



South Georgia and Antarctic Odyssey



30 November – 18 December 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 | Saturday 30 November 2019

Ushuaia, Beagle Channel

Position: 20:00 hours **Course:** 83°
Latitude: 54°49'S
Longitude: 68°18'W

Explore. Dream. Discover. —Mark Twain

Finally we are here on the Beagle Channel aboard our sparkling new ice-strengthened vessel. This afternoon in the wharf in Ushuaia we were treated to a true polar welcome, with an invigorating breeze sweeping the cobwebs of travel away. Our Expedition Leader John and Deputy Expedition Leader Robyn welcomed us on board, before sending us off to Ian and Richard for a mug shot (complete with windswept hair)!

Once all aboard and our luggage accounted for, John called us together in the lecture room to welcome us, talk about the workings of the ship, outline our plans for coming days, and introduce us to the Aurora team. Onboard we total 119 passengers, with many nationalities represented including Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Taiwan, the UK and the USA, along with 16 Aurora Expeditions' staff and 82 capable crew from all corners of the globe.

The Captain's announcement over the PA system was our cue to join the lifeboat drill, donning bulky orange lifejackets and gathering at the muster station before making our way from there to our two Polar Class life vessels.

Our Argentinian pilot climbed aboard and at around 1800 we cast off lines and eased away from the wharf. What a feeling! The thriving city of Ushuaia with its snow-capped mountains gradually receded as we motored eastward along the beautiful Beagle Channel

Wind Speed: 20 knots **Barometer:** 991 hPa & steady
Wind Direction: W **Air Temp:** 6° C
 Sea Temp: 5° C

in the soft afternoon light. The wildlife bonanza was off to a good start with a plethora of seabirds circling the ship as we departed.

On our port side stretched the beech forested slopes of Argentina, while Chile, its mountain ranges dusted with snow, lay on our starboard side. The light upon the Beagle, sun gilding the clouds, was exquisite.

After a drink or two at Elephant Island Bar we gathered in the dining room for our first delectable dinner together prepared by our hotel team. There was plenty of lively conversation as we acquainted ourselves with fellow travellers.

Kayaking guides Frank, Michael and Lisa met up with their 17 kayakers for a fit-out session and briefing, but for the rest of us weary travellers, we wended our way to our cabins for a sound night's sleep.

At 2155 the horn sounded as our Argentinian pilot disembarked, leaving us to strike out into the Drake Passage. Tomorrow we are on our own at sea. Be up on the observation deck and bridge to lookout for seabirds large and small, which frequent this productive 1000-kilometre stretch of ocean. Naturalists Annette and John kick off our educational series with talks on the oceanography and the remarkable seabirds we expect to encounter on our travels towards the great white southern continent.



DAY 2 | Sunday 1 December 2019

Drake Passage

Position: 06:30 hours **Course:** 162°
Latitude: 56°36'S
Longitude: 65°37'W

Wind Speed: 20 knots **Barometer:** 1012 hPa & steady
Wind Direction: SW **Air Temp:** 5°C
 Sea Temp: 4°C

After the excitement of our departure from Ushuaia at sunset the night before, and after navigating our way through the Beagle Channel, we were excited to wake up on Sunday morning to the sound of a nearly silent engine as we motored south south-east across a gentle Drake Passage. We had made great time overnight averaging over 13 knots.

The day began with overcast conditions, perfect for bird photography from the stern of the ship. A few minutes of early morning birding quickly revealed several new species of birds with Cape Petrels, Southern Giant Petrels and Prions all soaring and riding above the swells in our wake as we rolled on the gentle swell of the infamous "Drake Shake". These new pelagic birds provided definitive biological evidence of our progress away from the South American mainland and closer towards the Antarctic Peninsula!

After a fantastic breakfast of fresh fruit, hot and cold treats and fresh juice, the expedition team engaged us with plans for the day ahead - our preparations for our time on the Antarctic Peninsula had begun. Logistical considerations included familiarisation with the locker room and the fun equipment it housed.

Seeing the Zodiacs perched "ready-to-launch" on the rear deck certainly whetted our appetite for the days ahead. There were additional importation considerations for biosecurity, including vacuuming our outer garments and packs to remove any errant seeds or dirt, and lessons for appropriate decontamination of boots when returning to the boat each day.

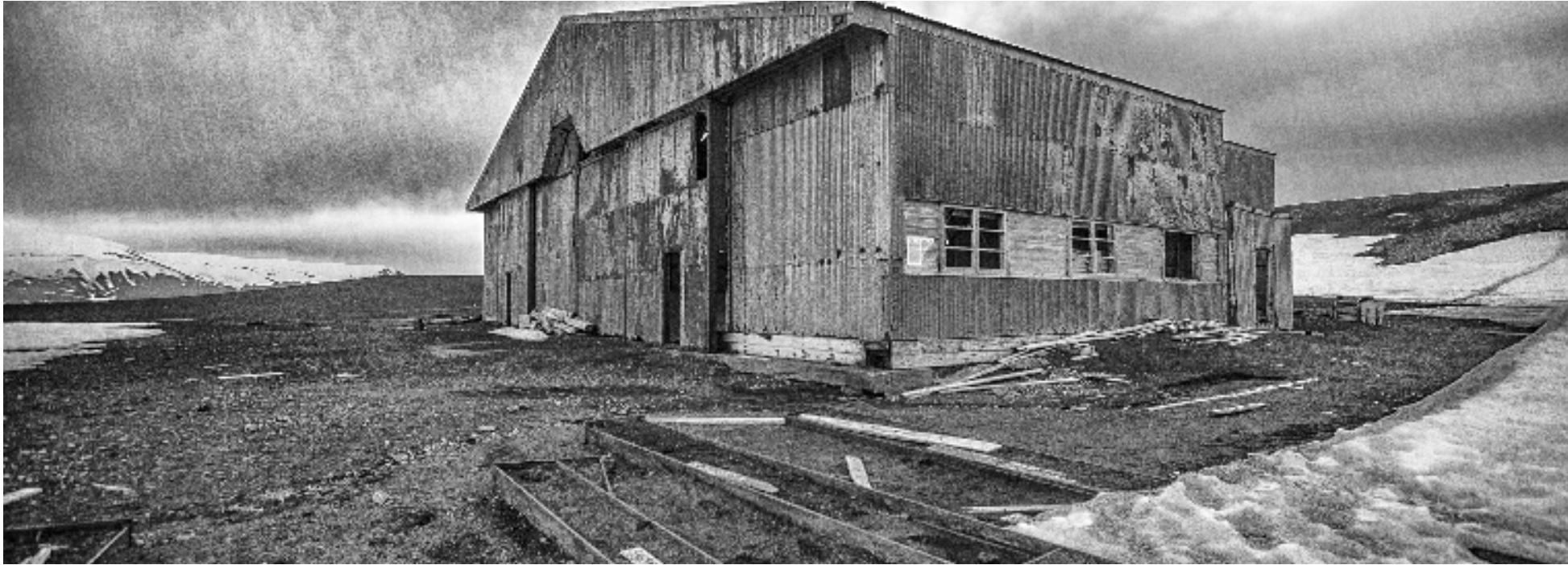
The excitement grew as landing requirements were checked off, and by afternoon more evidence of our progress arrived on the two-metre wings of several soaring black-browed albatross. A talk by Expedition Leader John inspired more excitement as John shared anecdotes and knowledge of the avifauna of the region. After John's mention of the potential to see a relatively rare white-phase Southern Giant Petrel along our travels, a keen birder reported seeing one from the aft deck!

This afforded some excellent photo opportunities for those passengers who are keen to hone their skills capturing images of pelagic birds in flight. Onboard naturalist Annette also gave a fantastic presentation that explained how ocean currents contribute to the biodiversity and abundant marine life that we are excited to experience in the days and weeks that lie ahead. Indeed, the expedition team had done a great job in preparing us for our first planned landing at Whalers Bay on Deception Island.

At 1800 we began crossing south over the Antarctic Convergence, passing from the relatively warm sub-Antarctic waters to the cold Antarctic waters. Expect to see a sharp drop in water temperature! Everything was in place as we celebrated the day's accomplishments over drinks in the Elephant Island Bar with Captain Oleg and his crew.

After another amazing dinner, just as we were relaxing before bed, Annette announced a nearby sighting of a few Sei whales off our starboard side. A perfect ending to an action-packed and productive day aboard.





DAY 3 | Monday 2 December 2019

Whalers Bay (Deception Island)

Position:	06:30 hours	Course:	162°	Wind Speed:	10 knots	Barometer:	1012hPa & steady
Latitude:	61° 43' S	Speed:	13.5 knots	Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	0°C
Longitude:	62° 32' W					Sea Temp:	4°C

We woke to a gentle roll of waves through the drake passage. The sea eased the closer we travelled towards the South Shetland Islands. After a delicious and filling breakfast we enjoyed a lecture from Liz who introduced us to the icy south. Antarctica is approximately 1.8 times the size of Australia and the peninsula alone is roughly 1,300 kms long. The ice sheets covering the continent contain over 70% of the worlds fresh water, and if that were to melt, sea levels would rise by over 60 metres (195 feet). Antarctica is also the highest continent with an average elevation of 2,500 meters or 8,200 feet.

Near the end of our lecture the bridge called to tell us that our first iceberg was visible on the port side. We all sprang from their seats to get a look out the window or from the outside decks. The iceberg was sighted at 0945 at 62 degrees 35,1' S and 0.61 degrees 37.1' W. What a delight to watch the buzz spread on the ship. Spirits soared high above our beautiful vessel.

Steve treated us to a lecture on Antarctic volcanoes including our first destination, Deception Island. This is an odd, mystical and utterly different place. Some would argue that it is best visited in windy, stormy, snowy and dark conditions to get a real feel of what it used to be like living here. Deception Island often gets described as an outer worldly place, and it is!

This afternoon we saw it in a few different lights when we finally made our way through Neptune's Bellows into the inside of this still active volcano. The outside decks were filled with inquisitive minds and eyes. All the excitement and anticipation could no longer be contained.

Most of us went ashore with Zodiacs right away to explore the rich history and beauty of this place while some went cruising first to get a feel of the bigger picture of this remarkable island. A small group of 16 expeditioners ventured out in kayaks to get a different perspective of our surroundings. We paddled back out through the Bellows to get a glimpse of open ocean kayaking among and below the giant cliffs and rock stacks of Deception Island. On our way back inside the caldera we stopped at a small but beautiful beach on the port side of the entrance to Whalers Bay. The beach was occupied by Chinstrap penguins, the majority nesting up high on the surrounding hills. It was a true pleasure watching them venture up and down the slopes.

Back on board, it was happy faces all around. A magnificent first landing on our way deeper towards the amazing south.

After we had sat down to wonderfully created food from the galley, everyone jumped up at the sight of Humpback whales along the side of the ship. This is just the third day of an amazing voyage, with many more marvels of nature to come our way. Welcome to one of the last true wild and untamed places on earth.





DAY 4 | Tuesday 3 December 2019

Cuverville Island, Lemaire Channel, Petermann Island

Position:	06:00 hours	Course:	229°	Wind Speed:	25 knots	Barometer:	1001 hPa & falling
Latitude:	64°34'S	Speed:	9.5 knots	Wind Direction:	SE	Air Temp:	-2°C
Longitude:	62°30'W					Sea Temp:	1°C

After the relative calm of Deception Island, waking to the snow and wind of Cuverville Island was a reminder that we were in fact in Antarctica, where nature is always in control. The blustery conditions made it difficult for our Zodiac drivers to safely secure to the side exits, and for a short while it seemed we may not be going ashore. But after some careful repositioning of the ship by Captain Oleg, we were able to access Zodiacs from the back marina, and after a exciting ride were soon ashore among the squawking gentoos of Cuverville.

With the thrill of visiting our first proper colony of penguins, many of us didn't venture far from the landing. Watching penguins awkwardly waddle up their krill-stained highways or dash about like black and white torpedos in the frigid water close to shore, was all too enticing. For the more intrepid among on us, John and Nina were ready to lead a 'short stroll' to the top of the 350-metre-high snow dome that capped the island. The summit team soon vanished from sight as they rounded the far ridge, high above the penguin colony. After zigzagging and ploughing their way through the snow for 45 minutes, the climbers had uninterrupted views of Rogue Island to the west and the towering spires of the Antarctic Peninsula mainland to the east.

After another hearty lunch—must... keep... eating—some of us enjoyed a well-earned afternoon snooze as the ship pushed south through the Gerlache Strait. After passing Cape Renard, we entered the narrow passage of the Lemaire Channel. Our ship was soon dwarfed by towering cliffs on both sides. Steve excitedly informed us that we were passing through the heart of an ancient 'stratovolcano', similar to those that exist today in the Andes to the north. Alternating bands of lava and ash stretched to the snow-shrouded peaks nearly one thousand metres above our heads, each representing a fiery eruption back in a time when the Antarctic Peninsula was forested and populated by dinosaurs. Suddenly we all wondered how the ship would squeeze past the massive iceberg that stood like a sentinel at the end of the channel, especially when we seemed to be headed for the narrower of the two exits. But we need not have worried; with walls of ice on both sides, we gently emerged unscathed on the other side, the loose pack ice of Penola Strait stretching to the white haze of the southerly horizon.

After another enticing meal we began to explore Petermann Island, the southernmost point for our voyage. Half a dozen lonely Adelies were waiting for us on the far hill, soon to be snapped by lens honed that afternoon by tips from our expert photographer Richard. 'Identification shots' were assured, but once the lone Adelie decided to shift position and shuffle up the slope, shutters sizzled. The question now is: whose shot of an ambling Adelie will stand proud and grace the pages our final voyage log?



Paradise Harbour, Enterprise Island

Position:	06:00 hours	Course:	115°	Wind Speed:	Calm	Barometer:	998 hPa & steady
Latitude:	64°49' S	Speed:	7 knots			Air Temp:	-2°C
Longitude:	63°03' W					Sea Temp:	2°C

Today we woke up to a mirror-like ocean, reflecting the surrounding mountains, glaciers and icebergs, together with the beautiful morning light of Antarctica all around the *Greg Mortimer*. The night hadn't really brought any real darkness, rather a blanket of silver light over the mountains and the sea, a sign of how far south our voyage had taken us.

Our morning landing took us to Brown Station, one of the 13 Antarctic research stations operated by Argentina. Once an all-year open station with an extensive biological laboratory for Antarctic research, Brown Base was burned down by the station's doctor in 1984 in protest of being ordered to overwinter for a second time. The station has been partly rebuilt but is now operated in summer-only mode, supporting a limited number of research projects.

The area around the station hosts several nesting areas of gentoo penguins which were just in the phase of mating and establishing their nests. We witnessed adorable gestures of presenting small rocks as nest building material to a future partner, and the occasional courtship vocalisation and mating ritual of the penguins.

To explore the beautiful surroundings of Brown Station we took off on a Zodiac cruise in the bays of Paradise Harbour and Skontorp Cove. After visiting a blue shag colony and nesting Antarctic terns just around the corner from Brown station we explored the steep cliffs and

immense rugged glacier fronts, and were enchanted by the countless smaller and larger icebergs floating in the mirror ocean. Through the calm waters we admired the shimmering silhouettes of the underwater proportion of icebergs, which represent the mass of the iceberg, hidden beneath the ocean surface.

On our way from Brown Station to Enterprise Island we had a surprise encounter with three humpback whales which accompanied our vessel for a few moments. Thanks to the captain slowing down and turning our ship we were able to observe some whale breaches and fins, which were a highlight during our transit to the next anchoring site.

In the late afternoon we anchored next to Enterprise Island and went out on a Zodiac cruise to see the ship wreck Guvernøren, which had been run aground here in 1915. As a Norwegian whaling factory ship it carried thousands of barrels of whale oil, and the captain tried to save the crew and the whale produce by steering it ashore. All 80 crewmen were saved but the over 16,000 barrels of whale oil were lost. In the shelter of Enterprise Island's east coast, we enjoyed a beautiful cruise around the wreck, where a yacht had taken shelter from the wind. Magnificent icebergs in shades of light blue and white accompanied our way back to the ship through the wind and waves of Gerlache Strait.



DAY 6 | Thursday 5 December 2019

Astrolabe Island

Position: 06:00 hours
Latitude: 63°22'S
Longitude: 58°47'W

Course: 112°
Speed: 8 knots

Wind Speed: 35 knots
Wind Direction: NE

Barometer: 992 hPa & falling
Air Temp: -1°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

A fresh early morning breeze created a wee roll that rocked us awake to the site of wind trails across the water of Orleans Strait enroute to Astrolabe Island. Our usual amazing breakfast was enhanced this morning by bright sunshine and the warm greetings of our smiling dining room staff. The morning's island destination was discovered by the French Expedition of 1837–1840 and was named for Captain Dumont d'Urville's chief expedition ship, *Astrolabe*. Our morning turned out to be rather colourful in a wind projection sense which postponed our kayaking and Zodiac outings.

Our weather delay was put to good use by Nina's lively interpretive presentation featuring the many who nearly discovered *Antarctos* until its actual first sightings in 1820. People's attention was split between Nina's terrific program and our backdrop of Astrolabe's craggy Dragon's Teeth peaks. Naturally, Rock Steve was quick to remind us of our surrounding's volcanic origins on what to Steve is a tour of the Southern Ocean's numerous volcanos covered with distracting animal life.

By midmorning our winds had abated sufficiently to launch into our much-anticipated Polar Plunge. Thirty-three brave (if not slightly unhinged) souls leapt from a perfectly good ship into zero-degree water, assisted or hauled back aboard by our dashing dry-suited kayaking guides Michael and Frank. After warm soft towels were issued and the spectator cheers died down, we all warmed up with a sauna for the plungers, followed by a delectable lunch of hot soup, salads, fish, turkey and grilled veggies.

As plates were being cleared, the seas began to calm, allowing an action-packed, full afternoon of Zodiac adventures and kayaking. Our Zodiacs were treated to fairly calm conditions and no end of stupendous icebergs hosting not one, not two, but all three of the brushtail penguin species: Adelie, Chinstrap and Gentoo. Onshore in a quiet bay was a haul out of Weddell seals, while Snowy Sheathbills tottered around the rocks. These mountain sides are home to nesting Cape petrels, Wilson's storm petrels and, in the higher reaches, Southern Fulmars. Kayakers enjoyed the wildlife as well while navigating through bergy bit canyons and gaps in the Dragon's Teeth as Fulmars wheeled overhead. Once we were all safely back on board, Robyn, John, Annette and Geology Steve led us through a recap of our day and a precap to tomorrow's visit to Elephant Island and its infamous Point Wild.

Astrolabe was indeed a rich volcano of experience for our day here which culminated in a BBQ dinner on the top deck of the ship against a stadium of snow-capped peaks, sun drenched rocks and icebergs festooned with penguins. One of our paddlers exclaimed that she just couldn't imagine a better trip experience. Our ship's kitchen team put together an outstanding repast, but none of us had ever experienced a BBQ surrounded by iceberg traffic, volcanic peaks and the calls of Southern Ocean seabirds. Music and magical evening sunlight enhanced the mood for a spontaneous dance party and conga line.



DAY 7 | Friday 6 December 2019

Point Wild (Elephant Island)

Position: 09:00 hours
Latitude: 61°46'S
Longitude: 55°43'W

Course: 112°

Wind Speed: 30 knots
Wind Direction: SSW
Barometer: 998 hPa & steady
Air Temp: -2°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

Dawn broke to find our vessel rolling across a rather choppy Southern Ocean bound for legendary Elephant Island. After several days on the ship we seem to be finding our sea legs as breakfast was busy. Hardly surprising when you see what awaits us. Although the weather was rather dull and grey it was brightened up by one of the breakfast treats: flocks of Cape petrels which periodically flitted past the dining room windows. It almost seemed that they were trying to get in for a bite of breakfast themselves.

A relaxed start to a day saw several Black browed albatross around the ship with a smattering of Fulmars and Prions. Of all seabirds which are seen down here in the Southern Ocean, albatross are arguably the most spectacular and regal. So far Grey Headed and Black browed albatross have been seen. With wing spans of over two meters they are spectacular creatures, much of their lives spent soaring thousands of kilometres over open ocean.

Even Wandering albatross which we hope to see -- huge birds with a wingspan of over three metres--can be dwarfed by the scale of these vast oceans. To watch an albatross dynamic soaring is like watch a racing yacht extract every ounce of lift and energy from the wind, as though the bird is stitching together sea and sky as it swoops and soars.

We enjoyed enthralling and informative talks through the day. Nina gave an in-depth and moving account of Shackleton's life and his ill-fated expedition south. Everyone was gripped by the drama of the story, with Part Two still to come. Annette educated us on penguins while Liz explained the mysteries of ice.

Mighty seas and gale force winds (one squall peaking at 80 knots), put paid to an outing at Elephant Island. But with impressive seamanship, Captain and his Bridge team manoeuvred the *Greg Mortimer* into an excellent viewing position off Point Wild in fierce weather and restricted sea room. The windows were crowded as we contemplated the wild, savage beauty of Elephant Island. Robyn read extracts from the men's diaries which many on board found very moving. Those of us standing in the shelter and warmth of the *Greg Mortimer*, looking out at the inhospitable rocky island half hidden by snow and mist, imagined how tough it must have been for Shackleton and his men as they clung precariously to life on that meagre, wind-lashed spit of land.

Onward to South Georgia!





DAY 8 | Saturday 7 December 2019

Scotia Sea, *enroute* to South Georgia

Position:	13:30 hours	Course:	60°	Wind Speed:	18 knots	Barometer:	985 mb & falling
Latitude:	59°04'S	Speed:	14 knots	Wind Direction:	SE	Air Temp:	0°C
Longitude:	48°22'W					Sea Temp:	4°C

With the glorious Antarctic Peninsula and the lonely, weather-beaten Elephant Island in our rear view mirror, we started our voyage across the Scotia Sea to South Georgia. Moving in a NE direction at 10.5 knots, we did not expect to see land for another couple of days and our thoughts were on Shackleton’s voyage as we viewed the cold seas from our cosy ship. Happily for all onboard, the *Greg Mortimer* rolled through the waves with almost imperceptible movement. After another hearty breakfast, many GM expeditioners gathered in the lecture hall to hear Nina expertly relay Part II of the inspirational story of Shackleton, the Endurance, and the eventual rescue of his entire crew from Point Wild on Elephant Island--a story of leadership, courage, and survival that touched our hearts.

Ian regaled a full crowd with tales of his career as a documentary film maker in far-away places. Tales of lions, land rovers, gastroenteritis, spiritual funerals, humpbacks interrupting his personal time on rocks, and vertigo caused by looking into a sky so filled with stars it made him feel like he was falling off the earth, fully engaged the audience. Ian’s descriptions of time spent on St. Andrew’s Bay and Bird Island increased our anticipation of what is to come on South Georgia. Fascinating documentaries accompanied by Ian’s gorgeous camera work provided a look at the crowded and difficult life of penguins and fur seals on the beaches of South Georgia.

A buffet of seemingly endless choices for lunch kept everyone happily fed and ready to enjoy the activities of the afternoon and perhaps accounted for the many people actively working out in the gym this afternoon!



An impromptu lesson on shooting birds in flight occurred on Deck 7 with Jared providing tips and tricks helping everyone create amazing photos of the circling Prions, Cape Petrels, and Albatross. This was followed by an informative lecture on King penguins expertly provided by Annette, covering her research and many aspects of penguin life, including breeding, foraging, diving, and behaviour patterns. The audience caught a glimpse into what we might see on South Georgia, and a better appreciation of the life cycle of King penguins and how they interact with the environment around them.

As the blue sunny skies turned grey again and snow reappeared, the afternoon finished with a post-processing session by Richard. This session was an excellent introduction to using Adobe Lightroom software. Stressing the need to process a raw file, Richard created gorgeous edits of several of his Antarctic photos using pre-sets and Lightroom’s extensive options. He finished the session showing the audience how to export photos for use in social media or to submit for the Aurora voyage log.

A large gathering of passengers mingled in the Elephant Island Bar celebrating several birthdays and sharing stories from the day prior to a delicious dinner followed by a showing of Part I of the Shackleton movie. We have all learned that even sea days are filled with many exciting and fulfilling opportunities on the *Greg Mortimer*.



DAY 9 | Sunday 8 December 2019

Scotia Sea, nearing South Georgia

Position:	07:00 hours	Course:	58°	Wind Speed:	11 knots	Barometer:	977 hPa and falling
Latitude:	57°27'S	Speed:	14 knots	Wind Direction:	SE	Air Temp:	0°C
Longitude:	43°23'W					Sea Temp:	4°C

Our morning sleep was broken
By Robyn's dulcet voice.
A calm sea of gentle swell
Enticed us to rejoice.

Though the sea was kind
We zig-zagged down the halls.
Some kept a paper bag in tow
In case there were close calls.

Jared took the morning slot
And we met the southern seals.
Eared or not, they're a funny lot
With flippers instead of feet.

The particular pinniped stars who live
On beautiful South Georgia isle
Sleep on the beach and swim in the sea
And are sure to make us smile.

The southern elephant 'blubber slug'
Dives down to a great dark depth
At least two thousand metres
And for two hours holds its breath.

And the feisty Antarctic (furry) fur seal
Will ensure we do not laze
With millions upon the beaches
A success after old sealing days.

At lunch we packed the dining room
Delicious fare filled each plate.
A common remark – 'Another dessert?'
Well sure! They taste so great!

We watched a briefing DVD
And perhaps we had a kip.
We vacuumed gear and bags once more.
And scurried about the ship.

With a glorious spread of afternoon tea
(What an awesome galley team)
Our taste buds were delighted
With the brownie an absolute dream.

'To the cinema!' called Shackleton
And to the lecture room we poured
Sir Branagh took the centre stage once more
As a man who was much adored.

Tomorrow – the ninth day of the month –
We'll sail closer to solid land.
South Georgia and its wilderness
We're sure will have new fans.

by Liz Pope



DAY 10 | Monday 9 December 2019

Drygalski Fjord, Larsen Harbour, Cooper Bay

Position:	07:00 hours	Course:	58°	Wind Speed:	25 knots	Barometer:	980 hPa & steady
Latitude:	55°19'S	Speed:	9.5 knots	Wind Direction:	NE	Air Temp:	-1°C
Longitude:	37°10'W					Sea Temp:	4°C

Oh my goodness, what a day! After so many months of planning and dreaming, and after having heard so much about the famous island of South Georgia, we were finally set to arrive. All the presentations on history, wildlife, geology and biosecurity left us well-prepared for our visit but only made us even more eager to get there.

The regular sightings of Fin whales continued through the morning as the rugged profile of South Georgia appeared in the distance, then disappeared again in the fog. The seas calmed then turned rough again, the clouds cleared and then closed in again, the wind started howling and then just dropped away. The weather in this remote part of the world is fickle and dominates what we can do, so we had to wait until we were inside Drygalski Fjord before we could decide whether we'd be able to launch Zodiacs and kayaks.

Tiny Larsen Harbour is rarely visited because the winds that usually come screaming down Drygalski Fjord make launching and retrieving Zodiacs and kayaks too risky most of the time. However, the winds decided to give us a break today and dropped just when we needed it.

After lunch, off to our beloved black Zodies and multi-coloured kayaks we went, and then out to explore Larsen Harbour. Some Zodies never made it past the bend in the Larsen Harbour as the entertainment provided by the frolicking fur seals was just too delightful to leave. In contrast, the Weddell and Elephant seals barely noticed us passing. Gentoo penguins zipped by, Antarctic terns swooped and hovered near us, cormorants flew by or

landed on the water and dived into the freezing water. Our non-wildlife cruise up Larsen Harbour certainly turned out the be a wildlife bonanza.

Back to the warm security of our ship and the place was buzzing with excitement, fuelled by the diverse experience that each Zody had. Some explored the inner reaches of the fjord, some circled icebergs and others just enjoyed watching the wildlife.

Too much Zody is never enough, so after dinner we boarded Zodiacs again – this time in Cooper Bay where the seas surged around hundreds of large rock outcrops. Macaroni penguins went about their daily business – coming and going from the colony as they took turns sitting on the nest or going out to get food. Seals burped, growled or whimpered. It was the first night that we turned off all possible lights and became a darkened ship. This was to reduce the incidence of birds striking the ship.

Many mad souls chose to go Zodiac-ing after dinner at Cooper Bay, while others chose an early bedtime in time for a pre-breakfast outing in the wee hours of the morning.





DAY 11 | Tuesday 10 December 2019

St Andrews Bay, Gold Harbour

Position: 12:45
Latitude: 54°26'S
Longitude: 36°07'W

Course: 114°
Speed: 10 knots

Wind Speed: 16 knots
Wind Direction: N

Barometer: 991 hPa
Air Temp: 2°C
Sea Temp: 3°C

No call came over the PA system to Rise and Shine, but at 0430, about half of our ship's complement rubbed sleep from their eyes and wriggled into thermals and goretex, ready to land at South Georgia's largest King penguin colony and largest elephant seal beach. Here at St Andrews Bay the estimate is in excess of 150,000 adult pairs of King penguins. Add brown fluffy chicks to that quantity and the volume of penguins on the beach at any one time boggles the imagination.

These surf-swept beaches are perfect for penguin comings and goings; it is rare indeed to be treated to such a calm morning, with only a minor swell racing up and down the beach. We did not have to walk far to be overcome with in-your face wildlife: kings, feisty fur seals, elephant seal haul-outs and the young elephant seals known as weaners. We knew all our distance rules but alas the wildlife ignored them, approaching us when we sat quietly. What a way to start the day!

The kayakers, too, were enjoying a spectacular paddle along the shoreline before bringing their craft ashore. After breakfast the full ship's complement set foot on the beach and some made their way across the fast-flowing glacial stream to stand on a high point and look down upon a throng of birds where adults trumpeted, chicks cheeped, and where eggs will soon be kept warm and safe under their parent's brood patch, ready to hatch later in the season.

Back onboard the ship enjoyed a well-earned siesta as we rested up for our afternoon at Gold Harbour. But like all good expeditions, we were delightfully distracted enroute by humpback whales busily lunge feeding. Captain and our officers slowed the ship as these magnificent creatures continued to dine, surfacing with their jaws agape to ingest a meg-alitre cocktail of krill and sea water. The humpbacks were a total crowd pleaser with their flipper slapping and display of flukes as they dived deep.

Gold Harbour did not disappoint. This glorious setting was prime real estate shared by king penguins and their large brown fluffy chicks, elephant seals, hundreds of weaners, giant petrels, fur seals, and a scattering of gentoos, sheathbills and skuas. With its picturesque background of mountains and hanging glaciers, Gold Harbour was a place to soak in the majesty of the surrounds.

An epic day at beautiful South Georgia.



Fortuna Bay, Stromness Harbour, Grytviken

Position: 07:00
Latitude: 54°08'S
Longitude: 40°10'W

Course: At anchor, Fortuna Bay

Wind Speed: Calm
Barometer: 980 hPa & rising

Air Temp: 2°C
Sea Temp: 4°C

Picking up anchor early we headed to Fortuna Bay to commence our first landing. A few intrepid adventurers awoke for an 0500 Zodiac cruise at Whistle Cove hoping to land ashore and explore the historic cave bearing artefacts from the sealing days. Alas, the beach was littered with fur seals staking their territory, too much of a force to be reckoned with, so the decision was made not to cruise instead.

The spectacle of hundreds of territorial fur seals lurching and charging towards each other certainly elicited a healthy dose of adrenaline.

At breakfast we were graced by the presence of humpback whales lunge feeding in a misty Fortuna Bay. Expecting to traverse the track where Shackleton had walked, we waited for the mountains to reveal themselves from their shroud of grey. Instead, the sky thickened to a watery mist that rolled down the slopes to the bay, making it impossible to safely attempt the walk. The call was made to proceed to the whaling station at Stromness and approach the walk from the other end, with a hike to Shackleton's waterfall.

The fur seals were thick on approach to the beach at Stromness. The remains of the whaling station were a stark contrast to the untouched beauty of the location. It was hard to grapple with the reality of a time when the whaling industry dominated this pristine landscape with three neighbouring stations: Leith, Stromness and Husvik.

Now it resembles a post-industrial graveyard in a strange foreign environment. The idea that one of the majestic animals we revere so much was once hunted close to extinction seemed a distant aberration of a dark past that did not belong in this setting.

In the afternoon we shifted around to Grytviken where we learned from the scientists who came onboard about the amazing efforts to eradicate all rodents from South Georgia. This was no small feat and it was wonderful to see the pride these people felt in having been a part of the return and increase in numbers of nesting bird populations.

We then headed ashore to Grytviken and visited the gravesites of Sir Ernest Shackleton and the remains of his right-hand man Frank Wild, where we raised a toast in memory of these mighty men and their epic journey. It was here, in 1923 at the start of the Quest expedition, that Sir Ernest suffered a heart attack and passed away.

The humble grave of a great explorer lay here, the cemetery surrounded by elephant and fur seals and the high peaks of jagged snow-capped mountains. One would imagine that his soul would find this a fitting setting to be remembered in.





DAY 13 | Thursday 12 December 2019

Salisbury Plain, Elsehul

Position: 05:15 hours
Latitude: 54°00'S
Longitude: 37°04'W

Course: 284°
Speed: 4.5 knots

Wind Speed: 6 knots
Wind Direction: Variable

Barometer: 1001 hPa & rising
Air Temp: 3°C
Sea Temp: 4°C

’twas a fine fair dawn that greeted a shipload of seafaring souls off the craggy coastline of South Georgia. And there, in the bonnie Bay of Isles, the good ship *Greg Mortimer* did lay anchor and swing towards the sea, as those inside filed into the dining room for their morning meal. Slightly sleepy after several, (rather swell) days in South Georgia, they found themselves quickly roused from their somnolent state by the tremendous spectacle of Salisbury Plain.

And if ever there were an unforgettable form of farewell for this fantastic island, it was at the Salisbury Plain. Snow-covered peaks soar above gently sloping glaciers Grace and Lucas, the tell-tale grey stripes of medial moraine tracing paths towards the plains. Long, sandy beaches provide breeding, birthing - and barking - grounds for thousands of fur seals, a population which has recovered remarkably since the fur sealing era, which saw them almost extinct. Seals gather in harems by the shore, with sometimes brutish (but always beautiful) bulls surrounded by their much smaller female mates and their young, mewling pups.

Cautious visitors walked the narrow corridor between harems, careful to avoid aggressive males and hapless solitary pups strewn across the sand. Slightly hidden over a rocky rise was a marvellous sight: the second largest king penguin colony in South Georgia. Downy brown “Oakem Boys” bordered the breathtaking colony, which extended hundreds of metres from the beach, snaking up into gently sloping hills of tussock and moss. How to describe the sound of hundreds of thousands of king penguins calling and trumpeting ecstatically? Like a thousand church bells pealing; an orchestra of orchids; a sound sublime.

With four hours to enjoy and explore, our seafaring travellers dispersed, some traipsing off across the verdant green outwash plains towards a grassy knoll, with awe-inspiring views across the colony and the Bay of Isles. Others trekked towards the dramatic glacier front, or congregated around the colony to enjoy a special kind of communion with the king penguins. It was the perfect morning for a kayak or Zodiac cruise, enjoying the seal-speckled beach from the security of the sea. With penguins porpoising and seals spinning lazily, it was a sight to see!

But all good things must come to an end, and not long after midday all piled on to the *Greg Mortimer* to enjoy yet another delicious meal from the excellent hotel team on board. Afterwards, an afternoon nap called. With the promise of one final Zodiac cruise we dreamed of rugged coastlines, regal penguins and landscapes sublime.

Elsehul provided a fitting farewell to this far-flung island, with the fog settling in as we made our final forays into the bay. We joined the ‘Macaroni Express’ to view the yellow-crested divas of the penguin world, perhaps poke a nose into a pretty sea cliff among the seals, or simply skirt the edges of this marvellous coastline once more. After an informative recap from our expedition team we set our course for the Falkland Islands, where sheep and penguins reign.



Shag Rocks, South Atlantic Ocean

Position:	09:00	Course:	280°	Wind Speed:	35 knots	Barometer:	986 hPa & falling
Latitude:	53°29'S	Speed:	12 knots	Wind Direction:	E	Air Temp:	2°C
Longitude:	42°35'W					Sea Temp:	6°C

I cannot call to mind any other settlement (except perhaps Tristan da Cunha) more dismal, miserable, and devoid of all interest than this at the Falkland Islands—the geese were so tame that we had to give up shooting them. – W. J. J. Spry, RN, HMS Challenger, 1876

An undulating land with a desolate and wretched aspect. —Charles Darwin, 1834

After fun-filled, action-packed days on South Georgia, we departed Elsehul after dusk to awaken at dawn to the steady roll of the South Atlantic Ocean. We had made fantastic progress on our 773-nautical mile journey as we tracked the North Scotia ridge towards the Falkland Islands; averaging 12 knots as we travelled towards the eye of a storm on our voyage west.

Waves built steadily throughout the day, the *Greg Mortimer* demonstrating her capabilities in gale force winds approaching 65 knots, with seas cresting eight metres. Throughout the day we continued to make good progress despite the increasing ferocity of the storm outside. The perfect setting for a series of well-attended and well -received bridge tours - as *Greg Mortimer* the man aptly pointed out, this is where it all “comes to a sharp point” and everyone was duly impressed by the calibre of the crew and the capabilities of our vessel to contend with stormy seas.

Onboard, the passengers were well entertained by an excellent presentation by Darwin (Cultural host and DPhil Zoology student at Oxford University) on the wildlife-human elements of our voyage, with a focus on the rat eradication of South Georgia and her own fascinating ethno-ornithological research which looks at the influence of human cultural interaction on species diversity. Next, we were regaled by Geologist Steve and his animated discussion on the geological origins of the Antarctic peninsula and South Georgia, the opening of the Drake passage and the commencement of the circumpolar current with the onset of permanent icecaps in the Antarctic. It was exciting to be reminded of Antarctica’s once temperate climate and ecology! Finally, before dinner we shared a recap of our experiences at each destination at South Georgia. The juxtaposition of the powerful elements outside, contrasted with the comfort of the ship’s inner quarters, reminded us of nature’s power while we celebrated the birthdays of several passengers and crew on a tempestuous sea.

We motored on towards the Malvinas ahead of schedule for the next chapter of our voyage together. We anticipate passing through the Antarctic convergence in our sleep as we continue to Bleaker Island in the east Falklands. We were lulled to sleep with fond recent memories of fantastic weather, memorable wildlife moments and amazing Zodiac adventures at Larsen Harbour and Elsehul.





DAY 15 | Saturday 14 December 2019

South Atlantic Ocean, *enroute* to Falkland Islands

Position:	08:15 hours	Course:	274°	Wind Speed:	34 knots	Barometer:	1002 hPa & rising
Latitude:	53°00'S	Speed:	10 knots	Wind Direction:	SSE	Air Temp:	1°C
Longitude:	50°24'W					Sea Temp:	6°C

Many of us fully experienced what it means to get our cabins ‘ship-shape’...and what happens if we don’t. The latter amongst us found water bottles, glasses and all manner of belongings propelled to a new spot by morning. Some of us heard items rolling around in our cupboards and drawers, swaying with the rolling rhythm of the ship, which made for an uneasy sleep (though not quite annoying enough to get out of bed in the middle of the night to rectify it).

Waking up after a bumpy sleep through rough seas and stormy winds, with the feeling that the weather was slowly subsiding, was a relief. We are now well on our way to the Falkland Islands and expecting to be there sometime tomorrow afternoon. During the day it became quickly apparent that seas were smoothing out. After a delicious breakfast we enjoyed a lecture by Jared on taking pictures of birds in flight. It is always a delight to watch Jared’s geeky approach and his absolute passion for the subjects he tries to capture in his photography come together in a lecture. A ‘must do’ for everyone interested in getting the best out of their photography.

Next up was Robyn’s gripping story of ‘A year on the ice with Emperor penguins’. She described in detail the story of doing research on emperor penguins in a colony on the sea ice, travelling in a Swedish over-snow vehicle called a Hagglund, towing a camper-like trailer on skis, spending days in a snow blizzard in the trailer hunkered down in a sleeping bag to read a book by the light of a headlamp. Hearing about the male and female penguins and how they share the responsibility of taking care of the egg and later of the newly hatched penguin, had everyone’s attention.

Many of us hardened sailors and explorers melted a little after seeing the cutest pictures of young penguins growing up and not much minding being held and examined.

Time for a delicious seafood buffet lunch with everything the seafood lover could wish for. Thanks, galley team; you all truly outdid yourself. Again!

Annette kept us going in our never-ending thirst for knowledge as she taught us about the crested penguins of South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. After seeing the Macaroni penguins in Elsehul, everyone had their questions answered on these beautiful creatures. Ian then had us clinging to his every word with his wonderful ‘Story of a picture’ talk. He presented a series of pictures taken during his time filming with the BBC and gave us a glimpse of the story behind those photographs.

To finish of our day at sea we held an auction with all proceeds going to the South Georgia Heritage Trust to aid their continuing rat eradication monitoring. A BIG THANK YOU to everyone on board who took part and donated generously. We raised a mighty US \$5270!



Bleaker Island

Position:	07:30 hours	Course:	350°	Wind Speed:	15 knots	Barometer:	985 hPa
Latitude:	57°38'S	Speed:	10.7 knots	Wind Direction:	SE	Air Temp:	1°C
Longitude:	65°33'W					Sea Temp:	6°C

Two and half days after leaving South Georgia, everyone was very excited about reaching the Falkland Islands. As we woke to the gentle rocking of a calm South Atlantic Ocean, an airborne escort of albatrosses, petrels and prions heralded our imminent arrival.

The Falklands are an archipelago of 776 islands, nestled into the eastern curl of southern Patagonia. Together these islands cover an area of 12,200 km2, approximately three times the size of South Georgia. The two main islands—East Falkland and West Falkland—represent a small, remnant block of Gondwana, twisted and rotated over 150 million years as Africa and South America were slowly pulled apart to create the Atlantic Ocean.

After breakfast, Nina set the scene with a quick history lesson that started with the near 100-year saga of three Englishmen named John, and an ambitious young Frenchman named Louis, that saw the British, French and Spanish all laying claim to the islands. After a long period of relative stability, Argentina successful invaded the Falklands in 1982, but it was recaptured by Britain not long after. The rest is, as they say, history, and since 1985, the Falklands have been an Independent Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom.

Our first port of call in the Falklands was Bleaker Island, off the SE coast of East Falkland. As our Zodiacs approached the wind-swept, white beach of Sandy Bay, the contrast with the snow-covered peaks of South Georgia could not have been starker. After making our way past clumps of silver-leaved sea cabbage, we were met by local farmers Nick, his mum Phil and father Mike, who kindly offered to ferry us to different parts of the island. For the remainder, a gentle amble across the low-lying grassy meadows beckoned.

Primed by Jared's excited talk about the local wildlife, we soon spotted our first pairs of the endemic upland goose, the white and grey males proudly strutting among the daisies alongside the slightly smaller speckled fawn females.

Over the rise, Magellanic penguins greeted us at the entrance to their burrows, while a turkey vulture leisurely soared overhead. Weaving through the tall clumps of tussac grass, we suddenly arrived at squawking colony of rockhopper penguins, their pebble nests complete with fluffy chicks, perched precariously on the edge of a deep fissure in the cliffs known as Long Gulch.

For those of us able to pull our gaze away from these charismatic little penguins, the surrounding tussac revealed an even greater number of king cormorants, and some of their smaller, red-eyed cousins, the rock cormorants, nesting on the ledges below. Darting among the tussac were long-tailed meadowlarks and black-throated finches. As we left, a pair of ruddy-headed geese emerged from the greenery to bid us farewell.



Stanley

Position: 12:30 hours
Latitude: 51°40' S
Longitude: 57°40' W

Course: 182°
Speed: 10.5 knots

Wind Speed: 31 knots
Wind Direction: SW

Barometer: 998 hPa & falling
Air Temp: 10°C
Sea Temp: 10°C

The gentle night voyage of the *Greg Mortimer* had taken us from Bleaker Island northward along the Falkland Islands' east coast and into the sheltered bay of Stanley. Looking out from the ship after waking up we were greeted by the colourful houses of Stanley which, since 1845, is the capital of the Falkland Islands.

The Zodiacs set out soon after breakfast to bring us to a beautiful early morning landing in the town centre. After the two last weeks in the remoteness of Antarctica, without much of a human trace around us, setting foot into Stanley was overwhelming in many senses. Daily life of the little town of 2,400 inhabitants seemed busy to us who had gotten used to the quietness of the Southern Ocean and the company of sailing albatrosses next to the ship; it certainly took some of us a moment to readjust our senses. In wise anticipation Robyn had warned us of the endemic species to watch out for during this landing – the Stanley Land Rover which might turn around corners unexpectedly and be slightly less gentle in giving way than the penguins.

We spent our morning exploring Stanley, enjoying the little shops filled with penguin souvenirs, admiring the blue whale jaw bones perfectly put into scene by the Stanley Anglican Cathedral, and walking along the British red phone boxes and the beautiful town houses. The Stanley post office and philatelic bureau gave the opportunity to send last postcards to loved ones at home or taking home some beautiful special edition stamps of the Falkland and South Georgia wildlife in our luggage.

The Falkland Islands Museum offered coffee and cake in the pier coffee shop, or some last-minute shopping in the extensive choice of the harbour souvenir shop. With all of us arriving back at the floating dock in good time, our Zodiacs whisked us back to the *Greg Mortimer*. Captain Oleg then steered our ship through the narrow channel leading us out of Stanley Harbour, and we admired once more the white beaches and turquoise waters lined with penguins that greeted our passage.

In the afternoon Steve took us onto a journey of how to look for dinosaur fossils in Antarctica, sharing his unique research and fieldwork experience. Few things could possibly be more adventurous than investigating ancient life on the Antarctic continent, and Steve managed to fully engage us in his story of scientific discovery and fieldwork logistics under challenging conditions.

As we started our last voyage leg towards Ushuaia, wind and waves picked up to give us a last adventurous taste of the wild Southern Ocean we were about to leave behind. The *Greg Mortimer* travelled through seas of up to seven metres high as our voyage memories and knowledge were tested during our quiz night – well done to the winning team for the Elephant Island Bar voucher!





DAY 18 | Tuesday 17 December 2019

South Atlantic Ocean, Beagle Channel

Position:	09:00 hours	Course:	244°	Wind Speed:	18 knots	Barometer:	1001 hPa & falling
Latitude:	53°32'S	Speed:	13.6 knots	Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	4°C
Longitude:	62°39'W					Sea Temp:	5°C

Some reprieve was felt in the wee hours from our ‘bucking bronco’ beds, and so it was a full complement that made it to breakfast. As we munched on our bacon and eggs, albatross wheeled and soared on the skies around the ship, their wing tips dipping ever-so-close to the surging seas.

Mid-morning, Nina shared her stimulating presentation on the history of Antarctic politics, and we were able to appreciate just how unique the Antarctic treaty system is in preserving the icy southern continent for peace and science for all citizens of the world.

As the day progressed, the ship was a hive of various activities. Almost reluctantly, we gathered our belongings from around our ‘floating home away from home’ and stuffed them back into long forgotten suitcases and bags. Siestas were enjoyed by many, interspersed with sessions of quiet contemplation of the distant watery horizon or final bursts of enthusiastic seabird photography.

Robyn led a disembarkation briefing, and not long after we gathered in the Elephant Island bar in our finery for farewell drinks. The atmosphere of warm conviviality was a delight as we shared our final thoughts, reflections and laughs with our new shipboard friends.

Once inside the lecture room, Captain Oleg Klaptenko reminded us of our first “hellos” all those weeks ago in Ushuaia, and of all the various members of the crew – including those who work so hard behind the scenes - that are integral to this voyage. We toasted them, and ourselves, with great cheer.

John presented certificates to our brave polar plungers, followed by a smashingly theatrical catwalk strut by our resident male model Steve donned with the revered Aurora Expeditions’ polar plunge t-shirt. Michael congratulated the hardy group of kayakers, and finally we were made privy to the iceberg competition winner. Well done to Kathryn Hamilton! Cheers and whoops rung out as we made a final thank you to John and his expedition team. These continued into dinner where we were given an opportunity to applaud the long congo-line of hotel, galley and bar lads and ladies.

The final hurrah for the day was an entertaining slideshow put together by Ian. This visual feast was the perfect journey back through all our days of adventure and discovery.

DAY 19 | Wednesday 18 December 2019

Ushuaia

Position:	07:00 hours	Course:	Docked at Ushuaia	Wind Speed:	Calm	Air Temp:	6°C
Latitude:	54°49'S			Barometer:	979.9 hPa	Sea Temp:	5°C
Longitude:	68°18'W						

A Journey is a person in itself; no two are alike, and all plans, safeguards, policies and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. —John Steinbeck

With the final stretch of our voyage west along the Beagle Channel, docking at the wharf at Ushuaia, we reflected on the feelings of a journey’s end -- the intensity and diversity of our three weeks together exploring the frozen reaches.

Our first Antarctic landing gave an introduction to Deception Island, our chance to wander its black volcanic beach, steam rising from the shoreline, to take in the first of an otherworld. The calm oceanic conditions meant that many were able to venture out in Zodiacs and kayaks beyond the caldera’s infamous ‘Neptune’s Bellows.’ The following day found us in the white frozen heart of the Antarctic Peninsula, icebergs sailing by, penguins porpoising, a vista of snow covered peaks and crystalline glaciers sweeping down to sea. Here we experienced the wonders of Cuverville Island and its resident gentoo penguins.

That same day we motored south through the stunning Lemaire Channel, cloud shrouding the mountain tops, then further south to Petermann Island for a tranquil evening landing. For some, this was our first sighting of Adelie penguins.

We were literally and metaphorically in Paradise the next day, exploring the snow banks of the continent at Paradise Bay and cruising Skontorp Cove’s glacier. Our kayakers had their own heavenly paddle on that calm, beautiful morning.

Foyrn Harbour at Enterprise Island offered a wild and woolly Zodiac cruise with snow beating against our faces and making us wince as we braced the Antarctic wind. But further north at Astrolabe Island, the sea calmed, allowing us to explore at leisure a hidden jewel of an island with its ‘Devil’s Teeth’, clusters of Adelies on ice floes, Weddell seals lounging on the foreshore, a glimpse of a leopard seal, and all three of the brushtail penguins posing on a single berg.

At Point Wild on Elephant Island the squalls screamed 80 knots of force while our thoughts went to Shackleton and the bravery of his men who came ashore at this desolate spit of land to set up a makeshift camp beneath two upturned lifeboats.

North-East we forged to South Georgia and what a time we had there. The sheer density of fur seals crowding the beaches, colonies of king penguins so large in number it felt mind-bending, and dozens of elephant seal weaners and countless tiny fur seal pups capturing our hearts.

After a stormy crossing to the Falklands, our ship riding beautifully in big seas, we managed not one but two outings at the Falklands: the Rockhopper and Magellanic penguins of Bleaker Island, then a sampling of the small frontier town of Stanley.

We leave our trusty expedition vessel, taking with us incredible experiences, newly forged friendships, and a deep respect for the wonder of this pristine wilderness that is Antarctica and South Georgia.



Kayaking Log

By Michael Gray

Kayaking Masters: Michael Gray, Frank Witter, Lisa Deziel
Total Distance Paddled: 57.2 kilometres

Kayakers:		
Tracy Andrews	Christopher Andrews	Terence Blades
Yasmin Blades	Jennifer Bowman	Rosalind Brown
Colin Crocker	Anita Nolan	Marie Dalziel
Renee Grant	Mel Green	Steve Mahnken
Dior Mahnken	Aria Mahnken	Brie Mahnken
Ria Bosher		

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

DAY 1: Ushuaia To Drake

Drysuit and Gear briefing split between the lecture theatre and Mudroom directly after the lifeboat drill. By the evening many were all fitted out with drysuits and boots.

DAY 2: Drake

DAY 3: PM: Deception Island – Distance: 9.5 km

We launched in 5 knots of wind for an ambitious first group paddle out through Neptune’s Bellows to beneath Neptune’s window, the mild conditions allowing us this rare opportunity. We spied a resting solo Leopard seal on the volcanic sand at the base of the window. After we left, we crossed the Bellows to a pocket beach with an old wreck and a small colony of Chinstrap penguins. The penguins were quite inquisitive and everyone had fun photographing them as they popped out of the water. It was a very sheltered opportunity to have a private landing that we managed in two small pods. A couple of our passengers proclaimed our first trip their personal longest trip already. Half the group did a second landing on the inside of the Bellows just below the trail to Neptune’s Window. The remainder of our paddlers had the chance to hike up to the Window for great ocean views.

DAY 4: AM: Cuverville Island

We had a few false starts this morning...0700 saw pretty solid 20-25 knot Easterly winds, snow and a bit of fog, but it looked as if we might get out of it in the lee of Cuverville Island. Alas, on arrival, winds started to gust to 40 knots and there was a lot of ice movement, ruling out paddling. Our group was happy to do a special Zodiac cruise and land on their own to enjoy all the icebergs and a good visit to the Gentoo colonies that were in full breeding regalia. Many people saw South Polar skuas snatch eggs from under penguins’ feet and fly off with them to share with their mates.

PM: Peterman Island – Distance: 5.3 km

Peterman Island late afternoon arrival after a ship’s cruise of the Lemaire Channel. We had a quick 1800 early dinner to get our group of kayakers out on the water by a fairly impressive 1930. We got to see some Adelies down by the water, a fair number of Wilson’s Storm Petrels and Antarctic Terns, amongst an impressive number of Gentoos. As well as

some majestic iceberg paddling, we had a fantastic show of bobsledding penguins to cap off our 2100 return to the ship.

DAY 5: AM: Paradise Harbour/Brown Station – Distance: 9.5 km

We had a very nice early morning paddle amongst fantastic amounts of bergy bits on glassy seas, touring around the impressive views of glacial faces. The group enjoyed a fun crossing over to the Gentoo colony on Bryde Island and then a quick crossing to rivers of ice coming in on the tide. We were back to the ship by noon.

PM: Enterprise Island

From the ship we saw many Humpback whales *enroute* with some of the whales close to ship very active with breaching. Our kayaking got blown out with 20 knots + winds, blowing snow and unfriendly conditions. Most of our paddlers got out on Zodiac cruises to the area around the wreck of the Norwegian whaling factory ship *Guvernøren*, where we chatted with the folks aboard the yacht *Spirit of Sydney*, tied up against the wreck.

DAY 6: AM: Astrolabe Island – Distance: 7.4 km

No kayaking this morning and no Zodiac cruising as winds were dancing between 20-40 knots. We took part in a mid-morning polar plunge from the floating deck as winds and seas calmed a bit. By early afternoon, winds abated enough to offer a ‘challenging’ kayak option that 10 of our paddlers took advantage of. We paddled through bergy bits, some bumpy water, 15 + knot winds, rocky canyons with three kinds of penguins and lots of seabirds. We all seemed to have a great day no matter the choice and seemed very happy at the evening’s BBQ. Departed for the journey to Elephant Island at 2000.

DAY 7:

At sea all morning enroute to Elephant Island in a rolling 2 metre following sea. Winds 25-35 knots from the South. Despite building winds we had a foggy, very blowy (gusts to 70 knots) arrival at Point Wild which Robyn brought to life over the PA with the Shackleton and Wild story. With conditions too extreme to launch Zodiacs and kayaks, we began the trip to South Georgia in blowing snow and a big following sea.

DAY 8:

At sea to South Georgia. Mild seas, semi blue skies, good sea birds and time well spent on wildlife lectures to prepare us for this wildlife mecca.

DAY 9:

At sea. Dawned foggy, but pretty calm. Our new ship really is amazingly stable in all the seas we’ve been in. We were kept busy with a South Georgia Biosecurity briefing, vacuuming, cleaning boats and gear. Excitement mounted as we closed the ocean gap!

DAY 10: Distance: 3/7 km

Arrived at Drygalski Fjord on the south-eastern corner of South Georgia at around lunch time. We enjoyed a ship’s cruise right to the end of the Fjord then anchored in Larsen Harbour on the way back down. We got super lucky to get a light wind to launch our kayak groups around 1430 for a two-hour paddle. Frank’s group went deep into the Fjord, while Lisa and Michael took the majority of our kayakers across to the Western lobe of the bay for a super wildlife rich and sheltered paddle. Frank’s group paddled around 7 kms on their loop. We enjoyed an evening Zodiac cruise at Cooper Bay.

Kayaking Log

By Michael Gray

DAY 11: Distance: 7 km

Two paddle outings. We arranged an early 0530 paddle at St Andrews Bay and took along a floating continental breakfast kindly arranged by the ship’s restaurant. This allowed us to stay ashore while the early morning shift Zodiac landing returned to the ship for breakfast. Our entire kayak group of 16 got to enjoy some very intimate beach time with the many Fur seals, Elephant seal weaners and King penguins. By 0930 most of the group was chilled enough to return to the ship.

By the time lunch rolled around, the ship moved on toward Gold Harbour. Enroute we had a superb close encounter with some surface krill-feeding Humpbacks. At Gold Harbour, we had a sensational small group paddle down to the lagoon and back up around Gold Head with its fantastic Rocky spires, secret passages and kelp gardens.

DAY 12:

No kayaking today as we were all geared up for the Shackleton Walk at Fortuna Bay. Our day began with such a low ceiling diminishing visibility that Expedition Leader John chose to ship cruise to Stromness Whaling Station and from there to walk in so as to reach ‘Shackleton’s’ waterfall. We enjoyed the company of Emma, the South Georgia Observer. Everyone enjoyed the pre-lunch hike before we climbed back onboard and cruised on to Grytviken. We opted not to paddle as everyone was keen to wander around Grytviken. We had ten South Georgia Island guests aboard for a late dinner that night.

DAY 13: AM: Salisbury Plain – Distance: 8.5 km

Mild weather this morning allowed us a fantastic morning paddle at Salisbury Plain with a small group private landing amongst Fur seals, King penguins and skuas fighting over the leavings of recently birthed pups. During a paddle around the rocks toward the secondary landing site, we probed into a pocket bay that revealed a beach absolutely carpeted with life including an island of King penguins, a beautiful blonde Fur seal pup and harems of Fur seals so thick you could barely see the ground. Needless to say, we chose to see all of this from the comfort of the water as we got a great view of the tidewater glacier at the head of the bay.



In the afternoon a light swell and winds allowed us a short visit to Elsehul before beginning our traverse to the Falkland Islands. Elsehul was a chance for a Zodiac cruise to the Macaroni colony in the outer harbour, and to the inner harbour to see trypots remaining from the early 19th century sealers who worked this area. The entire beach has since been reoccupied by Fur seals.

DAY 14:

At sea. Quite rough with quartering beam winds developing later in the day, gusts 50+ knots.

DAY 15:

At sea.

DAY 16:

At sea with afternoon arrival at Bleaker Island in the Falklands.

DAY 17:

Morning landing at Stanley. No kayaking.

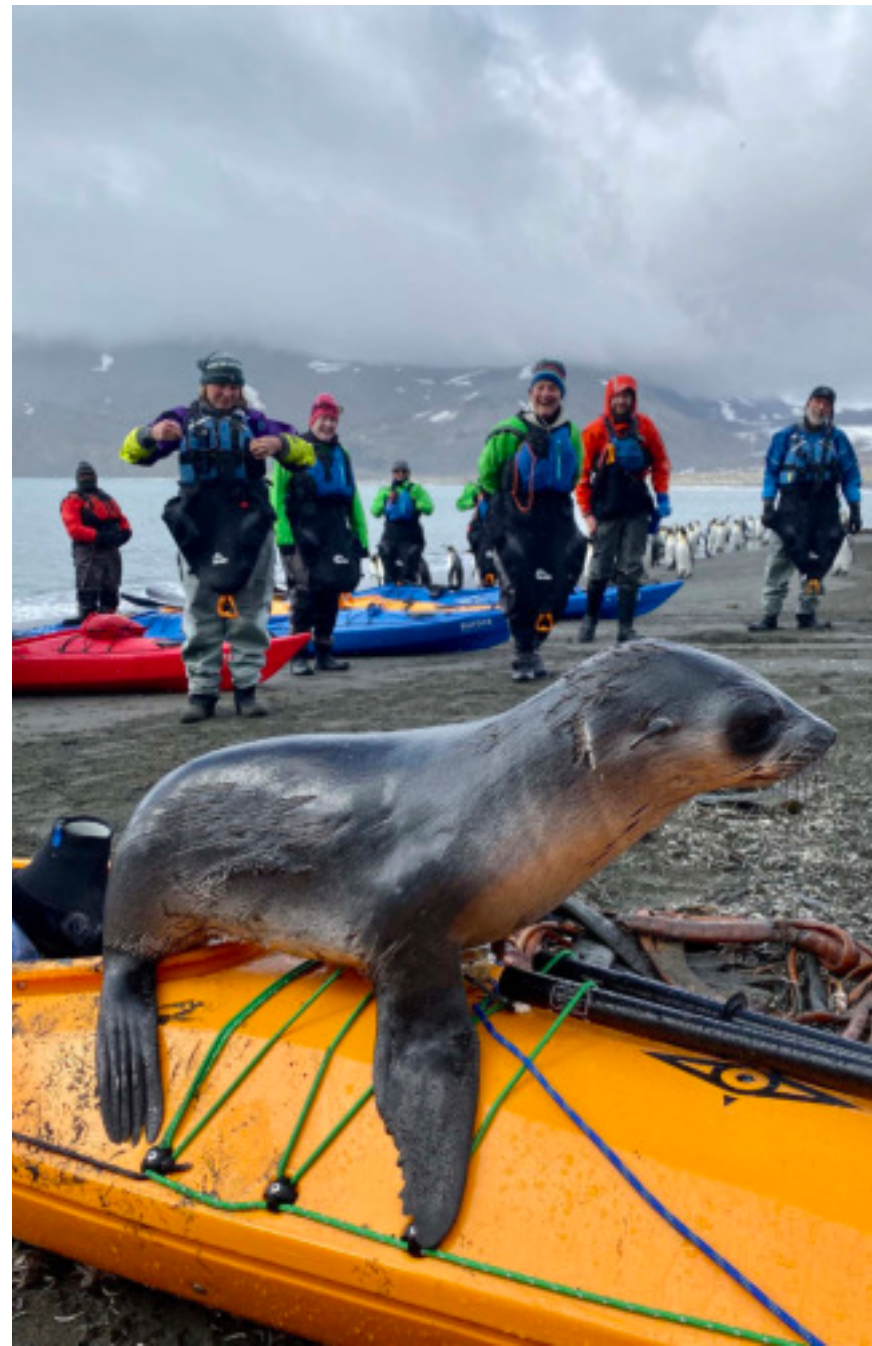
DAY 18:

At sea.

DAY 19:

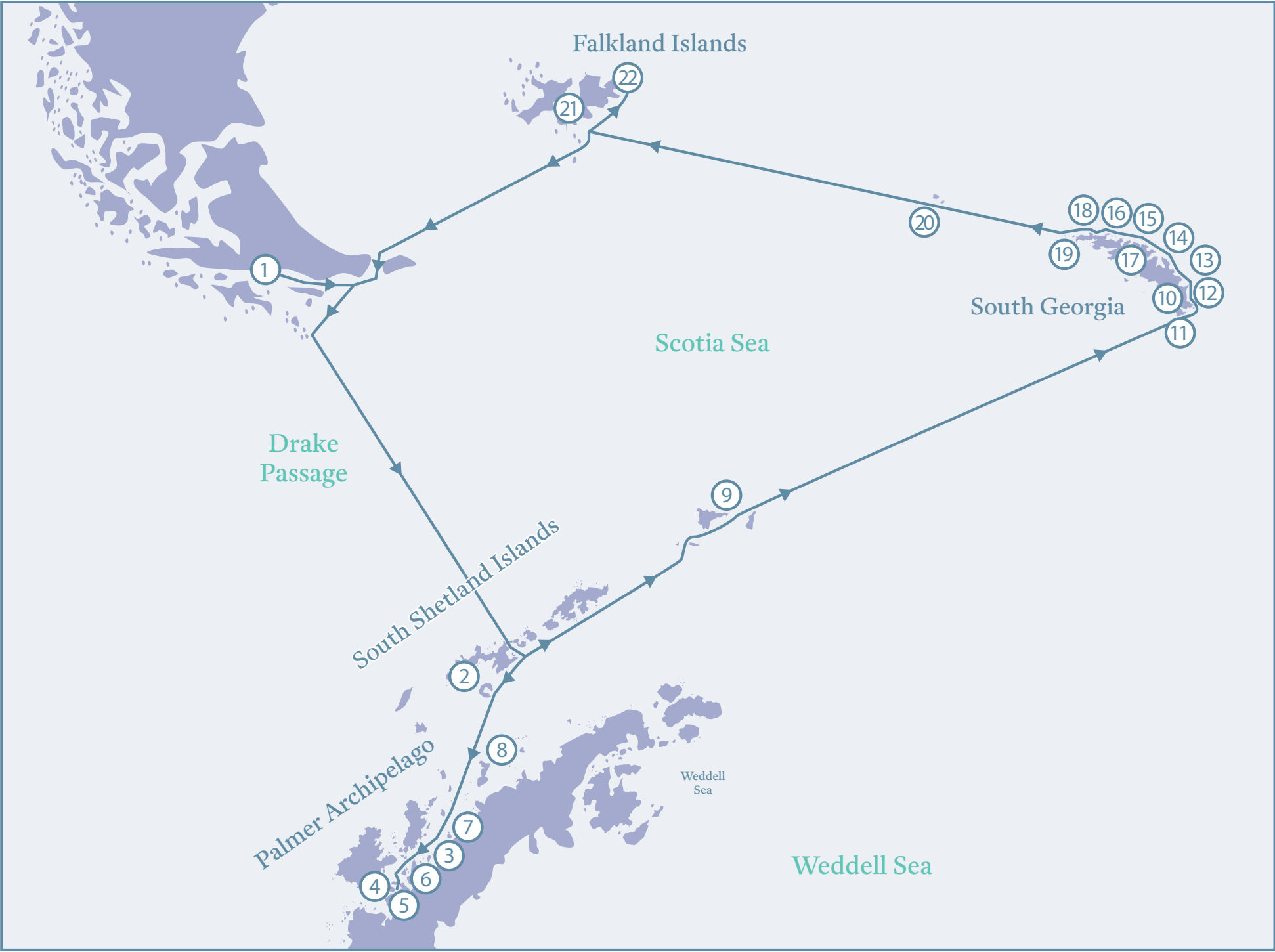
Docked at Ushuaia, ready for disembarkation.





South Georgia and Antarctic Odyssey

30 November – 18 December 2019
Southernmost point of voyage: 65°10'S, 64°70'W

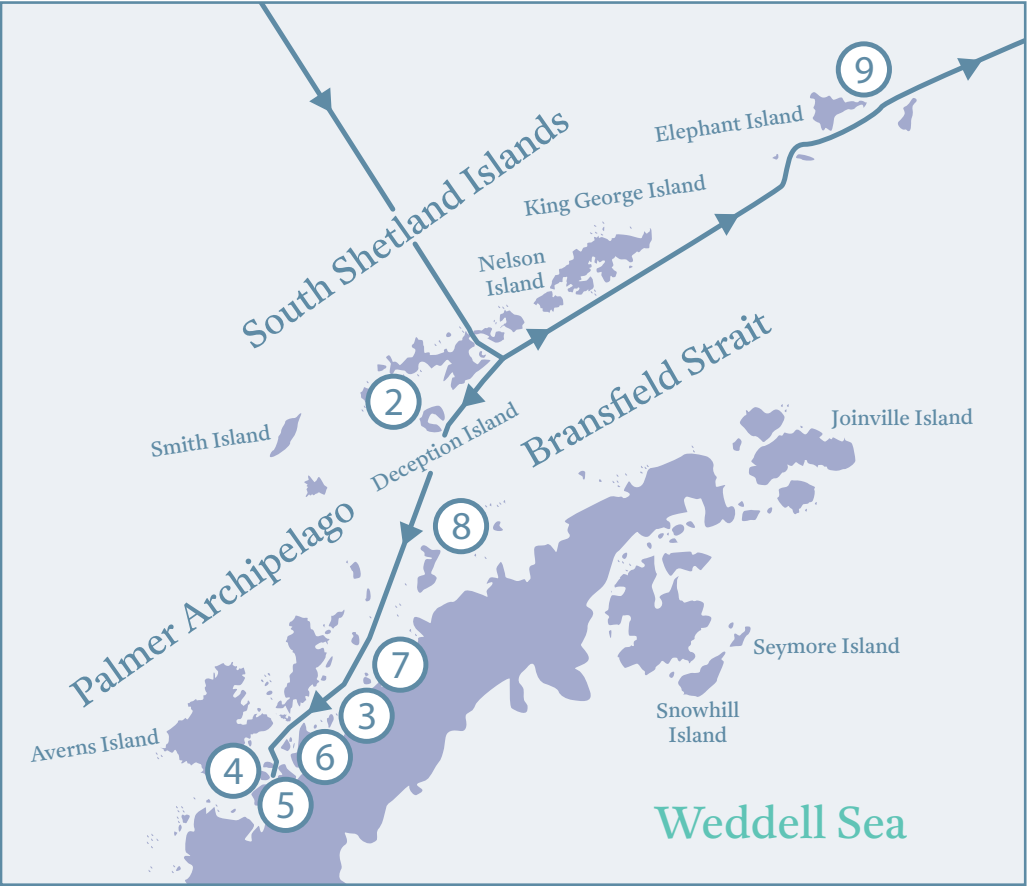


Destinations

- | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 01 Ushuaia | 07 Enterprise Island | 13 St. Andrews Bay | 19 Elsehul |
| 02 Deception Island | 08 Astrolabe Island | 14 Gold Harbour | 20 Shag Rocks |
| 03 Cuverville Island | 09 Elephant Island & Point Wild | 15 Whistle Cove | 21 Bleaker Island |
| 04 Peterman Island | 10 Drygalski Fjord | 16 Stromness | 22 Port Stanley |
| 05 Lemaire Channel | 11 Larsen Harbour | 17 Grytviken | |
| 06 Brown Base | 12 Cooper Bay | 18 Salisbury Plain | |

South Georgia and Antarctic Odyssey

30 November – 18 December 2019
Southernmost point of voyage: 65°10'S, 64°70'W



Antarctic Peninsula

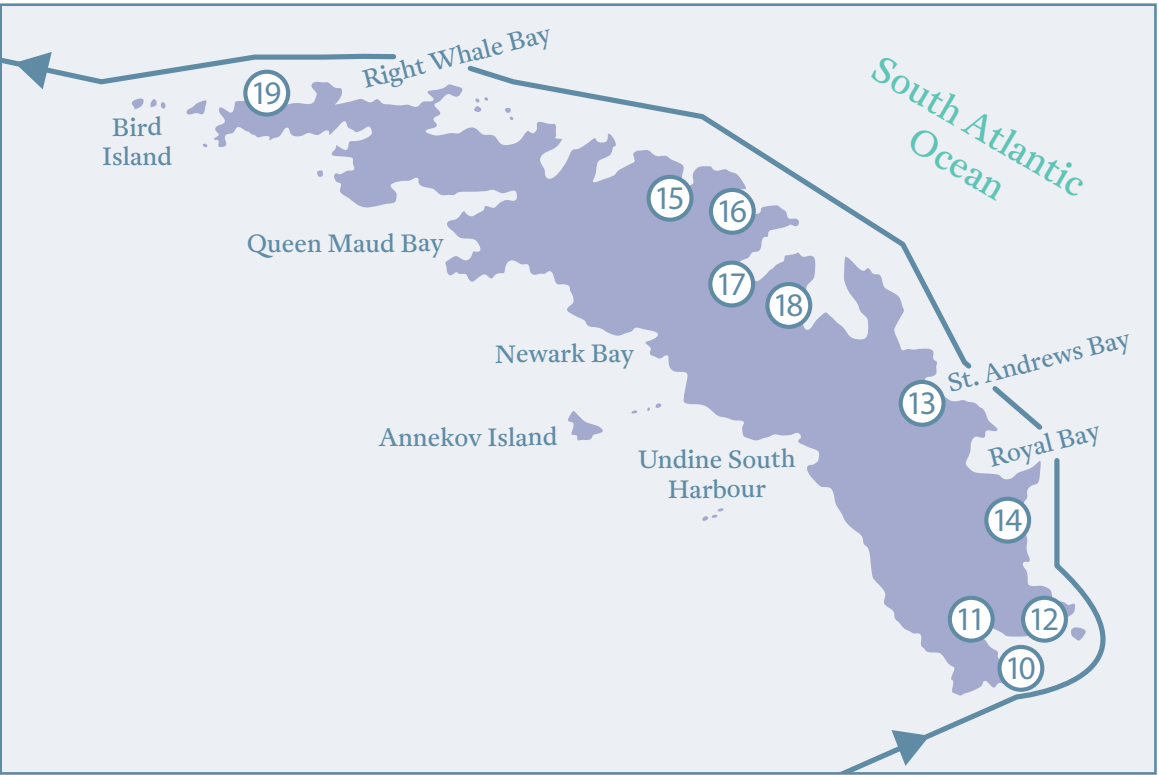
Destinations

- 02 Deception Island
- 03 Cuverville Island
- 04 Peterman Island
- 05 Lemaire Channel
- 06 Brown Base
- 07 Enterprise Island
- 08 Astrolabe Island
- 09 Elephant Island & Point Wild

South Georgia

Destinations

- 10 Drygalski Fjord
- 11 Larsen Harbour
- 12 Cooper Bay
- 13 St. Andrews Bay
- 14 Gold Harbour
- 15 Whistle Cove
- 16 Stromness
- 17 Grytviken
- 18 Salisbury Plain
- 19 Elsehul







Bird Species Log

Bird Species	November - December																	
	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
South Georgia Pintail										X	X	X	X					
Kelp Goose																X	X	
Magellanic Penguin																X	X	
King Penguin										X	X	X	X			X		
Adelie Penguin				X		X												
Gentoo Penguin			X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X			X		
Chinstrap Penguin			X			X				X								
Macaroni Penguin													X			X		
Wandering Albatross										X		X		X	X	X		
Black-browed Albatross		X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Grey-headed Albatross			X							X			X	X	X			
Light-mantled Albatross							X	X										
Northern Giant Petrel		X		X				X	X	X						X		X
Southern Giant Petrel						X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Cape Petrel		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X
Snow Petrel				X					X	X								
Antarctic Petrel							X											
Southern Fulmar			X	X	X	X	X	X										
Blue Petrel		X						X	X									
Soft-plumaged Petrel																		
Antarctic Prion		X	X							X								
Slender-billed Prion																		
White-chinned Petrel		X						X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Sooty Shearwater																		
Wilson's Storm-petrel		X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X			X			X



Skua



Giant Petrel



Antarctica Coromant

Bird Species Log

Bird Species	November - December																	
	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Diving Petrel (sp.)										X								
Antarctic Cormorant			X	X	X	X												
South Georgia Cormorant										X								
Imperial Cormorant											X	X	X	X		X	X	
Rock Cormorant																X		
White-faced Sheathbill			X		X	X				X	X		X			X		
Chilean Skua																		
Brown Skua										X	X	X	X			X		
South Polar Skua			X	X	X		X		X									
Kelp Gull	X			X	X	X				X		X	X	X		X	X	
Dolphin Gull	X										X	X				X	X	
Antarctic Tern	X		X	X	X	X				X		X	X					
South American Tern																		
Blackish Oystercatcher	X																	
Turkey Vulture	X															X	X	
South Georgia Pipit										X	X		X					
Prion Sp.									X	X				X	X	X	X	X
Megallanic Oystercatcher																X		
Flightless Steamer Duck																X		
Crested Duck																X		
Black-Throated Finch																X		
Austral Thrush																X		
Ashy-Headed Goose																X		
Ruddy-Headed Goose																X		
Upland Goose																X		



Adelie Penguin



Gentoo Penguin

Mammal Species Log

Mammal Species	November - December																	
	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Weddell Seal						x												
Fur Seal											x	x	x					
Leopard Seal						x												
Elephant Seal											x							
Sei Whale		x																
Fin Whale							x	x	x	x								
Humpback Whale			x		x			x	x		x	x						
Antarctic Minke Whale				x														
Killer Whale (Orca)				x														





Expeditioners

Heidi Adams	Jennifer Bowman	Gillian Dunkerley	Celia Hills	Brie Mahnken	George Nardin	Janet Scott
William Adams	Peter Bracewell	Keith Dyson	Yen-Hu Hsieh	Dior Mahnken	Barry Nicholson	Brian Shew
Christopher Andrews	Michael Braysher	Toni Elliott	Ching-Hua Hsieh Liu	Stephen Mahnken	Katherine Nightingale	Kenneth Shew
Tracy Andrews	Rosalind Brown	Glenn Ellis	Shu-Chen Huang	Jodie Martin	Anita Nolan	Laura Shew
Odile Arman	Felicity Burt	Jane Elliston	Catherine Kite	Phillip Martin	Rhonda Norman	Lisa Shew
Lynne Arnott	Peter Burt	Peter Elliston	Peter Kite	Maureen Mason	Daniel Olberg	Ai Hwa Ming Shih
Norman Arnott	Sally Burt	Rosemary Fazio	Catherine Klein	Sandra McNaught	Tracy Olberg	Gregory Stewart
Kay Barr	Steven Byrne	David Fone	Michael Klein	Heather McNeice	Graeme Orr	Leonie Stewart
Hans Bentzen	Gail Carey	Jennifer Fone	Teresa Laidlaw	Susan Mellows Facer	Judith Perry	John Stuart
Rosemary Bentzen	Chang-O Chen	Renee Grant	Chih-Chun Lan	David Mellows-Facer	John Plaxton	Kyrenia Thomas
Terrence Blades	Ching-Chih Chen	Melissa Green	Shirley Leuthner	Jennifer Mitchell	Sandra Plaxton	John Tucker
Yasmin Blades	Shin-Yi Chen	Susan Green	Ken Chien Wen Lin	Gail Moore	Susan Portnoy	Lorraine Tucker
Maxwell Bland	Colin Crocker	Charles Hamilton	Hsiu-Chen Liu	Richard Moore	David Randell	John Verschaeren
Michael Blieden	Marie Dalziel	Kathryn Hamilton	Kuei-Fen Liu	Ford Murray	Fanny Chi Fun Reed	Susan Whelan
Nichola Blieden	David Darlington	Dale Hanson	Yih-Fang Liu	Janine Murray	Geoffrey Roberts	Garry Williams
David Bosher	Patricia Darlington	Jan Hanson	Albert Mah	Karen Murray	Susan Roberts	Barry Young
Ria Bosher	Clara Davies	Robert Harris	Aria Mahnken	Marc Murray	Maureen Robinson	Sen-Lin Yu



Expedition Team

Expedition Leader:	John Kirkwood	Kayaking Guide:	Frank Witter
Deputy Expedition Leader:	Robyn Mundy	Kayaking Guide:	Lisa Deziel
Assistant Expedition Leader:	Hilary Gibson	Lead Photography Guide:	Richard I'Anson
Naturalist:	Annette Scheffer	Photography Guide:	Ian McCarthy
Naturalist:	Jared Hobbs	Expedition Doctor:	Suzanne Knapp
Paleontologist/Glaciologist:	Steve Salisbury	Cultural Host:	Darwin Zhenhuan Zhang
Expedition Guide & Lecturer:	Liz Pope	Zodiac Master:	Sergei Khyнку
Kayaking Master:	Michael Gray	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	Lukasz Zuterek	Spa Manager	Grace Tembo
Bosun	Duglas Garay	Able Seaman	Samuel Ricafort
Ship Doctor	Roberto Avellaneda	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	Ordinary Seaman	Anatolii Kornichuk

Ship's log written by Expedition Team members & compiled by Robyn Mundy

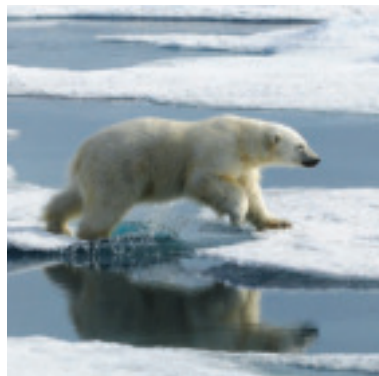


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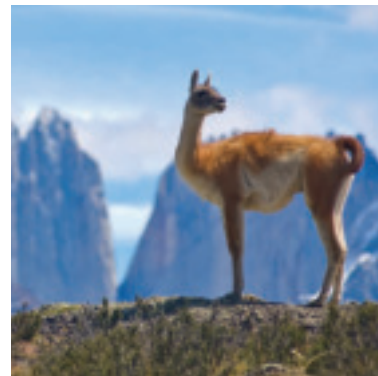
The Arctic

Polar bears roam pack ice for seals, walrus and whales. Deep fjords and towering icebergs meet colourful tundra and fossil-rich plains.



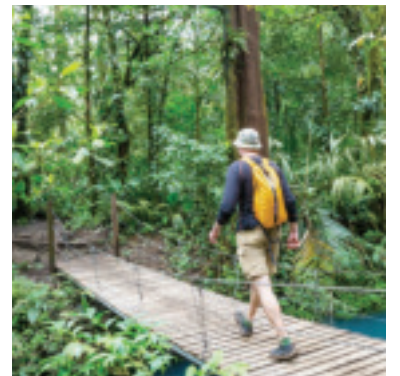
Scotland

Abandoned castles, exquisite abbeys, stone age villages and haunting Neolithic relics. Breeding seals and Europe's largest seabird colonies.



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