

Across the Antarctic Circle

Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 25 February – 07 March 2022





Frei Station

DAY 1 | Friday 25 February 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 62°12.197'S

Longitude: 058°55.716'S

Speed: 0.1 knots

Wind Speed: 12 knots, moderate breeze from

Barometer: 1004

Air Temp: -1°

Believe me my young friend, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats...simply messing.

—Water Rat to Mole from Wind in the Willows

What a day! We were up very early in the morning in Punta Arenas and somehow, despite fears of a cancelled departure, onto the planes for a short flight away from South America and down to Frei Base on King George Island, Antarctica. The planes flew over the island and when we saw the many small huts of the different bases we realised that at last, we had made it to the southernmost continent.

While our luggage was loaded onto two vehicles, one an enormous camouflaged truck, we walked in two groups down past the 'totem pole' through the Chilean and Russian bases to the black sand beach where we were welcomed by Expedition Leader Flo, the Aurora staff, a cluster of shags and a few gentoo penguins. We changed into boots, gathered lifejackets and climbed into Zodiacs and travelled to the *Greg Mortimer*, a lovely white expedition vessel, waiting out in the bay.

The hotel staff made us feel welcome as we worked through the boarding procedures, found our cabins and began to unwind. The luggage arrived soon afterwards. This was really happening.

After lunch in the restaurant, we attended a series of mandatory briefings on IAATO regulations, Zodiac operations and vacuuming our gear. Some of us swapped gear for more comfortable sizes, others explored the ship. The snorkellers and kayakers attended their own briefings and collected specialist gear.

All this time we could see the snow and ice covered islands of the South Shetlands as Captain Oleg Kaptenko guided the *Greg Mortimer* south down the Bransfield Strait. For most of us this is our first trip south.

There are 85 of us, including 7 snorkellers and 18 kayakers coming from many nations including the United Kingdom, (17) United States (59), Netherlands (1), Australia (3), India (1), and China (4).

Now we are ready for our adventure.



Cierva Cove, Portal Point

DAY 2 | Saturday 26 February 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64°01.561'S

Longitude: 061°06.691'W

Course: 168.0°

Speed: 5.2 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots

Barometer: 996

Air Temp: -3°C

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

—Bernard Stonehouse, Penguins

And so our adventure really begins. This morning we anchored in Cierva Cove, already at 64° 08' 08.83S in perfect conditions, a calm sea, no wind and -3°C. Time for everyone to be out on the water, 10 Zodiacs and 10 kayaks.

With 8 guests in each Zodiac we went out exploring the bay. Within minutes we had our first sighting of Antarctic wildlife - chinstrap and gentoo penguins and a Weddell seal hauled out on the rocks of a small island located in Cierva Cove. We continued cruising around the island, where we found two leopard seals in the water, no doubt waiting for a breakfast of penguin. Whilst most of the Zodiacs moved on to see even more wildlife, a few stayed watching the leopard seals and experienced a penguin kill. Nature at its harshest and best!

As we continued, we sighted our first humpback whale of the day, these gentle giants of the ocean weighing up to 45 tonne and 16 metres long.

Pushing through the brash ice we came to a large iceberg with a naturally formed arch, then another with the most beautiful blue ice, while others ventured past the Argentinian Primavera station.

Back on board, a hot drink followed lunch as we cruised into the Gerlache Strait. Early afternoon and the message over the public address, whales! For the next hour we were all enthralled and surrounded by feeding humpbacks, some close to the ship and others in the distance, no fewer than 16 whales. All were in pairs as they fed. For those of us on the observation deck, we were zipping from side to side to see them, cameras clicking constantly.

How quickly the weather can change down here. Late this afternoon we anchored off Portal Point, and our lovely calm sea had become very choppy. But would that stop us? Of course not!

Well, it did stop kayaking, but our kayakers instead embarked on a Zodiac adventure, driving a couple of nautical miles from the ship where they saw more humpback whales feeding on their favourite diet of krill - shrimp like creatures of which these whales can consume up to one tonne a day.

Landing at Portal Point, our first continental landing, we saw more wildlife in the form of penguins and Antarctic fur seals, and had time to stretch our legs walking up the snow/ice covered hill on either side of the landing.

Back on board and time for Captain's Welcome. Our Captain Oleg Klaptenko introduced himself and his senior officers and proposed a toast to our Antarctic journey.



Neko Harbour, Lemaire Channel

DAY 3 | Sunday 27 February 2022

Position at x			
Latitude: 64°44.048' S	Course: 139.5°	Wind Speed: 25 knots, strong breeze from NE	Air Temp: -3°C
Longitude: 062°54.974' W	Speed: 7.3 knots	Barometer: 995	

“Blue ice can be indicative of very old glacial ice. As more layers of snow are deposited onto a glacier, the snow beneath gradually transforms into ice. The sheer weight of the upper part of the glacier slowly squeezes air bubbles from its lower levels of ice to form clear ice. Light penetrates deeper into clear ice and all but blue wavelengths of light are absorbed. This results in an iceberg with a luminous blue appearance. Deep blue streaks and lines within icebergs may also result from melt water that drained into crevices within the glacier or iceberg and later refroze”

Antarctica displayed its best weather during the night. Anyone who'd looked out at the sea would have seen large snow flakes traveling horizontally. *Greg Mortimer* was moving south. A surreal scene. The ocean vaguely choppy, while a snowstorm raged above the water.

And we find ourselves whitewashed at breakfast time, before the Neko Harbour glacier, or Puerto Neko for the Argentines who claim the Antarctic Peninsula as their own territory.

The storm has subsided, but small, wet snowflakes continue to fall. After a while we are on land and soon afterwards, as wet as the gentoo penguins.

Most of the snow has melted, releasing a slush impregnated with the typical smell of 'penguin cologne'. Most gentoos have left, the remainder roaming all available space and finding a passage, for us, is difficult. Minimal disturbance and impact are the rules. Most of the penguins are young, from this last summer brood. Many are moulting, while some are behind in development. Winter is approaching and they will not be ready, with the tragic consequences. But this too is Nature. This too is climate change. The past winter was longer than usual. As a result, many of the penguins have been slow to mate and their offspring are far behind in growth.

But, forgetting for a moment that Nature can be merciless, we watch the young penguins. They look as if dressed in a wetsuit, honestly a little ugly, others with the soft gray down that inspires you to want to tighten them to your chest in an engaging embrace and say we will save you, even if you are so smelly!

While some, intrepidly, go up to admire the panorama of the bay, others return to the starting beach where the Zodiacs await them, to return aboard *Greg Mortimer*. Indeed, we are all tested by wet sleet. Especially our cameras.

Dry and refreshed that we were, it is finally time for the official presentations. Many of the staff introduced themselves, and John delivered his presentation on the Charismatic Megafauna just before everyone was called to the observation lounge or the wings. The long-awaited moment has arrived. *Greg Mortimer* is about to enter the narrow passage of the Lemaire

00Canal, one of the most scenic places on the Antarctic Peninsula. Will we get through? Icebergs could obstruct the exit, but the sight of a Chilean research ship advancing in the opposite direction to ours removes all doubts, and *Greg Mortimer* takes us from the North to South of the canal. It is a wonder of Nature, to be enjoyed with the eyes and with the heart.



Detaille Island, Crystal Sound

DAY 4 | Monday 28 February 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 66°33.292'S

Longitude: 067°31.999'W

Course: 129.6°

Speed: 9.8 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots, fresh breeze from NE

Barometer: 998

Air Temp: -4°C

South Magnetic Pole

It the South Magnetic Pole drifts continuously, pirouetting from hour to hour, travelling long distances over the years. Not until 1909 was it finally visited and flagged, by a sledging party under the Australian Douglas Mawson. They found it highly mobile. Approaching to within a few kilometres and calculating its movement, they seriously considered waiting for the pole to come to them.

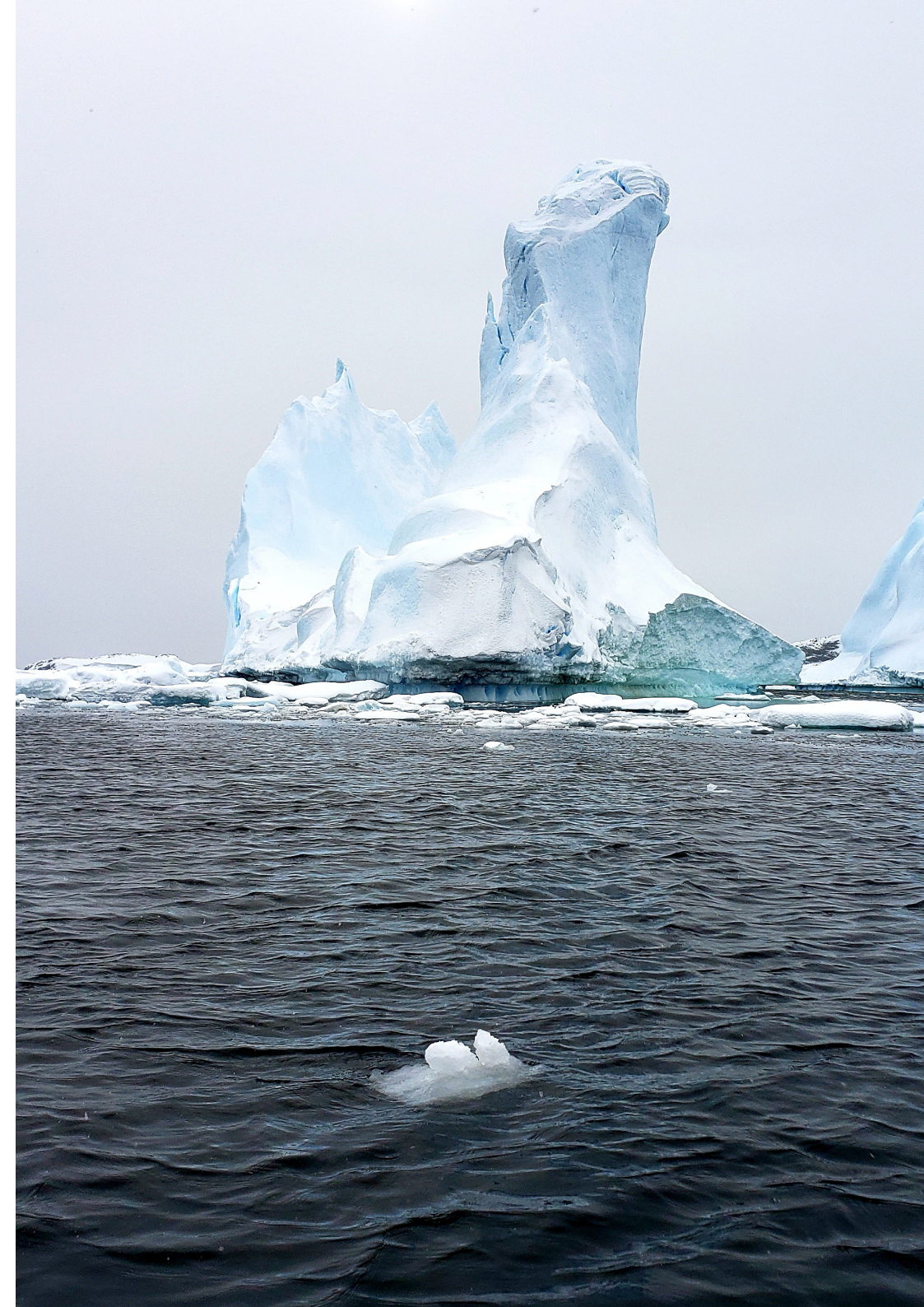
—Bernard Stonehouse, North Pole, South Pole

We were gently awoken from our slumber shortly before we crossed the Antarctic Circle at 05:27, at the exact position of 66° 33.3'S 067°32.0'W. What an accomplishment! We forgave expedition leader Flo for the early wake-up call as it meant we could venture out for an excursion soon after breakfast. Our original plan of visiting Base W on Detaille Island was foiled by a slippery, dangerous ice overhang which prevented us from safely landing, however we set out in our Zodiacs and were able to view this most historic hut from our bobbing fleet of rubber boats. We also journeyed around and through the broken sea ice which surrounded the island, greeting lazing crabeater seals and the occasional Adélie penguin perched atop an iceberg. We were sufficiently chilled from our hour or so out in the Zodiacs and enjoyed yet another lunch feast back on board.

The afternoon offered truly stunning ice navigation as we advanced towards the northern end of the Gullet, a narrow transit between mainland Antarctica and Adelaide Island, known as the gateway to the infamous Marguerite Bay. Low, dark grey clouds hung heavy on perfectly calm seas dotted with a mixture of broken sea and glacial ice. As we approached 67° South, *MV Greg Mortimer* reached what felt like a wall - kilometres of closely packed sea ice stretching ahead as far as the eye could see, with giant iceberg castles frozen in between floes. This signalled the end of our journey through the Gullet as it would not be possible for our vessel to pass the sheer volume of ice which lay in front of us.

We marked the occasion with a group photo on Deck 7 and then continued our way north and west of Liard Island. While underway, we gathered in the Lecture Theatre for a presentation by Dan Stavert on ice, the theme of our day! Later, Dot talked about the IGY, Steve the innovative Rymill expedition and Massimo showed a brief video he'd previously made about Detaille Hut.

Next we sail south along the coast of Adelaide Island on our way to Marguerite Bay, anticipating what adventures tomorrow will bring as the furthest south of the Peninsula expedition vessels. How exciting!



Stonington Island, Horseshoe Island

DAY 5 | Tuesday 1 March 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 68°13.587'S

Longitude: 067°35.072'W

Course: 091.8°

Speed: 10.2 knots

Wind Speed: 6 knots, light breeze from NW

Barometer: 1006

Air Temp: -3°C

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

—Annie Dillard

What a way to kick off the month of March.

After our passage south through the Gullet was blocked by an amazing array of glacial and sea ice, we were not to be deterred. West of Adelaide Island became our new route to Marguerite Bay.

And we made it! The furthest south we will get to, we tick off 68°30'00"S, 67°00'00"W as our turnaround point. Well done to everybody. So much has been achieved and it's still only day five.

Could our luck continue by evading the notorious weather around these parts? Could we have clear skies with uninterrupted views of this amazing landscape and wildlife surrounding us? Could we make it ashore? You betcha! We are so thankful for our talented navigation team for being the only expedition vessel this side of the Antarctic circle.

Kayaks are dropped, making the only ripple in what is the calmest of bays. Snorks are snorkelling and the rest of us make our way to a tiny, yet most interesting and beautiful place you could imagine - Stonington Island.

A short walk up through fresh powder snow revealed the inner beauty of this wonderful Island. Massive ice cliffs facing us, protruding from the continent ready to break off into icebergs at any moment. Crabeater and Weddell seals lazing about with bellies full of krill, and not forgetting the Adèle penguins in the final stages of molting ready to plunge into the seas before the they freeze over.

We take a step back in time and explore both the American and British scientific bases, which also served as a staging post for access from the Island to the mainland via the Northeast Glacier using dog sledges.

A full morning was had, but first, one more thing before lunchtime. The Polar Plunge!

Boy, oh boy. If these Antarctic waters were any colder, they would be solid. Distorted faces, clenched teeth, gasping breaths, the occasional expletive but a whole lot of fun. This is yet another memorable moment we take from this trip.

A warm shower, a hot lunch and we saddle up to explore Horseshoe Island. The station here was used from 1955 to 1960 for topographic, geology, geophysics, and meteorology survey. Another step back in time but this hut has really stood the test of time. We explore many other parts of Horseshoe Island and observe nesting shua's, Adèle penguins, fur and Weddell seals.

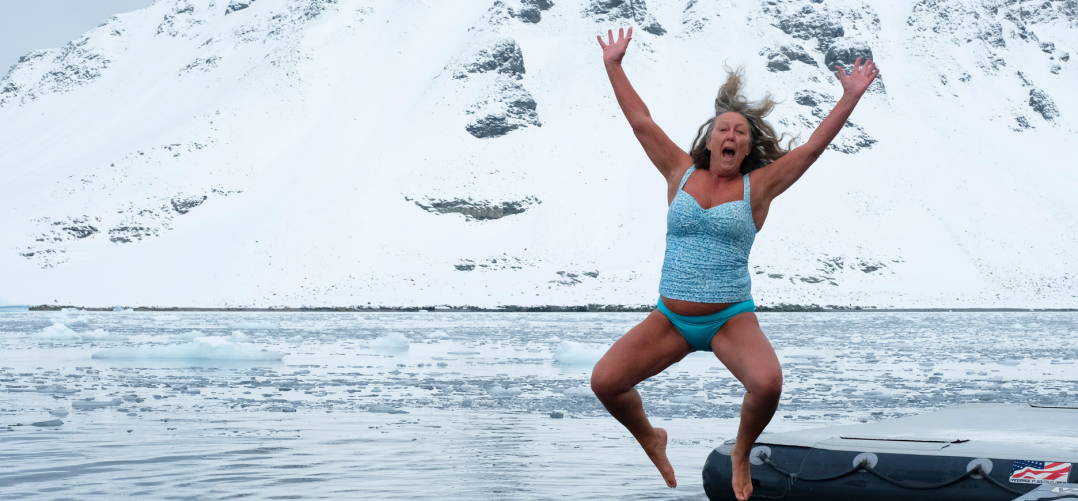
Today is topped off by heading up to deck 8 to enjoy Aurora's famous outdoor BBQ while we cruise around Marguerite Bay taking in the sunset, gazing in wonderment once more at our enchanting surrounds.



Polar Plunge

DAY 5 | Tuesday 1 March 2022





Avian Island

DAY 6 | Wednesday 02 March 2022

Position at 0600			
Latitude: 67°49.925' S	Course: 276.8°	Wind Speed: 5 knots, light breeze from N	Air Temp: -2°C
Longitude: 068°25.939' W	Speed: 1015	Barometer: 1015	

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.

—Anonymous

“Captain! We have some stowaways on board “ was the cry this morning from some early risers. During the night a couple of snowy petrels had become disoriented and confused by lights on the ship, and may have struck it. They were recovering on deck until they were assisted gently back to familiar skies. A good reminder for us all to turn any unnecessary lights off each night.

We steamed north briefly this morning to the small but heavily populated island aptly named Avian Island, one of the southmost regions for breeding colonies of a multitude of species and one of the many Antarctic Special Protection Areas - ASPA. A fragile no go zone, this is truly and officially a special place. The wildlife population on Avian is dominated by approximately 70,000 nesting pairs of Adèle penguins, plus their chicks! The island is also home to a number of birds including blue eyed shags, giant petrels, skuas, kelp gulls and Wilson’s storm petrels. Fur seals and elephant seals are regular visitors here too, enjoying the comfortable rocks and stony beaches of the island.

Our morning activity was a Zodiac cruise of the shoreline of Avian, observing the wildlife at a respectable 100m from the rocky coast. The stoic kayaking group chose to paddle towards the island using their own fuel and ever increasing strength and grit.

Some of the cosy coves sheltered a group of elephant seals taking some well earned rest, the deep yet disturbing guttural sounds occasionally letting all know that this was their beach. A couple of Zodiacs were lucky to see both fur and elephant seals swimming just off the Chilean Station “Lt Luis Carjaval” on the southwest end of Adelaide Island.

Looming ominously around the corner from this base are the sheer ice cliffs, threatening to topple off in enormous chunks into the channel between the two islands. Thankfully today they held fast and looked spectacular.

After another sumptuous lunch we were invited to hear a lecture by Steve M. on an introduction to Antarctica,

followed by a historic film about what life was like on Horseshoe Island’s British Base Y in the 1950’s.

With the spectacular backdrop of Adelaide Island’s pristine snow covered mountains, we journeyed back north towards more adventures. Another day of beauty and wonder sets slowly with the sun.



Damoy Point, Fournier Bay

DAY 7 | Thursday 3 March 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64°53.109'S

Longitude: 064°12.460'W

Course: 071.3°

Speed: 10.6 knots

Wind Speed: 25 knots, strong breeze from E

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: -2°C

There are many other beautiful sea-birds, but the most beautiful of all are the Snowy petrels, which approach nearer to the fairies than anything else on earth.

—Aspley Cherry-Garrard

Overnight we journeyed north and by morning found ourselves at the southern entrance to the Neumayer Channel. Our morning excursion was set for Damoy Point in Dorian Bay, a shallow, rocky harbour surrounded by pristine glaciers. The main event? Gentoo penguins! Nestled on several rocky outcrops, chicks of all ages nuzzled into their protective parent's belly while opportunistic skuas hovered above. Damoy Point is also home to Damoy Hut, which stands out in a bright turquoise.

This UK historic base was last used in 1993 as a transit station for staff and provisions of the British Antarctic Survey, which were to be flown south from the skiway on the glacier above the hut to Rothera Research Station, not far from where we visited Avian Island just yesterday.

Both the kayakers and snorkellers made the most of the morning, while a few expedition team made their way over to nearby Port Lockroy to deliver our healthy stock of postcards, which will slowly make their way to the UK before entering the British postal service. When they will be received is anyone's guess!

The afternoon was earmarked for whale watching, and what better place than the southern Gerlache Strait. While in transit, John and Dan gathered keen citizen scientists on Deck 8 for a seabird survey and cloud observation. Several small groups of humpback whales made their presence known as we approached the southern entrance to Dallman Bay, one of the gateways to the Peninsula. Two whales, altogether uninterested in our visit, logged on the surface and made shallow dives just off our bow as we drifted in the wind and current.

As the afternoon wore on, we headed towards the glacier at the back of Fournier Bay. From here we had fantastic views of Mount Francais, the tallest peak on the Peninsula at 2,825 metres. Brash ice, growlers, bergy bits and icebergs glided past our balconies as soft, early evening light cast the most beautiful, serene reflections on the sea. Later we gathered for recap presentations and a briefing, and enjoyed a quiet dinner in the protection of Fournier Bay.



Danco Island, Paradise Bay

DAY 8 | Friday 4 March 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64°33.333'S

Longitude: 062°38.712'W

Course: 169.5°

Speed: 5.5 knots

Wind Speed: 25 knots, strong breeze from NE

Barometer: 1017

Air Temp: -4°C

There is only one short link in the food chain between a diatom and a one-hundred-ton blue whale – between one cell and the largest of all animals – and that link is the Antarctic krill.

—David G. Campbell, *The Crystal Desert*, 1992

Waking up to the soft light on the mountain peaks was an early morning mark in the win column as we headed towards Danco Island. The coffee was poured and the restaurant was full as glimpses of glaciers, icebergs, and porpoising penguins sailed by us.

As we approached Danco Island, the winds blew strong as we found shelter in the lee, cancelling the kayak excursion and giving us a bit more of a sporty experience on our way towards the landing. At Danco Island, we were greeted by gentoo penguins swimming in and out of the water. It's hard to imagine how many times the penguins waddled up and down the side of the mountain in order to carve those highways. As we smiled, laughed, and captured photos of our favorite waddlers, our SNORK friends swam with penguins. Others trekked up the mountainside to take in the breathtaking views.

After a much needed warm-up and hearty lunch, it was time for round two. In true expedition style, we turned Plan A into Plan B. No worries though... at this point we're seasoned explorers and used to adapting our plans. Hoping to take full advantage of the calm winds and glassy seas, a Zodiac cruise it shall be. With the promise of a white penguin named Lucy, we loaded up our Zodiacs and navigated our way through the icy waters of the Aguirre Canal towards Paradise Harbour. Flowing tidewater glaciers, leopard seals, huge icebergs, feeding humpbacks, and porpoising penguins lined the channel as the overcast skies only deepened the blue of the ice and crevasses. Paradise Harbour definitely lived up to it's name!

Back on board, we recapped tomorrow's plan (Spert Island... yes!), the expedition at Waterboat Point, and compass swingers (it's a 4-year change of degree). Gathering for dinner, we filled our bellies with Chef Paolo's amazing cuisine, sharing our stories and photos of the day's adventures. With visions of penguins waddling through our heads, we gathered at Mawson bar for a night cap, music, and dancing to toast our amazing day.

A made up dad joke by Liz:

What do you get when you have 3 iPhones compasses shooting different bearings?

A compass swinger!

Yes folks, she's here all week. :) And on that note... Good Night, *Greg Mortimer*. Sleep well and see you tomorrow for another epic day!



Hydrurga Rocks, Spert Island

DAY 9 | Saturday 5 March 2022

Position at 0600
Latitude: 64°12.603'S
Longitude: 061°32.678'W
Course: 031.6°
Speed: 4.6 knots

Wind Speed: 5 knots, light breeze from NE
Barometer: 1016
Air Temp: -2°C

We are blessed
—Flo Kuyper, Expedition Leader

Still it comes. We are reaching the end of the voyage, but the surprises continue.
This morning we landed at Hydrurga Rocks a small island in the Shetlands known for its protected landing site and wildlife. This small piece of Antarctica was found by BAS survey flights in 1956 and named after the Latin name for leopard seal.

It is late in the season now and we walked around the island, now almost bare of snow watching the last movements of the wildlife before the cold winter sets in. The rocks harboured fur seals, an elephant seal and Weddell seal. Wilson's storm petrel flew over the water, feeding on tiny pieces of food on the surface, their black legs moving so quickly it looked as if they danced on the surface. A giant petrel flew low over the visitors checking out the possibilities.

The kayakers and snorkellers also enjoyed their activities and landings to the full, absorbing the offerings of the quiet morning.

It was then back to the *Greg Mortimer* for another hearty lunch before sailing to Spert Island, a grotesquely beautiful volcanic group of basaltic rocks, 58 million years in the making. Softer layers of rock have been slowly eroded away to leave channels, caves and arches. In Zodiacs we cruised around and between these ragged cliffs, awed by the solemn rock giants, standing firm as if they were the ramparts and gateways of an ancient forgotten city. Fur seals rested on beaches, growling at our presence and clouds of skuas flew from the cliff tops above. And again the diversity of Antarctica's geology surprised us mortal Zodiacers.

In the evening, the disembarkation briefing, the reminder that this voyage was closing, and that soon the trip will be found in memory and friendship. But not quite over, as the glowing colours of the setting sun lit the low cloud cover bringing us back to the Antarctic world. A day to go!



Hannah Point, Yankee Harbour

DAY 10 | Sunday 6 March 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 62°48.049' S

Longitude: 60°43.679' W

Speed: 10.5 knots

Wind Speed: 20 knots from E

Barometer: 1015

Air Temp: -1°C

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

—Annie Dillard - Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.

A grey, calm morning greeted us as we returned to the South Shetland Islands for our final day of landings. Our first landing was at Walker Bay on Livingston Island, with a short walk along the beach to some elephant seals, where we were collected and taken for a Zodiac tour around Hannah Point.

This first sighting of young male elephant seals was a highlight of this landing. It is amazing to think that these behemoths of the deep were still not fully grown. In a few years, they will be vying for the role of 'Beachmaster' in order to win their own harem. As young males, they lay on the beach, moulting their skin, belched and roared and occasionally fought with their neighbours. Our beach walk was also enriched by watching the feisty fur seals, finding a baby elephant sea out on its own for the first time and watching a few Weddell seals resting on the beach.

This landing was followed by a Zodiac cruise around Hannah Point, where we saw chinstrap and gentoo penguins as well as some nesting giant petrels with their enormous downy chicks. As the last few Zodiacs were returning to the ship, some fin and sei whales were spotted a few hundred metres off the ship. These rarely-seen whales are the second and third largest animal species on the planet, so it was exciting to have the opportunity to see them.

On our afternoon journey eastwards towards King George Island, we had time for one final landing at Yankee Harbour on nearby Greenwich Island. There we found some relics of the slaughter of seals and whales conducted by the first human visitors to the South Shetlands. Rusting trypots that were once used to render elephant seal blubber into oil stood next to eroding whale bones as stark reminders of that historic carnage. Fur seals were also killed here in massive numbers, so it is good to see that their populations are now starting to recover over 100 years later.

This final landing was an opportunity to sit and watch the wildlife and to reflect on what has been a packed and

The brown skuas are the nemesis of the penguins at Baily Head. This crater is theirs, and the penguins are their livelihood.

—David G. Campbell, The Crystal Desert, 1992

remarkable voyage. We were also entertained by gentoo penguins coming and going at the beach and splashing around in the shallows.

At the Captain's farewell drinks in the evening, we recounted the highlights of the voyage, drank a toast to our marvelous Captain and crew, and celebrated our noble kayakers, intrepid snorks and lunatic polar plungers. Thank you all for your adventurous spirit and your sense of fun as you explored this unique place.



Frei Station, Maxwell Bay

DAY 11 | Monday 7 March 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 62°11.902'S

Longitude: 058°55.421'W

Course: 212.6°

Wind Speed: 2 knots, light air from SE

Barometer: 1019

Air Temp: 0°C

Last day of Across the Antarctic Circle with *Greg Mortimer*.

What a morning! What a trip. After an exciting week or so in the south, including a wonderful time spent below the Antarctic Circle, we finished with an 'early' start, and a quick breakfast while the bags were collected and taken away to the beach on King George Island. The anxieties of travel receded as test results came back in the form of certificates, and news came through of the departure of our planes from Punta Arenas. Now it looked as if our hopes of a smooth departure were coming true.

There was time in the rush to think of the trip. Wonderful weather, enjoyable, peaceful landings in Antarctica. The series of historic huts all set in stunning Antarctic surroundings. The Zodiac cruises in silent splendour. Polar plunges south of the Circle. The penguins, whales, walks and views. And the unique experiences of the kayakers and snorkellers. And those photos. A fabulous trip.

Then the call to board Zodiacs followed by the trip to the beach, where for the final time we took off the lifejackets and walked through the Antarctic township up to the 'totem pole' where we pulled off the muck boots, and walked, perhaps with seafarer's balance, to the airport and onto the plane.

On the flight home we rested, and in the time and space of this familiar mode of transport reflected fondly of our trip to the magnificent continent with Aurora Expeditions.



Kayaking Log

By Frank Witter

Kayak Masters: Daniel Stavert, Eamon Larkin, Frank Witter

Number of Paddlers: 18 Total Paddle Outings: 8 Total Distance Paddled: 48.8 km

Paddlers:

Thomas Holster	Holly Kaufman	Devala Robinson	Teresa Targoz
Joan Zwiep	Alison Keegan	Micheal Robinson	Daniel Schlund
Rachel Hollingsworth	Erin Thomas	Bradley Povelaites	Jamal Perry
William Hollingsworth	Daniel Laury	Chad Schmuck	
Jeffrey Kaufman	Lisa Ameijide	Jennifer Ruth	

Day 2 am: Cierva Cove. 5.6km

Waking up in the morning to no wind and sunny skies is everyone’s favorite. Cierva Cove did not disappoint. The sea was as calm as can be, the cove filled with icebergs of all sizes, and we had our first paddle in Antarctic waters.

We had one more short briefing on the water, to go over a few more things including how to travel as a group and communication on the water with hand signs, then we made our way to the station just over 1km away. Getting closer, we saw that it was staffed at this time. Gentoo penguins were still aplenty on shore and gave us a good show. We watched them for a good while getting in and out of the water. While moving in between some smaller icebergs, we saw two blows of a small minke whale but couldn’t catch up with it or see the whale again.

Day 2 pm: Portal Point, cancelled kayaking last minute due to wind

We were all set to go out, but as when we dropped anchor and opened the back door, we had to make the decision to cancel the paddle due to the wind. It had picked up and one of the Zodiacs going to shore reported that there weren’t any places that are in the lee of the wind. Having all the paddlers dressed up and ready to go, we invited them into our kayak safety Zodiac for a cruise followed by a shore landing.. The cruise turned out well, because we spotted a group of humpback whales feeding only a short distance from the ship. As they breached and ate, we watched them for a good 30 minutes, simply in awe. After this, we headed back to the shore to set foot on the continent for the first time during our voyage.

Day 3 am: Neko Harbour 4.5km

We arrived in Neko Harbour and looking out form the ship we saw that it started snowing and the cloud ceiling was low, adding to the amazing atmosphere of this place. The bay was filled with icebergs and brash ice. Everyone enjoyed pushing their way through the brash for the first time. We kept the paddle a little shorter to make sure everyone had the opportunity to go ashore and watch the penguins.

Day 4 am: Detaille Island

Cancelled kayaking due to wind and ice, Zodiac cruise instead. Having our own kayak safety zodiac made it possible to get all the paddlers off the ship right away. We stayed in our drysuits and just put on an extra jacket on top to stay warm during the cruise. The ice around the ship was moving fast and we had to stay within close vicinity of the *Greg Mortimer* to get the clear to go from our expedition leader. While waiting we took the opportunity to get on to a large piece of sea ice. Everyone loved it. After a short while we went back into the Zodiac and had the all-clear to go cruising around the ice and the many icebergs.

Day 5 am: Stonington Island, 5.5km

The furthest south on this voyage! Stunning Stonington did not disappoint, visiting the station was a real treat.

Surrounded by mountains and glaciers, the little island is nestlet in a small bay. We made our way from the ship towards the island through some brash ice, paddling past a few smaller bergy bits with crabeater seals resting on top of them. The side of the island that has the landing beach was fairly clear of brash and made paddling a lot easier. Most of us landed to check out the UK Base and the US Base. The rest went for an amazing circumnavigation through more brash ice and good views all around. We were able to see both bases from the water. After everyone finished their little excursion to the buildings, we paddled back to the ship.

Day 5 pm: Horseshoe Island, 5.7km

We anchored up between near some beautiful icebergs but out of view of the base. Leaving the ship, we indulged in sunny skies and all shapes and sorts of bergy bits and larger bergs. It was a beautiful afternoon and setting we were lucky to find ourselves in. After paddling the little bay nearby the station we made our way to the back side of the small peninsula the station was on and went for a landing to check out the base.

Day 6 am: Avian Island, 8.1km

The GM anchored 2km out from the island. The wind was in our favour getting there and gave us a good push to the ASPA. The island hosts five different bird species breeding, elephant seals and fur seals. Even from afar, it looked busy on the island and the air above it. Giant Southern petrels were well visible all around us. We had to stay 100m away from shore as this is a special protected area. We rounded the island to the right going along the shore at the appropriate distance. We were lucky and encountered large male elephant seals and were able to hear them as well. The way home was a little more challenging, as we had the wind against us this time.

Day 7 am: Damoy Point 5.1km

The morning found us dropping anchor near Port Lockroy amidst stunning mountains all around us. Leaving the ship bright and early, we paddled along the shore of Damoy Point towards Port Lockroy and Yougla Point. The wind was once again in our favour, making paddling easy. The light on the mountains around us was spectacular and made it hard to take our eyes away from. We managed to get all the way from our anchorage at Damoy Point past Port Lockory and to Yougla Point, where we tied up the kayaks to the back of the Zodiac and hopped aboard, taking the cruisy way back to the ship.

Day 9 am: Hydrurga Rocks, 6km

The ship anchored on the southern end between Hydrurga Rocks and Two Hammock Island. We only had a short paddle to get from the GM to our little island. Hydrurga Rocks offers many little channels and rocky outcrops to paddle in and out of and explore. All the while we are able to see the abundance of life on the iiland, full of gentoo and chinstrap penguins, fur seals, giant petrels and the one elephant seal. The group did a circumnavigation and a short walk on the island.

Day 9 pm: Spert Island, 8.3km

Our last day of paddling here in Antarctica. Spert Island is much different than our previous paddles, with its towering rock walls, channels and caves. Conditions were good to try and paddle on this exposed location. The sun came out while we paddled towards the Island. We went through our first channels and felt the swell lift us up while passing through. Coming out the other side, we marvelled at the view of beautiful icebergs and the sheer beauty of the cliffs rising out of the ocean. We kept going and arrived at a huge arch, poking our noses in, which gave us a feeling of the sheer size of the arch - truly breathtaking. Returning back to the ship, we took a slightly different route through other small channels and along towering walls. We sat on the ocean for a little while, just contemplating how lucky we all are being able to paddle in these waters. What an amazing journey!



Snorkel Log

By Liz MacNeil

Snorkel Guide: Liz MacNeil

Number of Snorkels: 8

Total Outings: 7

Snorkellers:

Carl Beckwith

Cindy Beckwith

Jean-Pierre Els

Sophie Kennedy

Rachel Knight

Angela Kwiatek

Lisa Plaut

Peter Plaut

Day 2 pm: Portal Point

Welcome to the continent at Portal Point! We parked the Zodiac on the rocks on the backside of the point and had our inaugural snorkel where everyone familiarised themselves with the gear and equipment. Although we had a couple of challenges getting into the Zodiac, everyone did great in the water and passed the check-out snorkel with flying colours.

Day 3 pm: Neko Harbour

Neko Harbour showed us beautiful snowy and calm conditions, and gave us an opportunity to get the group out on an ice floe. It was so peaceful and serene in the middle of the harbour as we turned off the engine and just sat in silence taking in all that is Antarctica. Flo and the gentoo penguins greeted us at the landing site, as we watched the waddling penguins and took in the smells of the colony. With hopes to see penguins in the water, we were picked up and taken to snorkel around the full stop. It was snowing and we enjoyed the views of the ice from under the water, and the Zodiac challenges we faced in the morning were solved with a few PFDs and perseverance, yee haw!

Day 5 am: Stonington

It's hard to believe we made it to 68° below the Antarctic Circle and to the Stonington Hut! No one has been here for over two years, but the multitude of crabeater seals on the ice floes didn't seem to be bothered by our presence. What an amazing feat and beautiful calm, icy bay — just the right conditions for an ice snorkel within the brash. Getting into the water, we were surrounded by brash. Some chose to rest on it... some chose to video it, and others just chose to meditate in it. Back on the ship, we had full SNORK representation at the Polar Plunge... with dry suits or not, we all took the plunge!

Day 5 pm: Horseshoe Island

Still warming up from the morning, we had fewer SNORKS in the afternoon, but what a beautiful cruise. The icebergs were immense and the lighting was absolutely stunning as the sun revealed different textures and

colour... oh, the blues! The hut was again one that hadn't been visited for some time, and in the end, Sophie and Rachel were the only takers for snorkelling. The sun came out from behind the clouds as they took the plunge into a shallow, clear channel where there were a couple growlers to explore and push around. In the end, they were all smiles and ready for the BBQ awaiting them back on the ship.

Day 7 am: Damoy Point & Casabianca Island

What a beautiful morning at Damoy Point! The surrounding mountains revealed the infamous peaks of Snow White & the Seven Dwarves and the tallest peak on the Peninsula, Mount Francais, towering at 9,268ft (2,825m). In the protected waters of the Neumayer Channel, we had our Zodiac cruise and observed the young chicks who were born later in the season (they should be finishing up their molting stage and heading into the water by now). As we made our way towards the landing site, it got quite shallow, and Sophie and Rachel were recruited to help catch boats in their drysuits as they waited for Liz to arrive with Carl and Cindy. The SNORKS made our way towards Casabianca Island for another shallow snorkel around the south side of the island — of course Carl made his way towards the ice, while the others stayed close to the penguins hoping they'd make their way into the water - what a wonderful morning it was.

Day 8 am: Danco Island

It was hard to say how the morning would turn out. Being in the lee of the wind made Zodiac cruising a bit more challenging than previous days. No worries for the SNORKS, we're in drysuits. Across the bay, we made our way over to a spectacular grounded iceberg with a huge arch, the blues were fantastic as we took our daily group photo with the arch in the background. The blues in the bay were aquamarine as Liz navigated the Zodiac through the brash and growlers, what a beautiful place to snorkel! That was Plan A, at least. Making our way towards the landing site, Isabel met us on the beach as did gentoo penguins swimming in and out from the colony. As we were on shore, Liz went to recon the island and came back to pick us up with a Plan B option, penguins. It was unanimous, we wanted the penguins. Making our way to the point, there were penguins swimming in and out of the water and that was our snorkel site. With 6 of us in the water, we waited to see whether or not the penguins would join us, and for some of us, they did! It was a matter of being in the right place at the right time, but we got our penguins and Sophie and Rachel were thrilled.

Day 9 am: Hydrurga Rocks

This morning we had our last snorkel and everyone was present. Hydrurga Rocks is home to a variety of wildlife — chinstrap penguins, fur seals, Weddell seals, elephant seals and shags! Shags joined us in the water as we snorkelled in the bay, being viewed (and possibly envied) by our fellow shipmates. Classic Carl spent his time around the growler ice, as did Sophie and Rachel, while Lisa, Cindy, Peter, and Angela snorkelled their way along the channel, scaring the shags away. With the sun shining bright and warming our faces, we cruised the rest of the island on our way back to the ship. Y'all were an amazing group of SNORKS! YEE HAW!



Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	25 February to 7 March 2022										
	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gentoo Penguin	●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●
Chinstrap Penguin	●	●							●	●	
Adelie Penguin				●	●	●					
Unidentified Penguin (swimming)											
Wandering Albatross											
Royal Albatross											
Black-browed Albatross											
Grey-headed Albatross											
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross											
Giant Petrel sp. (Northern or Southern)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Antarctic Petrel											
Cape Petrel	●										
Snow Petrel				●	●	●	●	●	●		
Antarctic Fulmar (=Southern)											
Blue Petrel											
Grey Petrel											
Prion sp. (probably mostly Antarctic)											
White-chinned Petrel											
Sooty Shearwater											
Great Shearwater											
Wilson's Storm-petrel	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Black-bellied Storm-petrel						●					
Antarctic Cormorant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Pale-faced Sheathbill (Snowy)							●	●	●	●	
Brown Skua	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●
South Polar Skua			●	●	●	●	●				

Bird Species	25 February to 7 March 2022										
	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kelp Gull	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tern (probably mostly Antarctic)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		

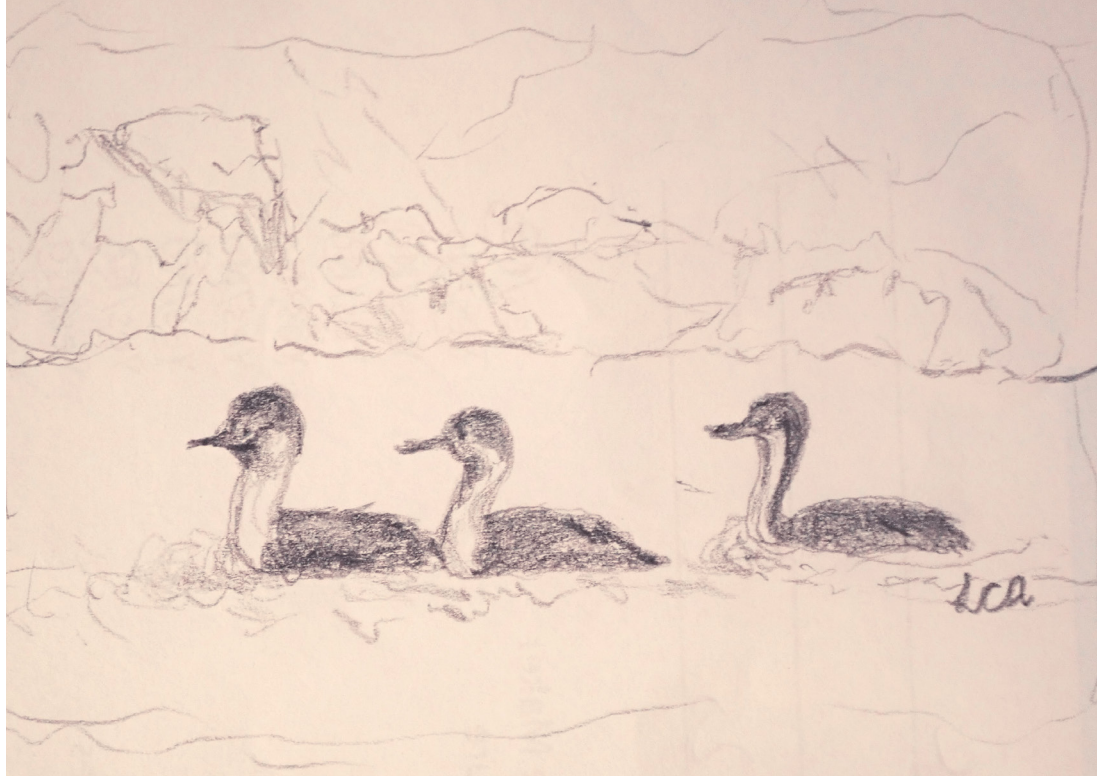
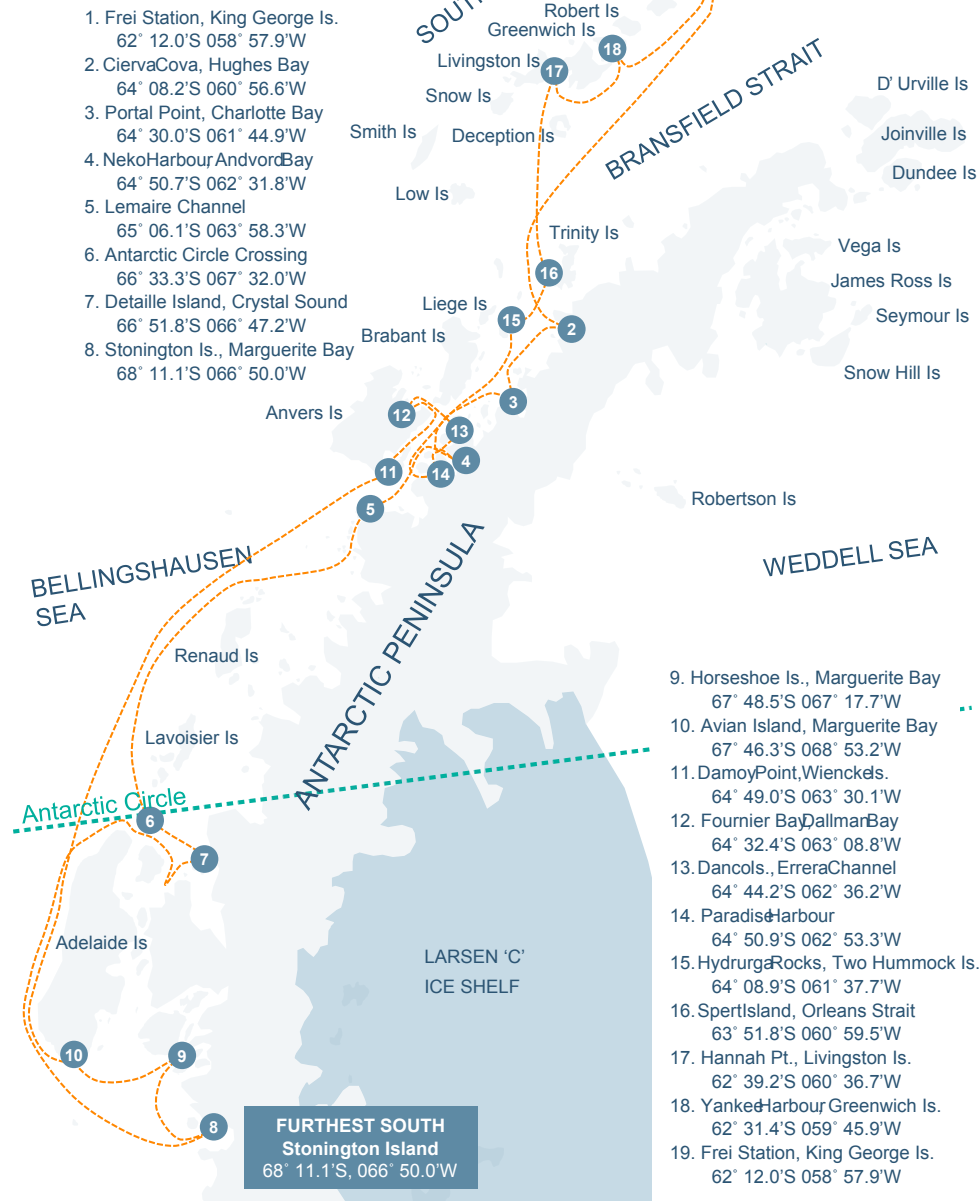


Mammal Species	25 February to 7 March 2022										
	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Antarctic Fur Seal		●			●	●		●	●	●	
Southern Elephant Seal						●				●	●
Crabeater Seal				●	●	●		●			
Weddell Seal		●	●		●					●	●
Leopard Seal		●					●	●	●		
Minke Whale			●					●			
Sei Whale											●
Fin Whale											●
Humpback Whale	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		
Orca											



from/to Punta Arenas
66°W

ACROSS THE ANTARCTIC CIRCLE 25 Feb – 7 Mar 2022





Expeditioners:

Lisa Ameijide	Connie Hendren	Jaclyn Lock
Linette Arakawa	James Hendren	Kaijia Luo
Garry Askew	Karen Hollands	Kelli Ann Mills
Tyler Askew	William Hollingsworth	Callie Moir
Carl Beckwith	Rachel Hollingsworth	Kevin Moore
Cynthia Beckwith	Tom Hoster	Helen Morgan
Katrijn Berends	David Hovenden	Barbara Nickerson
Michael Boettcher	Samantha Howe	Sherry Nickerson
John Boettcher	Nancy Hromin	Jane Packer
Rick Bryan	Shengkai Huang	Sarah Pendley
Rae Bryan	Molly Hutchison	Mark Pendley
Ian Cambata	Maria Joseph	Jamal Perry
Richard Carey	Joe Joseph	Peter Plaut
Nadine Catalano	Jeff Kaufman	Lisa Plaut
Duncan Crocker	Holly Kaufman	Bradley Povelaites
Karen Crocker	Alison Keegan	Michael Robinson
Tom Crowley	Gail Keikoan	Devala Robinson
Jane Crowley	Sophie Kennedy	Jennifer Ruth
Jean-Pierre Els	Rachel Knight	Christina Saldana
Kevin Freiburger	Angela Kwiatek	Dan Schlund
Mark Gregory	Helen Lambert	Chad Schmuck
Sara Gregory	Gavin Lambert	Tama Serfoss
Kelly Hayes	Daniel Laury	Alex Shaykis
Cindy Heeter	Lingxiao Liu	Vivian Steinberg

Expedition Team:

- Expedition Leader: Flo Kuijper
- Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells
- Onboard Expedition Manager: Justine Bornholdt
- Onboard Expedition Manager Trainee: Anne Oeyasaeter
- Naturalist: John Kirkwood
- Historian: Steve Martin
- Expedition Guide/Naturalist: Dot Robertson
- Expedition Guide: Lauren Farmer
- Lead Kayaking Guide: Frank Witter
- Kayaking Guide: Dan Stavert
- Kayaking Guide: Eamon Larkin
- Snorkeling Guide: Liz MacNeil
- Photography Guide: Massimo Bassano
- Medic: Dean Opie
- Zodiac Master: Sergei Hincu
- Mudroom/Shopkeeper: Reza Rusooly

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

- Master: Oleg Klaptenko

Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi

Safety Officer: Goran Goles

Second Officer: Sergii Voina

Bosun: Oscar Antonio Castejon Torres

Deck Cadet: Sander Magi

Deck Cadet: David Bote Martin

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

Ship Nurse: Susara Hendrika Mostert

Chief Engineer: Sergiy Melnyk

First Engineer: Ion Toma
- Hotel Director: Franz Wusits

F&B Manager: Miguel Cabanillas Alvarez

Chief Purser: Liza Merillo

Executive Chef: Pierpaolo Fadda

Sous Chef: Nellan Lewars

Head Waiter: Narendra Seeram

Hotel Controller: Rohmat Nurhidayat

IT Officer: Ihor Yesmieniev

Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska

Receptionist: Marie Annecy Reynoird

Head Stateroom: Elieser Nunez Almendarez

- Spa Manager: Alena Antonova

Able Seaman: Khenette Verzosa

Able Seaman: Bobby Penuliar Payumo

Able Seaman: Yevgen Kotuz

Able Seaman: Maksym Khlivniuk

Able Seaman: Joel Valdevieso Noble

Able Seaman: Giovanni Dela Torre

Photography thanks to:

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Bradley Povelaites

Duncanz Crocker

Kelly Hayes

Kelli Ann Mills

Samantha Howe

Dan Schlund

Helen Lambert

Gavin Lambert
- Kaijia Luo

Shengkai Huang

Daniel Laury

Angela Kwiatek

Bradley Povelaites

Duncan Crocker

Kelly Hayes

Kelli Ann Mills

Dan Schlund
- Helen Lambert

Gavin Lambert

Kaijia Luo

Shengkai Huang

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Lisa Ameijide

Keith Winter

Mike Robinson

Sherry Nickerston
- Yan Zhu

Lingxiao Lio

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