



# Spirit of Antarctica



10 – 20 November 2019 | *Greg Mortimer*



## About Us

Aurora Expeditions embodies the spirit of adventure, travelling to some of the most wild and remote places on our planet. With over 28 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 | Sunday, 10 November 2019

# Ushuaia

Position:

Latitude:

Longitude:

18:00 hours

54°49'S

68°18'W

Course:

83°

Wind Speed:

Calm

Barometer:

979.9 hPa & steady

Air Temp:

7° C

Sea Temp:

9° C

*Explore. Dream. Discover.* —Mark Twain

After weeks of excited anticipation and long, long flights from around the world, we finally arrived in Ushuaia, ‘el fin del mundo’ (the end of the world). After a good night rest, we were eager to begin our Antarctic adventure, but first we were collected from our hotels after lunch for a tour of the old airport and prison museum on the outskirts of town.

Before long it was time to make our way to the ship. At 1600, we pulled up alongside the *Greg Mortimer*, our floating home away from home for the next 11 days. With the X-Bow design, she is a vessel that clearly stood out from the other the ships nearby, helped, no doubt, by a perfect backdrop of brilliant blue sky and high snowy peaks.

Our leadership trio of Howard, Stephen and Justine welcomed us at the wharf and photographers Scott and Massimo snapped a photoboard shot of each of us before we headed up the gangway.

On board, we met some of our crew and hotel team, who kindly escorted us to our cabins and began our induction into shipboard life. Once unpacked, we settled in and began exploring the ship's many levels. in the Elephant Island Bar on deck 5 we enjoyed an impressive embarkation buffet accompanied by champagne and good company. The place was buzzing! Expedition leader Howard called us into the lecture Theatre to introduce the rest of the team and hotel director Franz gave us an insight to life on the GM.

The sound of seven-short-one-long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes and bring our bulky orange lifejackets to the muster station. Raj and Vishal made sure we all were present before further instruction came from the bridge. With lifejackets fitted it, we set off for the lifeboats - portside first, followed by starboard, we were led up to deck 7 to complete the drill.

With free time before dinner and a healthy curiosity as to what's what on this stunning new ship, we continued our exploration of the many stairwells and began discovering of our new favourite spots.

At 2030, Captain Oleg ordered the lines cast off, fired up the thrusters and fingered the joy stick to steer us east along the beautiful Beagle Channel. Chilean skuas,. As the bustling town of Ushuaia gradually receded, we were encouraged on our way by Chilean skuas, giant petrels and a host of other avian pilots to celebrate our departure for Antarctica. On our port side, the snow-capped peaks of Argentina glowed in the twilight. While Chile, to starboard, offered the first sighting of dolphin gulls.

On board, we total 120 adventurers with nationalities representing Australia (63), United Kingdom (30), Brazil (4), United States (10), Canada (3), New Zealand (2), Ireland (2), France (2), India (2) and Netherlands (2), along with 20 far-flung Aurora Expeditions staff and 102 crew from around the globe. Today we continue our preparation for landing as we near the icy continent.





DAY 2 | Monday, 11 November 2019

# Drake Passage

**Position:** 15:15 hours  
**Latitude:** 58°01'S  
**Longitude:** 064°07'W

**Course:** 160°  
**Speed:** 15 knots

**Wind Speed:** 10 knots  
**Wind Direction:** SW

**Barometer:** 1008 mb  
**Air Temp:** 8°C  
**Sea Temp:** 9°C

After an unusually summery day in Usahuaia and with vital communication links reinstalled, we dropped our lines and gently moved off the dock at 9:00pm. Prior to sailing, we participated in the mandatory man overboard and lifeboat drills – donning our bulky orange life vests, being checked off on the manifest and standing in military rows, facing each other, on the stern deck at our muster stations. All good fun, though a quiet reality check of the hazards of ship travel in big oceans. A calm Beagle Channel set us on our journey as the sun set on the snow - capped mountains.

Initial calm conditions prevailed, until we emerged from the lee of Cape Horn, when a brisk southwest wind started a gentle rocking of our world. Southern black-browed albatross and a menagerie of petrels joined us on our passage. The Deck 8 observation lounge and rear decks enticed many photographers and those who were simply enjoying this new environment.

In our first lecture, Sea Birds of the Southern Ocean, Heidi our naturalist, explained the polar front - the biological boundary to the Southern Ocean. We learned of many of the species we hope to see, including those already identified by keen birders this morning. Using a length of string to demonstrate wingspan, Heidi left us in awe at the scale of the albatrosses surviving in the polar environment and the importance of krill as the cornerstone food.

Scott lead an interactive presentation on how to get the most out of your cell phone camera. Comments of “ahhhh, I’ve always wondered what that icon is...” could be heard as people discovered how to perfect their digital images. The sea began to swell and heave but the *Greg Mortimer* rocked gently, while the sick bags waited idly along the passage way handrails.

The open bridge concept on this ship allowed us ‘bridge tours’, the officers explaining complexities of the ships’ vast dashboard. Some people nodded learnedly, while others gasped in awe at the glowing control panels. Fingers stayed in in our pockets, away from the temptation of the shiny levers and switches!

After a sumptuous lunch, Heidi explained the IAATO guidelines, particularly how we need to behave ashore in Antarctica with the five-metre rule our minimum approach distance to wildlife. Howard, our expedition leader, tutored us on Zodiac and shore operations. Following the briefing, the expedition team guided us to the mudroom to find our lockers and to confirm the fit of our warm muckboots .

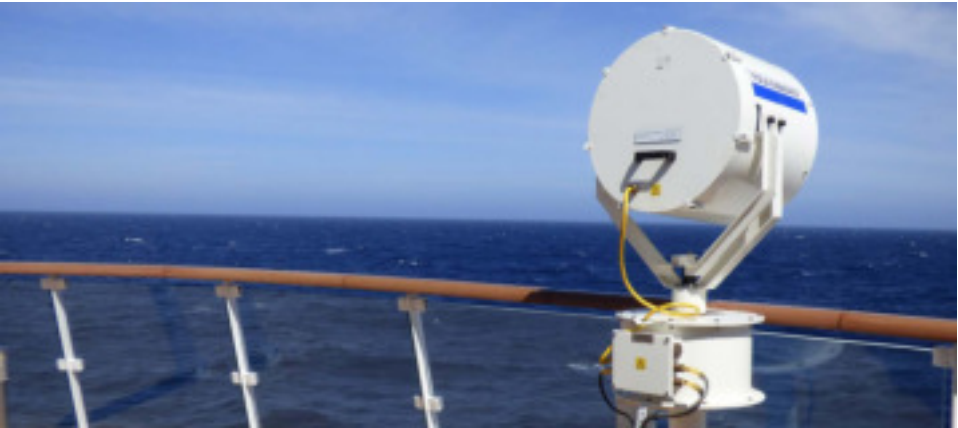
As the afternoon progressed, our ship began to play in the waves – swaying and tossing in the swell. Cabins with portholes on deck three and large windows on deck four had waves sloshing and crashing into the glass. The wind howled and the expedition staff, at least, enjoyed the motion as the new ship ‘the GM’ served us an authentic Drake passage experience.

Passengers and staff explored the multi-layers of decks and passages for the best vantage spots. The floating dock aka ‘the bouncy castle’ lashed onto the stern deck proving a popular place to watch soaring sea birds play in the ships’ wake.

Our last activity for the afternoon was biosecurity to ensure we don’t carry any invasive organisms to Antarctica. It meant time spent checking and vacuuming our outer clothing and bags – some of us surprised to find old granola bar crumbs and seeds hidden in the recesses of our backpacks.

At pre-dinner Captain’s drinks in the lecture lounge, our officers were presented, and we toasted the first full day of our expedition.

Krill spawn during the southern summer —December to March — with each female laying several thousand eggs in the upper layers of the ocean. The eggs sink for 10 days, then hatch as ‘nauplii,’ up to one kilometre down. The nauplii develop through various larval stages to adulthood.







DAY 3 | Tuesday, 12 November 2019

## Drake Passage; Half Moon Island

<b>Position:</b>	20:00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	28.8°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	20 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	973 hPa & falling
<b>Latitude:</b>	61°24'S	<b>Speed:</b>	20 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	SW	<b>Air Temp:</b>	-3°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	061°10'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	1°C

Sea conditions eased overnight, gently rocking most of us into a deep slumber. Cape petrels and even the occasional rarer Antarctic petrel soared about the ship on a now ethereal misty morning. A hearty breakfast followed by briefings and a fascinating presentation from Ben on Sealing and the Discovery of Antarctica. Fortunately, these days the exploitation of this pristine environment has been banned since the oil extracted from the area's wildlife fuelled the industrial revolution.

As the presentation began, a large iceberg loomed out of the fog and lecture room emptied to marvel at this colossal piece of ice. Sheer sided with hues of light blue surrounding its base it was an impressive introduction to the Antarctic. Having made great speed south we arrived in the South Shetland Islands prior to lunch.


A spectacular entrance to the islands through the current swept MacFarlane Strait. Many of us had not been through this straight before, but the captains extensive experience and local knowledge allowed for this fascinating short cut and more time for the afternoons activities. Our first penguins were sighted porpoising alongside our comfortable home. Those that had felt a little of the "mal de mare" quickly recovered and savoured lunch before our afternoon landing. The seas having eased as we came into the lee of the islands.

Half Moon Island was our destination with activities streaming in all directions. A colony of chinstrap penguins call this island home along with the more secretive storm petrels not yet here as their nesting sites in crevasses beneath the rocks are still covered in snow. We all had a great work out making our way through the snowy landscape, watching the antics of our first penguins. Some caught sight of a pair of skuas ganging up on a blue-eyed shag until it finally relented with its hard-earned fish that the skuas rapidly devoured.

The next weather system started to come through while we were out, bringing snow and a good dose of wind that made our return Zodiac ride a little damp and our evening drinks taste even better. The kayakers really earned their dinner having to pull hard back to the ship in the building breeze.

Alexander and Heidi interpreted many behaviours of animals we'd seen ashore and Howard filled us in on our plans for tomorrow during a quick recap before dinner.

During the evening we made our way south down the middle of Bransfield Strait toward the Northern Gerlache. As the wind increased to over 40 knots, we were glad to be in the partial protection of the Shetlands



Birds have it better than we do, in many ways, and here are three, with wings they fly by day and night, and never have a cancelled flight, with feathers they have clothes that always fit, in styles that never change a bit, and what we envy most, I'd say, with bills they never have to pay.







DAY 4 | Wednesday, 13 November 2019

# Hydrurga Rocks, Portal Point

Position:	06:45 hours	Course:	290°	Wind Speed:	6 knots	Barometer:	999 hPa & steady
Latitude:	64°08'S	Speed:	5 knots	Wind Direction:	SW	Air Temp:	-2°C
Longitude:	61°30'W					Sea Temp:	4°C

*I have often had the impression that, to penguins, man is just another penguin – different, less predictable, occasionally violent, but tolerable company when he sits still and minds his own business.— Bernard Stonehouse, Penguins*

After yesterday's stormy day, there was a lot of waiting for today. How is Antarctica welcoming us this morning?

The answer is not long in coming, since dawn the sun accompanies us. While *Greg Mortimer* anchors, everyone goes to get ready. The ritual of dressing begins in multiple layers, dressed in onion style. Keeping warm is important and, as we saw yesterday, weather can change for the worse without warning, so the waterproof layer is important.

With Hydrurga Rocks less than two miles away from *Greg Mortimer's* bow, first the skiers and the snow shoers, then the rest of the group jump into Zodiacs, while the kayakers launch themselves into the sea from the stern of the ship. Still strong from the day before, the paddlers are the most eager to have a quiet day to enjoy the icebergs to the fullest.

And they will be satisfied. The sun has kissed us all morning and sea and blue sky are separated in the middle by a long tongue of snow and ice. We are surrounded by glaciers and there are icebergs everywhere. For kayakers it is a zig-zag enjoyment in the ice while the shore group has its first close encounter with a weddell seal that is lazily enjoying the sun. Not at all disturbed by the presence, of so many human beings, it lends itself to the photographic attention of everyone for over two hours.

The group moves along the island, from one end to the other with gentoo chinstrap penguins and Antarctic cormorants amongst lichen painted rocks. Snow is soft, the sun dazzling.

But the best is yet to come. As we return to the ship, a small colony of adélie penguins observes our passage from an iceberg. We stop to admire them, then suddenly there are whales behind us. Two humpback whales sound and dive showing their signature tails. What a great ending! Before lunch, that's exactly what was needed.

During lunch we travel to Portal Point, our exciting first Antarctic continent landing with also a cruise amongst the ice to discover glimpses to photograph and marine fauna to spot. Meanwhile the sun has hidden behind the clouds, a persistent greyness surrounds us and it begins to snow, but no one is demoralized. Two humpbacks suddenly blow near the bow of the ship and the cruisers accompany them amongst the ice for a while. On the landing, the group launches from "panettone" of snow down a face first bumslide while in the sea floating ice sculptures are immortalized.

The skiers glide into view and the snow show group clump past. Only a few weddell seals loll, but after the full morning, even so it's fine. Indeed, a bit of variety enriches the adventure. And then, we are only at the beginning, there is always tomorrow.





Report of Penguin Ornithological Society of Antarctica (POSA)

By Gay Jacobson

(Exciting new observation made by our Gentoo spotters of Hydrurga Rocks)

An enthusiastic contingent of Gentoo spotters at Hydrurga Rocks recently made an exciting discovery of an apparent new species to the area.

Our Gentoo spotters having just finished a gourmet krill lunch, were making their way to their rookery when they observed what appeared to be a huge black nest travelling across the water. The nest was making a large harsh sound as it made its way with some speed towards the beach. It contained several large creatures. When the nest reached the beach another large creature with red plumage pulled it in. The creatures with blue and black plumage stepped onto the beach removing a piece of decorative red plumage from around their necks.

Our Gentoo twitchers described these creatures as enormous flightless birds which had no beaks or tails and having flat faces of a nondescript colour. The sounds they emitted were varied in tone and volume. Some of the birds had pouches that may fulfil the function of carrying pebbles and/or eggs. These large flightless birds made their way to stand a short distance from the Gentoo rookery. It would appear this behaviour had voyeuristic intent as they showed great curiosity in the Gentoo courting and mating process. It is hoped that at some stage we will have the opportunity to observe the courting and mating rituals of this large flightless bird.

Eventually the birds made their way back to the large nest on the beach having donned the attractive red plumage once again. They stepped into the nest and left the beach with the nest making its loud harsh noise.

Our Gentoo twitchers are to be congratulated on the discovery of these birds in the Hydrurga Rocks area.

Application has been made by POSA for the ornithological classification of this interesting species. This species has temporarily been classified as Hydrurga Humanicus.



Laetitia Campe



Laetitia Campe



Laetitia Campe



Laetitia Campe



DAY 5 | Thursday, 14 November 2019

# Peltier Channel & Cuverville Island

<b>Position:</b>	11.00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	225°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	12 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	993.5 hPa & rising
<b>Latitude:</b>	64°57'S	<b>Speed:</b>	9 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	W	<b>Air Temp:</b>	0°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	63°31'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	2°C

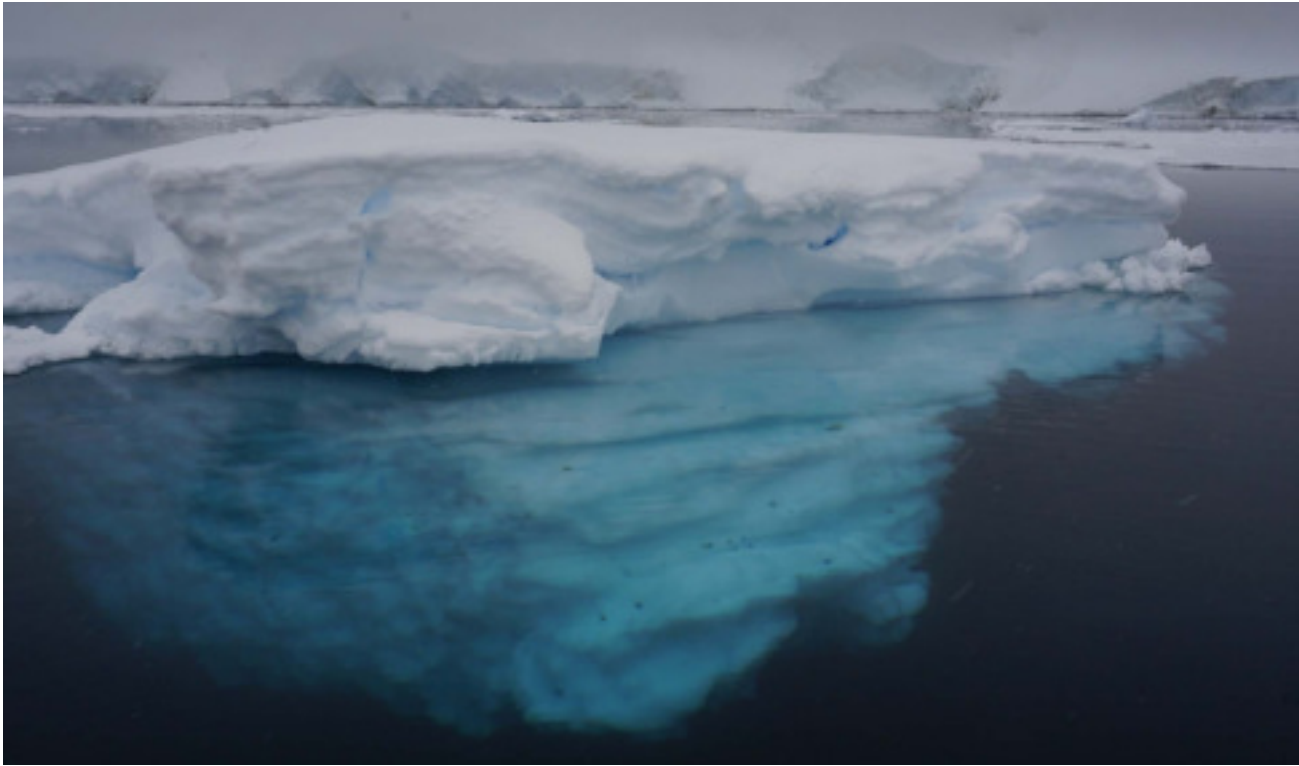
This morning the wind chill factor added to the low of minus 6 Celsius, making conditions bracing and causing textured ice on the outer decks. The wake-up call came early to get us ready for the cloud - wreathed ice and nunatak landscape of the Neumayer Channel. The *Greg Mortimer* wound her way to the southwest with the dramatic summit of Mount Français on Anvers Island to the north of us. Our morning's intention of exploring the area around Port Lockroy and Wiencke Island was thwarted by sea ice that had blown into the anchorage, choking our passage. Too much ice even for a sturdy Zodiac to push ashore, but with our enthusiastic ice captain, Oleg, at the helm there were adventures to be had with this new ice-strengthened ship.

A few turns as close as we could get to Goudier Island, allowed us to look at the post office building with its resident gentoo penguins on site. Heading further south through the narrow, ice-filled Peltier Channel revealed crabeater seals lounging on ice floes and gentoo penguins porpoising in the water as the ship pushed through ten tenths ice. Cameras were clicking and video was rolling as, from various vantage points, we watched the hull split the pans of ice. The ice floes eventually thinned and we gained the clear water in the wider channel of the Gerlache Strait, heading north to our afternoon landing.

This was an opportune moment to have a presentation from Massimo about creativity and composition in photography. Illustrated with some of his beautiful images, we learned about the rule of thirds and how to tell the story in a photograph.

Close to our arrival at Cuverville Island in the Errera Channel, our delicious lunch was interrupted by an announcement from Howard that Killer Whales or Orcas had been sighted. The bridge team manouvered the ship to our advantage and we saw several small family groups of Type B Antarctic Killer Whales, some near and others in the distance. A few females with their young calves accompanying them came very close to investigate this new hull in their waters, while the long - finned males lurked on the periphery.

Cuverville Island had several beautiful large ice bergs resting on the neighbouring shallows. Zodiacs seemed to stream in every direction with teams of climbers, skiers, snowshoers and gentoo penguin observers heading to different landing sites. The penguins seemed to grow more and more curious as the afternoon progressed. The passing waves on snow trails slowed as the penguins were content to stop and observe as we observed them! On the cobble beach, we could watch them streak past in the crystal - clear shallow water observed by a couple of Adélies. All too soon it was time to return to the ship, through a maze of ice canyons and towers festooned with stunning icicles of turquoise hue.





# Lemaire Channel; Pleneau Island

<b>Position:</b>	06:00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	222°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	19 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	981 hPa & falling
<b>Latitude:</b>	64°59'S	<b>Speed:</b>	6 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	SW	<b>Air Temp:</b>	-4°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	63°46'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	3°C

Today is what Antarctica is all about, ice! All types of ice; brash ice, sea ice, icebergs, pancake ice, glaciers, so many beautiful ice sculptures overwhelming our visual senses. The morning was magical as the mist and fog lifted to reveal the impressive towering peaks and the Hotine glacier as we cruised through the Lemaire channel. The captain demonstrated how maneuvering around these frozen obstacles was all in a day's work in Antarctica. Impressive nonetheless, and a sign of many years' experience, a comforting thought for many of us.

We could hear the sounds of sea ice, carved by the ship and the scraping of icebergs along the hull of the ship as it moved effortlessly through the channel. The Ulstein Xbow was being put to the test and, happy to say, passed with flying colours.

But nature always has a way of reminding us that, at any point in time, things can change. We arrive at Pleneau only to be greeted by the howling winds blowing a gale. Snow was careering off the mountains and the wind on the ocean was gusting to 30+ knots. It was a waiting game which eventually paid off as Howard gave the signal to launch the zodiacs. Pleneau is famous for its icebergs and it didn't disappoint; a myriad of shapes, colours and patterns encompassed this seascape as we explored the intricate details of many of these frozen sculptures. Zodiacs went off in different directions, but we somehow came together to find a large piece of sea ice.

Everyone had the same Idea, let's see if we can step foot on this floating white platform! The zodiac drivers set sight on their piece of this floating playground and with a bit of momentum behind them created a parking space for all to venture out. Snow angels, and snow ball fights were on the agenda and the zodiac parties gathered their troops as

the snow ball battle commenced. Losses were encountered on both sides, some of the passengers even turned on their zodiac drivers, Bad move! 10% of people not returning to the ship is an acceptable loss, right?

After lunch we headed for our next destination, Petermann Island, but again plans turned around due to weather and ice. Plan B let's head back to Pleneau and attempt a landing. Climbers, skiers, snow shoers all headed up into the hills but the journey there was where the adventure started. A few zodiacs went into the thick fast - moving brash ice to get the skiers and climbers to land.

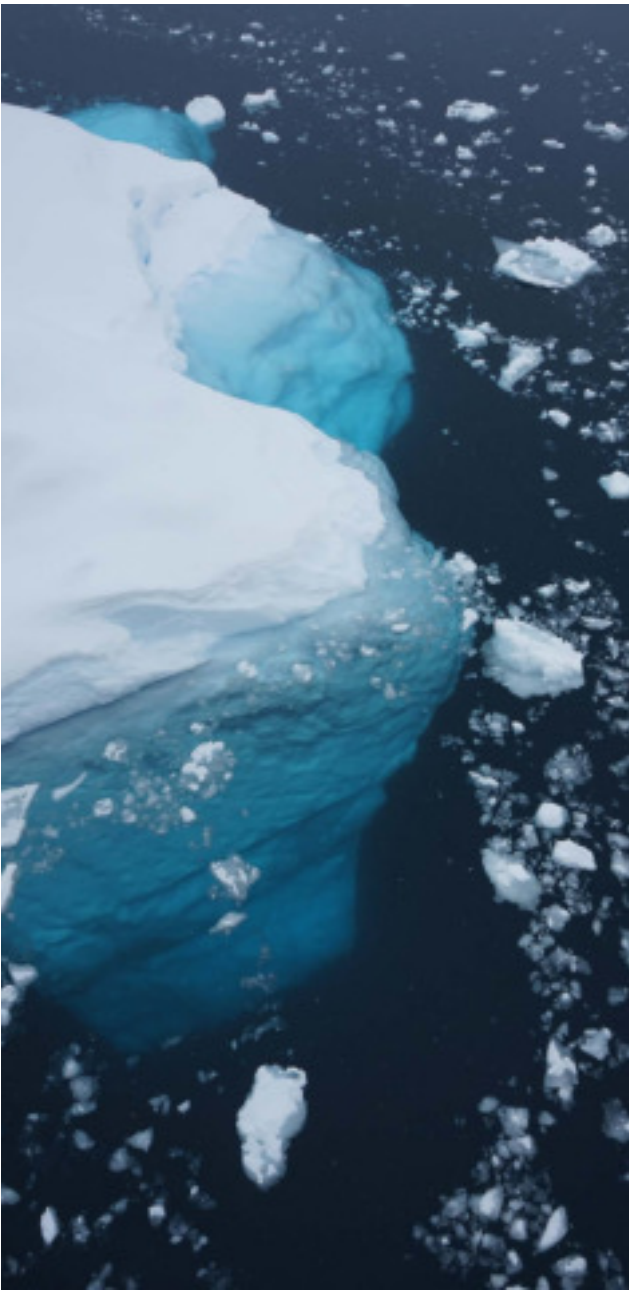
This however proved a bit more difficult than expected and Howard led the charge finding narrow gaps between the ice to squeeze a zodiac through while pushing large chunks of sea ice out of the way. What a way to spend your birthday, Howard! I think you were in your element though, exploration into the unknown with some unassuming participants along for the ride. But finally, we reached land and the team disembarked for their adventures.

Everyone battled the ice today! Kayakers scooted around the edges, but the ice was closing in and Frank had to lead his fearless paddlers to open water before they became part of the landscape. The highlight for the kayakers was some love - struck penguins on a piece of ice, floating in the vast expanse of white. Love was in the air, but some other suitors had different ideas and decided to interrupt their moment.



## Icebergs

Up to 4 billion tonnes of ice is released from the icecap into the southern ocean every year. white, slab-like 'tab-ular' icebergs, which form from ice shelves, can be sev-eral hundred kilometres long. Bergs from valley glaciers are smaller, denser and contain ice that's flowed under pressure from distant inland sources, having taken many thousands of years to reach the sea. the age of air trapped in bergs when the ice formed can be calculated from the flow rate of the parent glacier. Scientists analyse this air to chronicle changes in atmospheric gases over the millennia





# Brown Station; Neko Harbour

**Position:** 07:00 hours  
**Latitude:** 64°51'S  
**Longitude:** 62°54'W

**Course:** 127.6°  
**Speed:** 3.8 knots

**Wind Speed:** 10 knots  
**Wind Direction:** NE

**Barometer:** 990 hPa & steady  
**Air Temp:** -2°C  
**Sea Temp:** 2°C

*Eades left a party of ten with a year's supplies on Marion Island. Although he had told the men that he would return to collect them in nine months. Eades left them intentionally for over two years. Class and Colonialism in Antarctic Exploration, 1750-1920. —Ben Maddison (Historian on MV-Greg Mortimer Maiden Voyage)*

Our trusty ship juddered through ice, still under a dove grey sky, our destination Paradise Harbour and our second continental landing. Dense blue ice and broken - down tabular bergs, possibly 400 years in the creation, reflected in the mill pond waters and a sneaky crabeater seal wandered in to the landing site for a look. Gentooes gathered sedately around the Argentinian hut station of Almirante Brown awaited both the melting of the snow and the arrival of the summer scientific team. We heard stories of lore of the doctor who burned down the base when his one year tenure looked like stretching to two.

Stoic giant penguins followed Howard and Ben, as they tunneled like moles up through the deep soft snow to the summit for a hazy view over Paradise, searching for the whales that used to be congregate here in large numbers. The burnslide was slow to start at first, but headfirst back sliding heroes smoothed the way. Snow – shoers followed the climbers around a small circuit, Hillary again looking small but strong when photographed against the vast snow slopes. The skiers found good views but quickly disappeared into the mist. Skontorp Cove was a magical mystery tour of imperial cormorants in their high nests, close to a streak of copper sulphate reminding us of the mineral wealth of Antarctica. Bizarre densely blue bergs bobbed amongst little mushrooms of ice constantly tinkling and moving and there was a moment to feel the muted sounds of this special place. Some popped onto a rather mushy floe for a real iceberg experience and we watched the brightly coloured kayaks battle through the ice.



Passing another ship at lunchtime, our next landing at Neko Harbour also promised some heights to climb and downslide. Gentoo penguins porpoised down the slopes and gainfully marched up the snow. On the shore large sold ice blocks on the raised beach reminded us of the power of the glacier opposite sending a tsunami of ice toward our shore. This is a time of waiting and mating, of shifting stones and stealing stones, as there is preparation for the short summer of productivity in Antarctica. We did not disturb this energy but perhaps added our own as we moved around the slopes. Ice floes swept around the point, wind and current driven, making our egress from the beach with a falling tide, constantly changing.

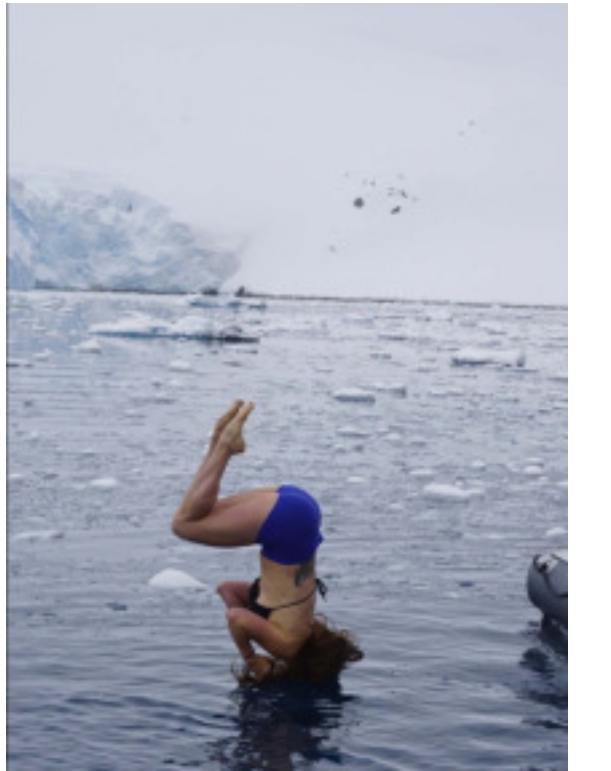
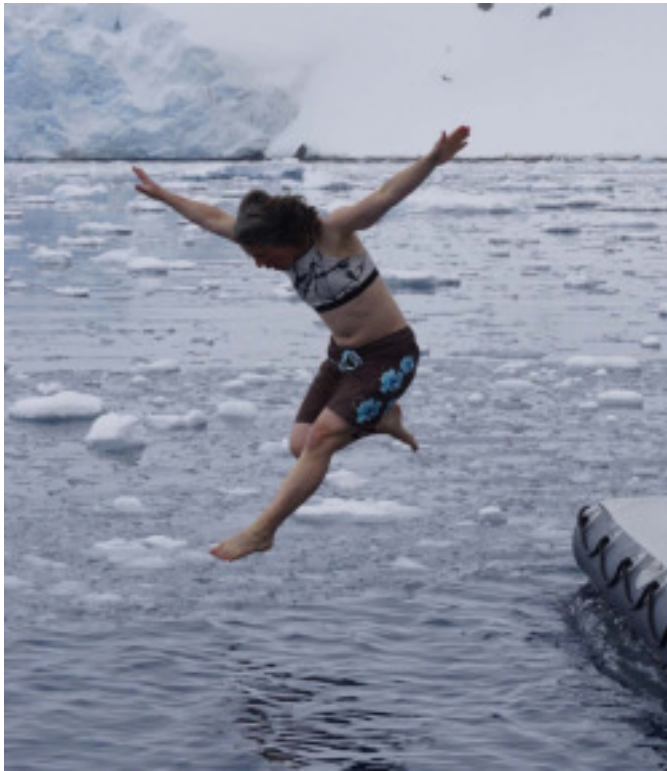
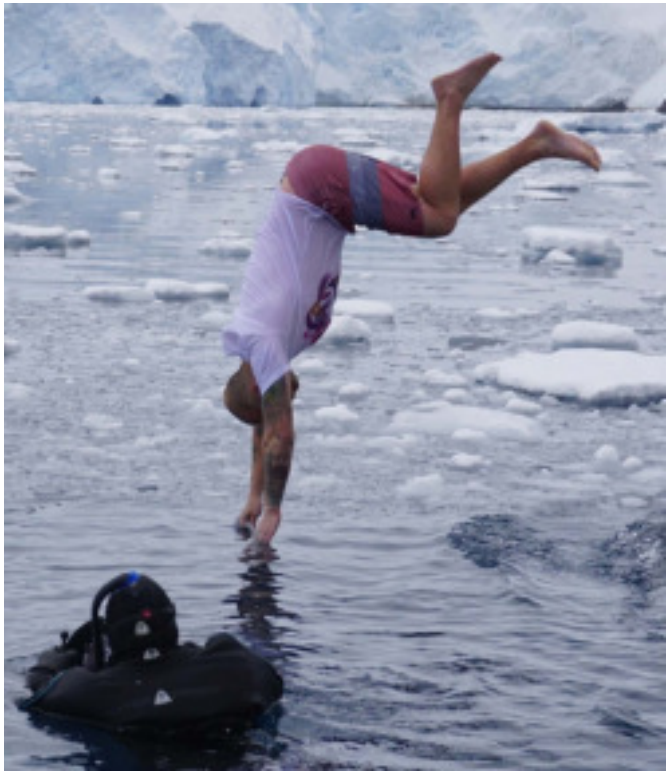
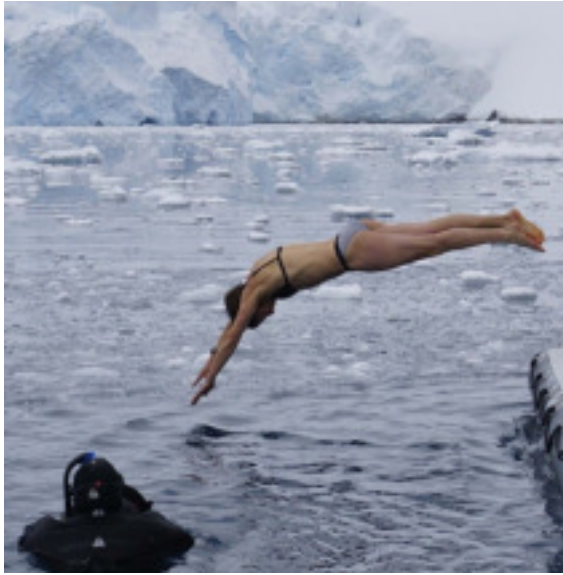
Many were rushing back to the ship to select their swim suits for the inaugural polar plunge from the bouncy castle attached to the marina. Spectators on levels 5 and 6 cheered encouragement as, against a backdrop of glacial ice, many styles of flips and dives were rated by the crowd. Scott, in the water and Massimo, in the difficult to position Zodiac, captured the anguish and ecstasy. Thaiyal, in her exuberance to be amongst the first to jump, proved her bravery in being a new swimmer – this wonderful place encourages wild behavior in waters of two degrees! The crew and staff followed in penguin manner, happy for this opportunity to exuberantly dive in – 64 the final total!

A sauna full to the brim after the vodka shots, squashed in many very proud and happy people who have accomplished a rare feat! Aclimatisation to the cold seems to take about 6 weeks, think of Cherry Apsley Garrard's tale of the worst journey in the world, and compare that to our journey on our comfortable ship. Already many of us are finding a three degree day positively balmy!

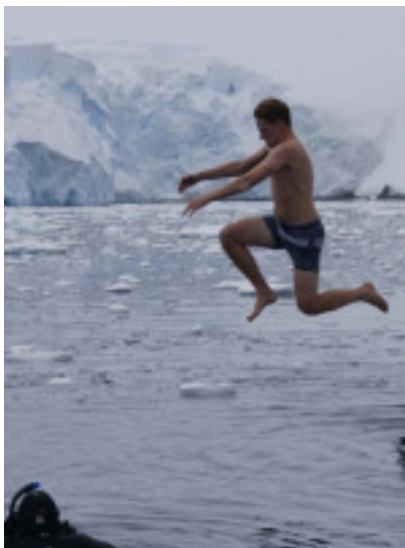
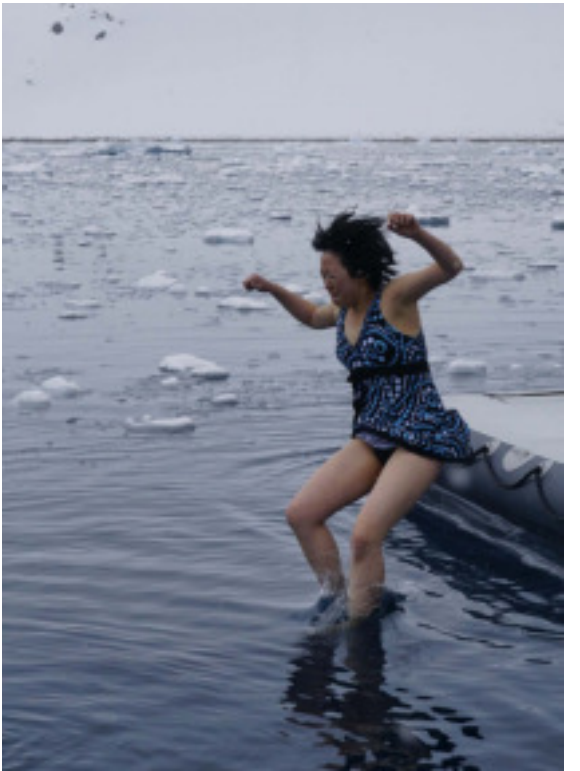
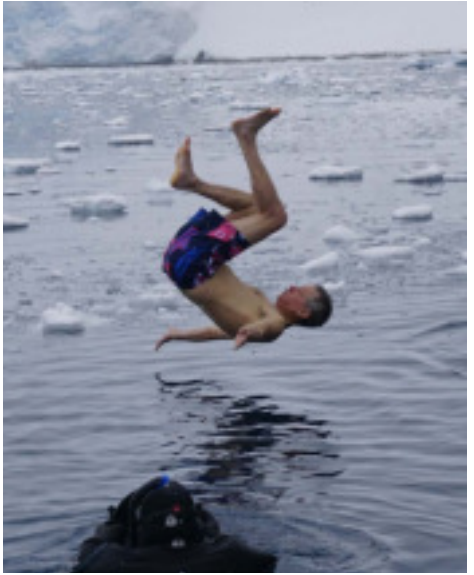
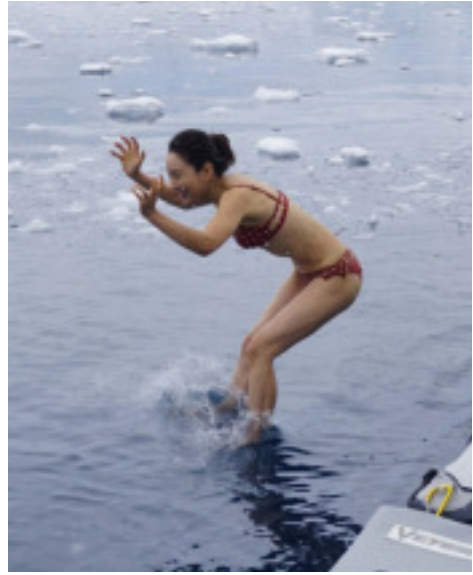
The bar was abuzz with rosy cheeked people, happy in their achievement and converts to the joys of cold water swimming!



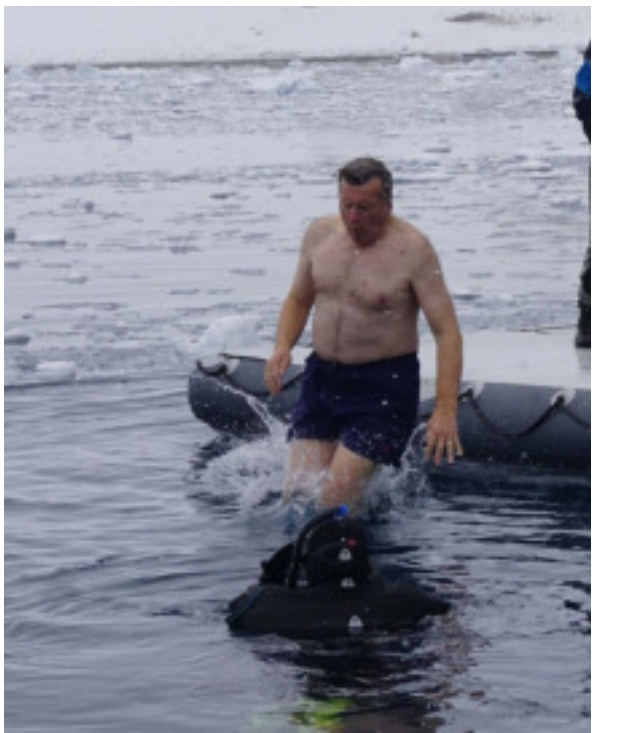
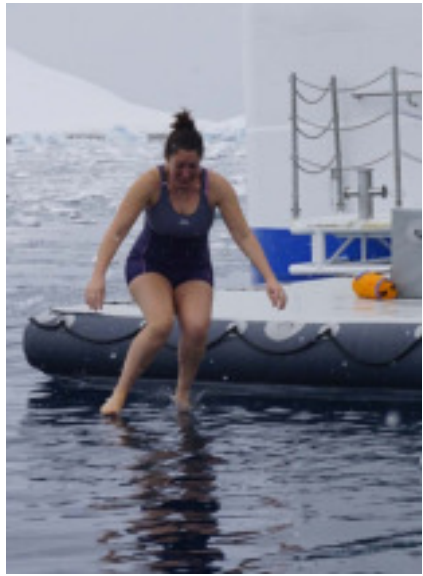
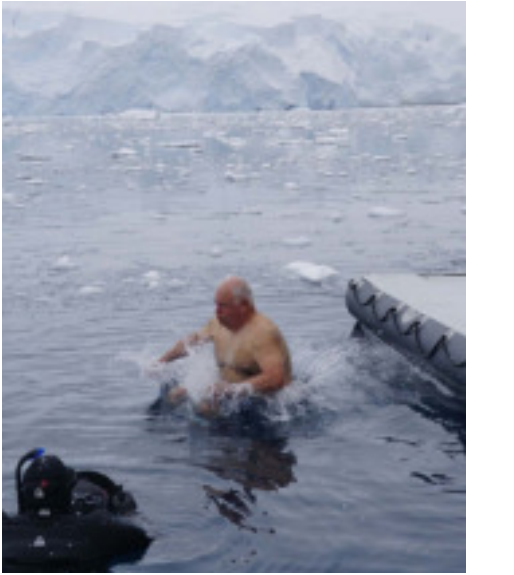
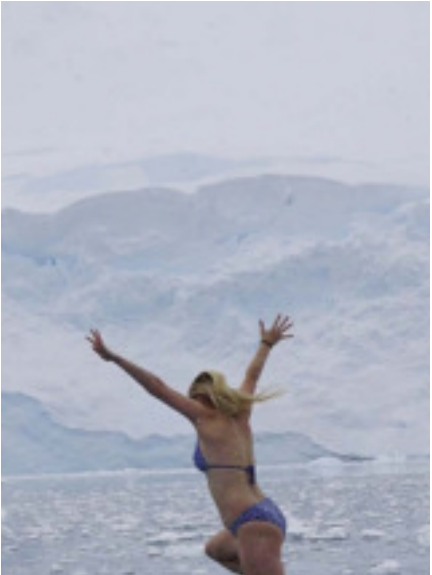
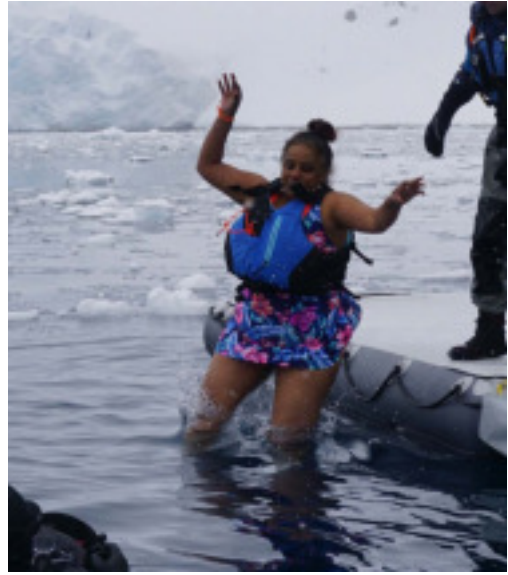
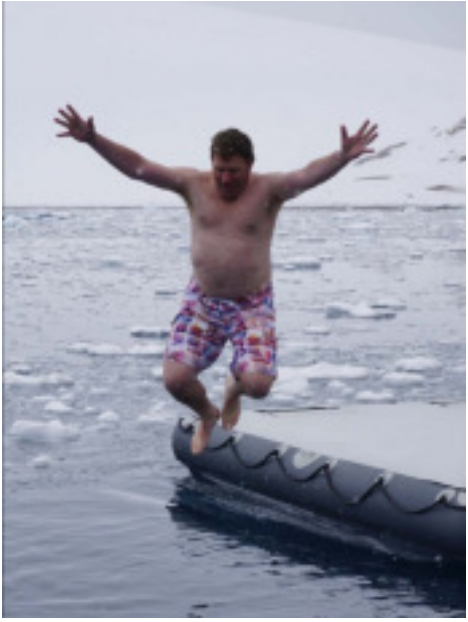














DAY 8 | Sunday, 17 November 2019

# Elephant Point; Whalers Bay; Deception Island

<b>Position:</b>	07:00 hours	<b>Course:</b>	270°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	10 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	981hpa and rising
<b>Latitude:</b>	62°48'S	<b>Speed:</b>	11 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	NE	<b>Air Temp:</b>	3°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	60°47'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	3°C

## Deception Island - Sir Hubert Wilkins

*Sir Hubert Wilkins (Australia) made the first powered flight in Antarctica. 16 November 1928, from Deception Island. Subsequent flights reached 71° 21'S.*

Few on board know of the wonders that await them on that distant sliver of shore, barely visible beneath the sea fog and the waters of Bransfield strait. Luck is on our side, the tide is high and the reefs that guard the beaches are navigable in our shallow draft zodiacs. The near constant barrage of waves that hammer this point is noticeably absent and the landing seems strangely easy. From the seaweed strewn beach eerie belches carry over the water and, under the fog, huge forms lay scattered along the beach - suddenly the mass of life on this exposed corner of the earth reveals itself. We are setting foot amidst an otherworldly scene of seemingly mythical creatures.

Heavily scarred 3 to 5 tonne male elephant seals lay like sleeping giants, tired and battle weary from weeks of fasting to maintain their harems. Dozens and dozens of smaller females and their plump pups lay scattered around them. Sub-adult males lie in the peripheries jousting for their position in the hierarchy. Young weaner elephant seal pups of the year lie on their backs gaping wide eyed at the new visitors, occasionally scratching at their skin or wallowing in the flooded terraces.

The wind carries the smell of thousands of pairs of breeding gentoo penguins staking out their nest and occupying bastions of high ground, diligently protecting their clutch. Any lapse of guard is taken advantage of by marauding skuas waiting in the sidelines, eager to pluck an egg from an unsuspecting parent. Shards of baleen, whale jaw bones, vertebrae, empty egg shells and other mysterious bones litter the beach.

Southern giant petrels soar above the rock stacks and two brilliant white morph petrels nest in close proximity to the remains of a rudimentary sealer's shelter from nearly 200 years ago, melting out of the winter's snow cover.

For a couple of blissful hours the sun burns through the fog, and people wander in amazement among the natural phenomena around them. In the distance the white massif of Mt Friesland dazzles, white cloaked in a blanket of fractured glaciers and enormous seracs and icefalls.

Then the fog sweeps back in and the cool wind wisps across the stones, and it's time to navigate through the fog back to the ship.

Now through the fog, the ship sails past black walls and ash stained snow. Suddenly we are passing through the gates of volcanic tuff turrets known as Neptune's Bellows and enter the somewhat protected waters inside the caldera. A chinstrap colony stands on one side and cape petrels wheel in the air around us on the other side.

The wind is whipping up the surface and sulphurous steam seeps out of the shore. We land and wander around the rusting installations and industrial relics of a once all-too productive whaling station, reflecting on an industry that is now hard to imagine ever existed. Seemingly abandoned in an instant, and now slowly being reclaimed by this hostile environment, disappearing into the dark alluvial sand, just a dark reminder. Sideways wind and blowing snow seem somewhat appropriate, and the bright lights and warmth of the ship are certainly a most welcome beacon and a delightful escape from the elements on this moody night.







DAY 9 | Friday, 18 November 2019

## Drake Passage

**Position:** 22:30 hours  
**Latitude:** 61° 01'S  
**Longitude:** 63° 21'W

**Course:** 91.5°  
**Speed:** 13.6 knots

**Wind Speed:** 16.3 knots  
**Wind Direction:** SW

**Barometer:** 979.9 hPa & rising  
**Air Temp:** 2°C  
**Sea Temp:** 2°C

### *Drake Passage*

*Just about the time when things looked their very worst the sky was like ink and water was everywhere and everyone was as wet inside their oilskins as the skins were wet without there came out a most perfect and brilliant rainbow for about half a minute or less and then suddenly and completely went out. If ever there was a moment when such a message was a comfort it was just then: it seemed to remove every shadow of doubt not only as to the present but as to the final issue of the whole expedition. And from that moment matters mended, and everything came all right.* —Edward Wilson

After a stormy afternoon in Whalers Bay, Deception Island we secured the ship and set off back over the Drake Passage. It was a quiet morning on board the GM as we all enjoyed a sleep in in our warm comfy beds. A welcome rest after our busy adventures on the Antarctic Peninsula. We made our way into the Drake, the seas rose and the ship swayed. Untethered trollies whizzed across the dining room, crashed and sent cutlery flying. Passengers lay low.

Heidi presented Krill. Explaining how there are about 500 million tonnes of this marine wonder food in the Southern Ocean, providing sustenance for many of the seals and whales we'd met on our journey.

The bridge tours proved popular. We learnt that this massive vessel is steered with the littlest of joysticks (about the size of a Nintendo control). Vishal showed us the numerous electronic devices used to navigate this ship and explained that in spite of all these he could still use a sextant to find our way home if need be. We are in safe hands.

Bens lecture on the exploration by Swedish geologist Otto Nordenskojold who set off in 1902 into the Weddell sea where he set up a wintering station on Snow Hill Island. The adventure that unfolded from this exploration is legendary – at one stage with twelve people scattered in various makeshift bivi's as they awaited rescue after the sea ice closed in.

As the afternoon progressed the seas calmed and people surfaced, bleary eyed, from their cabins. The wonderful chefs delivered a fine 'high tea' tiny cakes, club sandwiches and dainty scones – not what you'd expect on the high seas and beautifully presented. The expedition staff circled like hungry skuas, sneaking in and sampling the spread.

Ben, with the help of our energetic Heidi, facilitated a re-cap of our voyage and passengers told stories of their trip. Vivid descriptions of the moments that had made this trip special, of places we had visited, and appreciative thoughts flowed for over an hour.

Raza kept the ship shop open all day – passengers popped in the get those last - minute Antarctic momentos. A fridge magnet here, a cap there....





DAY 10 | Tuesday, 19 November 2019

# Drake Passage; Beagle Channel

<b>Position:</b>	06:15 hours	<b>Course:</b>	162°	<b>Wind Speed:</b>	17 knots	<b>Barometer:</b>	993 hPa & steady
<b>Latitude:</b>	57°08'S	<b>Speed:</b>	9.4 knots	<b>Wind Direction:</b>	NW	<b>Air Temp:</b>	4°C
<b>Longitude:</b>	65°19'W					<b>Sea Temp:</b>	10°C

Daybreak finds us moving smoothly across the Drake, rolling gently to the rhythm of this most benign of seas. There is enough of a breeze to keep birds on the wing for most of the day, as we edge closer and closer to South America. Amidst all the packing and preparing for our onwards travels, a couple of lectures keep our minds on our voyage. Heidi tells us about the marvels of seals, and as we get our first sight of Tierra del Fuego, Ben explains the history of the Drake Passage and its most iconic landmark, Cape Horn.

There is plenty of time for working up photographs and swapping contact details with new-found friends, interspersed between some episodes of history stair climb boot camp, the kayaker's slide-show, and a screening of that marvellous film 'Around the Horn', a chronicle of the last days of the commercial clipper ships. A heartfelt and humorous farewell from Captain Oleg and his officers, ushers in a final feast from the galley team, and a raucous and warm show of appreciation to the dining room and galley staff. After we pick up the pilot from the Pilot Station at the head of the Beagle Channel, the voyage slideshow reprises many of the highlights of our time on the Peninsula. A final gathering at the bar evolves into a dance party for some, as we move into our last sleep on the *Greg Mortimer*.





DAY 11 | Wednesday, 20 November 2019

# Ushuaia

Position:

06:20

Latitude:

54°48'S

Longitude:

68°18'W

Wind Speed:

Calm

Barometer:

979.9 hPa & steady

Air Temp:

7°C

Sea Temp:

9°C

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



More to Maire than meets the eye

By Don Telfer

If you climb the lines of parallel to the rolling Southern Sea

Turn south at the Southern Shetlands, after a left at South Orkney

Head down the Bransfield Strait and past the Graham Land

Look out for me as you enter the great Antarctic Band

We have played amongst the ice flows and paddled further more

Seen into the heart of ice burgs the haunting deep blue core

The mist and rain and sleet and snow have battered my countenance

But please forgive me if you feel I over talk my dance.

The majestic Elephant Seals with guttural calls ready for an angry fight

Here a pod of Orcas swam with baby tucked up tight

We saw the Gentoo and Chinstrap, cute penguins counting stones

And there a reminder of the past, a few bleached whale bones.

The magnificence of the scenery the starkness and the cold

Make us aware of conditions endured by explorers of past so bold

The mighty soaring ice cliffs, the deep reaching of the burgs

Forgive us for quietly talking of the Antarctic visions we extolled.



# Kayaking Log

By Al Bakker

<b>Kayaking Masters:</b>		Al Bakker, Frank Whitter, Peter Wainwright
<b>Kayakers:</b>		
Debbie Bray	Kerrie Ann Claffey	Jin Hay
Stephen Fairbrother	Wayne Freakley	Lisa Kelly
Michael Kelly	Jane Mottley	Jackie Torres North
Sean Thomas	Diane Silverman	Alasdair Vickers
Helen Torok	Nigel Williamson	

*The kayak is without comparison the best one-man vessel to be found.*  
—Fridtjof Nansen

**DAY 3: PM: Half Moon Island** – Distance: 7.6 km  
We launched in 5-7 knots for an easy paddle around the end of the island. Numerous penguins came out to investigate our colourful flotilla but soon became clear as we rounded the far side that the wind was picking up, curtailing a circumnavigation. We landed near some lazing Weddell seals and after a short stop and hot drink in the cool conditions the intensity of wind gusts increased and a hasty retreat was in order. Our escort zodiac was delayed and the shallow rocks at our landing spot meant we needed to start out on our own. Strong headwinds on our first outing equalled hard work!! An adventurous first outing left all wondering if we needed motors on our kayaks!

**DAY 4: AM: Hydrudga Rocks** – Distance: 8 km  
At first light we had a delightful surprise – no wind and sunny skies. Kayakers shot off after breakfast to explore the coastline of Two Hummocks island navigating past large bands of brash ice. We reached a small bay completely filled with brash just in time to see the skiers and climbers marching upwards. After waving goodbye we steered away towards Hydrurga. The skyline was dotted with tall penguins plodding in snowshoes - making tracks for the less nimble. We landed in a sheltered bay, short beach and towering snow banks. Fortunately for us the team had shovelled some stairs to enable views from the small rise. Seals, penguins and gorgeous vistas of Two Hummocks. After a short break, we continued paddling around Hydrurga past a small group of Adelie penguins balancing on a rolling iceberg and exploring all the nooks and crannies. A great recovery from the wind blasted first outing as we made our way back to the ship.

**PM: Portal Point** – Distance: 7.6 km  
With no wind and a surreal backdrop of large icebergs and “the continent” we made our way to a sheltered bay. A pebbly beach beckoned and we stopped for a hot chocolate to celebrate our continental landing. Then it was time to ice hop past a chain of majestic bergs as we made our way back to the ship. A great day in Antarctica!

**DAY 5: AM: Port Lockroy**  
Peltier Channel. Ice, ice everywhere. No paddling as the ship broke ice through the entire Peltier Channel.

**PM: Cuverville Island** – Distance: 7.2 km  
The captain found an anchorage close in and we set off to circumnavigate the island. It was slow going as rafts of penguins swam and porpoised around us. Marvelling at the

high-rise breeding areas of some entrepreneurial gentoos, we glided under the towering cliffs to find an amazing blue ice harbour on far end. We got out on a pebbly beach to have our own private display of penguins coming up and checking us out. We carried on manoeuvring through the ice maze to our trusty ship. Good fun!

**DAY 6: AM: Plenau**  
Strong winds through the Lemaire delayed a landing. Zodiacs departed the ship mid-morning in 25 knot winds. No kayaking.

**PM: Plenau** – Distance: 7.3 km  
The ice at Peterman prevented operations so we returned to Plenau. Splitting into two groups, the kayakers headed off, soon to be lost in the maze of moving sea ice. Open channels opened and closed in the soft sea ice but harder brash mixed in made navigation entertaining. A photo stop in front of a grounded berg showcased the brilliant blues in the light grey backdrop. Sadly it was soon time to return to the ship before the limited open areas blocked us from returning to the ship. An adventure!

**DAY 7: AM: Paradise Harbour** – Distance: 10 km  
Light falling snow and no wind provided a magical backdrop for exploring Paradise. A marshmellow landscape of soft, snow topped brash ice stretched across the bay, dotted with convenient gaps to navigate through. We worked our way over to a small penguin rookery on the far shoreline and a brilliant nearby island for prime viewing. On the other side of our small island lay two Weddell seals, highlighted by an imposing glacial wall directly behind. A hot drink in hand and our own Weddell show made the short break a delight. The low cloud and ice prevented us from seeing the ship but we confidently paddled off on a compass bearing, zig zagging our way through the myriad of small leads. A welcome sigh of relief was heard as the ship came into view. A great paddle.

**PM: Neko Harbour** – Distance: 5 km  
Ice, ice and more ice - but a clear path was visible through to the landing site. Andvoord Bay though, was totally blocked with ice. The kayakers in plastic boats launched and were soon heard crashing through the brash. We took the opportunity to venture out in the inflatable kayaks with the travel agents. A great chance to see how they went in ice. To our surprise they navigated through the ice choked bay in style. Traffic lights were required though as too many (captains) chose the same path through the narrow leads. All too soon it was time to return for the “polar plunge”. Brrr..

**DAY 8: AM: Elephant Point, Livingstone Island**  
No paddling. We transferred by zodiac to shore to spend some time with the astounding and prolific wildlife and stretch our legs. As the wind picked up and the tide dropped, we said our goodbyes and steamed across to Deception Island

**PM: Deception Island**  
. The outside shores of Deception had crashing surf and the strong Northeasterly wind didn’t bode well for our kayak plans. Sure enough, as we entered the Caldera, white caps and strong winds awaited us. Many hardy souls braved their way to shore in zodiacs for a sand blasting blizzard experience. No paddle.





# Snow Shoeing Log

By Hilary Cave

**Snow Shoe Masters:** Hilary Cave & Kevin Nicholas

**Snow Shoers:**

Ray Abeleda	Jewel Abeleda	Karen Chyn
Yath Gangakumaran	Wei Guo	Jace Howard
Guy Kuster	Sheena Sodha	Paul Tranter
Kelly Yu	Sean Thomas	Garry Russell
Bob Russell		

**November 12th**

**PM: Half Moon Island**

This small island was our first outing after crossing the Drake passage and for most of us the first visit to both Gentoo and Chinstrap penguin colonies. The snow fell in large flakes as we zodiaced ashore the south west breeze and low cloud base made for atmospheric conditions for our first outing. We donned our snow shoes and hiked up and over this small island – the rotten snow gobbled wayward ski poles as we slipped and slithered down to the opposite shore. We used this opportunity to familiarise ourselves with and to test out the new equipment

We got the hang of the snow shoes and stomped along to the abandoned Argentinian Camara base. The new orange paint holding the old wooden buildings together as the wind scoured wind scoops around the buildings. We aimed for a rock in the snow, it moved as we approached, a Weddell seal, who slugged off waves of blubber wobbling as it headed to the sea.

From the beach we climbed up a small hill. Nesting skua angrily squawked as we approached their exposed rocky ridgetop nests – we gave them their space and chose a lower vantage point as our summit. The wind rose, our jackets flapped and hands numbed in the cold. White caps spiced grey sea so we scuttled back to our zodiacs. The finishing touch a dousing in the waves as our zodiacs ploughed through the swell to the waiting ship.

**November 13th**

**AM: Hydruga Rocks**

The zodiac wove its way between ice burgs to land us in a hidden cove on a tiny island. Here we were entertained with wildlife aplenty: a weddell seal languished near our landing site, chinstrap penguins were beginning to create nests on rocky outcrops, the blue - eyed shags were already established on the higher points. We sidled to a narrow neck where we met a visiting Adelie. Our shovels proved useful as we dug a trench and steps through a wind lip accessing the far end of this narrow rocky island.

As we made our way back to the ship the first of the migrating humpback whales could be seen out in the open water – water spouts and large glistening backs diving as they made their way. ...

**PM: Portal Point**

For most of us this was our first landing on the Antarctic continent. Fittingly, it was cold, snowing lightly and the grey clouds hung low in the sky.

This is a historic site of Cape Reclus hut used in 1956/7 by the British Antarctic Survey researchers and explorers and from where they accessed the high plateaus of the Antarctic Peninsula to traverse to Hope Bay using dog sled teams.

Here we roped up for glacier travel and followed the skiers track climbing high above the bay. Our big loop on the snow slopes gave us ample opportunity to take in the spectacular views of glaciers, ice bergs and mountains forming the spine of the Peninsula.

**November 14th**

**PM: Georges point, Ronge Island**

We shared our rocky landing with gentoo penguins leaping out of the sea as they arrived to nest. We made a wandering loop through Georges point avoiding the nesting birds with great views of the Cuverville inlet and Ronke Island. With other passengers on a different landing at Curverville Island, it was just our small, diverse group enjoying the solitude of this landing.

We roped up as we skirted the crevasses flowing down the snowfield below Tennant peak. Our pace slowed as the slope steepened for the final pitch to the small col below Tennant spire. The icebergs and ship in the bay below looked tiny from high on our snowy perch. We could see our fellow passengers – tiny specs on the hillside on Cuverville Island.

**November 15th**

**PM: Pleneau Island**

After a stormy start to the day thick sea ice thwarted our visit to Peterman Island. We backtracked and made an interesting crossing of Pleneau Island, the snow shoes useful as we plugged our way over this simple snow dome. We descended right over the back of the island into a small frozen bay. We then stepped out over water filled tide cracks and onto the sea ice. The sea ice had some glowing blue melt pools but we were confident that it was strong enough to walk over.

Our adventure took a fortuitous turn as the skiers and climbers had landed on the edge of this sea ice essentially doing a reverse of our trip – we jumped at the chance to use their life vests and return to the GM by zodiac. This was easier said than done, with ice bergy bits making the zodiac driving a challenge.

**November 16th**

**AM: Brown Base, Paradise Bay**

We landed at Brown Base, which had a scattering of freshly painted red buildings, with many Gentoo penguins wandering amongst the base. We made our way up a short but steep snow slope. and reached a scenic snowy plateau. We made a circuit around the plateau, initially following a ridgeline where the hill dropped away to the ocean giving us a constant view as we walked. We could view the kayakers and zodiacs amongst the ice in the harbour below – they looked so small!. As we continued around our circuit, the view changed from ocean to impressive glaciers and icefalls. Returning to Brown Base, some members took the opportunity to take off snow shoes and slide down the slope towards base.

**PM: Neko Harbour**

Our landing at Neko Harbour was the last to be made on the Antarctic Continent. We made our ascent on soft snow past a Gentoo colony, with a fantastic backdrop of the ice

fall and sea below. We could sometimes hear the glacier calving, with a rumble it was dropping chunks of ice into the ocean. We were roped up due to the crevassed terrain, and as we gathered height we were soon walking into the cloud. We opted to swing back following the ridge so we could view the icefall and harbour below, and reached a great viewpoint high above the harbour.

**November 17th**

**PM: Whalers Bay, Deception Island**

We chose to leave the snow shoes on shore and to walk on Deception Island to small peak above the ruined whaling town. Views further up the harbour showed the true extent of the volcanic formed landscape. From the peak we traversed to a saddle and looped down easy snow slopes, allowing time to explore the ruins and to warm our feet in the steaming sand.





# Ski Touring Log

By Kevin Nicholas

**Snow Shoe Masters:** Kevin Nicholas, Peter Wainwright, Bronwen Waters

**Ski Tour participants:**

Marty Abeleda	Roslyn Choy	Lindsay Fox	
Mojdeh Zamani-Moussavi	Phoenix Rolls	Lee Cikuts	Gary Rolls

**November 12th**

Under a darkening sky we loaded our skis, boots, and emergency equipment into a zodiac and headed to shore for our first landing of the voyage. Most of the passengers went ashore on Half Moon Island, but we went further afield to Livingston Island for our shake down trip. A large flat spit offered the perfect spot for practising how to use our various pieces of equipment. Our first small journey on skis and split board took us along the beach to see some Weddell seals and Gentoo penguins. Lindsay had a great experience when one of the seals came over to say hello.

Suddenly the wind increased and we had to call the zodiac in to get back to the ship in good time before it became too rough to cross the exposed stretch of ocean. All in all, it was a good shake down – but what we really wanted was a slope to ski down.

**November 13th**

Two Hummock Island glowed beautifully in the morning sun – a great location for an easy ski outing. After Scott our zodiac driver expertly got us ashore on a small rock outcrop, it wasn't long before we were ready to ascend the slopes of the island for magnificent views over islands and the ocean. We could spot the sea kayakers far below, and with the mild temperatures and bright sunshine it was difficult to believe we were skiing in Antarctica. We moved up steadily, choosing a safe route away from crevasses. Our high point offered an easy spot to transition from up to down, and soon we were zooming down towards the ocean. It is always exhilarating experiencing your first ski turns in such a wild and remote location, and at the same time slightly intimidating because of the overwhelming scale of everything around you.

During yet another hearty lunch meal the ship relocated to Portal Point. This was to be our first landing on the continent. It was snowing, but not too cold, and everyone showed great enthusiasm to get as far up the slope as was sensible in the conditions. We ascended up into the murk until visibility was quite poor, but on the ski down we used the climbers and snow shoers to give us some reference in the flat light, and had a fabulous run down all the way to the zodiac in a few centimetres of fresh powder snow.

**November 14th**

As the ship approached our planned landing it became obvious that dropping anchor in the thick brash ice was not possible, let alone launching zodiacs and heading to shore. Captain Olag showed great skill to try and cut some ice out with the ship to give us some clear water, but we eventually headed away and enjoyed a cruise through the ice to our afternoon location, marvelling at how the *Greg Mortimer* excelled in the ice and bergy bits.

Most passengers landed at Cuverville Island in the afternoon, but we skiers had a zodiac ride of about ten 10 minutes up the coast towards Mt Spigot. The bowls just south of the mountain were great for doing a few laps on skis, and the more energetic amongst

us managed three or four runs. The view from the top of the bowl down the other side into Orne Harbour was breathtaking, complemented by the Chinstrap penguins who had ascended all the way to the crest to find their nesting sites. One penguin even enjoyed a run down the bowl behind us, practically getting airborne over the bumps they were going so fast.

**November 15th**

We all enjoyed a ship cruise down the Lemaire Channel in the morning, and then a zodiac cruise after breakfast. A ski outing was planned for the afternoon but fast moving sea ice and small icebergs prevented the ship from dropping anchor. After the ship moved to clearer water we were off in zodiacs to Mt Hoovgard, but it soon became clear that the sea ice was out to thwart our plans still. Our drivers Howard and Scott chugged away through the ice for more than an hour to try and get us ashore, which was only about 200 metres away. This soon became the focus of our fun, rather than skiing, as we battled away, inching closer and closer to land. We developed Plan B for skiing in the process, touring over a small island and down to a pick up spot where everybody else had landed. We did a clean swap of our life jackets with the snow shoers, who did our journey in reverse. No turns were had, but it certainly was an adventure.

**November 16th**

Leith Peak in Paradise Harbour was our objective for the morning. Falling snow and low visibility made for an ethereal zodiac ride, but no wind meant that the conditions were easy for us to handle. Everybody showed great enthusiasm for being out there in the weather, and we made good progress to the summit at 390m above sea level. The peak isn't actually officially named on any maps or charts, so we decided to rename it Mt Marty after one of our skiing party. The ski down from the top was a little difficult in the poor visibility but it was a lot of fun in the fresh snow.

The afternoon landing at Neko Harbour meant that we were with all the other passengers for a change. We ascended up into the cloud once again, but this time, just as we prepared to ski down, we had a little bit of sunshine appear, which made for an excellent run down through all the hikers and snowshoers, all the way to the beach.

**November 17th**

After a fabulous morning landing at Elephant Point we came to Whalers Bay on Deception Island, our last opportunity to ski on our voyage. The weather once again was a little demanding, this time with some wind added to the mix. We ascended up into the teeth of the storm, testing ourselves more so than we had experienced previously, fighting the wind and cold, and it was a great effort to make it all the way to the crater rim of this dormant volcano. The effort was worth it as the ski down was actually quite good, almost all the way to the beach once again.

So it was back to the comfort of the ship and time to head north across the Drake. We were well satisfied with our efforts, skiing more than we might have expected on this voyage, and understanding how fortunate we had been in such a remote and unforgiving ski destination.





# Alpine Trekking Log

By Mike Roberts

**Trekking Masters:** Michael Roberts & Laetitia Campe

**Trekkers:**  
Don Halvorsen                      Daniel Lenz                      Michelle Li

## November 12th: The Bishop

At 12.30pm the *Greg Mortimer* anchored at Half Moon Island in the South Shetlands. Brimming with anticipation, after a quick lunch the team headed to a snow-covered spit on Livingstone Island under a peak called The Bishop. The weather was misty with snow falling. It was blowing about 15 knots and ramping as we did our first Zodiac landing. We jumped straight into training with Laetitia running a brief on avalanche rescue and transceivers. We then covered ice axe, crampons, snowshoes and glacier travel. As we were about to head off on our first roped-up glacier travel foray, the wind started to red-line, so we radioed for a Zodiac and bailed. Even taking it slowly, that return zodiac trip was a wet one as sheets of spray washing over us. Wind readings from the bridge exceeded 40 knots. As soon as everyone was on board the captain upped anchor and that night, we crossed Bransfield Strait.

## November 13th: Landing 1: Two Hummock Island

While the main group landed at Hydruga Rocks, the climbers, along with the skiers were dropped by Zodiac on a rocky peninsular at Two Hummock Island adjacent to shear broken ice-cliffs. At the landing bergy bits heaved and fell with the swell making timing critical for that initial step to shore. We dragged our bags well above the high tide line, and the potential impact of surge waves created by ice carving into the ocean. After roping-up for glacier travel we slowly gained height for some 400m to a saddle located between the Two Hummocks. Views to the azure blue ocean, icebergs and distant ice-covered mountains were superb. The sun made out spirits soar. Late morning on descent cloud rolled in and before we knew it, we were zodiac bound and on our way to Portal Point.

## Landing 2: Portal Point

Historically, Portal Point, our first continental landing, provided access to the main spine of Antarctic Peninsula and the interior. The ocean refracted light as a magical bright blue around the many ice bergs, silent in the ghostly calm grey afternoon light. We unloaded onto a picturesque rocky point; granite rich in pink feldspar. Using snowshoes, we trekked up the glacier, roped as a safeguard against hidden crevasses. From above we heard and saw Humpback Whales surfacing around the ice bergs below. What a fantastic sight! Low visibility precluded going high but after two outings and over 600m height gain, folks were ready for the comforts of the *Greg Mortimer*.

## November 14th: Spiggot Peak

In the morning, ice bergs in Port Lockroy prevented anchorage, so we moved south through an ice-filled Peltier Channel, the *Greg Mortimer's* XBow slicing easily through the flow-ice. Our route then took us northwards up the Gerlache Strait, where we had fantastic sunlit Orca viewing. At Culverville Island, the climbing team set off for Spiggot Peak, a gem with an aesthetic sweeping ridge to a small corniced summit. To the west is a shear drop into the Gerlache Strait, to the northeast lies reclusive Orne Harbour and to the south spectacular Errea Channel. This truly is one of the most magnificent locations of Antarctic Peninsula. Our

climb started in snowshoes and when the terrain steepened, we switched to crampons. A sort way into our climb a large clap of thunder sounded, like Huey was firing a warning shot across our bows. To the north black cloud descended to sea level and threatened. High on the exposed ridge hardy Chin Strap Penguins nested. All told the climb was 1.48km and 205m. We all enjoyed the stunning evening summit surrounded by ocean, ice and dramatically steep terrain. On the return Zodiac trip, brooding evening light reflected the towering peaks and floating ice. Climbing to the summit of Spiggot Peak was a trip highlight.

## November 15th: Traverse Planeau Island

At 6.00am we entered the majestic Lemaire Channel in low cloud, with light snow falling; it was highly atmospheric with the steep summits veiled in mystery. We anchored adjacent to Port Charcott, located south of Booth Island, in 30 knot winds and fast-moving sea ice that made landing difficult, so we went on weather-hold. When winds dropped, we went zodiac cruising around the icebergs and scenic coast. After lunch, our captain attempted to anchor the *Greg Mortimer* at Peterman Island but once again, ice bergs being swept in a fast-moving current meant a safe landing was not possible. Our planning flexibility was tested! Eventually we ended up at Planeau Island where we completed a crossing in snowshoes. This trip was memorable for Howard turning our Zodiac into a mini icebreaker as he carefully manoeuvred through the dense sea ice. A great adventure and our furthest south point.

## November 16th: Landing 1: Almirante Brown Station in Paradise Harbour

We awoke to find ourselves in aptly named Paradise Harbour with low overcast skies and light snow falling. At about 8.00am we landed at Brown Station and our goal was to attempt Almirante Peak, a great looking objective. Unfortunately, due to avalanche hazard after new snow, Laetitia and Mike deemed the steep middle slopes to be dangerous in the current conditions. For some reason we did not fancy being avalanched into the ocean! Despite this, we enjoyed a fun snow hike, wallowing in fresh snow and ascending lower satellite peaks, looking down steep drops into the ocean.

## Landing 2: Neko Harbour

In low visibility, on this Antarctic mainland site set in the back of Andvord Bay, we snow-shoed past a Gentoo Penguin Rookery and 300m uphill to a rock bluff. Time and weather prevented continuing and besides, the polar plunge was scheduled on our return to the ship.

## November 17th: Deception island

During the morning we took in spectacular views of aptly named Elephant Point on Livingstone Island. Yep, there were lots of Elephant Seals and Penguins on the beaches and craggy headlands. During the afternoon, our second landing for the day was at Deception Island, an ocean filled volcanic caldera. In low visibility and light rain, Don and Mike were the only takers for this final trip to the ridge top, which is in fact an old crater rim. We had high hopes of making it up Mount Pond, the high point. As we got higher the visibility decreased and when we reached the ridge top, we were hit by winds in excess of 50 knots, that blasted ice pellets into our face and nearly knocked us over. Without question, we beat a hasty retreat to the historic remains at Whalers Bay. In blizzard conditions we took a zodiac back to our floating haven. A fun last outing that gave us a voracious appetite at the dinner table. As we dinned the ship motored through Neptune's Bellows and for the Drake Passage, we were on out way home after a fantastic week of adventure.

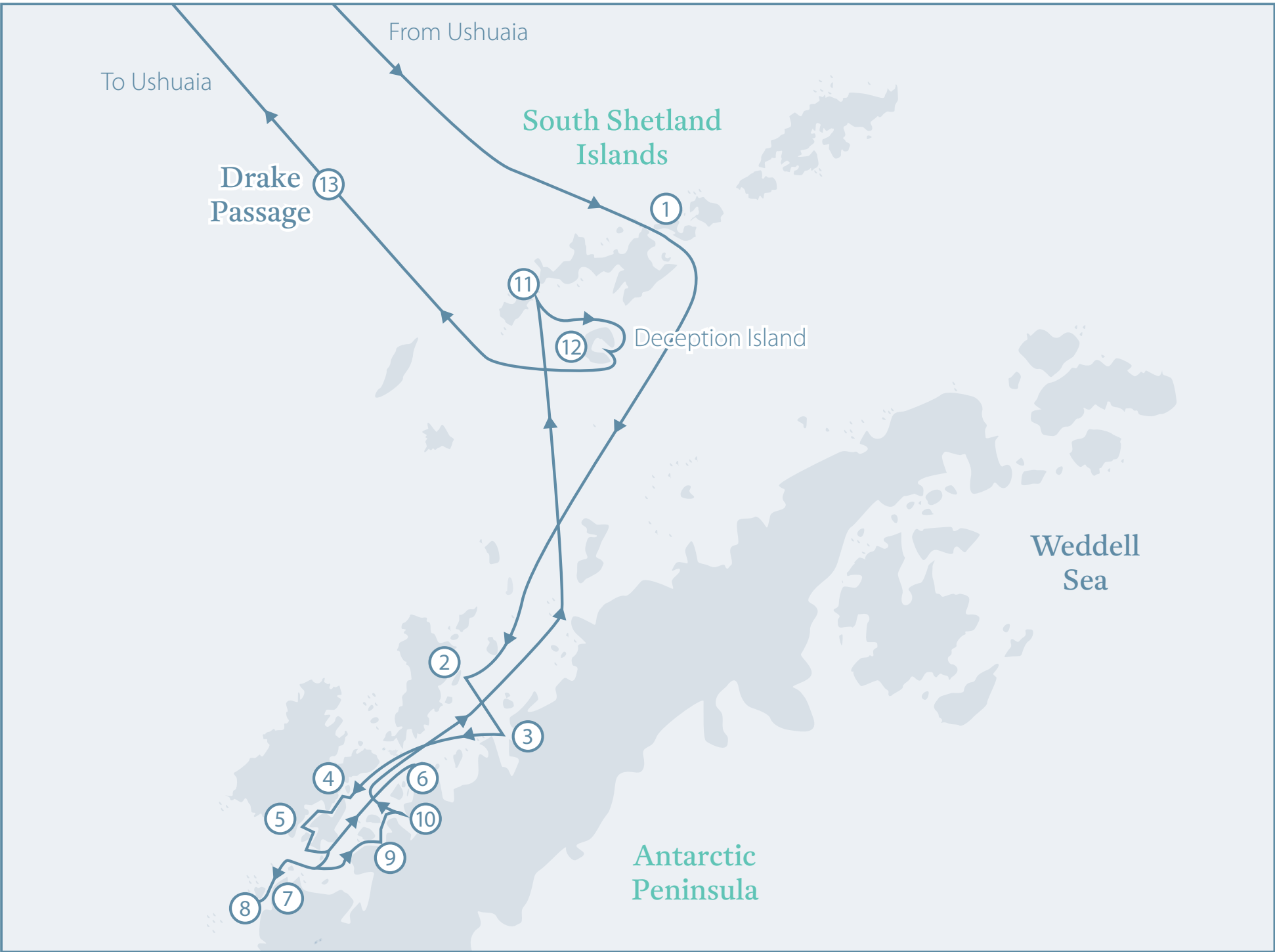




# Spirit of Antarctica

10 – 20 November 2019 | Distance travelled: 1,247 nautical miles | 2,309km

Southern most point: Pleneau Island 65°07.1S, 64°01.2’W



### Destinations

- |                     |                      |                                    |                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 01 Half Moon Island | 04 Neumayer Channel  | 07 Lemaire Channel                 | 10 Neko Harbour                  |
| 02 Hydrurga Rocks   | 05 Peltier Channel   | 08 Pleneau Island, Iceberg Alley   | 11 Elephant Point                |
| 03 Portal Point     | 06 Cuverville Island | 09 Brown Station, Paradise Harbour | 12 Whalers Bay, Deception Island |
|                     |                      |                                    | 13 Drake Passage                 |





# Bird Species Log

Bird Species	November									
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Gentoo Penguin			x	x	x	x	x	x		
Chinstrap Penguin			x	x	x	x		x		
Adelie Penguin			x	x	x			x		
Wandering Albatross										x
Black-browed Albatross		x	x						x	x
Grey-headed Albatross		x	x							
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross		x							x	x
Southern Giant Petrel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Giant Petrel		x								
Antarctic Petrel			x		x			x		
Cape Petrel		x	x				x	x	x	
Snow Petrel				x	x	x				
Antarctic Fulmar		x	x	x	x				x	
Blue Petrel									x	
Soft-plumaged Petrel										
White-chinned Petrel		x								x
Sooty Shearwater										x
Prion sp. (probably mostly Antarctic)			x							
Wilson's Storm-petrel				x						
Imperial Cormorant (blue-eyed)	x									
Antarctic Cormorant			x	x		x	x	x		
Snowy Sheathbill			x	x		x	x	x		
Chilean Skua	x									
Brown Skua			x		x		x	x		
South Polar Skua					x	x				
Kelp Gull	x		x	x		x	x	x		
Dolphin Gull	x									
South American Tern	x									
Antarctic Tern			x		x	x	x	x		



# Mammals Log

Mammals	November									
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Antarctic Fur Seal				x						
Southern Elephant Seal			x			x		x		
Crabeater Seal				x	x					
Weddell Seal			x	x	x	x	x	x		
Leopard Seal			x							
Antarctic Minke Whale				x						
Humpback Whale				x						
Orca					x					







Expeditioners

Jin Hay	Diane Silverman	Camilla Gemmingen	Leyla Calfat	Sue Gainford	Jackie Fairbrother	Clive Robertson
Marcia Rolim Camargo	Miranda Luckraft	von Massenbach	Alex Mijovich	Will Quinn	Steve Fairbrother	David Hill
A Frankenthal	Yath Gangakumaran	Ben Laurie	Kerri Johnston	Harry Nuttall Musson	Colin Jacobson	Gloria Wright
Silvana Ticoulat	Sheena Sodha	Cindy Bergagnin	Michael Kelly	Shelagh Everett	Gay Jacobson	Peter Morris
Deb Nash	Jace Howard	Maggie Bergagnin	Lisa Kelly	Fiona Inglis	Alasdair Vickers	Jann Morris
Helen Booij	Dan Lenz	Gary Rolls	Florence Leoshek	Jackie North	Lawrence Hanley	Jane Kuipers
Debbie Bray	Don Halvorsen	Roslyn Choy	Don Telfer	Adrian Andrews	Sunny Hanley	Herb Kuipers
Leanne Matthews	Bobbie Halvorsen	Garry Russell	Hilary Delamore	Jane Mottley	Rey Abeleda	Ev Wuchatsch
Lindsay Fox	Peter Smith	Bob Russell	Maz Marchant	Wayne Freakley	Jewel Abeleda	Robbo Robinson
Stan Gauden	Margaret Devenish Smith	Karen Chyn	John Whitlam	Gudi Vedanayagam	Paul Robinson	Melissa Sievers
Eve Gauden	Sharon McIntyre	Kelly Yu	Lyn Whitlam	Thaiyal Vedanayagam	Susan Robinson	Jason Sievers
Ruth Gauden	Robert McIntyre	Phoenix Rolls	Vishve Bandhu	Deborah Holmes	Justin Abeleda	Craig Upshall
Linh Tran	Phil Hawley	Lee Cikuts	Namita Mahendra	Maddie Cullen	Marty Abeleda	Glenn Cornell
Derek Sessions	Jennell Hawley	Peter Shepherd	Richard Ross	Gillian Bowley	Michelle Li	Bron Cornell
Carley Wilson	Mojdeh Zamani-Moussavi	Jenny Shepherd	George Johns	Martin Bowley	Wei Guo	Kerrie Claffey
Anthony Pearce	Guy Kuster	Paul Tranter	Ingrid Vroman	Vanessa Fowler	Eduardo Nebot	Sandy Griffin
Sam Ballard	Frances Riordan	Jackie Torres Feitosa	Charlotte Porritt	Lucy Yeoman	Olga Nebot	
Sean Thomas	John Riordan	Cotinho Torres	Glenn Gainford	Paul Frost	Ann Robertson	



Expedition Team

Expedition Leader:	Howard Whelan
Deputy Expedition Leader:	Stephen Anstee
Assistant Expedition Leader:	Justine Bornholdt
Historian & Lecturer:	Ben Maddison
Naturalist & Lecturer:	Heidi Krajewsky
Naturalist & Lecturer:	Alexander Watson
Kayaking Master:	Al Bakker
Kayaking Guide:	Frank Witter
Kayaking Guide:	Peter Wainwright
Snowshoe Guide:	Hilary Cave
Snowshoe Guide:	Bronwen Waters

Head Ski Tour Guide:	Kevin Nicholas
Ski Tour Guide:	Peter Wainwright
Climbing Guide:	Michael Roberts
Climbing Guide:	Laetitia Campe
Photography Guide:	Scott Portelli
Photography Guide:	Massimo Bassano
Expedition Doctor:	Lesley Cadzow
Zodiac Master:	Sergei Khynku
Mudroom/Shopkeeper	Reza Rusooly

Greg Mortimer Crew

Master	Oleg Klaptenko	Hotel Controller	Allen Thomas
Chief Officer	Oleg Kapko	Receptionist	Mary Sarah Baldovino
Second Officer	Vishal Sharma	Receptionist	Mary Jane Lacerna
Deck Cadet	Lovelyn Yray	Head Stateroom	Irene Abania
Safety Officer	Andrey Zakalashnyuk	Spa Manager	Grace Tembo
Bosun	Duglas Garay	Able Seaman	Samuel Ricafort
Ship Nurse	Sydney Grove	Able Seaman	Junar Gorecho
Chief Engineer	Dimitar Vasilev	Able Seaman	Leo Marzan
First Engineer	Ruslan Rotar	Able Seaman	Bobby Payumo
Hotel Director	Franz Wusits	Able Seaman	Khenette Verzosa
Chief Purser	Jane Saladaga	Able Seaman	Mickey Ledonio
Executive Chef	Przemyslaw Wisniewski	Ordinary Seaman	Alfredo Murillo
Sous Chef	Allan Estoque		

Ship's log written by members of the Expedition Team & compiled by Justine Bornholdt



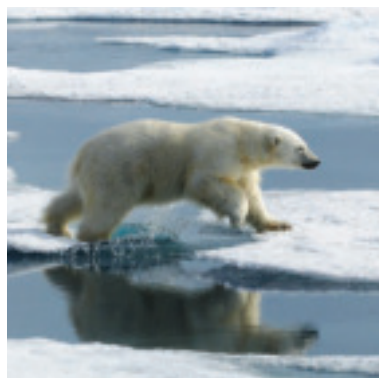


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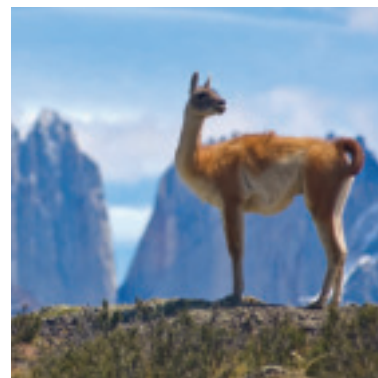
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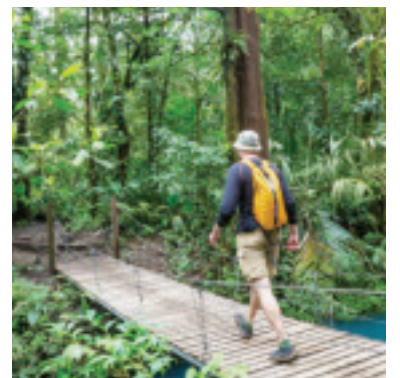
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