

Across the Antarctic Circle



4 – 15 February 2020 | *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 | Tuesday 4 February 2020

Ushuaia

Position: 20:22 hours
Latitude: 54°48.00'S
Longitude: 068°18.03'W

Course: 290.6°
Speed: At Anchor

Wind Speed: 19 knots
Wind Direction: NW

Barometer: 756 MB & steady
Air Temp: 15° C
Sea Temp: 214 C

Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true. — Ralph Waldo Emerson

After months of preparation, weeks of anticipation and long-haul flights from around the globe, we finally arrived at Ushuaia, known locally as el fin del mundo (the end of the world), ready and raring to begin our Antarctic adventure.

Following a brilliant tour of this bustling town; including stops at the Old Prison and Maritime Museum, we loaded onto buses headed for Ushuaia Port, and pulled alongside the *Greg Mortimer* waiting patiently for our arrival.

We smiled for the cameras, before heading on-board to meet our Expedition Team, Hotel Team and to become acquainted with our staterooms. Half unpacked and slightly settled in, it was time to meet our fellow adventurers down at the Elephant Island Bar for afternoon tea, while others headed to the outer decks to start exploring our home for the next few weeks. We returned to the Lecture Theatre when Expedition Leader Liz called us together. Liz gave us a warm welcome and introduced us to our friendly expedition team.

We learned of some unexpected news: that we would have a bonus day in Ushuaia as we awaited additional fortifications to our hull from minor damage incurred earlier in the season. While it came as a bit of surprise, this is a mark of true expedition and adventure. Flexibility, and being able to adapt to situations as they come will be a theme of our voyage ahead - as Mother Nature and King Neptune call the shots in Antarctica.

At 1930 we headed to the Restaurant on Deck 5 to enjoy a delicious first dinner, complete with panoramic views of the Beagle Channel shadowed by the mountain ranges of Tierra del Fuego.

Meeting new friends already, the dining rooms buzzed with excited conversation. After dinner, we wandered the ship and then nestled down into our new home away from home for the next ten days.





DAY 2 | Wednesday 5 February 2020

Fagnano and Escondido Lakes, Beagle Channel

Position:	08:22 hours	Wind Speed:	12 knots	Barometer:	1016 MB & steady	Air Temp:	12° C
Latitude:	54°48.00'S	Wind Direction:	NW			Sea Temp:	7° C
Longitude:	68°18.03'W						

Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. —Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

Today we woke up to a delicious breakfast buffet complete with lots of coffee to start off our day! The weather looked promising, as the sun was shining brightly outside. However, one step outside and it was off to get warmer jackets as the winds were really blowing! While waiting for the ship to get the “all-clear” to head down to Antarctica later this evening, about 100 of us opted to go on an excursion further inland, while the rest chose to spend some time in the city of Ushuaia or rest on the ship to get over jetlag. For those who opted to go on the excursion, we were picked up around 9 AM and enjoyed a scenic drive along the famous Ruta 3 highway which connects the “end of the world” with Buenos Aires, some 3000 kilometers in length.

Along the way, we stopped at the very windy Fagnano lake, which is one of the largest in South America. An interesting fact? In the middle of the lake, under all that water, lies a fault called the Magellan. The fault separates the South American and Scotia tectonic plates, the latter of which we’ll be sailing over later today, making this an active tectonic area. Given how chilly it was here, we were happy to have some treats and hot drinks at the “Camping Hain” grounds. It is quite an eccentric campground filled with teepees for guests and yard junk turned into sculptures – like helicopters, tractors, and “trees” made of empty wine and beer bottles.

After driving a bit further, we made another pit stop to get out and walk along the shoreline of the lake while birdwatching with Chris, Jared and our local guide. As we climbed 450 vertical meters along the highway, we got beautiful birds’ eye views of Fagnano, as well as another lake called the “hidden lake” or Lake Escondido. We had a great view of it before rain started falling on us. As they say here in Tierra del Fuego, if you don’t like the weather – just wait 15 minutes. The sun was soon out again! Our last stop was at the “Villa Las Cotorras” where we had a delicious traditional Argentinian lunch of lamb, potatoes and wine. An Argentinian native, dressed in traditional clothes, serenaded us while we ate. After lunch, some opted to visit the Siberian Husky “park,” home to over 100 dogs, eager for attention and affection.

After arriving back on the ship later in the afternoon, we took some time to clean up, rest and watch as the ship set off from the harbour. Then, we were officially welcomed to the ship by the Captain and his crew on the 5th floor, followed shortly thereafter by a delectable dinner. In just a few short 33 hours, we’ll have crossed the Drake Passage and will be in Antarctic waters.





DAY 3 | Thursday 6 February 2020

Drake Passage

Position: 07:00 hours

Latitude: 56°55.00'S

Longitude: 65°44.03'W

Course: 170.6°

Speed: 14.4 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots

Wind Direction: W

Barometer: 1025 MB & steady

Air Temp: 5°C

Sea Temp: 12°C

The Antarctic Convergence is perhaps the longest and most important biological barrier on earth, as formidable as any mountain range or desert. It is an obstacle to the dispersion of birds, fish, and, most important, plankton.
— David G. Campbell, *The Crystal Desert*, 1992

We were gently lulled to sleep last night by the reasonably small Drake passage swells. A peaceful night.

This morning, still cruising along we were sharing the crossing with some wandering albatross and the occasional Giant petrel & a Wilson's storm petrel.

After another fine breakfast we all had a very informative presentation about visiting Antarctica, and some fun facts from Liz P. Krill is very cool.

John (The Dude) Richardson (with his wealth of knowledge and hands on experience) gave a lecture on the history of first contacts with Antarctica and expeditions to the Peninsula. Brave explorers.

After lunch some newer staff to the ship had a safety brief and tour, they even chilled in a lifeboat that fits 135 people; cosy. That will be the only time we go in it, hopefully.

Another presentation after lunch by Christian on the important subject of Biosecurity while the swell outside began to get a bit bigger and some of us began to feel the effects.

After the information everyone departed to the gear vacuum and boot fitting stations. Our gear has never been cleaner!

Chris T. & Ulyana spoke to a crowd encouraging them to be involved with the scientific information gathering, sightings and recording. We can all be scientists!

As we await another delicious meal tonight we have made it past the 60 degree parallel: political Antarctica Zone at around 7:30pm.

Icebergs tomorrow!! Here we come.





DAY 4 | Friday 7 February 2020

Drake Passage, Danco Island

Position:	06:30 hours	Wind Speed:	25 knots	Barometer:	1018 MB & steady	Air Temp:	-1°C
Latitude:	62°32.00'S	Wind Direction:	SW			Sea Temp:	2°C
Longitude:	63°38.03'W						

A first walk in any new country is one of the things which makes life on this planet worth being grateful for. — Charles William Beebe

Out on the Drake, surrounded by waves and an endless horizon, we wake up to the intensely smiling sun. Knowing today is the day we will reach the Antarctic Peninsula, it is hard not to feel overwhelmingly excited when walking up the stairs to the observation lounge to watch the cape petrels and Antarctic fulmars playfully flying next to the ship in the beautiful, yet strong, morning light. With smooth movements and a constant speed, the sturdy *Greg Mortimer* safely gets us closer to our remote destination.

After the tasty buffet breakfast, we head to the lecture room, where Jared shares valuable tips and tricks on photography. During the mandatory Zodiac briefing, Liz comprehensively explains how to enter the Zodiacs and what to be aware of during the landings. We all get to practice the seaman's grip, which we from now on will be using during our daily outings. Christian and John then inform us about our first landing which will take place on Danco island later this evening.

Just before lunch is about to be served, we see the first iceberg appear. The impressive tabular iceberg is a good reason to get out on deck for a closer look and to get even more impressed by its majestic size and shape. This impressive sight and fresh air makes us enjoy lunch even more to soon head out on deck again when Liz announces that the Antarctic Peninsula is in sight!

It truly feels like a dream when seeing the snow covered, fairytale-looking mountains getting closer and closer. We are now in whale rich waters and have therefore decreased *Greg Mortimer's* speed to a maximum of 10 knots. And there she blows, a humpback whale! Many of them!!

After an early buffet dinner it is so time for our first landing. We all feel very excited when we dress up in all our layers of clothes. A short Zodiac drive from the ship, we land on Danco island, where Liz and Christian brief us about the place and where to go. The many gentoo penguins welcomed us with their cute appearance when we walk up the hill to see the stunning views surrounding us. Meanwhile both divers- and snorkelers enjoy their trial snorkel to test both drysuits and camera gear in the refreshing, salty surrounding, the kayakers explore the area a bit further away where they get a nice surprise when suddenly accompanied by minke whales. The lowering sun painted the entire landscape in warm colours when it is time for us all to head back to the ship. To top an already amazing first evening in Antarctica, a leopard seal swims up for a brief look close to the beach and Zodiacs. To our excitement there was another leopard seal sleeping on a smaller iceberg quite close to our floating home, *Greg Mortimer*. What a truly wonderful start of our Antarctic adventure!



DAY 5 | Saturday 8 February 2020

Fish Islands, Antarctic Circle

Position:	06:30 hours	Wind Speed:	Calm	Barometer:	1018 MB & steady	Air Temp:	-3°C
Latitude:	65°38.00'S					Sea Temp:	2°C
Longitude:	64°49.03'W						

To dine with a glacier on a sunny day is a glorious thing and makes feasts of meat and wine ridiculous. The glacier eats hills and drinks sunbeams.
— John Muir

This morning we awoke to a splendid bright morning in the Grandidier Channel with our ship's nose pointed firmly South, heading for our first activity of the day at Prospect Point and the Fish Islands. It was a lovely calm day on which to take breakfast as the ship threaded her way through ice floes adorned with crabeater seals undisturbed by our passage and the occasional Adelie penguin more curious about this big white "whale" sailing by.

In the distance was Sharp Mountain, a beacon overlooking our morning destination. Prospect Point the site of an old British base (Base J) from the 1950s but it was not that which drew us there, much more the fact that it is a landing on the 7th continent so a great moment for us all! It is also a beautiful spot with an active tidewater glacier, one which produced several small calvings during our visit. There are also the nearby Fish Islands around which to Zodiac cruise.

So the morning was occupied with landing, cruising to see Adelie penguins and seals, kayaking, snorkelling and diving. Then while we enjoyed lunch our ship turned her nose

once more to the South for our next goal of the day – crossing the Antarctic Circle! In the early afternoon Ulyana stemmed out impatience for the circle with a very informative talk on "the rocks under our feet", telling the geological history of the Antarctic Peninsula for the past several billion years.

But the big event for the day for us all was the crossing of the Antarctic Circle (66° 33'S). This was a very special crossing for the Captain and his crew as it was the *Greg Mortimer's* first crossing, 247 years after the first ever crossing by anybody – and that one was by the great explorer James Cook. It will be the first of many for this fine ship, Captain and crew. So we crossed at precisely 18:59 local time (21:59 GMT) with a countdown from our Expedition Leader Liz, and the sounding of the ship's horn.

This was followed by toasts on the afterdeck and the ritual marking of everybody's forehead with a circle. Our historian, John led us in an affirmation to be ambassadors to keep the Antarctic pristine and free from conflict. A very special moment for us all.



DAY 6 | Sunday 9 February 2020

Sea Ice, Detaille Island

Position: 06:25 hours
Latitude: 67°01.00'S
Longitude: 67°30.03'W

Wind Speed: 18 knots

Barometer: 1014 MB & steady
Air Temp: 0°C
Sea Temp: 1°C

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

At dawn, we broke through ice sheets with the bow of the ship, pushing our way clear of “The Gullet” and finding the perfect spot to explore the sea ice by Zodiac and kayak. It was a moody morning as we watched the fog gently lift enough to see a horizon filled with icebergs.

While three of the E team built human pyramids and jumped for joy to capture the unique moments of standing on floating sea ice, three Adelie penguins casually walked through the crowd to pose for photos. The kayakers weaved in between the icebergs and sheets of sea ice, ultimately launching their kayaks up onto ice sheets and sliding to a stop. We greeted fur seals, crabeater seals, and an impressive number of snow petrels, curious of us and our exploration. Unlike other landings, we kept our PFD’s on, as we had not actually landed. Always conscious and appreciative of the unique perspective.

Once we returned from our morning outing, the Polar Plunge was on! The beats and the adrenaline were pumping in anticipation for the icy plunge into Antarctic waters.

An impressive 43 joined the polar plunge club, all receiving a certificate and T-shirt, but perhaps more memorable is the photo they will receive (...the look on their faces hitting the water!) as they launched off the floating platform. A cool 2 degrees... Well done everyone!

Our afternoon adventure took us to Detaille Island, just North of “The Gullet”. A small and fascinating island, home to Base W, built in 1956. The main structure is like a time capsule, and we listened to John “The Dude” reminisce about his fond time there. The island itself hosted some spectacular Basalt formations, Adelie Penguins and was fringed by icebergs with sleepy fur seals and Weddell Seals. The ship was a warm welcome after a wet, yet amazing afternoon.

Uly and her ‘Ice, Ice Baby’ recap inspired many to look a little closer at the many shapes the ice forms, and we settled in for a lovely evening of wine, good conversation, and delicious food.

Sweet dreams everyone.









DAY 7 | Monday 10 February 2020

Port Charcot, Paradise Harbour

Position: 06:15 hours
Latitude: 65°25.00'S
Longitude: 64°20.03'W

Course: 27°
Speed: 11.4 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots
Wind Direction: W

Barometer: 1001 MB & steady
Air Temp: 5°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

*The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!*
—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, from ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner’

We awoke to a low sky and rain, having travelled northward overnight. We anchored at Port Charcot on Booth Island, within the Wilhelm Archipelago, and took the Zodiacs in past towering icebergs to a rocky landing site much frequented by gentoo penguins. Some of us climbed the (slightly treacherous) snow slope up to the memorial cross in honour of Charcot. Others walked parallel to the penguins as they traversed the slope to their colonies far above. Some colonies seemed to be impossibly high up on the rocky promontories above us. In the colony that we could reach, the chicks were very advanced and the adults had begun their moult.

Today was the first ‘Citizen Science’ outing of the trip; with 10 passengers and 2 guides taking a Zodiac out to take observations of water clarity (visibility of 12-14 metres), clouds (low stratus & fog!) and the bird species present. They also took a tour of the huge icebergs grounded in the harbour; sculpted into magnificent shapes by glacial action followed by their long exposure to tide and wave action and occasionally roll-overs. The crab-eater seals were in playful form, a group of them chasing each other through the azure waters around the foot of a berg, gambolling around the Zodiac and lifting their heads out to take a better look at us.

Shortly before lunch we transited the narrow Lemaire Channel, it’s vertiginous walls of rock and ice disappearing into low cloud. As we passed Cape Renard, the cloud lifted briefly to reveal vast sunlit glaciers and the magnificent form of Mt. Francais on Anvers Island.

We then entered the Gerlache Channel before turning east around Bryde Island into Paradise Harbour, so named because of its sheltered waters and ease of whale-hunting. We launched the Zodiacs and kayaks and headed off for a look around: The divers and snorkellers to investigate marine life under the shag colony on the cliffs and the rest to look around the harbour, including a ‘drive-by’ of Argentina’s ‘Brown Base’ (still not fully rebuilt after being burned down by their out-of-sorts base doctor in 1984) and the magnificent Skontorp Galcier, named after a famous Norwegian whale-harpoonist.

As we drove by the glacier, a massive chunk of ice plunged from the cliffs and submerged before rocketing back out of the water and rolling over, creating large swells in our direction. The other highlights were a couple of very curious and playful leopard seals, which swam all around the Zodiacs, jumped out of the water and lifted their heads many times to look at us.

We wrapped the night up with mulled wine; a tribute by Christian to the indefatigable and likeable French expeditioner Charcot; and a tasty indoor barbeque followed by dancing on the back deck: A magnificent day!







DAY 8 | Tuesday 11 February 2020

Port Lockroy, Foyn Harbour

Position: 06:00 hours
Latitude: 64°49.47' S
Longitude: 63°35.77' W

Course: 303.6°
Speed: 2.4 knots

Wind Speed: 35 knots
Wind Direction: NE
Barometer: 990 MB & steady
Air Temp: 4°C
Sea Temp: 2°C

Antarctica is a separate world. One can feel its presence in the approaches, sailing south from more temperate climes. Standing on deck, one may follow the reeling albatross, feel the drop in temperature, the bite of the wind and the motion of the waves. Yet it is the presence of ice, from the first occasional fragments, escalating in shape, form, and frequency, and finally dominating all else, that brings assurance of arrival in Antarctica. — Mark Jones, Wild Ice: Antarctic Journeys, 1990

The day kicked off with our now familiar poetic wake-up call over the public address system by our Expedition Leader Liz Pope.

Yesterday was a busy day and with the party on deck 8 keeping those of the silly hat brigade up till all hours there were a few tired faces at breakfast.

But after a good hit of coffee and a delicious breakfast many were keen for today's adventure. This morning we went to Port Lockroy, the most visited location in Antarctica. This place was discovered in 1904 by Jean Baptiste Charcot, captain of the 'Francais', during the first French Antarctic Expedition. It was named after a French politician who helped fund the expedition.

Before we can go ashore a representative from Port Lockroy comes on board to brief the guests on the etiquette ashore.

Famous for its Penguin Post Office this UK heritage site and museum was once a safe harbour for whalers. Evidence of this is still easily seen on the shore of the neighbouring site we also visited this morning, Jougla Point.

Both sites have nesting gentoo penguins which are now at the point where they are going through the moult and losing their fluffy chick down and changing into adult plumage.



Once this is finished, they will finally be able to enter the water themselves and begin to forage for food.

The wind was gusting up to 30 knots at times, but thanks to the Captain and his team the *Greg Mortimer* was anchored just a short distance away and the Zodiac drive in was short and sweet.

Many guests took the opportunity to get in a little retail therapy and of course send the obligatory post cards.

After returning to the ship for lunch we were soon on our way to our afternoon location – Foyn Harbour. This harbour is located at the southern end of the Enterprise Islands in Wilhelmina Bay. It was also used by whalers as a safe anchorage during the early 20th century.

Now it is most famous for being the site of the shipwreck 'Governoren', a Norwegian whaling vessel that caught fire and was deliberately run aground in 1916. It provides a wonderful site for our divers and snorkellers to explore. With the bow and around one third of the vessel still above water the wreck extends approximately 30 metres in length underwater to the stern at a depth of 18 metres.

Our dive and snorkel Zodiacs tied up to the shipwreck, along with to yachts which were also using it as a convenient mooring. While the divers and snorkellers explored the rest of the guests went on a Zodiac cruise around the islands.

Despite the somewhat windy conditions the harbour was quite sheltered and several kayakers paddled past the wreck to check it out.

All back on board by 6pm and the ship was soon on its way north, crossing the Bransfield Strait to the South Shetland Islands, our location for tomorrow.





DAY 9 | Wednesday 12 February 2020

Half Moon Island, Yankee Harbour

Position:	06:25 hours	Course:	24°	Wind Speed:	22 knots	Barometer:	982 MB & steady
Latitude:	62°59.36'S	Speed:	14.26 knots	Wind Direction:	NE	Air Temp:	5°C
Longitude:	60°02.16'W					Sea Temp:	3°C

The land was gone, all but a little streak, away off on the edge of the water, and down under us was just ocean, ocean, ocean – millions of miles of it, heaving and pitching and squirming, and white sprays blowing from the wave-tops, and we had the sky and the ocean to ourselves, and the roomiest place I ever did see and the loneliest. — Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad

A shining Antarctica greeted us out our portholes this morning. Steaming along towards Half Moon Island we had found a break in the clouds and the sea glistened gold with the sun beaming down. Before long we sailed through this good weather spell in to the moody, atmospheric low-hanging cloud and anchored in front of our morning landing.

Will we? Won't we? The wind had picked up and was gusting a blustery 30 knots threatening our morning operations. However, before long the wind gods heard our prayers and died down to a mere 15 knots. The morning was a go.

When you think that you've been sufficiently enamored of penguins, you see another that brings out the 'ohhhs and awwwws'. We had chinstrap penguins galore onshore at Half Moon Island. Many of us ambled over a hill the other side of the island where fur seals greeted us

with a bark and penguins ranged from fledging chicks to moulting adults. Another group of us walk the crescent shape of the island along the beach and pass Camara Argentinean station, stopping to view a whale jaw bone and beautiful rocks along the way. We came back onboard for lunch right on time as the clouds came low and the mist rolled in.

On the transit to our afternoon landing Dudes regaled us with a lecture on Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition. He added a new layer of complexity to the well-known tale of adventure and survival with research on Shackleton's choices that Dudes had uncovered himself.

And then it was time for our last landing in Antarctica! The sun broke out and we whizzed into Yankee Harbour, a glorious vista of snow-capped mountains as our backdrop. Elephant seals grunted, gentoo penguins waddled and even a patch of Antarctica haregrass was found!

A beautiful last landing to a wonderful trip. Off to the Drake Passage!



Drake Passage

Position:	07:00 hours	Course:	339°
Latitude:	61°090'S	Speed:	10 knots
Longitude:	61°25.6'W		

Wind Speed:	9 knots	Barometer:	994 MB & steady
Wind Direction:	W	Air Temp:	5°C
		Sea Temp:	2°C

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and sky, And all I ask is a tall ship, and a star to steer her by. — John Mansfield

The roar of the evening crowd reminiscent of a robust football game greeted our fabulous Expedition Leader Liz on her recap declaration that a sleep-in would be permitted the following day...

And so we find ourselves on this lovely moody grey day clear-headed and rolling our way in a northwesterly direction across the Drake passage. Methinks however the open bar may have clouded some as the breakfast menagerie seemed spartan but made up for lack of numbers with big smiling faces and cheerful dispositions. In the words of Spike Milligan ‘Smiling is infectious. You catch it like the flu. When someone smiled at me today I started smiling too...’ A Wandering Albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) with its outstanding wingspan of 2.5-3.5 m also joined the team this morning – thank you Zet for your keen breakfast eyes spotting it off the stern of the ship.

Naturalist Chris Todd weaved his magic with a presentation on seals; no favorites allowed but who could resist reminiscing about the slender reptilian leopard seal (*Hydruga leptonyx*) that danced around our Zodiacs a few days ago near Skontorp glacier. The Dude then continued in his usual fine form helping us navigate the complexities of the Antarctic Treaty.

Afternoon Tea was a visual splendor to help stave off the sense of melancholy creeping in as our minds race forwards to journeys end. I hope you are managing to gently steer your thoughts back to the present as we are not done yet!! A final lecture for the day from Dr Judy gave us a brief window into another world ‘Wintering in Antarctica at the Davis base’ and I think we all gave a shudder at the image of the winter polar plunge pool chopped into thick fast ice!! However the description of the base as the Riviera of the South and the glamorous home made spa bath were quite tempting and I know at least one passenger is hoping to follow in super Judy’s footsteps... maybe more after her seductive talk!

The Drake has tested some over the afternoon but good numbers attended the formative Bridge Tour and gained excellent insight into the superb array of technical equipment that drives us gently forward on this great Southern Ocean.

Overall conditions do not appear to have thwarted the romantics planning their heartfelt declarations for tomorrows Valentines day celebrations! I wish you all a happy evening as we head towards yet another sensational dinner with heartfelt thanks to the ever-cheerful team in the dining room and beyond.





DAY 11 | Thursday 14 February 2020

Drake Passage

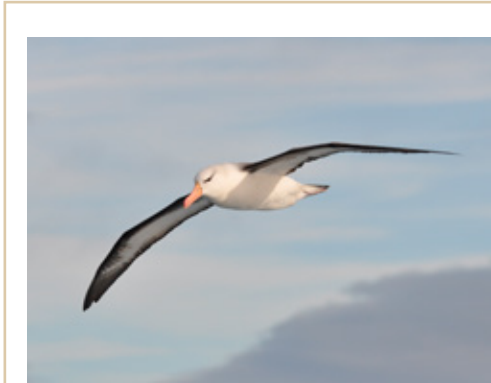
Position: 07:00 hours
Latitude: 57°01.4'S
Longitude: 64°56.6'W

Course: 335°
Speed: 10 knots

Wind Speed: 29 knots
Wind Direction: W

Barometer: 987 MB & steady
Air Temp: 7°C
Sea Temp: 5°C

To anyone who goes to the Antarctic, there is a tremendous appeal, an unparalleled combination of grandeur, beauty, vastness, loneliness, and malevolence — all of which sound terribly melodramatic — but which truly convey the actual feeling of Antarctica. Where else in the world are all of these descriptions really true? — Captain T.L.M. Sunter, ‘The Antarctic Century Newsletter’



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 12 | Friday 15 February 2020

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

Antarctica left a restless longing in my heart beckoning towards an incomprehensible perfection forever beyond the reach of mortal man. Its overwhelming beauty touches one so deeply that it is like a wound.
— Edwin Mickleburgh, Beyond the Frozen Sea

Aurora Expeditions send out a big thank you to you all for your great humour, infectious enthusiasm and smiling faces. It was a pleasure having you all on board and being able to share some of the pleasures that the icy south has to offer. May your memories live long and bright.

This morning we woke after a peaceful slumber at wharf in Ushuaia after our pleasant crossing of the Drake Passage on our good ship *Greg Mortimer*. It has been an amazing voyage.



Kayaking Log

By Alex Chavanne

Kayaking Masters: Alex Chavanne, Tory Stewart, Liz Gifford, Eamon Larkin, Zet Freiburghaus

Total Distance Paddled: 34 km

Kayakers:

Barb Chamberlain	Sam Chamberlain	Eloise Farmer
Belinda Farmer	Kent Farmer	Michael Farmer
Tom Farmer	Romy Benton	Leslie Finch
Jennifer Biggs	Phillip Biggs	Marina Angleton
Jim Petkas	Ted Kallergis	Melany Pierson
Toby Pierson	Leslie Tosh	Gavin Tosh
Lisa Booth	Masao Suzuki	Sara Morse
Karen Dixon	Robert Dixon	Jim Pruss
Michael Foley	Melinda Foley	

DAY 3: PM – Danco Island – Distance: 5 km

We arrived in the evening to Antarctica, and it was a lovely setting for our first paddle. All the guests came out for the first time to shake out any nerves, get used to the operation, and enjoy a sunny sunset paddle. We got off the ship and a good breeze kicked up, so we practiced our communication and steering into 20kts of wind in the face. We encountered our first penguins, and continued to find a sheltered cove where we caught our breath before moving back into the sunshine to continue. Paddling amongst giant grounded icebergs we came across a few minke whales, that in an enthusiastic moment, started porpoising, jumping out of the water repeatedly. We looped back to the ship, and once we returned, caught a zodiac to shore for some time with the penguins.

DAY 4: AM – Fish Islands and Prospect Point – Distance: 7 km

After sailing south towards the Antarctic Circle, we arrived at our ice filled anchorage off Prospect Point. Again, all the kayakers got off for a paddle, with one group heading off to The Minnows, a small group of islands covered in Adelie Penguins, while the other group looped around Perch Islands. The fish islands often have strong currents swirling around them, and after checking out some Adelie penguins, we rode a strong current back to the landing site to make a continental landing, a seventh continent for some.

DAY 5: AM: Hanusse Bay – Distance: 7 km

After sailing south all afternoon yesterday and crossing the Antarctic Circle, we arrived at Hanusse Bay on the southern end of the Peninsula. Though it sounds strange to say about Antarctica, there was really more ice around then normal. We all got off for a short paddle amongst a great smattering of large sculpted icebergs and flat pancakes of sea ice. The morning was so calm, and it was an amazing opportunity to get a chance to paddle amongst a truly Antarctic setting. Lots of sea ice pancakes meant that we had the opportunity to get out and walk around on a bit of ice for a while. We porpoised onto the berg like a seal would, and took a few group photos, before sliding back into the water. We then headed back to the ship in the fog to do the polar plunge.

DAY 6: PM: Detaille Island – Distance: 7 km

Only a handful of paddlers got off for our paddle this afternoon around the small island of Detaille. The fog was thick when we began, and it wasn't possible to see where the island was when we set off. Though foggy, it was so still the reflections of the icebergs sat serenely on the water as we glided and bumped amongst the brash ice. We paddled around the backside of the island and encountered some nesting Adelie penguins. Setting off away from the island we paddled amongst some stunning scenery. The fog lifted and for several minutes we had both beautiful vistas and reflections before a light rain began to fall. We paddled around to shore, and several guests got off to take a tour of the historic hut, while the rest paddled back to the ship for warm relief.

DAY 7: AM: Pleneau – Cancelled to wind

PM: Paradise Bay – Distance: 6 km

We nearly had everyone out this afternoon at this calm yet slightly wet afternoon in what is rightfully called Paradise Bay. The ship was drifting in front of a large glacier and we set off immediately to paddle through the brash ice that surrounded us. Paddling up to the great towers of ice we marvelled at the blue light that emanated from the crevasses. Many many pictures were taken, and while we snapped away, a large leopard seal came up and swam back and forth underneath our kayaks. It was quite curious, and stayed with us as we paddled out of the bay and underneath cliffs covered in lichen, moss, and cormorants. Once we reached Base Brown, we heard about the doctor who burned the place down... "When he found out, he burned the place down. Not another year! Cried the doctor at Base Brown". We then paddled back to the ship, still being followed by the leopard seal, for our Antarctic barbecue.

DAY 8: AM – Port Lockroy – Cancelled to wind

PM – Enterprise Island – Distance: 4 km

Pulling into Wilhelmina Bay, the ship was literally sailing downwind in 15 knots of wind. The conditions looked sporting outside, but we were anchored very close to the shelter of many small islands around Foyn Harbor. Though the paddle was not for everyone, some of us got out for a rolling ride a few hundred meters before finding calm water around dozens of fur seals and several chinstrap penguins. The area of paddling was limited by the conditions, but we made the most of it and took an easy paddle past historic whaling boats to the wreck of an old whaling processing ship. Enjoying some peace nearby, we watched bubbles come up from the divers beneath. To finish, we paddled out of the bay, and decided to grit our teeth and paddle into the wind and current to get back to the ship.

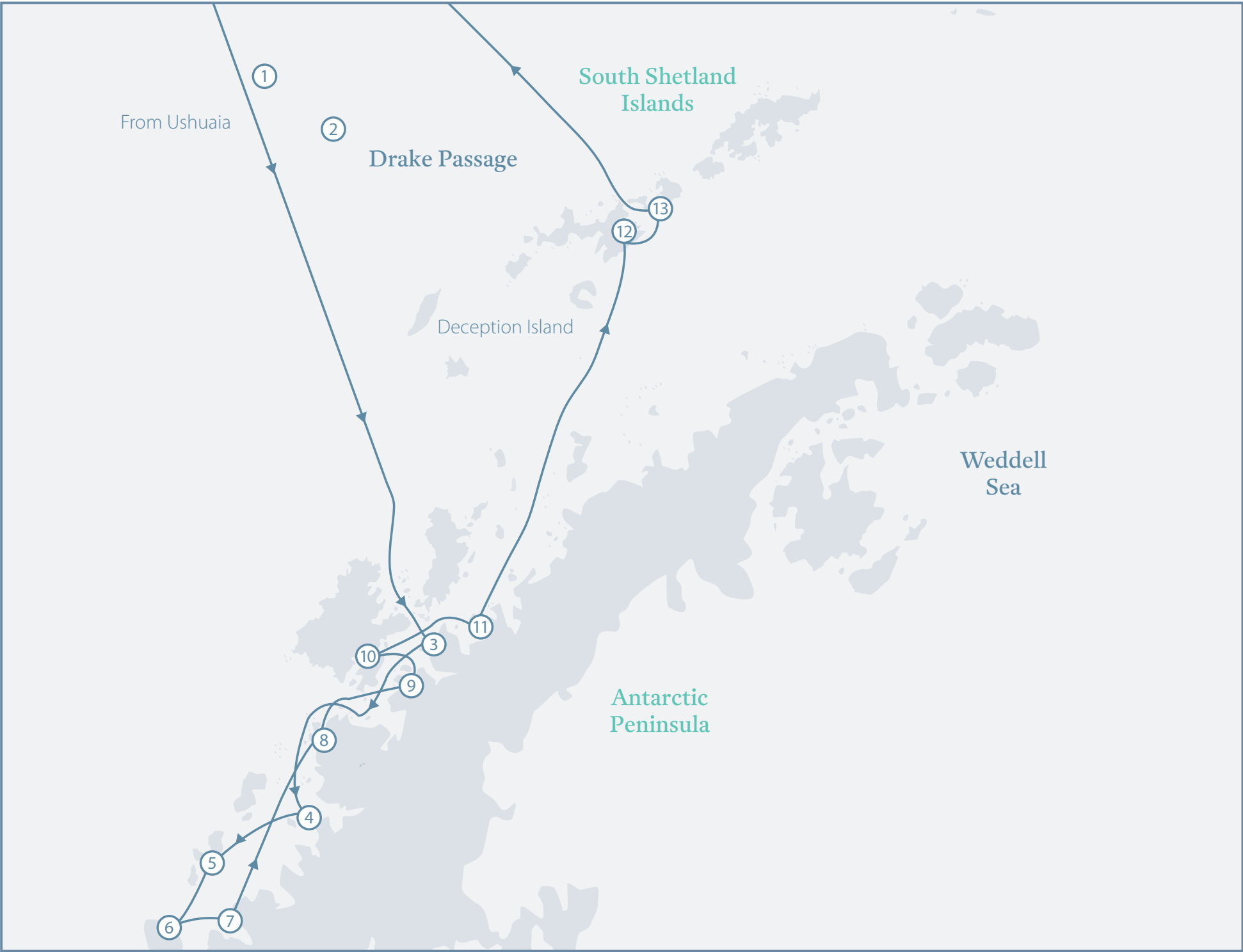
DAY 9: AM: Half Moon Island – Cancelled to wind

PM – Yankee Harbor – Gear clean-up



Across the Antarctic Circle

4 – 15 February 2020 | Distance Travelled: 1,546 nautical miles (2,292 kilometres)



Destinations

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 01. Ushuaia (Argentina) | 05. Antarctic Circle | 09. Paradise Harbour | 13. Yankee Harbour |
| 02. Drake Passage | 06. The Gullet | 10. Port Lockroy | |
| 03. Danco Island | 07. Detaille Island | 11. Foyen Harbour | |
| 04. Fish Islands;Prospect Pt | 08. Port Charcot | 12. Half Moon Island | |



Bird Species Log

Bird Species	February										
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Gentoo Penguin				x	x	x	x	x	x		
Chinstrap Penguin								x	x		
Adelie Penguin					x	x					
Magellanic Penguin		x									
Unidentified Penguin (swimming)					x	x	x	x		x	
Wandering Albatross			x		x						x
Royal Albatross											x
Black-browed Albatross		x	x	x							x
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern and/or Southern)		x	x	x			x		x	x	x
Cape Petrel				x	x	x	x	x			
Snow Petrel					x	x	x				
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern)				x	x	x	x	x	x		
Wilson's Storm-petrel			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Imperial Cormorant (blue-eyed)					x	x	x	x	x		
Cormorant sp. (unidentified)		x		x	x				x		
American Sheathbill (Snowy)				x	x	x		x	x		
Chilean Skua		x									x
Skua (Brown and/or South Polar)				x	x	x	x	x	x		
Kelp Gull		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		
Tern (probably mostly Antarctic)		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		



Mammal Species Log

Mammal Species	February										
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Antarctic Fur Seal					x	x	x	x	x		
Southern Elephant Seal					x				x		
Crabeater Seal					x	x	x	x	x		
Weddell Seal				x	x	x	x	x	x		
Leopard Seal				x	x	x	x	x			
Minke Whale				x	x	x	x	x	x		
Fin Whale								x			
Humpback Whale				x	x		x	x	x		





Expeditioners

Marina Angleton	Stuart Cooke	Michael Farmer	Jo Harvey	Chris Mcdevitt	Jim Petkas	Masao Suzuki
Eileen Batac	David Crawford	Marg Farrell	Heidi Heddings	Di Mcdevitt	Toby Pierson	May Tai
Servillano Batac	Nicole Crawford	Jeff Faunt	Dan Heeley	Linda Miller	Melany Pierson	Charmaine Tham
Judith Bennett	Mike Davidowsky	Jill Faunt	Lyn Hercus	Larry Miller	Roger Poels	Julie Ticehurst
Peter Bennett	Darrell Deming	Peter Ferguson	Kathy Huddle	Leanne Moreton	Joanne Poels	Lesley Tosh
Romy Benton	Peggy Deming	Leslie Finch	Jeremy Huddle	Sara Morse	Jim Pruss	Gavin Tosh
Phillip Biggs	Robert Dixon	Michael Foley	Paul Huebner	Sue Morse	Stuart Ray	Jacki Van Heerden
Jennifer Biggs	Karen Dixon	Melinda Foley	Perry Hughes	Diana Murdoch	Stephen Richardson	John Walton
Lisa Boothe	John Dixon	Janelle Ford	Joy Hughes	Patrick Neeb	Michael Riksman	Jennifer Wang
Dave Boothe	Tresa Dixon	Kathee Frohn	Kath Jones	Michael Neeb	Patrick Riley	Mike Waters
Melanie Braggs	Renee Dothard	Mandy Gair-Harris	Trevor John	Leonie Nelson	Sally Riley	Dawn Williams
Alan Braggs	Robert Dothard	Margie Gauld	Dianne John	John Nelson	Geoff Robb	Malcolm Williams
Lee Brookman	Margaret Dyer	Ron Gauld	Ted Kallergis	Peter Nightingale	Sue Robb	Terry Woolard
Karen Bull	Stephen Dyer	Debbie Gluch	Atanee Lakatos	Sandy Nightingale	Mina Roberts	Rita Woolard
Angelo Cavallaro	Dave Evans	Col Gluch	Paul Lakatos	Tony Norgan	Emma Robertson	Der Yee Wu
Barb Chamberlain	Eloise Farmer	Matt Griffith	James Lee	Morag Norgan	Shirley Rowden	Pat Wyeth
Sam Chamberlain	Kent Farmer	Emily Gubler	George Lloyd	Harvey Packham	Simon Rumbold	
Chiu-Hsia Chung	Belinda Farmer	Reis Hamilton	Jay Lloyd	Kurt Pelowski	Nicola Russell	
Ann Clough	Thomas Farmer	Steve Harris	Gracie Mackie	Harry Perks	Aly Shariff	



Expedition Team

Expedition Leader:	Dr Liz Pope	Kayaking Guide:	Liz Gifford
Deputy Expedition Leader:	Christian Genillard	Photography Guide:	Jared Hobbs
Assistant Expedition Leader:	Elena Wimberger	Expedition Doctor:	Judy Braga
Expedition Coordinator:	Justine Bornholdt	Snorkel Guide:	Pete Szyszka
Naturalist:	Birgitta Mueck	Dive Guide:	Steve Traynor
Naturalist/Glaciologist:	Dr Ulyana Horodyskyj	Expedition Doctor:	Dr Sophie Plowman
Naturalist:	Chris Todd	Zodiac Master:	Sergei Khyunku
Historian:	John Dudeney	Mudroom/Shopkeeper:	Reza Rusooly
Kayaking Master:	Alex Chavanne		
Kayaking Guide:	Eamon Larkin		
Kayaking Guide:	Zet Freiburghaus		
Kayaking Guide:	Tory Stewart		

Photograph Thanks

Jacqueline van Heerden	Steve Harris	Barb Chamberlain
Karen Bull	Stephen Richardson	Leanne Moreton
Emma Robertson	Marg Farrell	Melinda Foley
Dan Heeley	Perry Hughes	

Greg Mortimer Crew

Master	Joachim Saterskog	Sous Chef	Allan Estoque
Chief Officer	Arsen Aystev	Hotel Controller	Rohmat Nurhidayat
Second Officer	Andrei Valeahu	Receptionist	Mary Sarah Baldovino
Deck Cadet	Genadi Hristov	Receptionist	Mary Jane Lacerna
Safety Officer	Lukasz Zuterek	Head Stateroom Attendant	Irene Abania
Bosun	Duglas Garay	Spa Manager	Grace Tembo
Ship Doctor	Mauricio Usme	Able Seaman	Khennette Verzova
Chief Engineer	Marinko Hrabar	Able Seaman	Samuel Ricafort
First Engineer	Warlito Verzosa	Able Seaman	Junar Gorecho
IT Officer	Michael Reyes	Able Seaman	Leo Marzan
Hotel Director	Franz Wusits	Able Seaman	Bobby Payumo
F&B Service Manager	Miguel Cabanillas	Able Seaman	Mickey Ledonio
Head Bartender	Vishal Nunkoo	Ordinary Seaman	Anatoli Kornichuk
Chief Purser	Jane Saladaga	Ordinary Seaman	Alfredo Murillo
Executive Chef	Przemyslaw Wisniewski		

Ship's log written by Expedition Team members & compiled by Elena Wimberger



Paper made from 100% recycled material.

Explore our unique itineraries to these amazing destinations...



Adventure With Us

Intimate, educational, small group voyages to some of the world's wildest and most remote destinations, aboard quality expedition vessels.



The Arctic

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



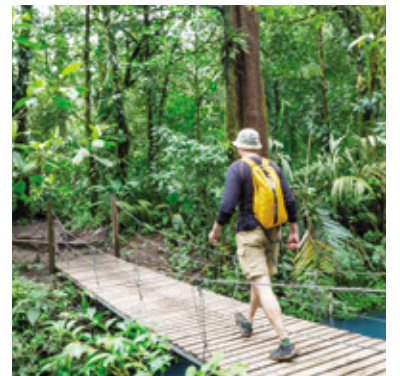
Scotland

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



Patagonia & Chile

Wild and isolated, Patagonia's wind-swept plains and glaciated peaks are the ultimate playground for intrepid travellers.



Costa Rica & Panama

Filled with remote national parks and biological reserves brimming with colourful wildlife. Traverse the Panama Canal on a guaranteed daylight crossing.

Our other destinations include: Iceland, Ireland, Sweden and Norway