



# New Year in Antarctica



29 December 2018 – 07 January 2019 | Polar Pioneer





# About Us

Aurora Expeditions embodies the spirit of adventure, travelling to some of the most wild and remote places on our planet. With over 27 years' experience, our small group voyages allow for a truly intimate experience with nature.

Our expeditions push the boundaries with flexible and innovative itineraries, exciting wildlife experiences and fascinating lectures. You'll share your adventure with a group of like-minded souls in a relaxed, casual atmosphere while making the most of every opportunity for

adventure and discovery. Our highly experienced expedition team of naturalists, historians and destination specialists are passionate and knowledgeable – they are the secret to a fulfilling and successful voyage.

Whilst we are dedicated to providing a 'trip of a lifetime', we are also deeply committed to education and preservation of the environment. Our aim is to travel respectfully, creating lifelong ambassadors for the protection of our destinations.





DAY 1 | Saturday 29 December 2018

# Puerto Williams

**Position:** 19:00 hours  
**Latitude:** 54°55’S  
**Longitude:** 67°36’W

**Course:** Alongside at  
Puerto Williams

**Wind Speed:** Calm  
**Barometer:** 979.9 hPa & steady

**Air Temp:** 7°C  
**Sea Temp:** 9°C

After months of planning, weeks of juggling Christmas shopping and packing, the time had finally come for our southern expedition. Long haul flights from around the world carrying an enthusiastic 47 people touched down in Chile’s remote Puerto Williams. Known as a small southerly outpost surrounded by a panorama of forested hills and snow-capped peaks. On arrival we were greeted by local guides and taken to Lakutaia restaurant for a delicious lunch before free time in town. Our 47 onboard expeditioners represent the nations of Australia (15), Canada (2), New Zealand (4), Malta (2), UK (7), USA (17), along with 13 Aurora Expeditions staff from far and wide, 1 Ukrainian and 21 Russian crew members.

Once settled into our cabins we explored the ship, ventured down to the dining rooms for afternoon tea then clambered up and down the various staircases. Soon, Stephen called us to the bar on Deck 4 to talk about our plans for the voyage and to introduce the Aurora Expedition Team. A safety briefing followed before returning to cabins to locate the bulky orange survival lifejackets. The sound of seven-short-one-long from the ship’s horn was our signal to gather at the muster station on Deck 4 behind the bar, to sample the ambience of a Polar Class life vessel. The hatches were closed and the engines started to give us a real feel for the conditions. Even without a full complement of Russian crew, the seating arrangements in the polar-class lifeboats proved cosy.

The flying bridge and outer decks were the place to enjoy our departure from Puerto Williams as we untied the lines and eased out of the Beagle Channel. Conditions were superb with clear sunny skies and just the lightest breeze. What a perfect evening to enjoy natures at its best. Before dinner Toby gathered our 16 kayakers in the lecture room for their first briefing, while Kev met the snowshoers in the portside dining room. After a delicious dinner prepared by our chefs Al and Bert, it was time for the infamous gumboot giveaway. With thick socks in hand it was off to the lecture room where the team were ready to fit us with our stylish and comfortable footwear. The evening light added a majestic touch to time out on deck, and we were lucky to witness a pod of dusky dolphins riding our bow wave. A few stayed up late to watch our pilot clamber down the rope ladder and step across to his waiting vessel. Most of us made our way to cabins for much-needed sleep.

Today, 30th December, we are on our own at sea, motoring southward across the Drake Passage. The bridge on Deck 6, via the internal or external stairs, is open 24 hours a day and offers a premium viewing spot as we encounter an array of seabirds. Kick back and enjoy the day as the wonders of this vast stretch of Southern Ocean unfurls.

REMEMBER: One hand for you and one hand for the ship!











DAY 2 | Sunday 30 December 2018

# Drake Passage

<b>Position:</b>	18:00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	145°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	20 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	981.3 hPa & falling
<b>Latitude:</b>	58°15'S	<b>Speed:</b>	11.8 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	NW	<b>Air Temp:</b>	10°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	62°53'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	5°C

Overnight we began to cross the notorious ‘Drake Shake’. Thankfully Dr Judy was out and about, making sure that everyone had enough seasickness medication for the next few days. Those who had found their sea legs clambered down to the dining rooms and were treated to a hearty breakfast cooked by Al and Bert of fruit, cereal, eggs & bacon. The first order of business was a lecture delivered by naturalist Heidi - Marine Mammals of the Southern Ocean in the lecture room. We were treated to her incredible wealth of knowledge in helping us to identify the differences between types of whales (baleen and toothed), dolphins and seals. Heidi then walked us through some of the different species of whales that we could potentially see in the coming days: ranging from orcas to humpbacks. A trip up to the dining rooms was then in order for a quick cuppa, but before long we hurried back for Kasper’s talk Antarctica Discovered. Kasper enthusiastically brought the era of Antarctic exploration to life as he filled us in on past polar expeditions.

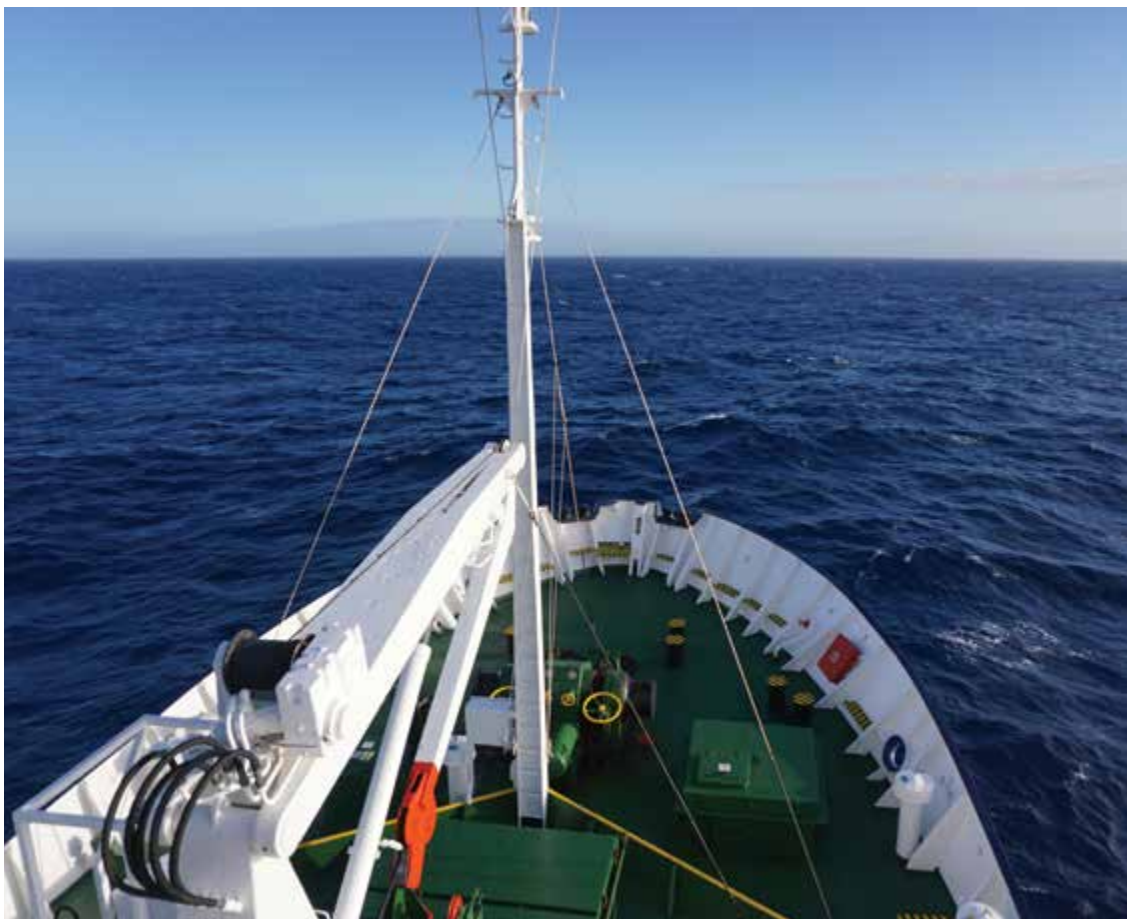
Kasper also highlighted some of the lesser known explorers such as Jean-Batiste Charcot, who overwintered at Port Charcot and Petermann Island, two sites we hope to visit on our voyage. Particularly thought provoking was Kasper’s observation of the importance of technology in the 20th century linking to the outcome of polar expeditions.

Whilst Roald Amundsen made it to the South Pole using Norwegian skiing techniques, dogs and by adapting modern nutrition methods to survive, others – such as Captain Scott’s - failed, due to severe malnutrition resulting from a poor diet & Scott’s refusal to use skis as a means of transportation.

After a much-needed nap and a lunch of spaghetti with meatballs, we found our way to the Bar for Stephen’s presentation Frozen Water. Stephen taught us about the two main types of ice: sea ice (saltwater) and glacial ice (fresh water); and stepped us through the ‘ice cycle’. Stephen also highlighted the importance of Antarctica to the world’s fresh water sources: where up to 70% of the world’s fresh water is held. Mid-afternoon, Kasper’s stories of the hardships faced by polar expeditions had evidently struck a chord with some expeditioners, who braved the cold to venture outside & onto the ‘fly bridge’. Whilst others remained in comfort on the Bridge, spotting different species of seabirds that had begun to circle the *Polar Pioneer*. At 1830 we gathered in the Bar for our first recap of the voyage.

Stephen gave us an update on our progress with the good news that the winds will be dropping and the swell decreasing as we keep heading south. Before heading to a delicious dinner of roast pork, Justine officially launched our Great Iceberg Competition and challenged us to list the expected time, latitude and longitude that we’ll sight our first iceberg.







# Drake Passage, enroute South Shetland Islands, Aitcho Islands

<b>Position:</b>	17:00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	At anchor Aitcho Islands	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	Calm	<b>Air Temp:</b>	7°C
<b>Latitude:</b>	62°24'S	<b>Barometer:</b>	973.3hPa & falling	<b>Sea Temp:</b>	1°C		
<b>Longitude:</b>	59°44'W						

Our second night’s sleep on the open sea was a lot easier than previous days, thanks to a declining swell and calmer winds. The overnight sea temperature dropped to a cool two degrees as we crossed over the Antarctic convergence. After breakfast we started with our mandatory briefings as we neared the South Shetland Islands. First up, Heidi gave an animated presentation about IAATO and the guidelines that we need to follow. At 1030, Stephen explained the correct procedures when embarking and disembarking Zodiacs. We learnt about the ‘three-step’ system, first step Zodiac rubber using the seaman’s grip, then onto the red step then onto the Zodiac floor. Most important is that we make sure we practice careful biosecurity measures by washing our boots as we embark and disembark the ship.

Shortly after it was back to our cabins to grab our outer gear for additional biosecurity checks; a requirement before our first landing. With vacuum cleaners in the bar and lecture room we extracted seed and dirt from Velcro and backpacks to be sure we’re able to keep Antarctica a safe haven for endemic animals and plants. A pleasant ocean today meant most had their appetites back to enjoy some of Al and Bert’s delicious rice lunch. Afterward, Heidi with her usual enthusiasm educated us on our much-loved penguin friends, talking of brush-tails, which we are likely to encounter on the Antarctica peninsula. We learnt of their different breeding and nesting strategies and how many chicks they hope to raise. Back in its hay day; 40 million years ago, some 40-50 different species existed, compared to a cool 18-19 today.

At 1430 Stephen made the call from the ship’s Bridge that we had spotted our first iceberg at 62°03.63’S 60°01.63’W. Everyone rushed to the Bridge or onto the outside decks to witness it for

themselves. The size of a city block; an ethereal sight as it appeared through the mist, before disappearing again. Following the excitement, a few of us opted for some quiet time in cabins and on the bridge, while Toby and Chris had the kayakers join them on the back deck for more instructions on their first paddle. A day full of New Year energy onboard as the clocks around the world struck midnight. After dinner, thanks to a smooth Drake we were able to get ashore at Aitcho Islands. With excited anticipation we donned our layers, turned our tags and washed our boots for our first experience of Antarctica. A Zodiac cruise along Cecilia Island was the first point of interest due a haul out of eight Weddell seals.

Over on the landing site between snow patched hills, we were greeted by two colonies of brushtail penguins, gentoo and chinstrap. This is a time in the season when a hype of activity is going on. New chicks are growing, eggs are hatching, stones are being moved and there is a cacophony of courtship calls. Our guest of honour however had to be Mr Leopard seal, a real treat for everyone this New Year’s Eve. Our kayakers reported their first kayak was a resounding success and enjoyed both coming ashore and the calm paddle back to the ship. Back onboard we were all invited to the bar for *Polar Pioneer*’s, New Year’s Eve celebrations. Kathrine prepared a tasty punch accompanied by an array of canapes prepared by our Chefs. With the company of our Captain, Vladimir Zimin, we raised our glasses for a successful voyage, a wonderful end to 2018 and an unforgettable start to the new year. Today we will spend our first full day on the Antarctic Peninsula - 2019 here we come!



















DAY 4 | Tuesday 1 January 2019

# Cierva Cove, Hydrurga Rocks

**Position:** 12:45 hours  
**Latitude:** 64°07'S  
**Longitude:** 61°06 W

**Course:** 267°  
**Speed:** 9.7 knots

**Wind Speed:** 15 knots  
**Wind Direction:** NNW

**Barometer:** 977.3 hPa & rising  
**Air Temp:** 4°C  
**Sea Temp:** 1°C

Overnight as the *Polar Pioneer* steamed her way south along the Davis Coast, the bar was abuzz with celebration as we heralded in 2019 in Antarctic style. Thanks to Kathrine’s delicious punch and Chef Allan’s DJ-ing skills, our NYE was one to remember. As we blearily woke to a clear morning, there were cliffs covered in glacier ice as far as we could see. Icebergs surrounded the *Polar Pioneer* on all sides. At the breakfast table, while enjoying our bacon and eggs we could hear small floes bump and slide along the ship’s hull as we approached our morning’s destination – Cierva Cove. Outside the wind had died and the sea was glassy.

There were blue icebergs calved from surrounding glaciers and small ice floes, remnants of frozen sea ice in a maze before us. After the captain had carefully navigated the ship around Cierva Point, we took to the Zodiacs and kayaks to explore this wonderland of Antarctic ice. We paddled or cruised between towering, cathedral-like grounded icebergs with brash ice and growlers scattered everywhere. Ethereal hues of blue radiated from deep within majestic tabular icebergs. A few gentoo penguins were seen porpoising in the water or lounging on ice or rocks. Massive glaciers completed this frozen landscape, stretching the length of the bay.

On our way back to the *Polar Pioneer*, some Zodiacs had a special sighting of two humpback whales surfacing next to the boat, which completed an unforgettable morning. After lunch there was time for a much-needed siesta before the call came to explore again. Kayakers, snow-shoers and the landing party headed for Hydrurga Rocks, a small islet named for the genus of the leopard seal *Hydrurga leptonyx*. Here we found several Weddell seals sleeping serenely on the snow, while we climbed towards a colony of chinstrap penguins going about their nesting business. Some were stealing stones from each other’s nests, whilst others were carefully guarding their newly hatched chicks.

These penguins had obviously started breeding a little later than those we visited yesterday on Barrientos Island, as far fewer and smaller chicks were seen among them. A few of us were lucky enough to see the first hole in an egg poked through as a penguin chick began to hatch. On the other side of the island, we watched a colony of Antarctic cormorants.

This seabird colony was far more advanced than their chinstrap neighbours, as large chicks could be seen, their parents busy flying overhead with pieces of seaweed streaming from their bills to add to their own nests. The snow-shoers had their first adventure and climbed to the other side of the island to get closer to the cormorant colonies. The sun managed to peak through the clouds, and some were content with finding a quiet spot to appreciate the grandeur of the peaks and glaciers lining the far shorelines. Once all parties had returned to the ship we joined in the bar for a quick recap, we heard of tomorrow’s plans; whaling in Antarctica and how to share our marine mammal I.D photographs. [www.happywhale.com](http://www.happywhale.com). Justine then announced the winner of the Great Iceberg Competition, congratulations again to Tony, what a guess! Dinner was ever so sweet after an incredible first day on the Peninsula.

What a way to start 2019!







# Neumayer Channel, Goudier Island, Jougla Point, Neko Harbour

<b>Position:</b>	13:40 hours	<b>Course:</b>	122°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	2 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	982.9 hPa & falling
<b>Latitude:</b>	64°44'S	<b>Speed:</b>	9.6 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	W	<b>Air Temp:</b>	4°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	63°00'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	1°C

Day two on the Antarctic Peninsula started early for 13 of our enthusiastic kayakers. Out the door just after six they paddled a whopping 24kms; circumnavigating Doumer Island. A stop at Py Point; south of the Island, was a well-deserved break before making their way back to the ship in just over four hours. Impressive! Others rose to see our first passage of Neumayer Channel – a narrow 16 mile passage of water beneath snow-covered peaks, whilst others opted for a sleep in.

Another glorious day on the weather chart as we arrived at our first stop Goudier Island. This island is home to Base A; an active English scientific station founded in WW2 during Operation Tabarin. Later it was turned into a museum by the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust. Hannah from the UKAHT came onboard to brief us on the site before we headed off down the gangway. At Port Lockroy, we wandered up to the museum and made sure to give way to the many gentoo penguins as they meandered up and down their unmissable highways. The museum was a vivid remnant of the past, with rooms maintained as they would have appeared in the 1950s – cupboards full of bully beef, bedrooms with old and creaky floors – it was easy to imagine how inhospitable it would have been during winter.

Today we also got to meet a popular day-tripping chinstrap Charlie who visits the gentoos frequently in search of his one true Adelie, Juliet. Over at Jougla Point we enjoyed the wildlife and sea ice; singing Weddell seals a highlight as were the well maturing cormorant chicks. After such a great morning it was back to the ship to feast on a delicious lunch of fish and chips, as we set sail for Neko Harbour. Transiting back through the Neumayer Channel, we were treated once more to panoramic views of breathtakingly high mountains and blue skies.

With weather going from great to phenomenal our arrival into Neko Harbour was absolutely breathtaking. With what we learnt from Kasper at recap, it's hard to believe that just over a century ago the site was home to a floating whale factory ship which processed each whale for overseas export. Surrounded by towering glaciers, we got into zodiacs and set off to enjoy it. The abundance of ice making the shuttle to shore that little more special.

As we pulled into the landing beach, Stephen welcomed us to our first official continental landing. Woohoo! Hilary & Kevin our fearless snowshoeing guides, set off with the snowshoers for a challenging hike overlooking the whole bay, with the rest of the group following suit on an alternative path. With the sun out and not a breath of wind, we could take our time admiring the vistas of jagged mountain peaks, ice and appreciate how we were spending the second day of the year. Now who wants a swim?! The infamous polar plunge was next on the agenda and what spectacular conditions for it.

A brave 34 took to the icy waters as Toby captured each priceless expression while going in. An impressive three carvings certainly stole the show as we wrapped up our final plunger. After a quick sauna and delicious dinner by our wonderful chefs, it was time to wrap up a remarkable day with a short recap.

What a day!











DAY 6 | Thursday 3 January 2019

# Lemaire Channel, Petermann Island, Pleneau Island

**Position:** 17:45 hours  
**Latitude:** 65°05'S  
**Longitude:** 64°02'W

**Course:** at anchor, Pleneau Is.  
**Wind Speed:** 8 knots  
**Wind Direction:** SW

**Barometer:** 986.6 & rising  
**Air Temp:** 7°C  
**Sea Temp:** 0°C

Stephen's 0620 wake-up call meant that there were a few yawns as many woke up this morning. The views of the Lemaire Channel at sunrise were undoubtedly worth it as the Channel is narrow and deep with towering peaks lining the shores. In the narrowest part, barely six hundred metres across, there was a considerable amount of ice making navigation difficult. However, thanks to the steady hand and experience of the Captain and his officers, they demonstrated great skill to get us through with barely a scratch on the hull. It was a photographer's dream, with early morning light peeking through behind the mountains creating some unforgettable photo opportunities.

After we'd woken our roommates and joined for breakfast to enjoy Al and Bert's famous French toast, Stephen announced our morning outing at Petermann Island. Significant both historically as Jean Baptiste Charcot overwintered here in the Porquois pais, and for wildlife as we were able to see our first colony of Adelie penguins. It was penguin peak hour when we arrived at 0900, with an abundance of activity as gentoos and Adelies waddled and slid up and down their highways as they went about their daily business. Heidi led the group and hiked towards the Adelie colony, distinguishable by their black faces. As Adelies nest much further south than their gentoo and chinstrap counterparts, Petermann Island is a unique opportunity to see this species.

Whilst the snow condition appeared deceptively hard packed, many also made the climb up towards the glacier overhanging the bay for some incredible views over the island. The snowshoers departed for a hike towards the south of the island, and reported panoramic views to the west. The kayakers had planned a special day though and departed for a mammoth eight hour kayaking expedition transiting the Penola Strait. We returned to the *Polar Pioneer* for a delicious lunch of pasta and caesar salad, as the Bridge manoeuvred north through heavy pack ice. Our initial planned landing at Port Charcot had to be changed given the heavy sea ice that surrounded the island, making it impenetrable. Instead, we headed to Pleneau Island for gentoo watching and a Zodiac cruise among majestic grounded bergs. Many opted to sit on rocks by the shore and soak up the brilliant afternoon sunshine as gentoos bathed themselves next to us.

Our zodiac cruise through some of the surrounding sea ice also proved an adventure, some zodiacs were even lucky enough to see a pair of crabeater seals hauled out on the ice. Seven snowshoers geared up with Hilary and Kevin for a hike around to the far side of the island, crossing sea ice along the way, whilst the kayakers wove their way back to the ship. During our time ashore our fantastic hotel team were busy preparing an evening of entertainment. We met in the bar for a short recap before making our way to the back deck for a good old fashion BBQ. Silly hats, gluwwein, esky treats and we danced the night away under the Antarctic sky. What a way to end our third day on the white continent.















DAY 7 | Friday 4 January 2019

# Skunthorp Cove, Paradise Bay, Waterboat Point, Leith Cove

<b>Position:</b>	18:00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	At anchor, Leith Cove	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	Calm	<b>Air Temp:</b>	6°C
<b>Latitude:</b>	64°51’S			<b>Barometer:</b>	973.3 hPa & steady	<b>Sea Temp:</b>	0°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	62°49’W						

We encountered a cool zero degrees this early morning as we travelled through the Lemaire Channel into Paradise Harbour. Awaiting our arrival were enormous mountain peaks covered in snow which reflected for miles into the silky-smooth sea. Eager to get our day started we dressed up warm and headed for our trusty Zodiacs and kayaks.

Starting at the top of the bay we instantly came across crabeater seals, gentoos and a giant petrel, who together looked quite content enjoying the morning sun. The Argentinean base, Almirante Brown; built in the early 1950’s, is still used today for scientific research during the summer months only. Damage from the 1984 fire that burned the main station structure is still evident. The old station lies between steep sea-cliffs and Paradise Harbour on one side, and a sheer glacier on the other. The cliffs are home to Antarctic terns, skuas, kelp gulls and of course the Antarctic cormorant with their twittering chicks.

Made of volcanic rock; the cliffs are laced with green minerals along its cracks and inclusions. Around the corner in Skontorp Cove waited towering glaciers, often active and always impressive with its caves, arches and crevasses. A modest whale blow caught our attention as we found ourselves accompanied by a humpback making its way through the pack ice. With our engines off we sat in silence for a chance to enjoy the tranquility of mother nature unfold. Rumbles of distant calving’s, avalanches, porpoising penguins, the serenity was completely untouchable. Today the bays identity is known best for its breathtaking landscape, whereas it was originally named for other reasons. ‘Paradise’ was given the name by whalers due to the abundance of humpback whales at the time.

Back onboard the chefs served up yummy turkey wraps before Stephen announced our plans for the afternoons landing. Waterboat Point, the Chilean Gonzalez Videla station, was our second continental landing of the trip. First the snowshoers were dropped off north east of our landing, while the rest of us were welcomed by the stations officers and given a brief introduction to the base. Kindly they had prepared refreshments for us and allowed a visit inside their communal living quarters. A museum of old photos of the Cope Expedition of 1920 was also open where we purchased wonderful souvenirs, stamps and postcards.

Lucky for us to we were also able to admire a leucisitic gentoo called Lucy among the colony, named by the locals. Leucistic is a very rare genetic mutation that does not allow the penguin to produce melanin. The kayakers enjoyed an easy paddle around some impressive icebergs before paddling an notable six kilometers to meet us at Leith Cove. With the anchor down and kayakers back onboard, we met for a quick recap, a tasty dinner and mentally prepared for our evening outing. A record breaking 41 campers plus staff agreed to give up their warm beds, a decent night sleep, a midnight snack; all for a chance to camp in Antarctica. And why wouldn’t you! To our warm six who stayed with us few onboard, we thank you for keeping us company.











DAY 8 | Saturday 5 January 2019

# Danco Island, Foyn Harbour; Enterprise Island

<b>Position:</b>	12:40 hours	<b>Course:</b>	47°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	13 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	973.3hPa & falling
<b>Latitude:</b>	64°35'S	<b>Speed:</b>	10.4 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	N	<b>Air Temp:</b>	6°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	62°32'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	1°C

Overnight, 39 bold expeditioners bade farewell to their cosy bunks to brave the cold and spend a night out on the ice at Leith Cove. Complete with glacier calving's and humpback sightings, it was definitely a night to remember. An early morning Zodiac ride brought our intrepid campers back on board. There were both tales of deep slumber and also accounts of restless nights. Either way, 39 of us now could say that they'd slept out in Antarctica! Our planned morning landing was scheduled at Danco Island in the Errera Channel. As soon as the Captain and his officers had carefully navigated the ship through the sea ice bordering the bay, we donned our layers and headed off to explore. A colony of gentoo penguins lined the shore of a pebbly beach as we climbed behind Kasper up a steeply winding path towards the summit with scenic views overlooking the whole bay. While deep snow made the hike hard going, the views from the summit were worth it as we admired the ice choked Errera Channel.

Kev and Hilary led the party of snowshoers further afield, stomping through the variable layers of snow to catch some incredible views of grounded icebergs. The kayakers also enjoyed a circumnavigation of Danco Island and were lucky enough to encounter both humpbacks and a leopard seal, hauled out on an iceberg. What a morning! We returned to the *Polar Pioneer* to warm up, before a delicious lunch of beef bourgingnon. The news of a four-hour transit was our cue to head up to the Bridge with a book in hand as we cruised through Wilhelmina Bay; or back to our bunks to catch up on some much-needed sleep.

Those who stayed up reported sea ice and sightings of a breaching humpback in front of the bow, ticking yet more things off our Antarctic bucket lists. Later in the afternoon, Stephen announced that we had arrived at Enterprise Island for a Zodiac cruise and paddle circumnavigating Enterprise Island, whilst the snowshoers headed ashore and roped up for a steep climb to the peak of the island. It was a magical afternoon for our last cruise along the Antarctic continent.

The icebergs were cast in filtered afternoon sunlight which provided the perfect opportunity to take some beautiful shots of towering glaciers and ice of different shapes and sizes. The different textures of the ice too formed unique structures, with a blue hue radiating from their cores. We made special stops to listen to the singing of an adolescent Weddell seal, as well as a young Adelie penguin who seemed to be as interested in us as we were of it. We were also able to get up close to the Gouvernøren I, a now-rusted whaling ship wrecked deliberately on the island in 1916. The kayakers wove their way through the maze of little islets and icebergs, snapping photos along the way and admiring the cathedral-sized bergs. We returned to the *Polar Pioneer* for a quick recap and a tasty dinner, before falling into bed. But just before bed, Stephen announced that more humpbacks had been spotted on the bow! Just another day on the Antarctic Peninsula.







DAY 9 | Sunday 6 January 2019

# Whaler’s Bay; Deception Island, Half Moon Island

<b>Position:</b>	23:00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	63°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	35 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	982.6hPa & rising
<b>Latitude:</b>	62°20’S	<b>Speed:</b>	8.6 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	NE	<b>Air Temp:</b>	1°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	58°43’W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	0°C

Overnight, the Captain carefully navigated us away from the Peninsula toward the South Shetland Islands. The day dawned misty, and with a few snow flurries in the air it was our cue to rug up. But there was a whiff of adventure in the air, which was perfect for us. Deception Island, our first stop, is an active volcano and a dark, desolate place - the opposite of what we experienced on the Peninsula.

As we zodiaced in, we could smell the sulfur permeating through the water, causing steam to rise from the surface. Its caldera - one of the few in the world that is navigable by ships – is 11km wide and accessed through a narrow channel called Neptune’s Bellows. The last eruption was in 1969 and caused major devastation to British and Chilean scientific stations located there. Once the sight of a large Norwegian whaling station, a hundred years ago several ships would have been anchored in the bay to have their whale catches processed into valuable oil. Today we took a step back in time, wandering between the tumbling and half buried buildings and the pressure cookers - now just a nesting site for kelp gulls.

A stroll along the black beach and up to Neptune’s Window was just the spot to sit and listen to the nesting Cape Petrels chattering on the cliffs. Some were lucky enough to find a leopard seal hauled out on the south side of the beach; while others ambled along to the old aircraft hanger and hiked up for panoramic views over the whole bay. As the tide dropped, steam started to rise from the geothermal activity at the water’s edge. As we dipped our toes through the water we could feel the heat radiating like a warm bath – quite the contrast from the icy waters we plunged in at Neko Harbor! Our bright kayakers added splashes of bright colour to this monochromatic world and enjoyed a scenic paddle around Neptune’s Bellows.

Following our return, *Polar Pioneer* headed further north whilst we savoured a delicious pizza lunch. The afternoon was devoted to settling accounts with Kathrine in the bar, swapping our emails with Kasper and spending some quality time up on the Bridge. En route, the call came for a large tabular iceberg, once calved from an Ice Shelf, perhaps in the Weddell Sea? The captain measured its longest dimensions on the navigation radar and at nearly 3 kilometers long, it was an impressive piece of ice! Our afternoon landing at Halfmoon Island was a short but sweet one. A brief walk up the cobble hill to visit our last colony of Chinstrap penguins and admire the glorious scenery. Heidi led a group through a windy path below the ridges and navigation tower to the chinstraps on the eastern extremity of the island.

A lucky encounter was to spot one solo Macaroni penguin hanging out in among the metropolis of chinstraps. Back on board, it was time for some final last minute packing before we made our way to Kathrine’s cosy bar for the Captain’s Farewell Drinks. We thanked Captain Vladimir and his crew for their seamanship and adventurous attitude, and the Expedition staff. Certificates were handed out to our campers, polar plungers, kayakers and snowshoer’s before one last dinner in the dining rooms. Last but not least we were then invited to the lecture room to enjoy our voyage slideshow. Thanks to everyone’s photo contributions, we were taken back through the last 10 days; of adventure and good times spent travelling around the Antarctica Peninsula.









DAY 10 | Monday 7 January 2019

# Frei. Station, Punta Arenas

**Position:** 06:30 hours                      **Course:** At Anchor, Frei Station  
**Latitude:** 62°12'S  
**Longitude:** 58°56'W

**Wind Speed:** 17 knots                      **Barometer:** 986.6 hPa & rising  
**Wind Direction:** N                      **Air Temp:** 1°C  
**Sea Temp:** 1°C

Early this morning, we set down anchor at Frei Station at King George Island. Stephen woke us up early as we hurried around locating all those bits and pieces stored in the different nooks and crannies in our cabins. Once our belongings had been found, borrowed gear had been returned and bags parked outside our rooms it was time to head to a final hearty breakfast cooked by Al and Bert. At 0830 sharp, it was time to don our waterproof gear & gumboots, bid farewell to staff staying behind on the ship, and venture down the gangway for the last time. A quick zodiac ride to shore later, we made our way up to the airstrip, before boarding our flight back to Punta Arenas.

On behalf of all of the team aboard *Polar Pioneer*, thank you for choosing Aurora Expeditions as your guide for your voyage to Antarctica this New Year. From watching humpbacks feeding off the bow, to cruising among the brash ice at Neko Harbor, we hope you’ve enjoyed visiting Antarctica as much as we have.

We hope to welcome you onboard again.









# Snow Shoeing Log

By Kevin Nicholas

**Snowshoe Guides:** Kevin Nicholas and Hilary Cave

**Snowshoers:**

Jackie Bourn	Saquib Rahim	Jenny White
Jake Doyle	Tony Smuts	John White
Douglas Martell	Simone Ubaldi	Matthew White
Tony Paul	Darren White	Vicki White
Julie Paul	James White	

**DAY 3: Hydrurga Rocks**

A great little shake down trip in the afternoon. Our entire group of 12 set out for an introduction to snowshoeing in Antarctica. From the sheltered cove landing, watched by some sleepy Weddell seals, we familiarised ourselves with our new equipment. We donned our harnesses and snowshoes and made our way along the island, getting the feeling for these tennis racquets strapped to our boots. Kevin demonstrated the roping up and glacier travel technique we would be using in the coming days. We then explored a little more of the small island with Kelp Gulls and Sheath Bills hovering near the surrounding rock faces.

**DAY 4: Jougla Point**

After a visit to the historic port Lockroy Antarctic base we zodiaced over to Jougla Point. We set off to explore this area, weaving a path amongst the nesting Gentoo’s. We were rewarded with superb views of the peaks on Wiencke Island before stepping down over the tide cracks to walk on the sea ice. A few tentative steps reassured us that the ice was plenty thick enough to support our weight. We were entertained by a singing Weddell seal – not commonly heard from seals when resting out of the water.

**Neko Harbour**

Our first glacier travel experience and a warm, sunny afternoon for our first landing on the continent! From an idyllic glassy sea we ascended pristine snow slopes after first giving way at some deep and busy penguin highway intersections. The highlights for this afternoon were the glacier views – towering seracs and yawning blue crevasses. Many of us celebrated on our return to the ship with a dip in the ocean to cool off!



**DAY 5: Peterman Island**

We meandered along with all the passengers to visit the Adelie Penguins nesting on the rocks. From there, we snowshoers struck out on our own to explore the other side of the island. Looking down onto a deep cove, we saw Kelp gulls being chased off cliffs by nesting Antarctic Terns. Small groups of penguins swam in the brilliant aqua coloured water amongst grounded icebergs.

**Pleneau Island**

A long but gentle ascent with a small group saw us look out over a scene of huge castellated bergs in the Penola Strait. Our group enjoyed the serenity of it - being far from the ship and our cruising shipmates who were mere dots in the distant grey sea. We traversed the island down a rolling ridge to an isolated cove. Here the sea ice provided a crossing as we began to return to our pickup point around the coast.

**DAY 6: Waterboat Point / Paradise Harbor**

After some superb ice navigation our zodiac dropped us off near the Chilean Base. We roped up before ascending to a rolling plateau below some steep mountains. The light was atmospheric – the *Polar Pioneer*, ice bergs and Humpback whales below us provided a sense of the immense scale of the Antarctic landscape.

**DAY 7: Danco Island**

A slow start to the morning after many snowshoer’s chose to sleep in after an epic Antarctic camp last night. A small group of us ascended the frozen slopes of Danco Island – hardy Gentoo nested on the rocky ground on the summit. Our intention to traverse the island to an alternative pick up was thwarted as these steeper slopes were frozen into a slick sliding surface.

**Enterprise Island**

A secret beach landing in a convoluted coastline led to a steep ascent to our virgin snow dome. The view across the Gerlache Strait made the effort worthwhile. Our footprints were the only ones on this island and we were the first to tread on this vantage point for some time. Kev and Hilary buried a pack in the soft snow anchoring our ropes and providing security as we slid on our backsides down to our zodiac pick up. The adage – ‘No adventure is too small’ proving true.





















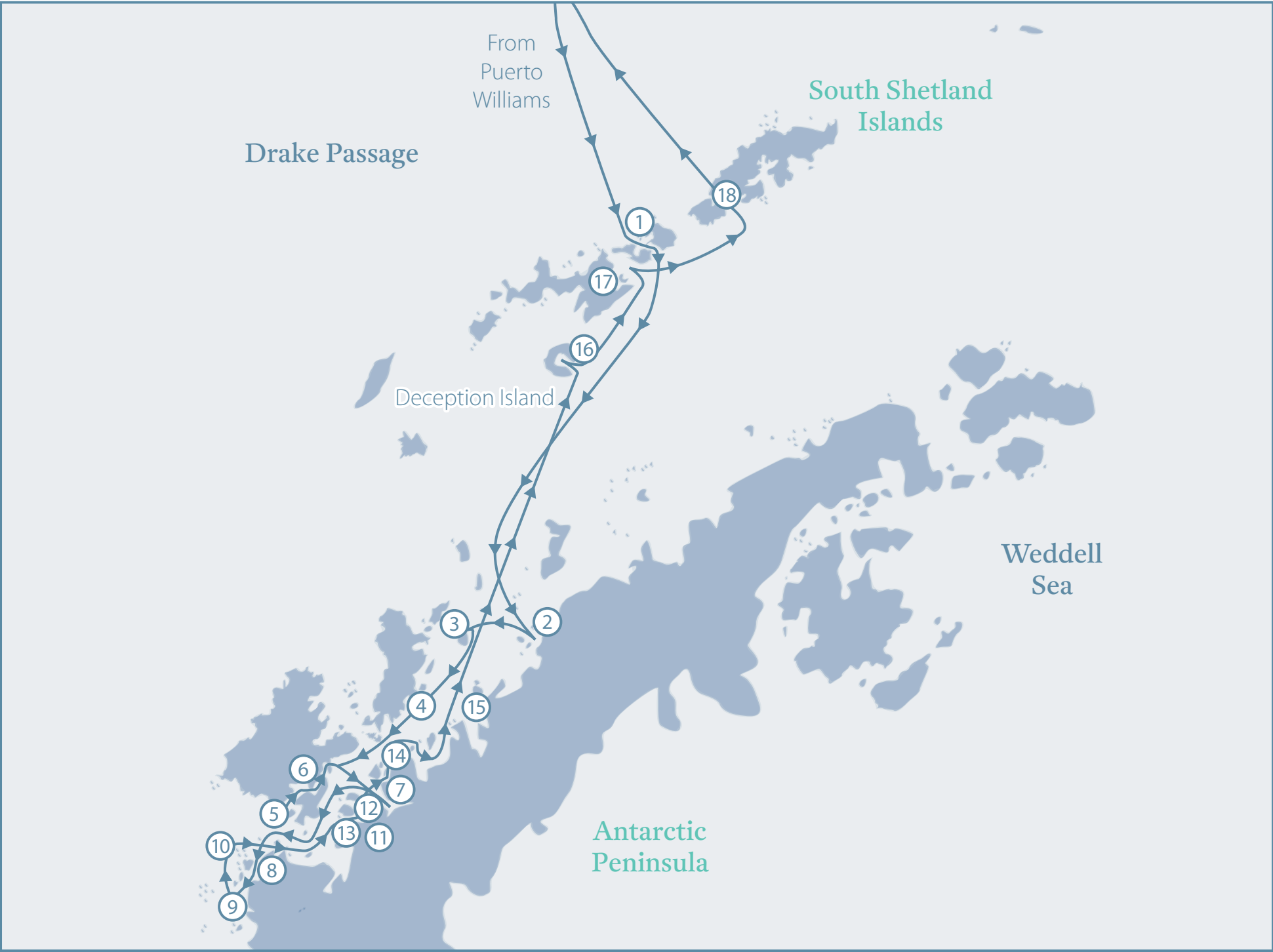




# New Year in Antarctica

29 Dec. 2018 – 07 Jan. 2019 | Distance Travelled: 1099.2 nautical miles

Southernmost point of voyage: Petermann Island 65°11', 64°07.2'W



## Destinations

- |  |                               |                                      |                                   |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Aitcho Islands                            | 6. Neumayer Channel           | 11. Skontorp Cove; Paradise Bay      | 16. Whalers Bay, Deception Island |
| 2. Cierva Cove                               | 7. Neko Harbour (continental) | 12. Waterboat Point                  | 17. Half Moon Island              |
| 3. Hydrurga Rocks                            | 8. Lemaire Channel            | 13. Leith Cove                       | 18. Frei Station                  |
| 4. Gerlache Strait (Humpbacks)               | 9. Petermann Island           | 14. Danco Island                     |                                   |
| 5. Port Lockroy, Jougla Point, Doumer Island | 10. Pleneau Island            | 15. Foyen harbour, Enterprise Island |                                   |







# Kayaking Log

By Chris Hipgrave

**Kayaking Guides:** Toby Story and Chris Hipgrave

**Kayakers:**

Taryn Agius	Ross Claydon	Jazz Agius-Jones	Jamie Rogers
Jack Amoss	Catherine Fawcett	Rachael Love	John Traendly
Rachel Baker	Kristine Ferguson	Matt Lemons	John White
Russell Claydon	Matt Hatton	Marc Narbeth	Brandon Yuan

**DAY 3: Aitcho Islands** – Distance: 8 km

For our first shake down paddle at the start of our expedition we circumnavigated the island and found a wide variety of wildlife including Gentoo & Chinstraps penguins, Cormorants and Weddell seals. Also got to see a Leopard seal high and dry on the beach taking a nap. Two bull Weddells put on a great display as they jousted for dominance on the beach while a light swell was rolling in, creating some fun little places to play along the way. A great fun paddle to settle into the kayaks for the week ahead.

**DAY 4: Cierva Cove** – Distance: 9 km

Ice! All about the ice. Glaciers explosively calved in the distance while the cove was chock full of icebergs from small to large. A great fun paddle exploring the various ice formations, their deep shades of blue and the scaring of their previous lives. A small dry dock iceberg gave is the chance to surf the incoming swell in and thru the berg.

**Hydruga Rocks** – Distance: 5 km

A stiff breeze, cooled things down and brought the ocean to life and left the *Polar Pioneer* for Hydruga Rocks. We enjoyed a nice circumnavigation of the rocks and played in the swell as it rolled past before making a landing and exploring the penguin colonies on foot. Weddell seals napped in the sun nearby. Paddling back was to the *Polar Pioneer* was super fun with the follow sea.

**DAY 5: Doumer Island** – Distance: 22 km

Up at 5am and paddling by after 6am. This dedicated group of expedition paddlers rose to the occasion as we tried to circumnavigate Doumer Island, something none of us had done before. With a slight head wind up the Peltier Channel, we ground ahead knowing the wind would eventually turn in our favor. We found a neat penguin colony at the end of the channel at Py Point and took a well-earned rest before turning north and crossing a small bay in one meter swells and stiff winds. A humpback came and visited with us briefly. After the bay, we turned into the Neumayer Channel where we battled the last of the swell and cruised for home knowing we’d accomplished what very few before us had done.

**Neko Harbour** – Distance: 9 km

A lazy paddle over to explore the penguin colonies and enjoy the exquisite views from Neko, before hitting the water for a short easy paddle to enjoy the ice in the bay.

**DAY 6: Petermann To Pleneau Thru The Penola Strait** – Distance: 12 km

After a short visit to Petermann Island to check out the Adelie Penguins we headed north towards Pleneau Island at the head of the Lemaire Channel which we had transitioned thru just that very morning. We fought thru thick ice trying to find the easiest path but sometimes got halted in our tracks. Just before reaching the island we found a lovely lunch spot out of the wind and enjoyed a great spread of food thanks to the galley staff on board the *Polar Pioneer*. We spent some solid time there just enjoying the amazing location. Returning to the water we made the short jump to Pleneau Island and decide ducked in behind where we immediately met significant sea ice. Toby checked its safety and we elected to drag out kayaks across the ice to open water on the other side like the early explorers before us would have done. The next ice obstacle was concurred but employing ice breaker tactics in the kayak. The *Polar Pioneer* was now in view but one more sheet of sea ice blocked the way. Without a word, all 13 boats accelerated towards the ice forcing our way thru. A memorable day for everyone.

**DAY 7: Brown Station / Skontorp Cove** – Distance: 11 km

Lovely little paddle in warm, still conditions. We paddled around Brown Base after visiting the incredible cliff side cormorant colony and hearing some fascinating insights from our special guest, Heidi. Wrapping things up at Brown Station we ventured into the ice and enjoyed blazing a path thru the brash ice. Nearby we spotted an adult and calf humpback whale and headed towards them for a closer look. For 10 minutes we paralleled their path and enjoyed their company before they took a deep dive and vanished, just in time for us to return back to the *Polar Pioneer*.

**Water Boat Point / Leith Cove** – Distance: 7 km

A nice visit to the Chilean base and then we started to paddle downwind towards Leith Cove. In the middle of the bay we encountered a curious humpback that circled us for nearly an hour. We witnessed a fascinating display of behavior. We also spotted a minke whale a little ways off. As the *Polar Pioneer* wrapped up operations at the Chilean base, we headed for Leith where we rendezvoused with the *Polar Pioneer* for a well-earned dinner.

**DAY 8: Danco Island** – Distance: 8 km

Despite some tired bodies from a night of camping on the ice, a small enthusiastic group rallied to tackle a circumnavigation of Danco Island. After exploring some small icebergs on the backside of the island we were surprised by 2 humpbacks that swam close by. We got to parallel them for a few minutes before they dove deep under some sizable icebergs and vanished into the bay. Shortly after, we found a leopard seal snoozing on the ice and barely acknowledged us as we floated by. As we rounded the top of the island back into the bay, massive icebergs carved into intricate shapes could be seen littering the bay. Nearing the completion of our loop, we stopped for a brief visit at the Gentoo colony on the island before returning to the ship.







# Kayaking Log

By Chris Hipgrave

## Foyn Harbour / Enterprise – Distance: 11 km

We jumped into our kayaks and entered the maze of small islands that makes up this end of Foyn Harbor. After a quick stop to gage the progress of the chicks at a cormorant colony, we found ourselves on the wreck of the *Gouvernøren* and the nearby reminders of the whaling industry that was once so pervasive in this bay and elsewhere in Antarctica. A thought provoking reminder of an age gone by. We paddled to the north end of the islands and found a light swell rolling in from the ocean and seized the opportunity to play in a few rocks as the swell washed by. Now entering the back of Enterprise Island, we found huge beached icebergs towering over us illuminated by incredible afternoon light but before too long the *Polar Pioneer* came into view to call an end to another great Antarctic paddle.

## DAY 9: Whalers Bay, Deception Island – Distance: 5 km

We sailed into the volcanic caldera of Deception Island and immediately jumped into our kayaks to do a little exploring. Whale bones and evidence of whaling industry littered the beaches while a young leopard seal slept undisturbed as we paddled by. Into Neptune’s Bellows and we could feel the incoming swell as we looked at sea caves and the huge cliffs that line the pass. We ventured between the island and a sea stack in moderate swells and every paddler comfortably negotiated the narrow pass with their newfound confidence gained over our week of paddling. Our intention had been to land on the beach below Neptunes Window, but the unpredictable swell prevented us from making the tricky landing, so we paddled to a secluded beach nearby and toasted our successful week of exploring the Antarctic Peninsula as the end of our expedition draws to a close.

## DISTANCE PADDLED: 105 KILOMETRES IN 12 OUTINGS









# Bird species log

BIRD SPECIES	DECEMBER - JANUARY									
	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Magellanic Penguin	x									
Adelie Penguin						x		x		
Gentoo Penguin			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Chinstrap Penguin			x	x	x					x
Macaroni Penguin										x
Wandering Albatross		x	x							
Southern Royal Albatross		x								
Black-browed Albatross	x	x	x							
Grey-headed Albatross			x							
Light-mantled Albatross			x							
Northern Giant Petrel		x	x							
Southern Giant Petrel	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	
Cape Petrel			x				x			x
Snow Petrel						x				
Antarctic Petrel										
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern)			x							
Blue Petrel			x							
Soft-plumaged Petrel										
Antarctic Prion		x	x							



Imperial Cormorant



Black browed Albatross



Snowy Sheathbill



Cape Petrel



Northern Giant Petrel



# Bird species log

BIRD SPECIES	DECEMBER - JANUARY									
	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Slender-billed Prion										
White-chinned Petrel		x	x							
Great Shearwater										
Sooty Shearwater										
Wilson's Storm-petrel		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
Black-bellied Storm-petrel			x							
Diving Petrel (sp.)										
Antarctic Cormorant			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Imperial Cormorant	x									
Rock Cormorant	x									
Snowy Sheathbill			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Chilean Skua	x									
Brown Skua			x		x			x	x	
South Polar Skua				x	x	x	x			
Kelp Gull	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Dolphin Gull	x									
Antarctic Tern			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
South American Tern	x									



Brown Skua



Antarctic Cormorant



Wandering Albatross



# Mammals species log

MAMMAL SPECIES	DECEMBER - JANUARY									
	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Antarctic Fur Seal										
Southern Sealion										
Southern Elephant Seal			x							
Crabeater Seal					x	x				
Weddell Seal			x	x	x		x	x	x	
Leopard Seal			x					x	x	
Sei Whale										
Fin Whale										
Humpback Whale			x	x			x	x		
Antarctic Minke Whale										
Sperm Whale										
Killer Whale (Orca)										
Hourglass Dolphin										
Dusky Dolphin		x								



Chinstrap Penguin



Humpback Whale

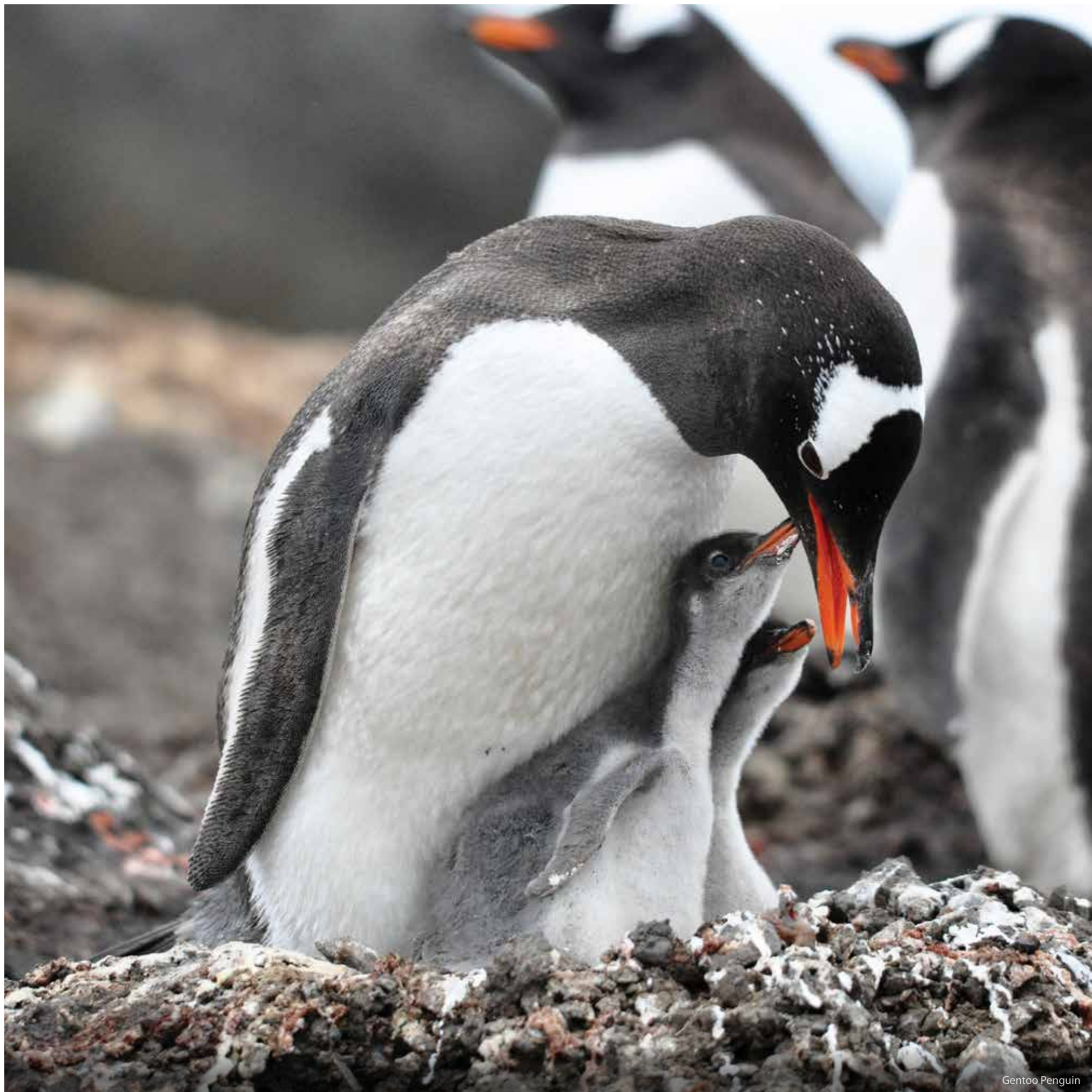


Adelie Penguin



Weddell Seal





Gentoo Penguin













# Expeditioners

Taryn Agius  
Jazz Agius-Jones  
Jack Amoss  
Dan Arnett  
Rachel Baker  
Neil Bergman  
Jackie Bourn

Russell Claydon  
Ross Claydon  
Jake Doyle  
Catherine Fawcett  
Kristine Ferguson  
Gail Grant  
Sharon Green

Matt Hatton  
Averill Hollond  
Anne Hollond  
Calder Hollond  
David Hollond  
Mostyn Hollond  
Sterling Hollond

Perry Jones  
Deborah Judah  
Matt Lemons  
Rachael Love  
Suzanne Lyndon  
Douglas Martell  
Grace Martin

Marc Narbeth  
Julie Paul  
Tony Paul  
Saquib Rahim  
Jamie Rogers  
Tony Smuts  
Dave Tabrett

Dorothy Tinker  
Jim Tinker  
John Traendly  
Simone Ubaldi  
Charlene Van Hofwegen  
Eric Van Hofwegen  
Darren White

James White  
Jenny White  
John White  
Matthew White  
Vicki White  
Brandon Yuan





## Expedition Team

Expedition Leader:	Stephen Anstee
Assistant Expedition Leader:	Justine Bornholdt
Naturalist:	Heidi Krajewsky
Doctor:	Judy Braga
Chef:	Allan Estoque
Second Chef:	Herbert Cruz
Hotel Manager:	Kathrine Ersando
Head Kayaking Guide:	Toby Story
Kayaking Guide	Chris Hipgrave
Head Snowshoe Guide:	Kevin Nicholas
Snowshoe Guide:	Hilary Cave
Expedition Guide:	Kasper Jaeger
Bar Tender/General Hand:	Jack Alscher

## Polar Pioneer Crew

Captain	Vladimir Zimin
Chief Mate	Maxim Makarovskiy
Second Mate	Evgenii Aleksandrov
Second Mate	Anton Bogdanov
Radio Operator	Ilia Liamzin
Chief Engineer	Evgeny Pavlov
Second Engineer	Pavel Voronov
Third Engineer	Evgeny Petukhov
Fourth Engineer	Yurii Horobets
Electrical Engineer	Valentin Lomachenko
Boatswain	Alexandr Agafonov
Able Seaman	Vasilii Berlizev
Able Seaman	Igor Popp
Able Seaman	Aleksandr Litvinov
Able Seaman	Aleksei Okunkov

Head Stewardess	Natalia Pustovalova
Stewardess	Evgeniya Chemiris
Stewardess	Alena Antonova
Stewardess	Anastasiia Peregontseva
Stewardess	Iliana Koval
Stewardess	Roman Trushin
Russian Crew Chef	Petr Pustovalov

## Photo Credits

Taryn Agius	Julie Paul
Stephen Anstee	Tony Paul
Rachel Baker	Tony Smuts
Neil Bergman	Toby Story
Justine Bornholdt	Dave Tabrett
Jackie Bourn	Charlene Van
Kristine Ferguson	Hofwegen
Sharon Green	Eric Van Hofwegen
Calder Hollond	John White
David Hollond	
Kasper Jaeger	
Perry Jones	
Heidi Krajewsky	
Douglas Martell	
Marc Narbeth	







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