

Spirit of Antarctica

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 08 – 19 January 2022





Punta Arenas

DAY 1 | Saturday 08 January 2022

Position at 2100

Latitude: 53°16'S

Longitude: 70°51,6'W

Course: 170°

Speed: 10 knots

Wind Speed: 13 knots from W

Barometer: 1028 hPa

Air Temp: 15°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Strong offshore wind whipped up fleeting rainbows in the sea spray around the *Greg Mortimer*, as the ship sat alongside the pier in Punta Arenas.

We can only imagine what it took to get to the ship from your homes in this new age of travel. But finally, we were all together onboard and could put the challenges of travel behind us and enjoy being thoroughly looked after while on the ship.

Together we total 28 passengers from Australia, UK and USA, along with 12 Aurora Expeditions' team and 84 crew from around the globe.

Once onboard and settled into our staterooms, guests enjoyed meeting some of the expedition team whilst at the welcome buffet, a small glimpse into a carefully chosen menu that is to come over the duration of the voyage. Briefings, welcome speeches and emergency procedure drills ensued. Understandably it can take some days to get accustomed to ship life, but all around there was a buzz of excitement about our upcoming adventure.

During dinner, we cast off our lines and slipped away from the port, most of us unable to detect any motion, given how smoothly the ship glides through the water. This trip is very special for all of us onboard, not only as it represents the first taste of freedom for many of us after time at home, but also because we travel through the Chilean fjords, thus getting a chance to see a much more varied landscape.

The Strait of Magellan is a channel linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, between the mainland tip of South America and Tierra del Fuego island. Lying entirely within Chilean territorial waters, except for its easternmost extremity, which is Argentinian, it is 350 miles (560 km) long and 2–20 miles (3–32 km) wide at different points.

The first European to navigate the strait was Ferdinand Magellan (October 21–November 28, 1520), a Portuguese representing Spain, whose expedition is said to have eventually completed the first circumnavigation of the world. Although the strait follows a winding course among numerous islands and channels and has a cold, foggy climate, it was an important sailing route before the building of the Panama Canal (completed in 1914) shortened the Atlantic-Pacific passage by several thousand miles.

The anticipation to explore was palpable, and in the evening we raised our glasses to travel companions, adventure and seeking out new places and new experiences.



Chilean Fjords, Beagle Channel

DAY 2 | Sunday 09 January 2022

Position at 0637

Latitude: 54°34'S

Longitude: 072°04'W

Course: 120°

Speed: 11 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots

Barometer: 1008 hPa

Air Temp: 4° C

A wonderful feeling to be able to cast off and head for our goal at last.

—Roald Amundsen, *The Amundsen Photographs*, edited by Roland Huntford, 1987

Sometime in the wee hours, the *Greg Mortimer* slipped smoothly from the Magdalena Canal to the Cockburn Canal and southwest toward the Pacific. At around 0500, we felt the first stirrings of the Pacific swell as it wrapped around and through the outer Camden Island group.

At first light, one could see to the Northwest, where light veils of moisture intertwined with massive black streaks of down-pouring rain. It seemed that we might hit harsh weather, but no, it held off. Our intended route is to exit the Chilean Fjords in Nassau Bay, sail south past Cape Horn, then cross Drake Passage to the Antarctic Peninsula. To get there, we had to expose ourselves to the Pacific swells for a short spell, then duck back in around Basket Island to a narrow passage leading to the Beagle Channel.

The swells turned out to be less pronounced than first promised, just enough to give the impression that we were being rocked in a cozy cradle. Perhaps it was the design of the *Greg Mortimer* that minimized those swells, just as those seasoned sailors of the ship said it would.

Following our morning Rapid Antigen Test, the entire ship tested negative and we were able to move on to our hardy breakfast. Afterwards, John gave an enlightened presentation on Gliders and Flapper, a timely introduction to the wandering albatross, terns and other birds we had spied in the morning, especially the petrels skimming just inches above the water.

As the morning unfolded, the mood on board seemed a little subdued, possibly because many were still exhausted from the amazing effort it took simply to reach the ship under such difficult travel times. This sense of exhaustion quickly dissipated though when Howard, our expedition leader, decided to change the schedule. Instead of our mandatory IAATO briefing, which is interesting, informative and essential to protecting the Antarctic, Howard rallied us to ascend to the Observation Lounge on Deck 8 with the announcement of “Whales ahead!”

Against a backdrop Tierra Del Fuego’s peaks, the enticing blows could be seen just off the bow. Carefully assessing the blows and behavior, John and Isabelle identified the whales as members of the baleen, or rorqual family. Despite a chill wind and occasional raindrops, nearly everyone was out on deck watching the whales rise, two to

starboard and one to port. Over the next hour they effortlessly kept pace with our ship, giving our naturalists time to confirm that we were watching sei whales, the third largest creatures on Earth. The word ‘sei’ comes from the Norwegian word for ‘scythe’, in reference to the shape of the fin.

No sooner had the whales slipped from sight, than the mists began to lift, revealing the flanks of ice-clad peaks rising out of the channel to our north. We passed Mount Sarmiento, at 2246 m, one of the highest in the region. Sadly it’s summit remained cloud-capped, keeping us from viewing what Charles Darwin wrote was ‘one of the most sublime spectacles of Tierra del Fuego’.

Nonetheless we were treated to the sheer rock walls and blue-tinged crevasses falling from Cordillera Darwin, some of the most dramatic near Mont Darwin and finally Cerro Italia. As we continued East along the Beagle Channel, the air temperature rose, the wind was at our back and we sailed smoothly and swiftly along.

It was almost impossible to stay seated through lunch as the Beagle revealed more and more offerings of hanging glaciers, including some ending in high volume waterfalls sliding over sheer rock, and others falling into delicate bays.

At 1400 we gathered in the lecture hall for our IAATO briefing. Isabelle expressed the nature of IAATO, an organization that Aurora helped found, and its dedication to protect Antarctica’s heritage, and wildlife by reducing the impacts of tourism. The briefing ended with the vacuuming and cleaning of the clothing we would use during our landings, to avoid introducing alien plant species to Antarctica.

In the afternoon, our activity guides gathered their charges to be properly kitted out and prepared for the exciting chance to snorkel and kayak on the Antarctic Peninsula.

By 1800 we had gathered in the Elephant Island Bar for the Captains’ welcome toast and to meet the wonderful, hard-working people looking after us on the ship while we set off to adventure and explore. The toast was followed by a recap of the day from Isabel and John, including more information about the sei whales we encountered earlier.

The ship was quiet after our sumptuous dinner, as we battened down for a Drake Passage forecast to deliver conditions that led to its reputation. High winds and big seas? We shall see.



Drake Passage

DAY 3 | Monday 10 January 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 57°04'S

Longitude: 65°65'W

Course: 180°

Speed: 11 knots

Wind Speed: 40 knots, NW

Barometer: 987 hPa

Air Temp: 4° C

I now belong to the higher cult of mortals, for I have seen the albatross.

—Robert Cushman Murphy

This morning we woke to the slow sway of the *Greg Mortimer*. The mountain peaks of the Chilean Fjords were already far behind us, replaced by seemingly mountainous waves of the Drake Passage. Despite the power in those 4-6m waves, they could only cause a gentle sway of our trusty, stable ship.

Nevertheless, everything is extra-challenging when there is a little movement, so we took good care when walking around the ship, secured our belongings, and many expeditioners retreated to the comfort of their cabins for the crossing.

It's amazing to imagine the conditions that the early Antarctic explorers endured, being tossed around in a small wooden ship, with limited food rations, and limited shelter from the elements. It certainly gives us a lot to be grateful for, whilst relaxing in our cosy ship, watching movies in our cabins, and being served three course meals cooked by our onboard chefs (the dahl and the carbonara were delicious!).

Now that we are well underway, anticipation is building for our first glimpse of Antarctica, and even before that, our first ice-berg. John's lecture this morning "Oceanography and Ice Ice Baby" definitely helped to whet our appetite for the coming days.

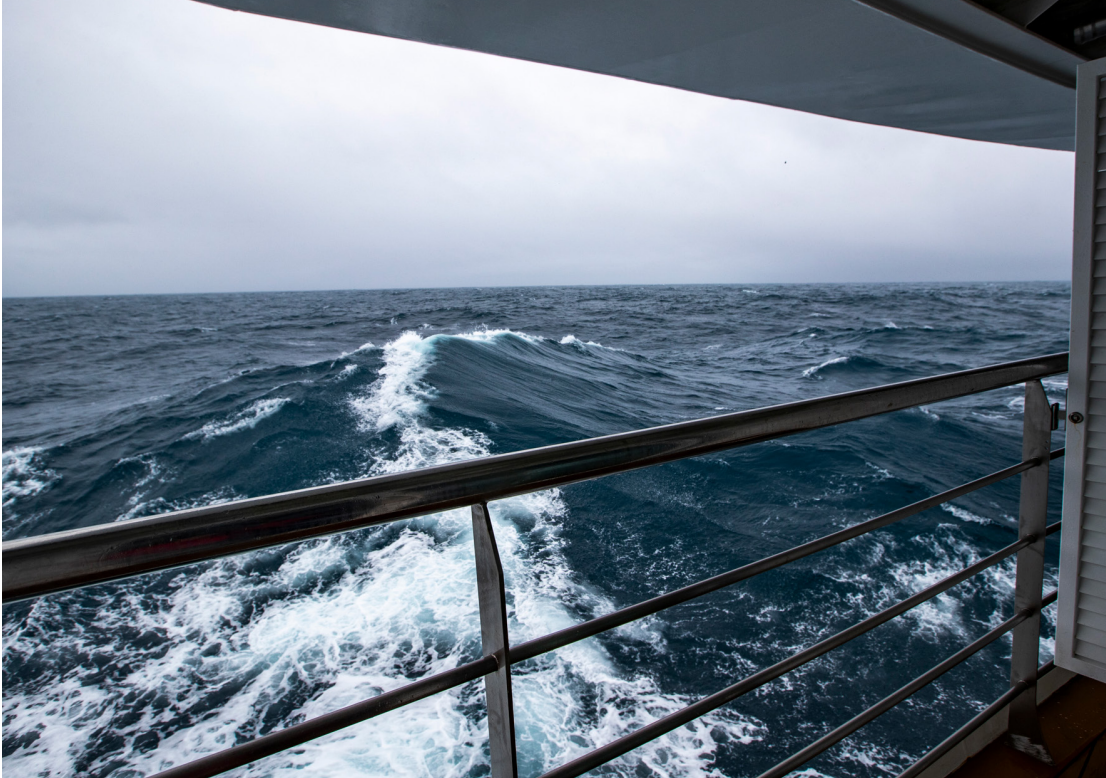
This afternoon, Isabelle taught us more about the fascinating world of whales. The more we learn about these great giants, more we look forward to seeing them in their icy feeding grounds of Antarctica.

Of course, you can't mention whales, without talking about the reason they are down here – krill. We learnt that krill are so numerous, they make up the largest biomass on the planet. So much of the Antarctic wildlife we will encounter in the coming week, depend on krill.

We finished off our first full day at sea with a recap of the day, and yet another delicious meal cooked by our talented chefs. We passed by a small sailing yacht and watched as it rode up and down each wave, only one small storm sail unfurled, and we felt grateful again to be in the comfort of the *Greg Mortimer*.



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.



Drake Passage, Melchior Islands

DAY 4 | Tuesday 11 January 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 61°43'S

Longitude: 64°16'W

Course: 180°

Speed: 11.5 knots

Wind Speed: 35-45 knots, SW

Barometer: 929 hPa

Air Temp: -2° C

I watched the sky a long time, concluding that such beauty was reserved for distant, dangerous places, and nature has good reason for exacting her own special sacrifice from those determined to witness them.

—Admiral Richard E Byrd, Alone, 1938

This morning's Zodiac briefing opened with some great news as Howard announced that we had made good speed across Drake Passage and would have the time for an evening Zodiac cruise at the Melchior Islands. This unexpected bonus turned out to be a real gem and a great introduction to Antarctica under a golden evening sky. But before I tell you more about that, let's wind the clock back to the morning and take you through the day...

Our first iceberg was spotted in the early hours of this morning, at 5:52 am to be precise, and entered into the ship's log before most of us had stirred. That was way further North than most of us expected, and indeed we did not see another iceberg until we arrived at the Melchior Islands.

We awoke to seas that were still very lumpy, despite the winds having dropped well down from yesterday. After breakfast, we gathered in the lecture room for a compulsory Zodiac briefing. This was to ensure that we kept safe and sound while enjoying the off-ship activities. We also heard a talk on the 'Charismatic megafauna' of the Antarctic Peninsula and spent some time marvelling at the beautiful seabirds accompanying our journey. A highlight of the morning was watching a pair of Light-mantled sooty albatrosses as they performed their synchronized flying double-act alongside the ship. We were also escorted by small flocks of Cape petrels and visited by some Antarctic petrels, storm petrels and Southern fulmars.

Just before lunch, we crossed the Antarctic Convergence, thus entering Antarctic waters. An afternoon nap seemed like a great idea, but we were interrupted by some humpback whales not far from the ship. Unfortunately, the whales had gone by the time most people had donned their outside clothing and came out on to the deck, but we did get to see the distant snow-covered peaks of some of the mountainous islands just off the coast of Antarctica. Although the wind had an extra bite in it, many people remained on deck to watch our approach to those islands, marvel at the seabirds and just soak up our first afternoon in Antarctic seas. Eventually, all but a few hardy individuals retired to the warm comfort of the Observation Lounge, Deck 5 or our cabins.

Our daily Covid testing regime continued today, this time comprising PCR tests through the afternoon. While those were going on, Scott P gave an informative presentation about the tips and tricks that you can use to produce great pictures from your smart phone.

Then, at the end of a great day at sea, we topped it all off with a Zodiac cruise amongst the Melchior Islands. Our flotilla of Zodiacs and kayaks broke into three groups and headed in different directions to explore the labyrinthine channels amongst these tiny islands. Each group had their own special experiences: some saw icebergs bobbing around and threatening to roll over, others spent time watching Weddell seals resting on the snow or swimming in company with a penguin, and some saw large numbers of Crabeater seals resting on the ice.

This was a perfect end to a great day at sea, and a wonderful introduction to Antarctica.



Cuerville Island; Neko Harbour

DAY 5 | Wednesday 12 January 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 62°51'S

Longitude: 64°28'W

Course: 245°

Speed: 10 knots

Wind Speed: 5 knots N

Barometer: 995 hPa

Air Temp: -1° C

Penguins?

There are several theories on the derivation of the word penguin. One of the more plausible is that it came from the Welsh 'pen-gwin', meaning 'white-head', a name originally given to the flightless great auk, a Northern Hemisphere bird that became extinct in 1844.

We awoke this morning to a view of icebergs and freshly fallen snow, and a sighting of a humpback whale 20m from the ship. After putting kayakers, snorkelers and Zodiacs in the water, we wove our way between the icebergs towards the landing at Cuerville Island, Gentoo penguins porpoising along beside us.

The landing didn't disappoint. Gentoo penguins marched to and fro on their highways and seemed quite inquisitive towards us on the beach, much to the delight of everyone! Skuas on the shore were seemingly undisturbed by our presence.

The snorkelers arrived, and after some exploring, went snorkeling off the beach despite snowy, cold conditions. We were soon joined by the kayakers who came ashore to check out the Gentoo action.

After making our way back through heavy snow and very limited visibility, we thawed out whilst enjoying lunch and taking in the amazing scenery as we sailed to Neko Harbour.

On arrival at Neko, the sky was overcast with light snow falling, creating a mystical scene with the high mountains and glaciers surrounding us. Snorkelers, kayakers and the shore-goers readied themselves for the next adventure of the day. Ashore, we were surrounded by Gentoo penguins – all busy either washing in the shallows, preening on the beach, wandering their highways or occasionally tobogganing down the hill. A pleasant surprise was a sole Adelie penguin in their midst, seemingly quite content with his companions.

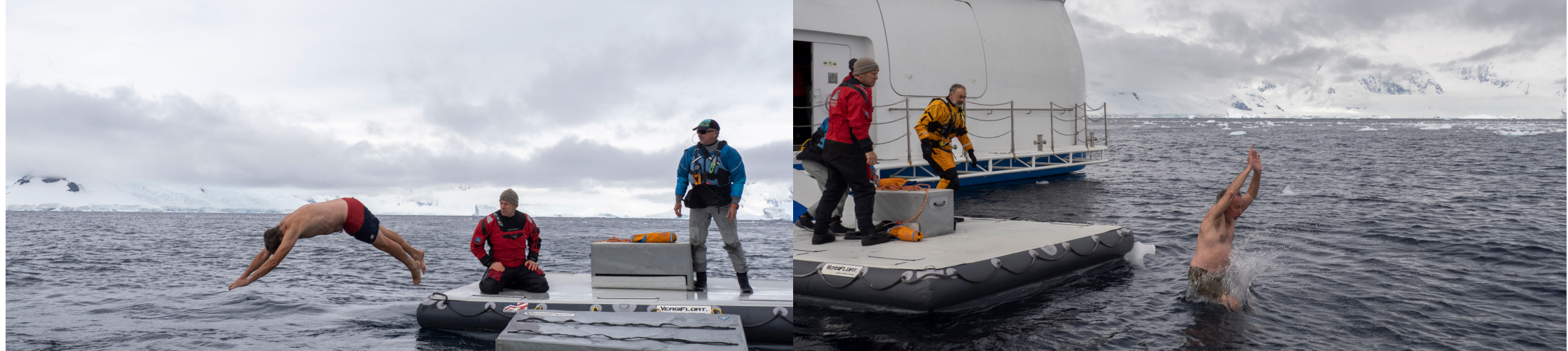
Some expeditioners explored the nearby beach, others joined a guided hike up to the mountain to enjoy stunning views of the harbour. Ice walls loomed in the distance with impressive blue crevasses cutting through the vista. On the return, a chance to slide naturally down the steep mountainside, coming to a halt on the plateau below, was an adrenalin-filled addition to the climb.

As our Zodiac made its way through the brash ice back towards the ship, we spotted a Weddell seal casually relaxing atop an iceberg, giving a great photo opportunity.



Polar Plunge

DAY 5 | Wednesday 12 January 2022



Lemaire Channel; Petermann Island; Pleneau; Leith Cove

DAY 6 | Thursday 13 January 2022

Position at 0600			
Latitude: 65°10'S	Course: 190°	Wind Speed: 5 knots N	Air Temp: 0°C
Longitude: 64°08'W	Speed: 10 knots	Barometer: 1005 hPa	

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*

Our morning dawned brighter than previous days, with rays of sunshine peeking between the broken clouds. Howard's cheerful morning call was early as we were on approach to the beautiful Lemaire Channel. We stumbled our way, coffee in hand, to the open decks to witness our passage through this narrow and ice choked waterway.

Dark and foreboding walls of the canyon-like passage towered above us with sharp ice-covered peaks seeming to rise vertically from the water. Our sturdy ship shook and thumped as it pushed aside ice floes in our path.

To our delight three, humpback whales passed, heading in the opposite direction. Their black, glistening fins and backs rising as they blew steaming spray into the fresh morning air. We made our way out of the canyon and into the beautiful mountainous and ice-choked Penola Strait.

Here we enjoyed a brief meeting with a sister ship to *Greg Mortimer*, the Ocean Explorer. The two ships pirouetted amongst the ice floes. Our swarthy expedition team took a single zodiac out to explore the possibility of making a landing on Petermann Island.

On their way back to the ship, they called us to the zodiacs and we bundled up warmly for an adventure. Deciding that the approach to shore was too difficult, we explored intricate passageways between jostling ice floes, our trusty zodiacs pushing ice aside before us. Our expedition guides invited us to set foot on a large ice floe and we clambered out of the zodiacs to find ourselves adrift on ice in the channel. We stood together and gazed at the sublime mountain vistas.

Towering peaks fell through steep couloirs like white ribbons to the dark water below. Mist clung like a cloak to the mountain tops and huge broken glaciers tumbled to the water before us. We reveled in our isolation and vulnerability standing as we were on frozen sea ice.

Our ship began to move back up the channel and we jumped into our zodiacs to follow in its wake. Eventually we clambered back onto the ship for a warm and hearty lunch and a rest before our afternoon outing.

And what an afternoon it was. We anchored at Pleneau Island surrounded by floating ice and huge stranded icebergs. Excited, we reboarded the zodiacs ready to explore amongst the many shaped bergs. We spotted much wildlife including leopard seals basking on floes and penguins skimming the waters ahead of us to waddle up onto the rocks. Even a shy Minke whale paid us a visit, slipping gracefully through the ice-filled water.

Soon it was time to return to the ship and hoist our faithful zodiacs back into place. We relaxed on deck for another stunning traverse back through the Lemaire Channel, seeing again those sublime vistas. Our hardy snow campers prepared for their evening adventure as we arrived in the tranquillity and beauty of Leith Cove.

Yet another hearty meal was a fitting end to a day filled with stunning Antarctic mountain scenery, endless ice floes filling the surface of the dark water and adventures that will live forever in our memories.



Portal Point; Hydrurga Rocks

DAY 7 | Friday 14 January 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64°38'S

Longitude: 062°46'W

Course: 54.7°

Speed: 10.5 knots

Wind Speed: 3-5 knots NW

Barometer: 1005 hPa

Air Temp: -0° C

The hardy snow-campers returned to the ship before breakfast to report a successful night! They fell asleep to the sound of distant calving glaciers, and the calls of petrels, and were pleasantly surprised not to feel cold in their thick polar sleeping bags.

Heading down the Gerlache Strait, the clouds parted and the sun lit up the mountain vistas. Out on the deck, we watched for whales while admiring the sheer magnitude of ice blanketing the continent. There really is no view like it.

Our next stop was Point Portal, a quick visit as we traipsed through the snow and enjoyed the incredible view from high on the hill. The snorkelers, immersed in the clear water, caught a glimpse of the 90 percent of the iceberg that hides below the surface. The scalloped patterns of deep blue and pure white, glistening as the sun pierces the surface, are a spectacle that would convert anyone into a polar snorkeler. Those who ventured into the freezing water emerged later with nothing but smiles.

Back from our morning adventure, we dove straight into the polar plunge. The brave participants lined up and mentally prepared. "Who will be the first to volunteer?", we all think quietly to ourselves, and before we know it, it's time to take the leap. If I could capture the facial expressions in slow motion as they hit the water, this would truly give a sense of what they were feeling as they hit the water. A captive audience watched on, contemplating whether to take the plunge, while others cringed at the notion of stepping half naked into the icy water. Well done to all those brave souls!

After lunch we landed at Hydrurga Rocks. We navigated our way across the island, being careful not to disturb the peacefully sleeping Weddell seals and chinstrap penguins with their fluffy grey chicks. The echoing sound of penguin calls, and chicks squawking for food filled the air.

As the kayakers weaved between icebergs, marveling at the intricate shapes, they encountered a curious Weddell seal. It would keep emerging from the water to see what they were doing before slowly submerging again.

At the evening recap and over dinner, we recounted stories from the days adventure. No matter which zodiac you are in, which part of the land you explored, or how far you paddled, it is great to hear about all the different epic experiences.

One thing we share is a sense of adventure and we think you will agree that each new day brings a new challenge and lets us step out of our comfort zones.



Why is that iceberg so blue?

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.



Whalers Bay; Deception Island, Half Moon Island

DAY 8 | Saturday 15 January 2022

Position at 1500

Latitude: 62°41'S

Longitude: 59°54'W

Course: 042°

Speed: 12 knots

Wind Speed: 10 knots from W

Barometer: 1017 hpa

Air Temp: 7°

As of today, most on this voyage can make an unusual claim. That is, that they have entered two volcanic calderas in one day.

Whalers Bay on Deception Island was our first. This enormous caldera enticed us in with the calmest of seas and clear skies. Ashore in Whalers Bay, steam rose from the shallows and the smell of sulphur hung in the air - sure signs of an active volcano.

What used to be a busy whaling station, bustling with hundreds of workers, was now deserted except for some nesting kelp gulls, a couple of chinstrap penguins and one lone fur seal. The silence in the air only broken by the cries of the gulls, and the gentle waves lapping the black sand.

Under the waters surface, our snorkelers discovered scattered whale bones, giant remnants of the whaling industry, as well as sea stars, mussels and fish. For our kayakers, the sea was still enough to paddle out through the ominously named Neptune's Bellows, with little resistance from the ocean.

Our next Caldera was Halfmoon Island. This extinct volcano serves as a nesting site for chinstrap penguins, who provided endless entertainment for us as they stumbled and slid down the steep rubble slopes. For a lucky few, a short hike over the rocky slopes revealed an elephant seal basking on the shore.

We gathered in the lecture theatre this evening, where David taught us the history of Whalers Bay, and what life was like for the Scandinavian workers there all those years before modern technology. No phones or emails meant the only way husbands and wives could keep the romance alive was through letters which would take over a year to arrive. Luckily David had this perfectly preserved, authentic Norwegian letter in his pocket:

Dear Lucas,	13 months later Lucas replies:	18 months later Anna replies:
Where did you put the hammer?	Dear Anna,	Dear Lucas,
Love, Anna	What do you need the hammer for?	Where did you put the Axe?
	Love Lucas	Love Anna



Deception Island: Sir Hubert Wilkins

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



Drake Passage

DAY 9 | Sunday 16 January 2022

Position at 0600			
Latitude: 60°28 S	Course: 330°	Wind Speed: 17 knots SW	Air Temp: 3°C
Longitude: 61°41 W	Speed: 12 knots	Barometer: 1019 hpa	

Drake Passage

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

—Edward Wilson

Aaaaaand relax!

Many of us made the most of a slow morning today after what everyone agreed was an action-packed time on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Today has given us the time to reflect on our Antarctic experience and the effect it's had on us. Having the space and time to process the journey, both the voyage and the internal journey, is a gift as we know as soon as we fly home and reality sets back in, life gets busy.

In the morning we were treated to a fantastic talk by Scott on life in the Commandos. Our expedition team has such a variety of skills and backgrounds, it is always interesting to hear about people's previous lives and experiences. We came away from the talk in total admiration and thankful that our Polar Plunge was a lot easier than the military version.

With the increase in air and water temperature, we've been starting to see more of a variety of birds as we head North over the Drake Passage. Black-bellied storm petrels featured in our bird observation survey on deck, but other species were few and far between, perhaps because of being so far from land.

In the afternoon Scott Portelli gave an inspiring presentation about his experiences of photographing wildlife on the Antarctic Peninsula but interestingly, also on South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. This was a great insight for those of us who were unfamiliar with these sub-Antarctic islands, and his beautiful photos got us talking about

planning a trip down that way.

Before dinner, we had a great insight from Neville into the building process of the *Greg Mortimer* and Aurora Expedition's philosophy around what an expedition cruise should look like. Due to the extra precautions we must take this season, we are unable to do tours of the Bridge, but this was a great replacement!



Drake Passage; Beagle Channel

DAY 10 | Monday 17 January 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 58°38'S

Longitude: 67°03'W

Speed: 12 knots

Wind Speed: 25 knots from SW

Barometer: 1023 hPa

Air Temp: 3°C

Although Justine referred to the smooth crossing yesterday as the Drake Lake, sometime in the evening the swell increased in size and the night was mildly rougher. The nature of the swell notably changed in the early morning, I suspect it was the waves rebounding off the land. The ocean was more chaotic, and the feeling of gentle rolling switched to sudden abrupt bounces and occasional slaps from the side.

Just before 7am, we sighted a faint shadow through the mist, low on the horizon — Cape Horn. Howard made the wake-up call and encouraged our expeditioners to gather on deck, and soon folks started filtering out to glimpse the Southernmost tip of the American Continent.

The meeting point of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans breeds violent and unpredictable weather, and in the days of sailing, rounding the Horn East to West was a major event. The Cape Horn Memorial, in the shape of an albatross, stands to commemorate the lives of over 10,000 sailors lost to the treacherous seas.

Inscribed on the Memorial is a poem by Sara Vial which reads (translated from Spanish):

I am the albatross that waits for you

at the end of the earth.

I am the forgotten soul of the dead sailors

who crossed Cape Horn

from all the seas of the world.

But they did not die

in the furious waves.

Today they fly in my wings

to eternity

in the last trough of the Antarctic winds

I think all will agree it was an emotive experience when John Kirkwood recited this poem over the speakers as we rounded the Horn.

The rest of the day was relaxed. We enjoyed a wonderful spread of afternoon tea, swapped photos and made the most of the last few days with new-found friends. Edwin gave a fascinating lecture about his scuba diving adventures, and we learned from John K about the effect of our changing climate on penguins.

At our recap, Howard recounted some of the incredible adventures of our ship's namesake, *Greg Mortimer*, who co-founded Aurora Expeditions with his wife Margaret. It was great to learn about the evolution of Aurora Expeditions as it is today, and how the values of adventure and exploration have held strong.

With full bellies from another beautiful dinner, we retired either to the bar or to our cabins, as we cruised smoothly through the Chilean Fjords.



Beagle Channel, Chilean Fjords

DAY 11 | Tuesday 18 January 2022

Position at 0600

Latitude: 54°03'S

Longitude: 071°50'W

Course: 324°

Wind Speed: 16 knots SW

Barometer: 1028 hPa

Air Temp: 7° C

This morning dawned to a misty, overcast day as we made our way up the Beagle Channel in the Chilean Fjords. The wind whipped up the ocean's surface and mountains peeked their heads over the mist. Despite the rougher sea state, it was still smooth sailing in the *Greg Mortimer*.

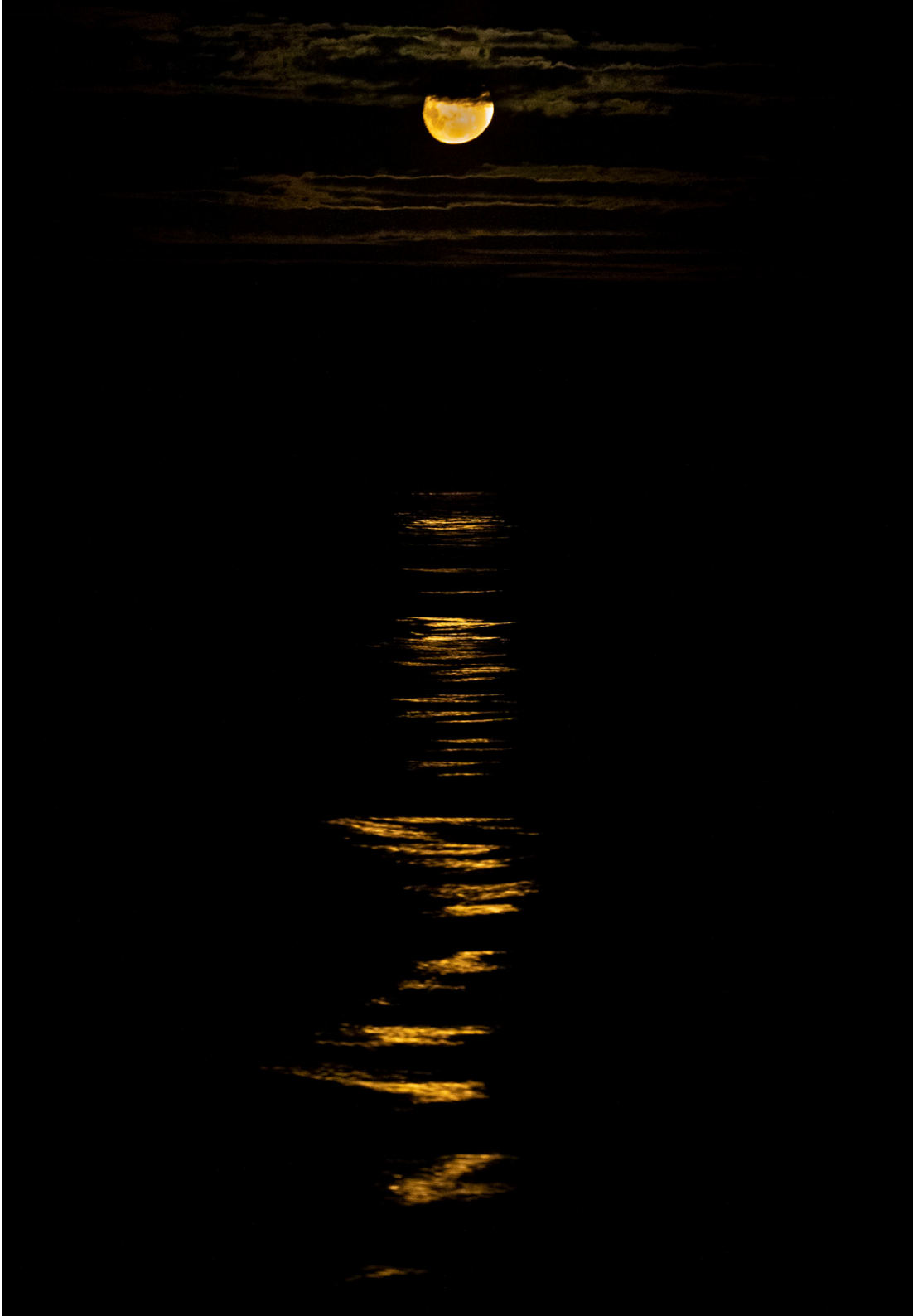
After breakfast, we were treated to a great talk by David Berg on his crossing of the Greenland ice cap from west to east on skis, pulling laden Pulkas behind them. A true expedition of determination, resilience and success. After a coffee and some photo swapping, passengers joined Justine in the lecture theatre, who gave an excellent disembarkation briefing about what to expect the following morning on our arrival to port.

Shortly after we turned to our Starboard and entered the tighter Fjords for some ship exploration. Thankfully the conditions eased and relatively smooth progress was made reaching Clarence Island to our Port side by about 12:30pm, enjoying stunning views of the whole area. Lunch was enjoyed by all with the anticipation of what we would see as we continued to wind our way through the Fjords.

As we approached Captain Aracena Island, the highest point of which is Mount Vernal, the sun broke through the clouds in all its glory and the mist cleared revealing the Chilean mountains for all to see. Some expeditioners were treated to glimpses of a couple of pods of Dolphins in the favourable sea conditions. As a note, the coastal areas of this island have been inhabited by the Alacalufe people for some 6000 years!

After some more time on the observation deck it was time for Captain's Cocktails at 6.00pm, where we all got together to toast the success of the expedition and talked of the wildlife and sights we had seen during the voyage. It was also time to give out certificates for activities like the Polar Plunge, kayaking, snorkelling, and camping with great fun and laughs!

Captain's farewell dinner was served, then we gathered in the lecture theatre for the slideshow which Scott Portelli, our expedition photographer, had so expertly put together. We were back in the Beagle Channel now, a chance for everyone to enjoy the beauty of this amazing, wild part of the world with a drink, a chat with new friends and a feeling of achievement as we made our way back to Punta Arenas and the end of a fantastic expedition.



Punta Arenas

DAY 12 | Wednesday 19 January 2022

Disembarkation at 0830 am.
Aurora Expeditions thanks you for joining us aboard MV *Greg Mortimer* to Antarctica. We hope to see you on the high seas again someday!



Kayaking Log

By John Weir

Kayak Masters: John Weir, Wes McNeil

Number of Paddlers: 6 Total Paddle Outings: 7 Total Distance Paddled: 29.2km

Paddlers:

Kerstin Boodee	Joanna Mobed	Bob Varga
Eric Muller	Ron Mobed	Tracey Varga

Day 3 pm: Melchoir Islands. 3.3 kms

Running ahead of a big southern storm in the Drake Passage, we made good time and despite some heavy seas, arrived early enough in the Melchior Islands for a quick shakedown paddle. *MV Greg Mortimer* looked stunning against a white island archipelago backdrop. We slipped our kayaks away from the floating platform and we paddled through cold Antarctic waters. Small islands surrounded us as we saw our first penguins perched on the ice far above a rocky shoreline. We paddled past an Argentinean Base Station on our way back to the ship.

Day 4 am: Cuverville Island. 5.5 kms

A snowy morning greeted us as we arrived at Cuverville Island. The island looked dark and foreboding with mist swirling around the peak. We paddled from the ship to the island and then traversed to the east, past penguin rookeries on the rocky shore. We found sheltered waters away from the wind in the lee of the island and had our first paddling lesson. We landed briefly on the shore with groups of penguins proposing past us as the snow continued to fall. We made a quick visit to an icy beach with the zodiacs. Our paddle back to the ship was in misty conditions, which made it difficult to navigate and we were glad to be back on our warm ship.

Day 4 pm: Neko Harbour 2.8 kms

While we had a well earned lunch the ship moved to the beautiful and calm Neko Harbour. We were greatly relieved to have a more calm and relaxed afternoon paddle past beautiful icebergs and found a tiny beach set against ice cliffs to celebrate our landing on the continent of Antarctica. We celebrated in true Antarctic kayaker tradition with a cup of hot chocolate and some group photographs. Our paddle back to the ship led us past giant icebergs in quiet waters of the stunning harbour.

Day 5 am: Peterman Island – no paddling due to ice conditions

An early morning passage of the beautiful Lemaire Channel and a morning spent on the ship among surrounding mountains and in zodiacs amongst the ice.

Day 5 pm: Pleneau Island 2.3 kms

Departing from the ship after lunch we picked our way through a landscape of ice. Brash ice and growlers blocked any easy passage and a helpful lesson on turning and steering our kayaks make it a little easier to navigate narrow ice passageways past beautiful blue and white grounded bergs. We found a small rocky island to clamber out of our boats and stretch out legs. Our guides led the way to a rocky knoll and we gazed across the ice fields through which we had paddled. Our ship looked tiny as it sat in the passageway, dwarfed by mountains and icebergs all around. We had a tricky paddle back to the ship, returning through myriad waterways between the ice. As we arrived at the ship, some strong currents moved the ice around us and our safety zodiac led us thought the ice back to the ship. What an exciting paddle it was.

Day 6 am: Portal Point 2.2 kms

The morning found us dropping anchor in another ice choaked landscape. Portal Point, another continental landing site, was covered with snow and ice and a maze of icebergs led us to crystal clear waters by the rocky shoreline. We were transfixed as we gazed down into the cold blue depths of the water at the boulders and seafloor beneath us. A quick break and a rest from paddling saw us making out way back to the ship again. We found all manner of beautiful shapes and colours amongst the icebergs on our return paddle.

Day 6 pm: Hydruga Rocks 8.1 kms

The low rocky islands of Hydruga Rocks gave us an opportunity to practice our timing our paddling through narrow gaps between rocky outcrops. We waited and watched the swell roll in, then took our chance to paddle through a pass to the sheltered waters in the lee of the islands. Rounding the end of the islands, we found enclosed sheltered bays and in one an old and wise Weddell Seal gazed at us from the shallows of a quiet lagoon. We marvelled at nesting cormorants with dark downy chicks nesting on the sea side cliffs.

Day 7am: Whalers Bay, Deception Island 5 kms

We entered the starkly contrasting caldera of Deception Island and anchored in the calm waters of Whalers Bay. Well practiced now, we slipped our kayaks into the water and paddled a short distance to the cliffs lining the bay. It was not far back to the entrance and we decided to cross the passage to a black beach set against ochre cliffs. Here curious penguins regarded our kayaks as a mere inconvenience on their beach and we had the feeling that we were uninvited guests in their home. We paddled back and walked on the steaming shore, reminding us that we were visiting an active volcano. Wandering amongst the ruins of the whaling factory gave us pause to reflect on our impact on this fragile landscape.



Snorkel Log

By Edwin Sargeant

Snorkel Guide: Edwin Sargeant

Number of Snorkels: 6

Total Outings: 7

Snorkellers:

Jake Sides

Rick Pinegear

Joanna Mobed

Sara Sides

Kerstin Boodee

Rohinton Mobed

Day 4 am: Cuverville Island

This was our inaugural outing where everyone got familiar with the equipment and conditions. We had a shore dive in calm seas, there was ice on shore and 10kts wind. It snowed during the whole outing which added to the excitement of being in Antarctica.

Day 4 pm: Neko Harbour

Neko Harbour showed us clamer conditions and gave us an opportunity to take some photo's on an iceberg. We were able to do a shore landing and saw a crabeater seal and the Gentoo rookery. Whilst we did not end up doing any snorkelling, we spent the afternoon onshore and participated in the 'bum-sliding' event that Howard Whelan (the Expedition Leader) facilitated!

No snorkelling – zodiac cruising only

Day 5 am: Petermann Island – No snorkelling (too much ice) zodiac cruising only

After travelling down the Lemaire Channel, we arrived at Petermann Island.

Petermann island was a zodiac cruise only – there was far too much ice to be able to land safely. We were lucky enough to be able to get on to a floating piece of sea ice and get some photo's from the ship. This was truly an Antarctic adventure!

Day 5 pm: Pleneau Island

Pleneau was also full of ice and grounded icebergs. We spent much of our time cruising around looking at icebergs and wildlife. We had a brief encounter with a humpback whale that was passing through. We saw a leopard seal and many penguins along with some pretty majestic icebergs along the way.

Snorkelling was on an iceberg that was pretty special, we circumnavigated it and stopped for some photos along the way

Day 6 am: Portal Point

Portal point was probably our best snorkelling location on the entire trip. We spent the first half of the landing on land, looking at the penguin rookery and climbing a knoll to gain a better view of the ship in the background and the ice in the bay. After returning to the zodiac, we went around the point and snorkelled from a piece of sea ice in clear water, where we were able to see the bottom clearly.

Day 6 pm: Hydrurga Rocks

Hydrurga rocks was a fascinating landing – we circumnavigated the island before landing at the main landing site. There were a couple of Weddel Seals on shore, not really bothered by our arrival. Further up the island were further seals and a couple of penguin rookeries with some chicks. After spending some time ashore, we embarked on a further zodiac cruise to the outer rocks looking for wildlife and stopped on the way back to the ship to take a couple of photos of an interesting iceberg stuck in the bay.

Day 7 am: Whalers Bay (Deception Island)

Whalers Bay was definitely one of our biggest landings, we were pretty determined to see all of the 'spots' that were available to us, so we rushed around from the moment we (were the first off the ship) started until the moment we were back on board. Firstly we visited the tanks, then Biscoe house and the boilers, then hiked up to Neptune's window and back, followed by a zodiac cruise to Neptune's window from the sea, then the wreck on the western shore, then snorkelled along the 'Cathedral Crag's' where there was some volcanic activity causing bubbles to continually come to the surface. Visibility was amazing, with lots of diverse creatures to see. Following our first snorkel, we went to the hangar and then snorkelled over the whale bones in the bay! We certainly earned our lunch that day!

Day 7 pm: Half Moon Bay

This was the final outing for the voyage, it was also the longest dive we had. We spent the first half of it visiting the wildlife on land and then entered the water close to the main landing site. Joanna was the record holder, staying in the water for a little over an hour – I am sure that she would have spent more time if I hadn't got her out to return to the ship!



Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	08 – 19 January 2022											
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Gentoo Penguin					●	●	●					
Chinstrap Penguin				●	●		●	●				
Adelie Penguin					●	●						
Macaroni Penguin												
Magellanic 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				●					●			
Imperial Cormorant (= South American)	●	●								●	●	●
Antarctic Cormorant				●	●	●	●	●				

Bird Species	08 – 19 January 2022											
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
American Sheathbill (Snowy)							●	●				
Chilean Skua	●	●								●	●	●
Brown Skua				●	●	●	●	●				
South Polar Skua												
Kelp Gull	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Dolphin Gull	●											●
Tern (probably mostly Antarctic)				●	●	●	●	●				
South American Tern	●	●								●	●	●



Mammal Species	08 – 19 January 2022											
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
South American Fur Seal		●									●	
Antarctic Fur Seal								●				
Southern Elephant Seal								●				
Crabeater Seal				●		●						
Weddell Seal				●	●		●					
Leopard Seal					●	●						
Minke Whale						●						
Sei Whale		●										
Fin Whale												
Humpback Whale				●	●	●	●					
Southern Right Whale												
Orca												
Long-finned Pilot Whale												
Unidentified Whale												
Hourglass Dolphin												
Peale's Dolphin												
Dusky Dolphin											●	





Expeditioners:

David Ayres	Joanna Mobed
Douglas Behan	Ron Mobed
Kerstin Boodee	Eric Muller
John Boodee	Christ Norton
Bonnie Borch-rote	Rick Pinegar
Nick Borch-rote	Kay Pinegar
Neville Buch	Jake Sides
Anna Buch	Sara Sides
Brian Crowley	Bruce Spear
Lise Deguire	Linda Spear
Philip Gomersall	Bob Varga
Chuck Hewett	Tracey Varga
Beth Hewett	Ron Vigus
Anna Marback	Joyce Vigus

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Howard Whelan
Assistant Expedition Leader: David Berg
Naturalist: John Kirkwood
Kayaking Master: John Weir
Kayaking Guide: Wes McNeil
Snorkeling Guide: Edwin Sargeant
Photography Guide: Scott Portelli
Expedition Guide/Naturalist: Isabelle Howells
Medic: Scott Thompson
Onboard Expedition Coordinator: Justine Bornholdt
Sales & Communications Coordinator Trainee: Rosie Leaney
Zodiac Master: Sergei Hincu
Mudroom/Shopkeeper: Reza Rusooly

Greg Mortimer Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Joachim Säterskog	Sous Chef: Nellan Lewars
Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi	Head Waiter: Narendra Seeram
Safety Officer: Goran Goles	Hotel Controller: Rohmat Nurhidayat
Second Officer: Sergii Voina	IT Officer : Ihor Yesmienieiev
Bosun: Oscar Antonio Castejon Torres	Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska
Deck Cadet: Sander Magi	Receptionist: Marie Annecy Reynoird
Deck Cadet: David Bote Martin	Head Stateroom: Elieser Nunez Almendarez
Ship Doctor : Ivan Savic	Spa Manager: Alena Antonova
Ship Nurse: Susara Hendrika Mostert	Able Seaman: Khenette Verzosa
Chief Engineer: Dimitar Vasilev	Able Seaman: Petko Vladimirov Petkov
Chief Engineer: Sergiy Melnyk	Able Seaman: Yevgen Kotuz
First Engineer: Warlito B. Verzosa	Able Seaman: Maksym Khlivniuk
Hotel Director: Franz Wusits	Able Seaman: Joel Valdevieso Noble
F&B Manager: Miguel Cabanillas Alvarez	Able Seaman: Giovanni Dela Torre
Chief Purser: Liza Merillo	
Executive Chef: Pierpaolo Fadda	

Photography thanks to:

Douglas Behan	Eric Muller	Linda Spear	E Team:	
John Boodee	Joanna Mobed	Bob Varga	John Kirkwood	John Weir
Kerstin Boodee	Ron Mobed	Tracey Varga	Rosie Leaney	
Bonnie Borch-Rote	Chris Norton	Joyce Vigus	Scott Portelli	
Nick Borch-Rote	Jake Sides	Ron Vigus	Wes McNeil	
Anna Buch	Sara Sides		Edwin Sargeant	









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