern Fur Seal	●												●
Minke Whale			●	●							●		
Fin Whale			●	●							●		
Humpback Whale			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			
Unidentified Whale		●		●								●	
Dusky Dolphin	●												



Deep Weddell following Nordenskjöld

24 March-6 April 2024





Expeditioners:

Lois Appleby	Lori Cayton	Jordan Johnson	Victoria Miller	Mark Stratton
James Armour	Chi Man Cheung	Evan Johnson	Andrew Murkin	Kelley Tausch
Trevor Barrenger	David Cowley	Karen Johnson	Hoi Ning Ng	David Thomson
Maria Beati	Kathryn Cowley	Kiki Jones	Renlong Pan	Jennifer Thomson
Karen Beaver	Fushu Dai	Villatoro Cecilia Junco	Michael Poppe	Sofie van de Bijlmer
Richard Beaver	John Fawcett	Endreson Kristine	Jacqueline Poppe	Eduard van Rooij
Alexandra Black	Minxia Feng	Charles Kronsten	Tamara Redmon	Kerry Vess
Deirdre Blackmore	Alison George	Sheri Laverack	Ursula Reinstein	Terry Wannan
Samira Bouazza-Marouf	Jennifer Gilbert	Zekun Li	Frances Roberts	Luyao Wen
Stephen Brown	Rae Green	Yvonne Lucas	Louis Rodriques	Philip Wheeler
Julie Buchanan	Christine Grey	Sandra MacDuffee	Julie Ruston	Rosalind Willatts
Richard Buchanan	Deborah Harvey	Suzanne Mailly	Mark Seldon	Valdred Williams
Robbie Burnstine	Sari Heiskanen	Sonia Mailly	Amy Shields	Kathryn Wills
Patricia Calvo	ClareHill	Catriona McKenzie	Michael Shields	Helen Wreford
Pamela Cappelli	Karen Hollands	Laura Meares	Joan Smith	Yu Yang
Domenico Cappelli	Cynthia Hoover	Duane Meyer	Philip Spriet	Suzette Yu
Saunders Carmichael-Brown	Joy Hughes	Susan Meyer	Dale Steedman	Xin Zhao
Kristin Cathcart	Perry Hughes	Andrew Miller	Carol Stewart	



Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Ashley Perrin

Assistant Expedition Leader: Elena Wimberger

Onboard Expedition Manager: Barbara Ostwalt

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Flor Torti

Naturalist: Heather Chrystie

Naturalist: Peter Wimberger

Historian: Ben Maddison

Geologist: Marcos Goldin

Photography Guide: Scott Portelli

Expedition Medic: Linda Steutel

Mountain Guide: Jane Morris

Lead Kayaking Guide: Eamon Larkin

Senior Kayaking Guide: Sigurd Davidsen

Lead Snorkel Guide: Eddie Hauzer

Snorkel Guide: Rosie Leany

Zodiac Master: Nicole Genoud

Dive Team Leader: Darren Clarke

Dive Guide: Freya Dooley

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Artem Kolmykov

Chief Officer: Sergio Saldanha Hernandez

Second Officer: Yevhenii Zolotarov

Deck Cadet: Vladislav Klaptenko

Safety Officer: Alexandru Chiriac

Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan

Ship Doctor: Jose Muller San Juan

Chief Engineer: Luis Gil

1st Engineer: Warlito Verzosa

IT Officer: Valentin Cojocar

Hotel Director: Alex Barkar

F&B Service Manager: Narendra Seeram

Head Bartender: Lloyd Laylo

Chief Purser: Josephine Blanco

Executive Chef: Rosauro Soriano

Sous Chef: Hubert Ramiro Barreto

Hotel Controller: Orlando Costa

Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska

Receptionist: Jaypee Alota Abonitalla

Head Stateroom Attendant: Marthony Penalosa

Able Seaman: Lexter Fadriquela

Able Seaman: Rene Casipe

Able Seaman: Anthony John Brosas

Able Seaman: Noel Reugia

Able Seaman: Rossell Fernandez Araujo

Able Seaman: Eduardo Aloyan

Photography thanks to:

Scott Portelli

Marcos Goldin

Eamon Larkin

Peter Wimberger

