



Spirit of Antarctica



07 – 16 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 | Monday, 7 January 2019

Frei Station, King George Island

Position:	18:30 hours	Course:	At anchor,	Wind Speed:	14 knots	Barometer:	990.6hPa & falling
Latitude:	62°12'S		Frei Station	Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	3°C
Longitude:	58°56'W					Sea Temp:	2°C

After months of preparation, weeks of excited anticipation and long, long flights from around the world, 52 adventurers congregated at Punta Arenas on the Straits of Magellan to make the flight south across Drake Passage to Antarctica. Weather conditions were fortunately calm in the country’s south making for a successful take off early morning. After a scenic flight, the plane touched down ahead of schedule at Frei Station on King George Island in the South Shetland Islands. Our Expedition Leader Stephen was there to meet us; before leading us along the long gravel road towards the beach. Near the end of the path we had a chance to pop into the Bellingshausen souvenir shop and up the hill to the Russian Orthodox church. Stephen briefed us on the do’s and don’ts of Zodiac embarkation and our drivers then briefed us on gangway disembarkation.

With lifejackets and gumboots on it was time to clamber into zodiacs for our ride to the *Polar Pioneer*, our home away from home for the next 10 days. We climbed up the gangway where Heidi snapped our photos, before we headed inside to find our cabins and explore the ship’s many nooks and crannies. Our 52 onboard expeditioners represent the nations of Australia (25), Canada (2), China (3), Germany (2), New Zealand (8), Netherlands (2), Spain (1), Ireland (2), UK (4), USA (3), along with 12 Aurora Expeditions staff from far and wide, 1 Ukrainian and 21 Russian crew members. Once settled into our cabins we ventured down to the dining rooms for a delicious lunch. Shortly after, Stephen called us to the bar on Deck 4 to talk about our

plans for our voyage and to introduce the Aurora Expedition Team. Before long, we returned to our 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 life-boats proved cosy. Two important briefings were next up in preparation for our first Antarctic outing. Heidi gave an animated presentation about IAATO and the guidelines that we need to follow and Stephen explained again 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. Shortly after it was back to our cabins to grab our outer gear for additional biosecurity checks. 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. Another delightful meal was prepared by our chefs Al and Bert and served by our lovely smiling waitresses Jay and Alyona. The coming days are revving up to be a whirlwind of activity and wonder as we immerse ourselves in the incredible world of Antarctica







DAY 2 | Tuesday, 8 January 2019

Half Moon Island, Whalers Bay; Deception Island

Position:	11:50 hours	Course:	73°	Wind Speed:	11 knots	Barometer:	994.6 hPa & rising
Latitude:	62°34'S	Speed:	11 knots	Wind Direction:	E	Air Temp:	5°C
Longitude:	59°50'W					Sea Temp:	1°C

Overnight, the Captain and his officers carefully navigated the *Polar Pioneer* away from her anchorage and steamed our way south along the South Shetland Islands. The day dawned misty, and with a fair few snow flurries in the air it was our cue to rug up. The first order of business for any Antarctic expeditioner is a hearty breakfast, so we made our way down to the dining room to enjoy fruit, cereal, eggs & bacon cooked by Al and Bert. Our first landing in Antarctica was scheduled for Half Moon Island, home to several chinstrap penguin colonies & a southern giant petrel rookery. The snowshoers headed off first to begin their hike from the north side of the island, while the rest of us followed soon after; climbing down onto Zodiacs or into kayaks. Once ashore, we marvelled at the decaying whaling dory and we were lucky to find a lone fur seal hauled up on the beach.

The Argentinian station Camara is located on the southwestern side of the bay. Heidi, Kasper and Stephen each led groups to the east side of the island toward the chinstrap colonies, clambouring over slippery rocks covered in a smattering of guano. On the way, we were treated with sightings of two elephant seals. As we wandered up to the colonies, we were greeted with a hive of activity. Eggs being turned, stones being stolen, pairs mating and the cacophony of courtship calls. Staff were on hand to answer pressing questions and identify different behaviours. Some of us were lucky enough to catch sight of Bruce – a lone macaroni penguin with a bright plume of yellow feathers. While macaronis normally only nest in South Georgia, Bruce nests in the same chinstrap colony each year. Back onboard, we raised anchor and headed further south.

Before long, 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 kilometres, it was an impressive piece of ice! Just as we were heading back inside, a group of humpbacks were sighted and we were treated to a display of their tail flukes. Mother nature at its best. After a delicious lunch, there was time for a quick siesta before we found our way to the lecture room for naturalist Heidi's talk on penguins. We learnt of the three brushtails we are likely to encounter while down in Antarctica: chinstrap; Adelie and gentoo.

Our afternoon stop at Whalers Bay is located in a caldera. We took a step back in time as we perused black volcanic beaches and remnants of old whaling stations, deteriorating old buildings and beautiful rust coloured tanks. A few gentoo and chinstrap penguins strolled along the black sandy shores and a few were fortunate to spot our second fur seal of the day. Those feeling active walked 1½km past a lucky sighting of a leopard seal and old whale bones up to Neptune's window for a wonderful view of the vast ocean and cliff face. Following several hours ashore, and giving our waterproof gear a thorough test, we returned to the ship for Captain's cocktail drinks in the bar. Captain Vladimir toasted to the *Polar Pioneer* and the positive success of our voyage!

Today we will spend our first full day on the Antarctic Peninsula!



DAY 3 | Wednesday, 9 January 2019

Ronge Island; Georges Point, Cuverville Island

Position:	21:15 hours	Course:	222°	Wind Speed:	10 knots	Barometer:	987.9 hPa & rising
Latitude:	64°45'S	Speed:	9.6 knots	Wind Direction:	SSE	Air Temp:	3°C
Longitude:	63°19'W					Sea Temp:	1°C

Often I feel I go to some distant region of the world to be reminded of who I really am. There is no mystery about why this should be so. Stripped of your daily routines ... you are forced into direct experience. Such direct experience inevitably makes you aware of who it is that is having the experience.
— Michael Crichton, 1988

Our first day exploring the Danco coastline on the Peninsula dawned bright and cold: a fresh layer of snow blanketed the peaks while the water around us glistened deep blue with the Antarctic sky above. The coast is named after Lieutenant Danco, a member of Gerlache’s expedition and this coastline acts as a major waterway/artery for wildlife and ships alike. As the Captain navigated us past large icebergs to our anchorage offshore of George’s Point, the bridge was the place to be as we were carefully manoeuvred into position. Eager to make the most of the beautiful day, we clamboured into Zodiacs and kayaks and made our way to shore. The snowshoers took off once we arrived, roping up with harnesses as they hiked their way towards a glacier for a scenic view over the Errera Channel.

The rest of us followed behind Heidi, as she led the charge through different colonies of nesting gentoos and chinstraps as they went about their nesting business. Some were stealing stones from each other’s nests, while others were carefully guarding their eggs or newly hatched chicks. These penguins had obviously started breeding a little later than those we visited yesterday on Half-Moon Island, as far fewer and smaller chicks were seen among them. Heidi and Stephen were on hand to help us identify different behaviours and features. The kayakers

enjoyed a long paddle towards George’s Point, before investigating some of the pebbly coves on the shoreline. As we returned to the beach, we found the tide had retreated substantially, leaving us to scramble over rocks and slippery kelp on our way back to the ship. A delicious lunch of lamb curry and a quick siesta later, it was time to explore again.

This time, our plan was to circumnavigate nearby Cuverville Island. We wove our way around all different shapes and sizes of icebergs: majestic dry-docks gleaming with their blue hues, compressed ice with their intricate patterns, chunks of roughly cut brash ice. Colossal glaciers lining the far shores completed this frozen landscape. We stopped to admire gentoo and cormorant colonies, perched high up on steep cliff faces. Some Zodiacs were also lucky enough to find a large leopard seal, hauled up on an ice floe. While it initially slept serenely as we eagerly took dozens of photos, it soon came to investigate; allowing us to get up close and personal! It was soon time to head ashore again to make a short landing at a cobbled beach on the northwestern side of the island. Such was the lay of the land that we could sit on the beach and watch the antics of gentoo penguins at eye level, to-ing and fro-ing along penguin highways, back to their nests or heading out to sea to forage. Some donned snowshoes and trudged through heavy snow to investigate nearby colonies, while others were content with finding a quiet spot to appreciate the grandeur of the peaks and glaciers lining the far shorelines.

Returning to the ship, there was time for a drink in Kathrine’s cosy bar, before a quick recap and a sumptuous dinner. The outer decks and bridge were buzzing late this evening as we cruised south down the Neumayer Channel. What a way to spend a Wednesday.







DAY 4 | Thursday, 10 January 2019

Goudier Island; (Port Lockroy & Jougla Point), Port Charcot

Position: 21:30 hours
Latitude: 65°05'S
Longitude: 64°02'W

Course: 175°
Speed: 4.6 knots

Wind Speed: Calm

Barometer: 983.9 hPa & falling
Air Temp: 4°C
Sea Temp: 1°C

Waking up, it was clear that our morning at Goudier Island may be challenged as a strong westerly wind buffeted the *Polar Pioneer*. A little too rough to kayak for the paddlers; but not too rough for our trusty Zodiacs. With a slight swell at the gangway, we took our time climbing down and made our way ashore.

The 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. Heidi from the UKAHT came onboard to brief us 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. Over at Jougla Point, we enjoyed our first sighting of crabeater seals hauled out on the sea ice. Their blonde fur contrasting against the white glacial backdrop made for a great photo.

Kev and Hilary took the snowshoers for a scenic hike around the point before finishing on a walk across the sea ice. Heidi educated us further on the behaviours of gentoos and Weddell seals before others had a chance to test the sea ice as well. As the morning went on, we were lucky to encounter another leopard seal hauled out on the ice, just as we were wrapping up the landing. Back on the ship, the chefs had prepared a tasty lunch of fish and chips, as we set sail for the Lemaire Channel. As we approached, the ice in the distance looked heavy as the light gently filtered through the magnificent scenery in front of us. In the days of film, Lemaire Passage was coined Kodak Alley, and we soon saw why.

The 11-km channel has straight-sided mountains rising from the water to 900 metres. On the bridge and out on deck we were captivated as the scenery and weather changed before our eyes. Enormous mountain peaks covered in snow were reflected for miles; while the silky-smooth sea glistened as the sun beamed down on us. Its reputation of grandeur and beauty is truly deserved. As we dropped anchor, the call came that we were headed ashore to Port Charcot, the overwintering site of Charcot's first French Antarctic Expedition. As we wove or paddled our way through the brash ice, the crystal-clear waters revealed penguins nimbly ducking and diving. Once ashore, we were treated to a sublime afternoon. The snowshoers headed off first, rounding the west side of Booth Island. Some decided to head up to the cairn built by Charcot and were treated to incredible vistas below: while brash ice still covered much of Port Charcot proper, a deep blue stretched out toward the horizon – only broken up by white foam from the crests of waves.

Some were lucky to even sight an elusive minke whale. Meanwhile, Heidi was hard at work breaking through knee-deep snow and found eight Adelie penguins, and some chinstraps amidst a Gentoo rookery. A brushtail trilectra! Justine's zodiac and the paddlers decided to explore the breath-taking Salpêtrière Bay. Several crabeater seals and a leopard seal were spread among the ice floe as they enjoyed the peacefulness of mother nature around them. Thanks to the seamanship and determined attitude of our Captain, we were able to break through the ice and experience a part of Antarctica that only few people get to. An evening cruise back through the Lemaire after dinner was a perfect ending to the day







DAY 5 | Friday, 11 January 2019

Melchior Islands, Portal Point

Position: 20:30 hours
Latitude: 64°31’S
Longitude: 61°45’W

Course: at anchor,
Portal Point

Wind Speed: Calm
Barometer: 989.3 & rising
Air Temp: 5°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

Waking to tranquil blue waters and clear skies with only a breath of wind, our day began in earnest with a humpback whale sighting early in the morning. Some who had stayed up the previous night reported over the breakfast table of tales of an incredible sunrise around 02:30 filtered golden light with shimmers/splashes of pink and turquoise. For the rest of us - recuperating in our cosy bunks. A morning’s Zodiac cruise around the Melchior Islands, an archipelago of narrow islets and rock stacks between Anvers and Brabant Islands sounded like just the ticket. Although the conditions appeared deceptively calm, a strong following swell meant that we rode the waves bouncing on top of our Zodiacs.

The Melchiors are home to the Argentinian Research Station Melchior. Numerous navigational markers on high points around the islands serve as beacons for passing ships. It was a beautiful morning to be out and about, we cruised past tall ice cliffs that covered all but the very rim of each rocky island. The occasional kelp gull, Antarctic tern or cormorant kept watch, while Weddell seals slumbered on rocks and snow slopes. We poked our way into narrow channels and coves, marvelling at the spectacular scenery. Some were lucky enough to catch sight of a Wilson’s storm petrel, skimming the crests of waves. The ice as always’s a highlight and we were treated to a selection of beautiful sculptured bergs, all of which showed several old water lines.

The swell also paved way for some intense action shots of waves crashing against the craggy rocks and shores of these islands. The paddlers enjoyed a standout paddle, riding the waves downwind before circumnavigating Gamma island. After a fantastic cruise, we returned for a

definite standout moment of our voyage – the infamous Polar Plunge. A brave 27 decided to abandon ship, diving, bombing or jumping into frigid waters as Kasper captured each priceless expression. A quick recap before a delicious lunch completed an unforgettable morning. Mid-afternoon, as we ploughed our way north-east along the Gerlache Strait, Heidi delivered an animated lecture on marine mammals, providing us with more information on our sightings of minke whales and humpbacks that we’ve been lucky to witness throughout our voyage. We also learnt about the different species of seals, all four of which we’ve seen so far: fur, leopard, crabeater and Weddell seal.

Late afternoon, we arrived at Portal Point for our landing on the continent proper. After sighting and cruising around the Peninsula for the last few days, it was time to head ashore. Climbing up the steep snow slope we found dazzling blue skies and million-dollar views of Charlotte Bay. We also caught sight of the remains of the Reclus Hut, and it was easy to imagine how cramped it must have been for the three British men who stayed there. After a tasty dinner, the time for our evening outing had finally come. 20 campers plus two staff agreed to give up their warm beds for a chance to camp out on the Antarctic continent. Sleeping bag, mattress pad and liner distributed, we farewelled our campers and retreated to the comfort of the *Polar Pioneer* and Kathrine’s cosy bar. Spokonye noche, shipmates!















DAY 6 | Saturday, 12 January 2019

Hydrurga Rocks, Intercurrence Island

Position: 19:45 hours
Latitude: 63°54'S
Longitude: 61°22'W

Course: at anchor,
Intercurrence Island

Wind Speed: Calm

Barometer: 981.3hPa & falling

Air Temp: 7°C

Sea Temp: 2°C

It was a whale of a time out on deck this early Antarctic morning. Overnight anchorage in Portal Point in lieu of our campers was certainly a fine choice. Before Stephens dulcet tones had a chance to wake us we were enjoying the company of humpback whales feeding in the bay. Some of our remaining campers enjoying a closer glimpse on their way back to the warm Polar Pioneer. With the anchor up, it was straight off to our first landing of the day at Hydrurga Rocks. The snowshoers made their way to Two Hummock Island; weaving through, around and over many large crevasses. Kevin falling in one on purpose to demonstrate how easy it can be to misjudge the shadows in the flat light.

The kayakers crossed the strait in between before joining the landing party onshore. Hydrurga Rocks; is 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 watched a colony of chinstrap penguins going about their nesting business. Chicks are now becoming little adults and barely fitting underneath mum or dad's tummy. Their fluffy coat too cute for words.

The snow providing a pleasant addition to our Antarctic morning as we embraced the conditions while roaming the island. Back on board, we had some time before lunch to catch up on sleep or enjoy the navigation of the Gerlache Strait. Always on the lookout for new adventure possibilities, Stephen head straight for Intercurrence (Intercourse) Island in the Christiania group. A monolithic long thin island with a deep cut through the centre, it looked pretty exciting from the ship and the big icebergs did not disappoint. We launched Zodiacs on the east side and motored north and down to the west side—which is directly exposed to the Drake Passage. As our Zodiacs rounded the north end of the island, they were met with a long gentle open ocean swell. The kayakers attempting a portage; however the surge channel conditions

proving a little too adventurous. Chinstrap colonies on small skerries, Weddell seals, kelp gulls and Antarctic terns flying overhead, we were even lucky to meet one curious leopard seal. We discovered an amazing fairyland of sheer lichen-covered cliffs rising some 40-50 meters with overhanging caps of ice. Weaving around between the islands through each channel was pure magic! During our time off the ship our fantastic hotel team were busy preparing an evening of festivities. We met in the bar for a short recap and briefing before being asked to slowly make our way to the dining rooms for a good old fashion BBQ.

Like musical chairs, we were each greeted with a silly hat on our seats, complimentary gluhwein, esky treats and a dinner of champions. Before long we made our way up to the bar to continue the party and sing like no one was watching. A big thank you to our captain and his officers for their exceptional navigation skills and for Stephens determination to get us exploring. This leadership combined allowed us to experience a part of Antarctica that only a few lucky people get too.

The great hurrah about wild animals is that they exist at all, and the greater hurrah is the actual moment of seeing them, because they have a nice dignity, and prefer to have nothing to do with me, not even as the simple objects of my vision. They show me by their very wariness what a prize it is simply to open my eyes and behold.

Annie Dillard,
Pilgrim at Tinker Creek



Walker Bay, Yankee Harbour

Position:	20:40 hours	Course:	356°	Wind Speed:	8 knots	Barometer:	985.3 hPa & rising
Latitude:	62°31’S	Speed:	11.6 knots	Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	4°C
Longitude:	59°31’W					Sea Temp:	1°C

After an entertaining night of dancing in the dining rooms and singing in the bar it was time to get stuck into our last full day of exploring Antarctica. Calm seas allowed for an easy embarkation down the gangway at Walker Bay on the south coast of Livingston Island. From a distance it looked as though rocks had been scattered along the beach but as we came closer, we realised we were in for a treat. Southern elephant seals sprawled out in wallows below the ash covered slopes. Among them we met wandering gentoos, chinstraps, and three giant petrels; one of which was a rare white morph. The adolescent male seals were busy testing their strength as they rumbled, jousting one another in preparation for life as an adult male.

The kayakers found themselves in a prime position to get a closer view of the elephant seals from the water. After an incredible morning, we returned to the ship for a warm drink and a group photo on the bow. We rugged up and posed with our Captain and the Aurora team to capture the prize-winning photo. With an hour to go before lunch we thought we’d have time for some much-needed R&R, and then the unexpected happened. Orcas! Orcas! Orcas! The Bransfield strait in a frenzy both on the ship and in the water. For the next 30 minutes we enjoyed a display of dorsal fins, spy hopping and activity all around us. A massive thanks to our officers on the bridge for maneuvering our beloved little ship so we could experience that moment in all its glory. Since day two Captain Vladimir has hoped for us to experience killer

whales and today that wish came true! After all of the excitement it was time for a delicious lunch and a short siesta as the *Polar Pioneer* steamed further north along the chain of the South Shetland Islands for our last landing in Antarctica. Yankee Harbor would have sheltered ships over many years including whalers and sealers. A very old, rusting try pot can still be seen on shore above the beach, a relic of these past pursuits. The gentoo penguins nesting along the shelf of the beach had three-week old fluffy chicks.

These chicks were squeaking, running around, and feeding on regurgitated krill from their very attendant parents. In a perfect ending to our Antarctic adventure, the sun appeared from behind thick clouds over the surrounding mountains; sugar-coated in glaciers and snow. The snow-shoe team headed off up the slopes to overlook the harbor in a fitting finale to a week’s hard trekking, before sliding back down. It was definitely hard to tear ourselves away from the scenery and penguins to return to the ship, but our spectacular day in the South Shetland Islands had come to an end. Back on the *Polar Pioneer* we reminisced about the day’s events over a drink in Kathrine’s cosy bar, before we savoured a tasty dinner by our favourite chefs, Al and Bert. By popular demand Happy Feet was played in the lecture room before we prepared ourselves for the open sea. Drake Passage here we come!







DAY 8 | Monday, 14 January 2019

Drake Passage

Position:	11:15 hours	Course:	322°	Wind Speed:	12 knots	Barometer:	991.9 hPa & rising
Latitude:	59°57'S	Speed:	11.2 knots	Wind Direction:	NW	Air Temp:	3°C
Longitude:	62°14'W					Sea Temp:	1°C

No rest for the weary! As we woke this morning to rolling seas and no land in sight, it was a reminder that we'd begun our transit north across the dreaded Drake Passage. Thankfully, the rough seas that the Drake is renowned for were nowhere to be seen, with a reasonably mild swell. After a whole week of landings on cobbled beaches and cruises beneath majestic icebergs, paddles through calm channels and around towering cliffs, snowshoes across crevasses and beneath glaciers; most of us were looking forward to some much-needed R&R. But who said that sea days were lazy days?

At 0930 we headed to the lecture room for Kasper's presentation: Antarctica Discovered. Kasper brought the era of Antarctic exploration to life as he filled us in on past epic polar voyages. For many of us, hearing of the hardships fared by expeditions such as those led by Robert Scott, Ernest Shackleton and Roald Amundsen, it was fascinating to understand the reasons for both success and failure. As we've now experienced first-hand some of the harshness of the Antarctic weather (who could forget the dramatic swells at Intercurrence Island?), we were able to appreciate the mammoth tasks faced by explorers battling through such conditions daily. Kasper also filled us in on the discoveries made by lesser-known expeditioners, such as Jean-Baptiste Charcot, who overwintered twice on the Antarctic Peninsula, providing essential navigation charts and comprehensive scientific data for later exploration efforts.

A quick trip up to the Bar was then in order to begin the long process of sorting through our hundreds of photos for our voyage log; before we hurried back to the lecture room for Heidi's animated lecture on killer whales and Antarctic krill. We learnt about the different sub-species of killer whales, which can be classified by their eye patch size and diet. Heidi informed us that the pods of killer whales that we observed were Type B orcas, which eat seals and penguins.

Particularly interesting was Heidi's hypothesis that the orcas we saw were two distinct pods that had met in the Gerlache Strait, due to the prevalence of algae on only some whales. Heidi also stepped us through the centre of the Antarctic food chain krill. Then provided a timeline of some of the regulations and authorities tasked with making sure that krill are sustainably caught. Krill are incredibly important as a keystone species in the Antarctic: as primary consumers, nearly every animal whether that be a gentoo penguin or humpback whale, relies on krill (directly or indirectly) as an essential food source.

A filling of pizza lunch followed, before many retired with cups of tea for a siesta or to begin packing the odds and ends stored in the various nooks and crannies around our cabins. Mid-afternoon, some made their way down to the lecture room to watch the documentary Ice and the Sky, while others rugged up and braved the cold on the outer decks, watching as seabirds began to circle above the Polar Pioneer's wake.

A drink & recap in Kathrine's cosy bar, before an early dinner was on the cards for the evening. We savoured another tasty meal of roast pork, before Stephen announced the viewing of Around Cape Horn.



Drake Passage, Cape Horn, Beagle Channel

Position:	18:30 hours	Course:	305°	Wind Speed:	36 knots	Barometer:	986.6 hPa & falling
Latitude:	55°05'S	Speed:	11.1 knots	Wind Direction:	NW	Air Temp:	9°C
Longitude:	66°34'W					Sea Temp:	9°C

As we had passed the Antarctic Convergence overnight, we woke with the news that the sea and land temperature had increased by a few degrees as we approached the South American mainland. The smooth seas that we had enjoyed throughout our crossing continued as we ploughed our way further north. This, coupled with crossing the convergence, meant that we were treated with a myriad of bird life with plentiful sightings of giant petrels, a reminder of how close we are to Argentina. This being our final day aboard the *Polar Pioneer*, we began the long process of searching for clothing and gear hidden in the nooks and crannies around our cabins.

After another hearty breakfast cooked by Al and Bert, Judy kicked off the morning by delivering an interesting presentation on her year living at one of the Australian bases in Antarctica – Davis Station. She immersed us in the daily life, acting as a doctor for the research team. An experience like no other as she walked us through life on the station, the often-rough (and snowy!) conditions and the fun. Who’s keen to apply?! A quick cuppa later, we headed back down to the lecture room for Justine’s disembarkation briefing.

She walked us through our arrival in Ushuaia, and some of the highlights of this city, known locally as el fin del mundo (the end of the world) as it’s the southernmost city in the world! Surrounded by snow-capped mountain peaks and temperate forests, Ushuaia serves as the gateway to the Beagle Channel. A trip up to the Bar was then in order to settle our shipboard accounts with Kathrine and add our emails to the exchange list with Jack before we devoured a delicious final lunch of Pasta al Vodka.

Mid-afternoon, just as we were waking from much-needed naps, Stephen announced that we were rounding Cape Horn - one of the windiest places on earth, and a beacon for past epic Antarctic and Pacific expeditions. As we crossed toward the Beagle Channel, our trusty ship began to rock and roll with the waves. While some brave adventurers donned their layers and ventured outside & onto the ‘fly bridge’ to gain intense action-shots of waves crashing against the *Polar Pioneer*, others remained in the comfort of inside the Bridge.

Before long, just as we were finishing some last-minute packing, Justine announced Captains’ Drinks in Kathrine’s cosy bar. With tasty fruit punch and scrumptious canapes in hand, we toasted Captain Vladimir and his crew for the success of our voyage and reminisced over the last week of experiences. Meanwhile, the chefs had cooked up a feast for our final night. The celebrations of good memories continued over a sumptuous dinner of lamb chops and crème brulee; and we thanked our wonderful stewardesses – Jay, Anastassia, Iliana and Alyona; and our chefs – Al and Bert, for all their hard work.

I am the albatross that waits for you at the end of the earth.

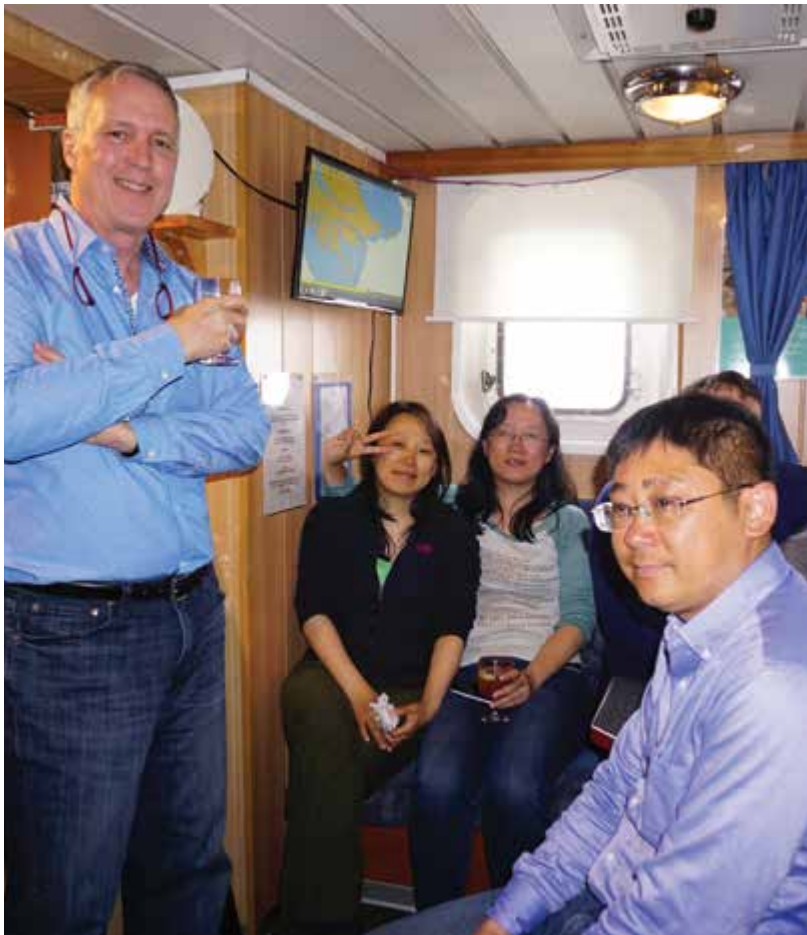
I am the forgotten soul of the dead sailors
who crossed Cape Horn
from all the seas of the world.

But they did not die
in the furious waves.

Today they fly in my wings
to eternity
in the last trough of the Antarctic winds.

— Poem inscribed on the Cape Horn albatross monument
written by Sara Vial.





DAY 10 | Wednesday, 16 January 2019

Ushuaia

Position:	07:20 hours	Course:	docked at Ushuaia	Wind Speed:	10 knots	Barometer:	1003.9 hPa & rising
Latitude:	54°48'S			Wind Direction:	NE	Air Temp:	5°C
Longitude:	68°17'W					Sea Temp:	9°C

Today, the final day of our Antarctic voyage as new adventures await us at and beyond Ushuaia. We awoke in port to an early 6.15am wake-up call ‘Good morning ladies and gentlemen good morning’ oh how we’ll miss Stephens soothing dulcet tone. Before breakfast, we left our luggage outside each cabin and navigated once more through the corridors for our final hearty breakfast prepared by our fabulous chefs Al and Bert. To think only 10 days ago we were strangers not only to each other but to the extraordinary world of Antarctica.

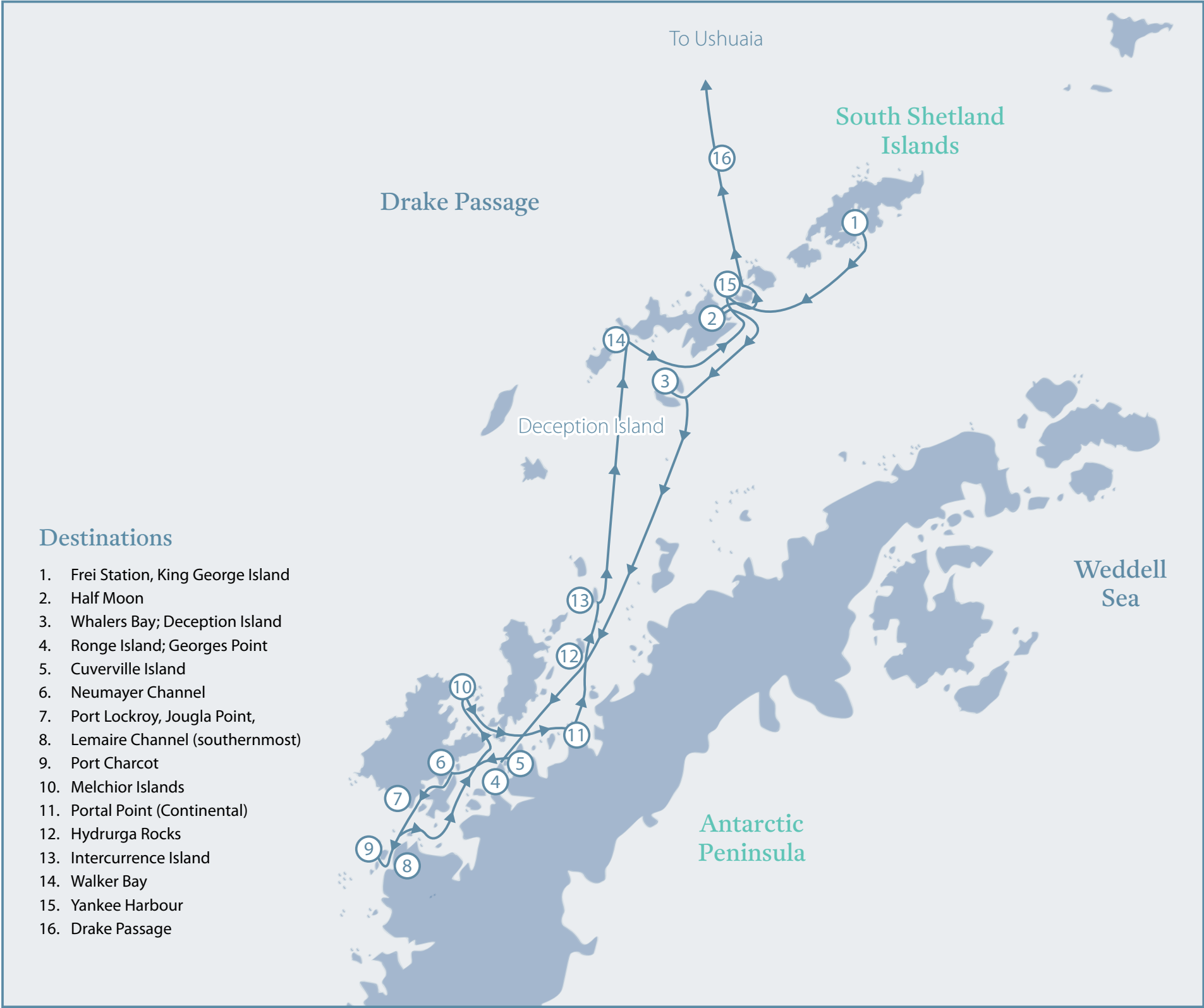
May the memories of malodorous but adorable penguins; wallows of belching elephant seals; Weddell seals; humpbacks; killer whales in the Gerlache Strait, brash ice; Zodiac cruises; icebergs, glaciers, an ocean alive with seabirds; wild sea crossings; slothful crabeater seals; curious leopard seals; the majestic Lemaire Channel; a BBQ; polar plunge, plus a whole swathe of kayaking and snowshoeing experiences live on and on. Our voyage has certainly been one to remember/a trip of a lifetime.

To quote Water Rat to Mole in Wind in the Willows: *Believe me my young friend, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats... simply messing.*



Spirit of Antarctica

07 - 16 January 2019 | Distance Travelled: 968 nautical miles | Southernmost point of voyage: 65°07' S, 64°01' W



Kayaking Log

By Chris Hipgrave

Kayaking Guide: Chris Hipgrave

Kayakers:

Elysia Adams	Christine Dos Santos	Helen Roche
Rob Briggs	Augusto	Gabrielle Satherley
Mike Burgess	Guy Gilbert	Oliver Threlfall
Craig Burrell	Peter Horobin	
Jan Cossar	Janine Lippi	

DAYS 1: At Sea

DAY 2 (AM): Half Moon – Distance: 7 km

After getting familiar with our kayaks and equipment, we disembarked the *Polar Pioneer* for a little paddle around the east end of Half Moon Island. With no wind, calm seas and comfortable temperatures, we ended up with the perfect shake down paddle. Along the way we saw our first chinstrap and Adelie penguins in addition to cormorants and a dozen or so hauled out Weddell seals. One young Weddell followed us for a little while, no doubt trying to figure out what we were. A comfortable introduction to Antarctic kayaking.

DAY 2 (PM): Whalers Bay, Deception Island – Distance: 7 km

We departed the *Polar Pioneer* and gently paddled towards Neptune’s Bellows. Along the way we spotted a leopard seal, some penguins and a lovely cormorant colony with their fat young chicks squawking at us as we paddled by. We ventured in to Neptune’s Bellows and soon found the ocean to be rougher than we wanted, so we turn back into the Deception Island caldera and headed to the old Whaling Station to enjoy an hour on shore exploring the remnant of the darker historical side of this lovely island and still active volcano.

DAY 4 (AM): Georges Point – Distance: 8 km

With the *Polar Pioneer* anchored up nearly 2km offshore, we geared up and enjoyed some huge icebergs as we made our way towards Ronge Island. We even found a little bergy-bit we could paddle thru. Once near shore we followed the numerous penguins towards their vast colony on Georges Point where we met up with the rest of the passengers and had a fantastic little walk in the deep snow where we saw gentoos with chicks and eggs. With time running out, we reluctantly left the colony at Georges Point and headed back to the *Polar Pioneer* but not before we found the opportunity to kayak thru some brash ice for the very first time.

DAY 4 (PM): Cuverville Island – Distance: 9 km

The kayak team left the *Polar Pioneer* to tackle one of Antarctica’s iconic circumnavigations of Cuverville Island. After dancing around some large icebergs, we reached the shore of the island and found ourselves alongside a huge gentoo colony. Leaving the area, we pushed thru a large brash ice field and also found an unusually large purple jelly fish floating near the surface, later identified as a Lions Mane jelly fish. We spent a long time with the jelly fish memorized by its movements. Moving into the back of the island we continued to play in the ice until we reached water boat island and then continued to play thru the ice before heading back to the *Polar Pioneer* to end an incredible afternoon.

DAY 5 (AM): Port Lockroy & Peltier Channel

Unfortunately, we cancelled the kayaking this morning due to sustained 20knot winds, gusting to 30knot, with light snow, low temperatures and poor visibility. Instead we visited historic Port Lockroy and explored Jougla Point on foot.

DAY 5 (PM): Pleneau Island & Port Charcot – Distance: 9 km

What a difference a few hours makes to the weather in Antarctica! After the *Polar Pioneer* blazed a trail thru a very icy Lamaire Channel, we dropped anchor in Port Charcot and jumped into our kayaks bathed in warm sunlight, cloudless skies and still conditions. We moved south towards Pleneau Island investigating huge icebergs moving around in the current at astonishing speed. We found several dead ends amongst the icebergs, but eventually found safe passage to the bottom of Pleneau Island. We jumped out of our kayaks on a small rocky outcropping and climbed to the top and were rewarded with incredible views of the area and a warm welcome from half a dozen gentoo penguins that inhabited the small rocky outcropping. Our guide, Chris, found some safe speed ice and we took turns venturing onto the ice to grab a great picture. Several folks commented that they were feeling warm so an impromptu swimming session started in the glacial waters, giving everyone a chance to test their dry suits and find out if they had closed their zippers (or not). Sadly, time ran out so we climbed back into our kayaks and cruised back to Port Charcot after a memorable afternoon.

DAY 6 (AM): Melchior Islands – Distance: 9 km

A solid swell rolled thru Melchior Bay bucking the Zodiac as we climbed into our kayaks. Once everyone was safely on the water we ducked west into a series of islands and found some craggy rocks exploding the incoming swell and reflecting it in many different directions. We moved north towards the end of the bay fighting into the swell and wind before finding a small outcropping with three Weddell seals sleeping the day away. We soon rounded the top of the islands and enjoyed a spirited downwind paddle across the center of the bay, past the *Polar Pioneer* and the Argentine Base Melchior into the calmer waters behind Gamma Island. Several of the team got their first surfs in the swell as we enjoyed the helpful push. With the weeks activities starting to take its toll on energy levels, the team slowed as we rounded the southern base of Gamma Island giving us time to take a long look at the heavily fissured glacial cliffs that looked reading to calve at any moment. The swell wrapped around the corner of the island and rejoined us for one final push to complete our circumnavigation of Gamma Island and our return to the *Polar Pioneer* where many decided to participation in the Polar Plunge.

DAY 6 (PM): Portal Point – Distance: 6 km

A lazy paddle to Portal Point thru the numerous icebergs in gloriously warm and calm conditions. Once at the landing site, we popped out of the kayaks to stand on continental Antarctica for the first time this expedition. After celebrating our landing with photos and a little exploration of Portal Point, we took a slow cruise back to the *Polar Pioneer* to prepare for the camping out that very night.



Kayaking Log

By Chris Hipgrave

DAY 7 (AM): Hydrurga Rocks – Distance: 6 km

A light paddle around Hydrurga Rocks to wake up the mind and body after snow camping last night. A swell pushed us to the rocks where we enjoyed time amongst the penguin and cormorant colonies as we ducked into many of the coves the rocks has to offer. Numerous Weddell seals slept the day away and barely acknowledged our presence on their little rock.

DAY 7 (PM): Intercurrence Island – Distance: 7 km

With little information about this incredible island, the kayakers ventured off the ship to attempt a circumnavigation of Intercurrence Island. We headed to the narrow rock gap separating the island from the peninsula and made a landing thru a small swell onto the rock shelf. The team man handled the boats to the other side but found the launch into the western side too exposed to the swell so turned around. The circumnavigation would have been easier with less swell and a higher tide, and Aurora will be back to complete this circumnavigation at another date. Back in the water we headed north into growing swell and enjoyed a little play near the rocks as the expanse of the eastern rock wall of this island loomed over us. At the very northern top of the island we glimpsed down the exposed western side of the island and saw just some of the magic that will bring us back here at another date. We turned here and enjoyed following sea back to the *Polar Pioneer* having thoroughly enjoyed the adventure and opportunity to see a small part of Antarctica rarely visited.

DAY 8 (AM): Walker Bay (Hannah Point) – Distance: 5 km

A light snow fell as the kayakers departed the *Polar Pioneer* for a lite cruise around Walker Bay. What a great day to end our kayaking adventures with these beautiful Antarctic conditions. Upon reaching the back we found several large haul outs of elephant seals so popped out of our boats and got a take a closer look at these beach masters. We also found fossils that underscored that Antarctica was once and equatorial continent. Returning to the kayaks, we completed our loop of Walker Bay and continued to find elephant seals and a huge penguin colony before we had to head back to the *Polar Pioneer* and end our amazing week of kayaking in Antarctica.

DAYS 9 & 10: Drake Passage

DAY 11: Ushuaia

DISTANCE PADDLED: 73 KILOMETRES IN 10 PADDLES





Snowshoeing Log

By Kevin Nicholas and Hilary Cave

Snowshoe Guides: Kevin Nicholas and Hilary Cave

Snowshoers:

Rafael Dos Santos Augusto	Fiona Nation	Wang Wang
Chris Cox-Hancy	Mae Richmond	Cynthia Wu
Liza Cox-Hancy	Oliver Sherwin	Wei Wu
Sebastian Engel	Rosemary Threlfall	Eddie Zabilowicz
Tanja Fauth-Engel	Fiachra Tierney	

DAYS 1: At Sea

DAY 2: Half Moon Island

A great little shake down trip in gentle terrain. Our entire group of 12 set out for an introduction to snowshoeing in Antarctica. We made our way from the rocky shoreline to the snow where we familiarised ourselves with the new equipment and crisp environment. We then explored a little of Halfmoon Island. Fresh snow meant we had first tracks as we made our way along the spit, past the deserted Camaro base to a lovely first encounter with chinstrap penguins and Weddell seals. We joined the rest of the passengers to return to the ship.

DAY 3: Georges Point

What an Antarctic start to the day! We left our landing site and wove our way through Gentoo penguin rookeries. We roped up before we headed onto the glacier, adjusting our pace to move together with our rope buddies. We set off up the glacier – yesterday’s fresh snow a bright icing on the surface. Our high point was a small Col overlooking the icy sea and impressive glaciers below.

DAY 4 (AM): Jougla Point

After a visit to the museum and historic huts at Port Lockroy we had a short zodiac ride over to Jougla point. We meandered along the shoreline navigating through numerous Gentoo colonies. The grey sky and “light” winds kept us moving round the inlet, uncovered skin quickly numbed, we kept our hoods up and like true Antarctic explorers forged on into the teeth of the wind. Fabulous views of the towering peaks – the seven sisters impressed.

We picked our way along the sea ice edge wary of the softening conditions before stepping out to walk on the fast ice. Weddell seals snoozing on the ice provided a photo blitz opportunity. Kev hacked a hole in the sea ice with his ice axe showing us that the water was not far away!

DAY 4 (PM): Port Charcot

After the excitement of the ship cruise through the Lemaire Channel we arrived at Port Charcot. The warm, calm conditions made this the perfect spot for a group “plank” photo opportunity. We then made a circumnavigation of the point – removing our snowshoes at one stage to walk along the boulder strewn beach, then cliffs to sea level blocked our path. Undeterred, we tromped up and up to the high point cairn.

DAY 5: Portal Point

After some superb ice navigation our ship finally stopped opposite Portal Point. Our first mainland landing saw some of our group finally tick their seventh continent. Easy slopes across a prominent neck lead to the glaciers above. The high point afforded a marvellous view of the high polar plateau along the Antarctic Peninsula.

DAY 6: Two Hummock Island

After a night camping out in Antarctica a small group of us braved the fog and snow to explore Two Hummock Island. It was a foreboding approach as Ilia landed our zodiac in surging sea on a boulder strewn point. Surrounded by glaciers plunging directly into the ocean we climbed a steep initial slope. It was time for Kev and Hilary to get us up close and personal with the crevasses we had been so careful to avoid thus far. We took turns at crawling to the edge and peering into the icy depths, demonstrating perfectly why this roping up was necessary! Tentatively we straddled and stepped our way – the ship lost in the mist below.

DAY 7: Yankee Harbour

Our last opportunity for an excursion had a good turnout ready to go with Elia to a landing on the outside of a sheltering spit, which made our landing a bit more difficult, but with patience and timing we all got ashore with dry feet. We climbed steadily from the beach, and with one last steep pitch at the top of our slope we arrived at a clifftop viewpoint. From here we looked down on our fellow passengers on the spit far below. It was a great outing to finish our week. The best way back down the steep section was snow shoes off and sliding on our backsides, which was exhilarating. A stroll along the beach with snow shoes in hand soon had us at the zodiacs, and it was back to the ship for the last time.









Bird species log

BIRD SPECIES	JANUARY									
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Magellanic Penguin									x	
Adelie Penguin			x	x						
Gentoo Penguin	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Chinstrap Penguin	x	x	x	x	x		x			
Macaroni Penguin		x								
Wandering Albatross								x		
Southern Royal Albatross										
Black-browed Albatross						x		x	x	
Grey-headed Albatross										
Light-mantled Albatross										
Northern Giant Petrel								x	x	
Southern Giant Petrel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Cape Petrel		x								
Snow Petrel			x	x						
Antarctic Petrel										
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern)					x					
Blue Petrel										
Soft-plumaged Petrel										
Antarctic Prion								x		
Slender-billed Prion										



Gentoo Penguin



Chinstrap Penguin



Antarctic Tern



Antarctic Cormorant

Bird species log

BIRD SPECIES	JANUARY									
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
White-chinned Petrel								x	x	
Great Shearwater										
Sooty Shearwater									x	
Wilson's Storm-petrel		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Black-bellied Storm-petrel										
Diving Petrel (sp.)										
Antarctic Cormorant		x	x	x	x	x				
Imperial Cormorant									x	
Rock Cormorant										
Snowy Sheathbill		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	
Dolphin Gull									x	
Antarctic Tern	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
South American Tern									x	



Southern Giant Petrel



Adélie Penguin



Kelp Gull



Snowy Sheathbill



Cape Petrel

Mammals species log

BIRD SPECIES	JANUARY									
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Antarctic Fur Seal		x								
Southern Sealion									x	
Southern Elephant Seal		x					x			
Crabeater Seal				x	x					
Weddell Seal		x	x	x	x	x				
Leopard Seal		x	x	x	x	x				
Sei Whale										
Fin Whale										
Humpback Whale	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Antarctic Minke Whale										
Sperm Whale										
Killer Whale (Orca)							x			
Hourglass Dolphin										
Peale's Dolphin									x	





Weddell Seal







Expeditioners

Elysia Adams
Eddie Amon
Rob Briggs
Mike Burgess
Craig Burrell
Ron Cameron
Elizabeth Cameron
Jan Cossar

Chris Cox-Hancy
Liza Cox-Hancy
Rafael Dos Santos Augusto
Christine Dos Santos Augusto
Jackie Ellis
Sebastian Engel
Tanja Fauth-Engel

Eve Flaim
Michael Flaim
Andrew Foote
Liz Foote
Karry Garcia Roces
Helen Gidley
Bruce Gidley
Guy Gilbert

Troy Harrison
Peter Horobin
Jeff Kilmer
Janine Lippi
Grant Lodge
Sarah Lodge
Rae Mckenzie
Barbara Mclure

Brian Morris
Richard Murphy
Marion Murphy
Fiona Nation
Manja Nederkoorn-Dijkstra
Brian Nicholas
Mae Richmond
Chris Roach

Helen Roche
Gabrielle Satherley
Oliver Sherwin
Lu Smit
Glenn Taylor
Oliver Threlfall
Rosemary Threlfall
Lisette Tiddens

Fiachra Tierney
Wang Wang
Wei Wu
Cynthia Wu
Eddie Zabilowicz



Expedition Team

Polar Pioneer Crew

Photo Credits

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
Kayaking Master: Chris Hipgrave
Snowshoe & Ski Guide: Kevin Nicholas
Snowshoe Guide: Hilary Cave
Expedition Guide: Kasper Jæger
Bar Tender/General Hand: Jack Alscher

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

Elysia Adams
Justine Bornholdt
Mike Burgess
Craig Burrell
Ron Cameron
Hilary Cave
Jan Cossar
Chris Cox-Hancy
Liza Cox-Hancy
Rafael Dos Santos
Augusto
Christine Dos
Santos Augusto
Sebastian Engel
Andrew Foote
Liz Foote
Karry Garcia Roces
Kasper Jæger
Heidi Krajewsky
Janine Lippi
Sarah Lodge
Fiona Nation
Kevin Nicholas
Mae Richmond
Gabrielle Satherley
Oliver Sherwin
Lu Smit
Oliver Threlfall
Rosemary Threlfall
Lisette Tiddens

Ship's log written by Justine Bornholdt &
Jack Alscher – Log compiled by Justine Bornholdt



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