

# Spirit of Antarctica

Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 9 – 19 December 2024

---





# Spirit of Antarctica

9 – 19 December 2024

# Ushuaia

DAY 1 | Monday 9 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
54° 48.28' S

**Longitude:**  
68° 17.59' W

**Course:**  
108°

**Speed:**  
Alongside

**Wind Speed:**  
10 knots NW

**Barometer:**  
1000 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
9°C

Our morning was spent leisurely in Ushuaia before we made our way to the optional catamaran cruise in the afternoon. Many of us enjoyed sailing through the Beagle Channel towards the city's iconic Les Eclaireurs Lighthouse, where we observed local wildlife against panoramic views of the surrounding mountain range.

Upon our arrival at the wharf, members of the Expedition Team greeted us and accompanied us on foot along the pier to the ship. After a brief walk, we found ourselves standing in front of the *Greg Mortimer*. First, we met our Expedition Leader, Isabelle, and Assistant Expedition Leader, Nicole, followed by Onboard Expedition Manager

Justine and Photographer, Adrian, who checked us off and took a memorable photo for the photo board.

Together we total 108 Expeditioners from Australia (24), Canada (7), China (23), Hong Kong (1), Germany (1), Italy (1), Netherlands (2), UK (12), USA (37), along with 83 crew from all around the globe.

Our 24 Expedition Team members have a variety of specialties, including polar exploration, marine mammals, mountaineering, geology, history, ornithology, photography, medicine, and kayaking.



# Drake Passage

DAY 2 | Tuesday 10 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
55° 55.4' S  
**Longitude:**  
64° 09.9' W

**Course:**  
121°  
**Speed:**  
12.9 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
12 knots W  
**Barometer:**  
1020 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
5°C

Our day started with the mandatory IAATO and biosecurity briefings, where we learned about the precautions we take in order to travel safely and responsibly in Antarctica. We also got to try on our gear, ranging from Muck Boots to lifejackets to dry suits. The kayak and alpine activity groups met for orientation sessions to help prepare for the next couple weeks of activities.

Linda presented her lecture on seabirds, which told us all about the very same species gliding past us. We learned about their adaptations, feeding and breeding habits, and the conservation efforts taking place to protect these beautiful creatures.

Following the lecture, some of us grabbed the opportunity to get some fresh air and observe the birds we had just learned about.

Afterwards, Marcos and the rest of the naturalist team gave us an introduction to Citizen Science, where they presented an overview of various projects we will conduct throughout the trip. It's a great opportunity to contribute to science and global research on climate, ecosystems, and beyond.







# Drake Passage

DAY 3 | Wednesday 11 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
60° 44.1' S  
**Longitude:**  
060° 58.7' W

**Course:**  
190°  
**Speed:**  
13.1 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
17 knots NW  
**Barometer:**  
1017 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
1°C

We started the morning with one of our Citizen Science projects - Cloud Survey - as one of NASA's satellites was crossing the sky, waiting for us to link our ground-truth data of the clouds with their top-down view. Soon after Kelsey, our historian, told us a heroic explorer's story about the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of Adrien de Gerlache. A journey through ice and uncharted territory, becoming the first to overwinter in Antarctica. The expedition provided invaluable scientific data, despite the crew's struggle with extreme isolation and perilous cold. Another lecture followed by Adrian, our photographer, who shared many tips and tricks on how to create those amazing photos of Antarctica that will capture a lasting memory of this incredible adventure.

And as if the morning was not already packed with activities, we also got to spend some time on the bridge, seeing our Captain and officers navigating our ship through the icy waters.

It was a busy day, and after a tasty lunch, more lectures followed. Marcos, our geologist, took us on a journey through the formation of Antarctica. From plate tectonics and volcanoes to marine fossils of extinct dinosaurs, all the way to the icy expanse of Antarctica as we know today and some of the challenges the icy continent faces. And right after the lecture we spotted our first iceberg! Not just one, but a couple of big tabular icebergs.





# Melchior Islands | Paradise Bay

DAY 4 | Thursday 12 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
64° 23.8' S

**Longitude:**  
062° 58.5' W

**Course:**  
338°

**Speed:**  
8.8 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
9 knots SSW

**Barometer:**  
1008 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
-1°C

We woke up early this morning and looked out the window to see wind, rain and waves. A truly Antarctic day. Justine began calling us to the mudroom where we would embark the Zodiacs for our first exploration off the ship! After we got all of our layers on, we carefully sailor gripped, and patiently timed our steps perfectly, to make it into the Zodiac as the swell tossed everything up and down. We made our way around icebergs, an older Argentinian base, and got our first glimpse of wildlife, which included chinstrap penguins, gentoo penguins, shags, and arctic and antarctic terns. Our Zodiac exploration of the Melchior Islands was a great start to our adventure and a very good test of our gear. We were greeted with hot chocolate once we made it back on board and had plenty of time to warm up on our way to Paradise Bay.

Paradise Bay, our afternoon landing, lived up to its name. A light on-and-off sprinkle of rain, but barely any wind, made for a much more relaxed operation. After climbing a few stairs and weaving through the buildings that make up Almirante Brown Scientific Station, we were stopped at the penguin highway. Some of us waited ten minutes or more while gentoo penguins made their way back and forth. Nobody told us there would be traffic jams in Antarctica. Luckily penguin crosswalks are far more enjoyable, and no-one is upset to have extra time to watch them make their pebble nests. Some of us even hiked up to a lookout where we had a view of the whole bay.









# Chiriguano Bay | Charlotte Bay

DAY 5 | Friday 13 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
64° 34.3' S  
**Longitude:**  
62° 37.8' W

**Course:**  
055°  
**Speed:**  
5.9 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
27 knots NE  
**Barometer:**  
1002 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
-1°C

We began with a gentle wake-up call from our Expedition Leader, Isabelle, informing us to get ready for a Zodiac cruise in the magical Chiriguano Bay. We boarded our Zodiacs and set off to explore the ice wonders of this remote corner of Antarctica on a perfectly calm day. We sailed past the endless glaciers that surround us on all sides. Here, ice is everywhere, the landscape monochrome and fascinating. Feeling tiny in this amphitheatre of ice, we also made our way through the brash ice, fragments of glacier that testify to the perpetual activity that characterises these seemingly dormant giants.

Winding our way through the icebergs, we also had a chance encounter with Adélie penguins! We were lucky to enjoy this moment of magic to the fullest. Then it was time to head back on board for the polar plunge before a well-deserved lunch!

Barely time for a break, and we were already being called to the outer decks to enjoy the unique and unexpected sight of the sea ice in Charlotte Bay! We enjoyed the views from the upper decks of the *Greg Mortimer*, then Isabelle announced we will go exploring in Zodiacs, so we can enjoy this marvel! And to say the least, this Zodiac cruise was incredible! First of all, we met some whales, which stayed with us for a while. Appearing at the surface, close to the limit of the pack ice, they gave us a real show, and it was hard to leave them, but we had other surprises in store! We had the privilege of landing on the sea ice! What a unique sensation, to dock with the Zodiac, then to tread with our feet on this floating ice. We had time to take some unique photos, to be filled with equally unique sensations, and were soon back on the ship, because the day was not over yet!













# Flanders Bay | Port Lockroy | Jougla Point

DAY 6 | Saturday 14 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
64° 58.5' S

**Longitude:**  
63° 22.5' W

**Course:**  
201°

**Speed:**  
7.0 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
12 knots E

**Barometer:**  
1003 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
-0°C

In the early hours the *Greg Mortimer* sailed calmly into the sheltered waters of Flanders Bay, with colossal glacial scenery all around. The Zodiacs were lowered to explore these glassy waters adrift with glacial icebergs of all different shapes and sizes. All three species of brush-tailed penguins were observed. Many of the Zodiacs had pods of gentoo penguins swimming around them. Adélie penguins and chinstraps were also spotted resting on various icebergs.

As we approached the southeast of Anvers Island, the sun was poking through some breaks in the clouds and we were treated to some views of this magnificent setting. The impressive fortress wall of the Fief range and its Seven Sisters summits.

We clambered ashore on the rocks of Goudier Island, home to Bransfield house and the old 'British Base A'.

After visiting Goudier Island and the 500 breeding pairs of gentoos, we hopped in a Zodiac to cross over to Jougla Point to explore its rich wildlife, with hundreds more gentoos often displaying courtship behaviour and others clearly sitting on eggs. There were also Weddell seals hauled out on the islets and kelp gulls, terns, skuas and antarctic shags. Several relics of the bygone whaling operation that happened here in the mid-half of the 20th century were also just visible, with some whalebones sticking out of the snow.









# Danco Island | Portal Point

DAY 7 | Sunday 15 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
64° 38.7' S  
**Longitude:**  
62° 36.9' W

**Course:**  
170°  
**Speed:**  
4.5 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
13 knots NE  
**Barometer:**  
1006 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
3°C

This morning we were greeted with the wonderful vistas of the Errera Channel. Icebergs floated past in the current and the mountaintops around us were visible in all their beauty. We made our way to Danco Island over calm seas, passing surfacing humpback whales and gentoo penguins shooting around in the shallows.

And what a wonderful morning it was to walk along the snowy path (sometimes sinking down to our knees!) and take in that incredible view. This part of the Antarctic Peninsula is such a perfect place to take a moment and soak in the mountains, glaciers and icebergs in every direction, while giving way to the cheeky penguins passing by. The kayakers paddled among the icebergs and whales, while the alpine team trekked their way up and over the island.

We got back on board and took our group photo, with wonderful views and whales all around as we headed off towards our next stop. It was amazing to head out into the Gerlache Strait and enter thick fog, which reduced our visibility right down for most of the passage. Luckily for us, the fog had lifted for our afternoon visit to Portal Point.

It was another incredible location with the clouds gradually lifting more and more through the afternoon, revealing jagged mountain peaks and shining glaciers all around. As our last landing on the Antarctic Peninsula, it was a great time to reflect on the last few days, spot some more whales (and a few more penguins!) and enjoy such a wild and beautiful place.







# Deception Island | Whalers Bay | Telefon Bay

DAY 8 | Monday 16 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
62° 59.0' S  
**Longitude:**  
60° 33.7' W

**Course:**  
023°  
**Speed:**  
At anchor

**Wind Speed:**  
14 knots NW  
**Barometer:**  
1012 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
1°C

Today marked the final day of our landings in Antarctica, and what a day it was! Our adventure began bright and early, with a 4:30 AM wake-up call. The reason? We were making our way through the legendary Neptune's Bellows at Deception Island.

Our first stop was Whalers Bay, a hauntingly beautiful site steeped in Antarctic history. Some of us chose a short stroll along the landing site, exploring the rusting remains of whaling equipment and buildings from a bygone era. It's impossible not to feel the eerie silence of this place, a stark reminder of the island's industrial past.

Once back on board, we gathered for a hearty lunch—well-

deserved after the morning's adventures. The adrenaline of the morning eventually caught up with some of us, and the ship's lounges and cabins became peaceful havens for much-needed afternoon naps.

For those who resisted the siren call of sleep, the afternoon held another fascinating activity: the phytoplankton workshop with Marcos and Linda.

Under their guidance, we peered into microscopes to discover the tiny, hidden creatures that thrive just beneath the ocean's surface.







# Drake Passage

DAY 9 | Tuesday 17 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
59° 50.7' S  
**Longitude:**  
062° 57.8' W

**Course:**  
351°  
**Speed:**  
13.2 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
19 knots NE  
**Barometer:**  
1019 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
0°C

The day began with a Citizen Science eBird Survey session out on deck, conducted by our naturalist, Linda. The seas were certainly more pleasant than expected, so it was quite an enjoyable experience to spend some time outside.

In the morning, some of us ventured into the heart of the vessel—the *Greg Mortimer's* bridge—where officers and crew welcomed us with open doors, right during the Drake Passage itself.

Later in the morning, marine biologist, Pat, delivered a fascinating lecture about life beneath the water's surface. From seaweed and fish to invertebrates, we explored the incredible variety of marine life that thrives in these cold, nutrient-rich waters.

Before lunch, we headed back out on deck for some more Citizen Science—this time focusing on clouds. Participating in projects like these allows us to contribute valuable data while gaining a deeper appreciation for the environment around us.

After teatime, we gathered together for some lighthearted fun. Liz and the Expedition Team organised an entertaining activity called 'How Big Is It?' Laughter and friendly competition filled the room as we guessed the size of various antarctic creatures and objects—it was the perfect way to bring everyone together and unwind.

After dinner, the energy continued with a unique and creative workshop—Chinese calligraphy! Guided by skilled instructors, we explored this beautiful writing form, practising brushstrokes and learning all together.





# Drake Passage, Beagle Channel

DAY 10 | Wednesday 18 December 2024

**Latitude:**  
57° 37' S  
**Longitude:**  
64° 02.8' W

**Course:**  
326°  
**Speed:**  
11.8 knots

**Wind Speed:**  
6 knots NW  
**Barometer:**  
1009 hPa

**Air Temp:**  
4°C

On our final day at sea, we woke up to calm waters, having left the swells of the Southern Ocean and Drake Passage behind. We were now in the sheltered waters near Cape Horn, heading towards the Beagle Channel. Here, we waited for our pilot to join us and guide the ship safely through this narrow passage.

Though protected from the weather system to the south, the wind remained strong. We spotted black-browed albatrosses, giant petrels, and white-chinned petrels gliding across the waves. A pod of dusky dolphins also joined us, leaping gracefully out of the sea as they passed by.

Linda's lecture enlightened us on the importance of getting a

healthy dose of Vitamin C to ward off scurvy, and Marcos shared fascinating insights into the cultural and historical significance of the Beagle Channel region.

By lunchtime, the dining room buzzed with chatter, as we enjoyed another sociable meal together. The afternoon was spent packing, saying goodbyes, and securing photos from Adrian in the library.

The evening brought a special celebration, joined by the Captain and officers. We toasted to the incredible voyage we'd shared, reflecting on the amazing memories that would last a lifetime. It was a chance to thank the crew for their hard work in making our trip so memorable.



# Ushuaia

DAY 11 | Thursday 19 December 2024

Latitude:  
54° 48.28' S  
Longitude:  
68° 17.59' W

Wind Speed:  
27–33 knots  
Barometer:  
1003 hPa

Aurora Expeditions thanks you for joining us aboard *Greg Mortimer* to Antarctica. We hope to see you on the high seas again someday!

Course:  
108°  
Speed:  
Alongside

Air Temp:  
6°C





# BBQ









# Polar Plunge



















# Snowshoeing Log

Snowshoeing Guides: Mike Roberts, Paula Roberts,  
Peter Alex Wainwright, Sylvia Forest

12 December, AM – Melchior  
Islands, Zeta Island

First snowshoe outing. The weather was soggy and wet, but enthusiasm was high! This was a shakedown trip on a glaciated Island in the Melchior Islands group. Many folks felt suitably challenged learning to put on snowshoes and walk on a rope tied to six other people! Despite the soggy weather, it was a fabulous walk up a small hill to a viewpoint of other islands. The exit off the island onto the Zodiac was an exciting finish to a fantastic morning.

12 December, PM – Brown  
Station, Paradise Harbour

Our first penguin encounter! Carefully navigating through the gentoo penguins was a fantastic, novel start to the walk. The walk up the steep hill that is part of the general passenger landing was a good cardio workout for most! From here, we roped up and continued on to a very spectacular viewpoint of Skontorp Cove. We marvelled at the kayakers, icebergs and the quietness of our surroundings, before beginning our descent. The steep hill on the way down provided some good hilarity as a few hardy souls tried the art of bum sliding!



Number of Snowshoers: 13

Total Outings: 6

Snowshoers:

Monica Gerstner

Kathleen Gerstner

Richard Perry

Barbara Alexander

Kerri Dowdell

Madeleine Coles

Hal Morris

Andrea Powys Staines

Denise Allen

Terris Dunn

Leslie Wilkie

Jess Longstaff

Pamela Longstaff

### 13 November, AM – Chiriguano Bay, Brabant Island

The Zodiac ride across to our island was beautiful. Calm conditions surrounded by some amazing icebergs. A straightforward landing allowed us to gear up easily and head off. After a short climb, we had a wonderful humpback whale sighting! We then continued our circumnavigation journey of the island to see what else we could find. The next wildlife encounter was some Weddell seals and gentoo penguins on a small piece of remaining fast ice. Many photos and videos were taken and views admired before continuing with the remaining circumnavigation back to our start point and our transit back to the ship for lunch.

All in all, a fantastic outing on our own little unnamed island.

### 14 December, PM – Jougla Point, Port Lockroy

Our first mission here was to do a visit to Goudier Island. 'Base A' is a designated historic site under the Antarctic Treaty. The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust has staff on the island for the summer season to operate the shop, museum, and do wildlife monitoring.

The team had a nice time looking through the museum and doing a quick spot of Christmas shopping before heading across to Jougla Point for our snowshoe outing.

Once, through the chaos of people and penguins at the main landing site, we were out wandering amid the quiet serenity of Antarctica. The Seven Sisters provided both an amazing backdrop for photos and fantastic views. We enjoyed wandering past groups of gentoo penguins on their nests in a nice loop back to our Zodiac pick-up.

### 15 December, AM – Danco Island, Errera Channel

What a fantastic arrival we had into the Errera Channel. The cloud cleared as promised to provide spectacular views as we cruised into our anchor.

Our goal on this outing was to summit the island, 140 metres above sea level. After giving way at a couple of penguin highways, the team did an amazing job of keeping a nice steady uphill pace. We were incredibly lucky to be accompanied by the sound of many humpback whale blows as we cruised up to our summit. The 360-degree views from the summit were absolutely phenomenal! Perhaps some of the best yet!

We were rewarded with more penguin interactions on the way down that allowed for some great photos.

On arrival back at the beach, the humpback whales continued to put

on a show, we were treated to many flukes and blows as we waited our shuttle back to the ship. What a salubrious morning!

### 15 December, PM – Portal Point

This was to be our last outing for the trip, and it did not disappoint. The sun was shining and the stoke was high. We walked up to a high point with amazing views back down the portal, where Wally Herbert and his team completed their traverse by dog team from Hope Bay to here. We then headed down to see where the Reclus hut was in days gone by.

Kerri and Babs decided this was the place to do their 'snowshoe run' and proceeded to get it captured on film by Pete. They even had their own medals made for each other for their efforts!

This was a fantastic final outing, and there were smiles all round!

















# Alpine Trekking Log

Guides: Paula Roberts, Sylvia Forest, Peter Wainwright, Mike Roberts

## 12 December, AM – Omega Island, in Melchior Islands

Early morning views from cabin windows revealed an ice-clad landscape; we had arrived in Antarctic Peninsula. Fantastic!

Excitedly we prepared for our first landing in the Melchior Islands, a complex archipelago of islands, peninsulas and waterways. Putting on Muck Boots and donning a life jacket we had a short Zodiac trip to a small, glaciated island that has many names - Zeta Island on the iSailor App, Bremen Island on Gaia GPS, and Omega Island on British Antarctic Survey Maps – take your pick!

We had a fun shakedown, learning new skills that started with an avalanche rescue brief, before roping up for glacier travel and snowshoeing to the top of the island,

a height gain of about 100 metres. The advantage of using snowshoes was soon evident in the soft, wet snow; we didn't sink in as far. Signs of recent avalanche activity meant this was not a day for steep terrain. We had great views from the summit of the surrounding islands, a nearby Argentine research base and a yacht sheltered at anchorage. As the morning progressed the rain became heavier with rising winds, which meant the main Expedition Team had an exciting Zodiac exploration, with white caps. Our landing site became affected by swell, which required hiking across the headland to a more sheltered pick-up location.

This was a great introduction to the realities of ocean-based hiking trips on glaciers in Antarctic waters, using Zodiacs for access. Drying out over lunch was most welcome.





Number of Trekkers: 5  
Total Paddle Outings: 7

Trekkers:  
Natalia Kotova  
Leonardo Rub  
Lindsay Wootten  
Hamish Longstaff  
Timothy Longstaff

### 12 December, PM – Leith Cove, Paradise Harbour

During lunch break the *Greg Mortimer* transited to scenic Paradise Harbour, a location that lived up to its name, being protected from the strong winds affecting the Gerlache Strait and most of the Antarctic Peninsula.

While the main team landed at Brown Station, we took a Zodiac to nearby Leith Cove. At the landing site we had a welcoming committee of gentoo penguins. Initially, the light was flat, and it was lightly raining. By the time we reached a viewpoint at 220 metres the cloud had lifted, revealing a stunning icescape of glaciers flowing from high terrain into ocean. Lindsay had one leg break through a crevasse bridge, a reminder of the need to be roped-up. During the descent humpback whales were visible, as were gentoo penguins swimming in the clear Antarctic

waters.

### 13 December, AM – Chiriguano Bay

Wake-up coincided with our entry into Chiriguano Bay, situated on the southeast tip of Brabant Island. Once again, evidence of recent avalanche activity meant it was a day for low-angle terrain. Our day began with a Zodiac exploration of alternative landing sites and objectives. At one location there were photogenic bergy bits and freshly carved ice afloat. The team decided to steer clear of an ice-climbing objective, joining the snowshoe group for a wander around a friendly low-lying island. Wildlife viewing included a humpback whale, gentoo penguins, Weddell seals,

Giant Petrels, and Snowy Sheath Bills.

### 14 December, PM – Doumer Hill

The trekkers were drawn to Doumer Island for a longer adventure, aiming to climb to the highest point, known as Doumer Hill at 515 metres.

The weather had cleared to reveal views of the Seven Sisters, spectacular peaks on the spine of neighbouring Wiencke Island. Westwards, the high summit of Mount Francais 2,825 metres and other peaks on Anvers Island were periodically visible.

The team had become efficient in gearing up and were quickly underway, ascending the northeast ridge, a route that avoids the worst crevassing. On the summit ridge the angle increased, and the snow became firmer, so snowshoes were taken off. The upper mountain became shrouded in cloud, creating flat light and low visibility. Strong

winds made conversation difficult and travel challenging. Despite being close to the summit, conditions had become borderline, so it was time to descend. Congratulations to the team for appreciating it's about the journey and safety, not reaching the summit.

### 15 December, AM – Danco Island in Errera Channel

Today was a photographer's dream, with almost glassy waters providing iceberg reflections as the elusive sun and blue sky appeared. Our snowshoe trip involved a circumnavigation and crossing of the summit, meandering around groups of nesting gentoo penguins, taking time to soak in the amazing 360° views. There were numerous humpback whale sightings. As we snowshoed, focusing on the track ahead, the humpbacks could be heard surfacing and breathing. This outing was a trip highlight.



### 15 December, PM – Portal Point

Historically, Portal Point, another continental landing, provided access to the main spine of the Antarctic Peninsula and the interior. Hopes of doing an ambitious circuit were dashed due to avalanche hazard on the steep access ramp, but fun was had speeding around in a Zodiac doing the reconnaissance.

We unloaded onto a picturesque rocky point, carrying our shore bags well above the high-tide line. Initially the route ascended a narrow, snowy peninsula that opened to a broader low-angle slope. We were careful to avoid open crevasses as the route slowly gained height during our two-kilometre 'up and back' hike. Our eyes feasted on the undulating ice coast, bergs and steeply rising peaks. Thankfully, the fog burned off and the high terrain of the Antarctic Peninsula become visible during this fun trip.

### 16 December, Mount Kirkwood, Deception Island

The day started with a Zodiac shuttle to Whalers Bay, Deception Island for a 40-minute visit to see the ruins of the old whaling station and the British Base, destroyed by volcanic eruptions in the late 1960s. From here we briefly returned to the ship to collect breakfast bags and gear before being dropped off under Mount Kirkwood at 552 metres. The climb of Mount Kirkwood took 2½ hours, carrying both snowshoes and crampons, which we were happy not to need. The upper mountain was shrouded in dense cloud, which meant navigating. A cold wind was blowing on the top and the curved rime features of the snow surface resembled an icy mammoth's coat. The promised clearance on the upper mountain and summit did not happen but it was a great final mission. Everyone was stoked to make the summit and amazingly it was sunny on the beach.













# Kayaking Log

with Kayak Guides: Liz MacNeil, Tim Vanhoutteghem, Rob Barth

## 12 December, PM: Paradise Harbour 3kms

After squeezing into our dry suits for the first time we started the process of getting into kayaks from the Zodiacs, and after a quick check to see if we had all the equipment we jumped into the Zodiacs and we were off on our first paddle! With the whole team there we cruised along the coast getting used to the alien feeling of being in a kayak in Antarctica. Following Liz we meandered past the Argentinian base, Brown Station, with a few gentoos swimming and waddling around. As we came around the corner, we paddled at the base of a stunning cliff with bright-green lichen growing on its face. Tucked onto ledges we spotted a few blue-eyed shags and some skua chilling the day away. The paddling conditions were perfect, with light winds and just enough ice to give us an obstacle course to navigate.

## 13 December, AM: Chiriguano Bay 4kms

The theme for the day was ice; lots of ice. Splitting into two groups we started the trip with a new experience; paddling through brash ice. Everyone punched their way through the ice with only a few collisions or navigational errors. As we were surrounded by glacier fronts, we had a good chance of seeing some pretty epic calving events and we definitely heard and saw a big one from a safe distance. As we made our way around the bay, we encountered a variety of pinnacle and tabular icebergs, and after a circumnavigation we even got to see two Adélie penguins that were hanging out on a little berg. After a good loop of the bay it was time to head back to the ship for lunch!

Number of Kayakers: 20

Total Paddle Outings: 6

Total Distance Paddled: 34.2 km

Kayakers:

Simon Perkins

Barb Bullemer

Peter Bullemer

Mary Parent

Cath Gale

Nicola Wassell

Mike McCauley

Dave Wright

Nishkam Votta

Janet Stephenson

Jill Jago

Ann Rooney

Alyssa Winkler

Christine Wheeler

Andrew Moses

Erica Dennings

Mike Humphries

Cate Humphries

Tushar Sharma

Zare Edwards

### 14 December, AM: Flandres Bay 3.7kms

After our icy paddling experiences the last days, we were up for more ice, and maybe some new wildlife to spot from our kayaks. Starting out in Flandres Bay in yet again very calm conditions, we found an exciting iceberg with a double window to the icy world behind it to look at, paddle around, and take the necessary photos! Some of us spotted a big rock on an iceberg further away, or was this something else? After an investigation from our beloved safety and kayak guide driver Rob, we got the intel there could potentially be a leopard seal on the ice. Getting closer in, and paddling in a controlled and respectable silent manner, we all managed to get a good look at one of the apex predators of this icy world; what a powerful and beautifully patterned leopard seal!

### 15 December, AM: Danco Island 3kms

Once we all got sorted in our kayaks, we began the paddle with towering icebergs on all sides. After multiple Weddell seal and whale sightings, we arrived at Danco Island for some penguin observing. At this stage, our weatherman, Tim's, forecast predictions came through and the sun broke out! With the sun out, the water became glassy with an abundance of wildlife, and we had a dreamy paddle out into the icebergs with the penguins. The conditions were so nice, our birthday girl, Cate, even decided to jump in for another swim. Next on the agenda we had some penguins jumping on an iceberg, a seal showing us how to galumph, and a stunning view of the surrounding peaks.

### 15 December, PM: Portal Point 4.5kms

After a foggy repositioning to Portal Point, we were happy to see the sky opened up again, without winds, for our afternoon paddle around Portal Point. We started off paddling around some big icebergs, and some of us got a closer look and a talk with a sailing vessel travelling from Murmansk. Following the coastline close to the landing site, we got some beautiful growlers to paddle around and in between, finding a passage along the shoreline, making sure the general population got plenty of photo opportunities of us, the cool antarctic kayakers! We decided to paddle behind the main landing spot, following the shoreline, enjoying the calm Antarctic waters, with a more open and wide view than the previous day, putting in perspective how huge this landscape and playground is that we have been grateful to have had time kayaking around in.

### 16 December, AM: Neptune's Bellows to Telefon Bay Transit, Deception Island 17 kms

With a 5:30am ready to go time, we were ready for the day's kayak expedition! Paddling through the Bellows was something not many have done, and in the wee hours of the morning, we loaded the Zodiac and made our way. On the water we were put to the test as we have only paddled glassy conditions until this point. Going in/out of sea caves and riding the swell, we made our way through the sea stacks and the infamous Neptune's Bellows of Deception Island. Watching the *Greg Mortimer* sail to Telefon Bay, we loaded onto the Zodiacs sipping hot drinks, munching on breakfast, and deciding whether or not we really had to relieve our 'ballast'. Telefon Bay was on the other side of the caldera and the weather turned out to be a bit colder than forecast. Nonetheless, we were determined to get as far as





we could, and we knew we would warm up once we were back in the kayaks. Making our way along the caldera, we stayed in the protection of the lee, enjoying the calm, clear waters and unique volcanic geology. Crossing the bay, we found an awesome beach with sculpted cliffs, making us feel we were on another planet. As we got back into our kayaks, the sun started shining, making the last few kilometres even that much more special as we reached the ship in Telefon Bay and celebrated our amazing paddle!

### 16 December, PM: Telefon Bay, Deception Island 3 kms

Our last paddle of the voyage. So, we mixed it up a bit with a paddle in the caldera of a volcano. Conditions were good, with a light wind blowing and some unreal geology and scenery as we entered the kayaks. Following

the coast we had a good chance to take in the volcanic rocks and ash deposits, with the landscape looking more like another planet than Antarctica. After checking out a couple of gentoo penguins we played a little game of log or seal and to our surprise we found an adult and pup Weddell seal. These weren't the only seals either; further down the coast we watched another six Weddell seals galumph their way up the snow. Next we did a little paddle-by of the general ops landing zone and with the *Greg Mortimer* right there and the wind picking up, it was time to get back on board and finish up the kayaking in Antarctica.



















# Map

## Spirit of Antarctica

9 – 19 December 2024







# Our Expeditioners

|                   |                  |                   |                    |                      |                 |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Barbara Alexander | Terri Dunn       | Weijie Jiang      | Hal Morris         | Francois Steverlynck | Alyssa Winkler  |
| Denise Allen      | Zare Edwards     | Wei Kong          | Andrew Moses       | Randy Taub           | Lindsay Wootten |
| Mark Bonarius     | Ditte Eijkelboom | Vincent Koning    | Jim Neils          | Emily Taub           | Dave Wright     |
| Dayanthi Bonarius | Bin Fang         | Nataliia Kotova   | Simon Nieh         | Nishkam Votta        | Xiaoyuan Wu     |
| Mike Boyd         | Hope Fenske      | Alan Levine       | Wei Pan            | Lingling Wang        | Benfa Xu        |
| Faye Bullemer     | Bob Fenske       | Yingying Li       | Mary Parent        | Guoyue Wang          | Shu-Ying Yang   |
| Peter Bullemer    | Bruna Gaggio     | Qilong Liang      | Simon Perkins      | Danny Wang           | Zhiqiang Yao    |
| Barbara Bullemer  | Cath Gale        | Hengyi Liu        | Richard Perry      | Eeli Wang            | Minjing Zhang   |
| Gladys Caddy      | Monica Gerstner  | Haosheng Liu      | Jaime Piatt        | Jixu Wang            | Dong Zhang      |
| Allison Carroll   | Kathy Gerstner   | Jess Longstaff    | Donna Rassack      | Deb Ward             | Yongliang Zhang |
| Jonathan Carroll  | Jianlin Guo      | Hamish Longstaff  | John Reilly        | Colin Ward           | Yuanhong Zhang  |
| Hong Chen         | Julie Hamilton   | Timothy Longstaff | Lynn Reimers Neils | Nicola Wassell       | Zhenqi Zhang    |
| Maddie Coles      | Yafei He         | Pamela Longstaff  | Lee Ann Rooney     | Patty Waterfall      | Deyi Zhou       |
| Erika Commisso    | Kate Holden-Boyd | Shiyun Lu         | Leonardo Rub       | Douglas Waterfall    | Liyi Zhou       |
| Chris Commisso    | Janet Holden     | Frank Lu          | Tushar Sharma      | Christine Wheeler    |                 |
| Yasemin Coskun    | Miaojiong Hu     | Mike McCauley     | Andrea Staines     | Todd Wilkie          |                 |
| Erica Dennings    | Cate Humphries   | Adimika Meadows   | Doris Stephenson   | Leslie Wilkie        |                 |
| Paul Derham       | Mike Humphries   | Arthur            | Janet Stephenson   | Steve Wilson         |                 |
| Kerri Dowdell     | Jill Jago        | Hua Meng          | Eva Steverlynck    | Clare Wilson         |                 |



## Expedition Team

**Expedition Leader:** Isabelle Howells

**Assistant Expedition Leader:** Nicole Genoud

**Onboard Expedition Manager:** Justine Bornholdt

**Ornithologist/Naturalist:** Linda Steutel

**Geologist & Citizen Science Coordinator:** Marcos Goldin

**Expedition Leader Trainee/Geologist:** Antoine Voit

**Historian:** Kelsey Camacho

**Expedition First Responder:** Laura Boenish

**Expedition First Responder Trainee:** Morgane Ruiz

**Photography Guide:** Adrian Wlodarczyk

**Marine Biologist:** Pat Horgan

**Naturalist:** Hannah Cowley

**Zodiac Master:** Ignacio (Nacho) Marino

**Zodiac Master Trainee:** Saul Davidson

**Onboard Expedition Assistant:** Ari Benzo Ciria

**Mandarin Speaking Guide:** Qing Qu

**Mandarin Speaking Guide:** Guozhi (Juice) Ye

**Kayaking Master:** Liz MacNeil

**Kayaking Guide:** Tim Vanhoutteghem

**Kayak Guide:** Rob Barth

**Alpine Guide:** Mike Roberts

**Alpine Guide:** Peter Wainwright

**Alpine Guide:** Sylvia Forest

**Alpine Guide:** Paula Roberts

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department

**Master:** Oleg Kapko

**Chief Officer:** Andrey Zakalashnyuk

**Safety Officer:** Sergii Voina

**Bosun:** Bobby Payumo

**Deck Cadet:** Joao Varlos De Souza Lima Filho

**Ship Doctor:** Javier Martinez Rodriguez

**Ship Doctor:** Juan Nicolas Diaz Rodriguez

**Chief Engineer:** Dimitar Vasilev

**First Engineer:** Denys Odrynsky

**Hotel Director:** Alex Barkar

**F&B Manager:** Rajesh Murao

**Chief Purser:** Pia Blanca

**Executive Chef:** Edgar Mangalinao

**Sous Chef:** Edgra Angelo Xavier Pereira

**Head Waiter:** Neelam (James) Lopes

**Hotel Controller:** Christopher Santos

**IT Officer:** Gerry Dcunha

**Receptionist:** Jaica Puyod

**Receptionist:** Jonathan Valdez

**Head Stateroom:** Roniel Garcia

**Spa Manager:** Venila Vythilingum

**Able Seaman:** Angelo San Antonio

**Able Seaman:** Iwan Setiawan

**Able Seaman:** Hardik Dipakbhai Rao

**Able Seaman:** Noel Refugia

**Able Seaman:** Joel Noble

**Able Seaman:** Francis Marvin Linga

## Photography thanks to:

Adrian Wlodarczyk

Special Activity guides







-  [facebook.com/auroraex](https://facebook.com/auroraex)
-  [@aurora\\_expeditions](https://@aurora_expeditions)
-  [youtube.com/auroraexpeditions](https://youtube.com/auroraexpeditions)
-  [Aurora Expeditions \(@Polar\\_Experts\) / Twitter](https://Aurora Expeditions (@Polar_Experts) / Twitter)