

# Antarctic Explorer

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 20 February to 1 March 2023





# Frei Station, King George Island

DAY 1 | Monday 20th February 2023

Position at 1800 on 5th Feb

Latitude: 62°20.0'S

Longitude: 058°42.5'W

Course: 220°

Speed: 11.8 knots

Wind Speed: E6

Barometer: 997

Air Temp: -2°C

The demand of science, that no part of the globe shall remain untouched by the hand of investigation was the force that drew our little band to the land of the farthest south.

—Otto Nordenskjöld

What a beautiful day to welcome you aboard the *Greg Mortimer*! We had calm seas, clear skies, and even felt the heat of the sun as we met you all at the airstrip even if the wind was a little chilly. After the plane, with its lovely chinstrap penguin design, touched down on the black gravel runway, we boarded our bus which brought us down to the beach. Here, a few gentoo and chinstrap penguins splashed in the shallows and preened on the shore – a lovely beginning to our adventure.

Frei Station, King George Island is our first “taste” of Antarctica. Although much of King George Island is glaciated, this bay is an area of contrast, for here the terrain is stripped bare by the frequent high winds, revealing a stark volcanic landscape that has its own allure with small rocky towers and plugs. This will be the last time in over a week that we see anything in the way of civilized activity. It is a bustling little harbour, a small town really, with other ships going about their business, helicopters offloading supplies, and plenty of happenings on shore.

The South Shetland Islands and King George Island were the first to see human activity in the 1820's, not from exploration or scientific study, as many of the stations do now, but as an economic endeavour in sealing. Seal skins were hugely profitable, and as the common story goes, humans hunted the seals to near extinction and the industry went bust. Thankfully fur seals are in a full rebound today, and in the late Austral summer, are often seen in streams, making their way from South Georgia Island to the South Shetlands.

Once onboard, we checked in at Reception and were shown to our comfortable staterooms by the housekeeping staff. A delicious smelling lunch ensued. This was then followed by a large amount of information with some key players in the E Team as well as our “Frenchie” Hotel Director Pascal and one of our onboard doctors, Dr. Anzor. It was a busy afternoon with our mandatory safety drill, snorkelling and kayaking briefings and voyage overview. These were ticked off so that the coming days can be filled with outdoor adventure. Understandably it can take some days to become accustomed to ship life, but it took almost no time before there was a buzz of excitement.

We can only imagine what it took to reach the ship from your homes in this new age of travel. But finally, we were all together onboard, with those challenges behind. Together we total 61 guests from 8 different countries, along with the 21 Expedition team and 80 ship's crew from around the globe. We hope you are as excited as we are, about exploring this incredible environment together.



# Yankee Harbour | At Sea

DAY 2 | Tuesday 21st February 2023

Position at 0700 on 21st Feb

Latitude: 62°33.4 S

Longitude: 059°47.2'W

Course: 311°

Speed: 4.9 knots

Antarctica. You know, that giant continent at the bottom of the earth that's ruled by penguins and seals.

—C.B. Cook, Twinepathy

Often described as a continent of superlatives, Antarctica is the world's southernmost landmass. A cold dry desert, where access to water determines the abundance of life. The terrestrial ecosystem contains more than a thousand known species of life forms, as well as pretty unique marine flora and fauna. A place where the largest of all animals that inhabit this planet feeds on the smallest – in great abundance.

Antarctica is also a place where brave and daring people ventured to conquer the last frontier – and many died trying. This, amongst many other elements, make Antarctica the roughest and yet most fragile and fascinating ecosystem in the world. And that's where we are today, folks! We made it!

This morning we all showed what we're made of! The gusting winds and cold blizzards did not stop us from exploring the lovely land strip at Yankee Harbour – a place used by both American and British sealers from mid to late 1800s. The period of sealing activities in Antarctica was relatively short, but utterly intense and devastating. For years, fur seals were nowhere to be seen in these parts, both alarming and devastating. Luckily, the populations have bounced back, and today we could experience being surrounded by them.

Along the beach, we could see some remnants of that era, like artefacts used to render seal blubber into oil ("try pot") and the foundations of a sealer's hut. But we all agree that the site today can be called a refuge for birds and marine mammals: fur seals resting on soft pebbled ground; gentoo penguins coming in and out of the water to feed and bathe; elephant seals with absolutely no concept of cold - using the brash ice as a jacuzzi; brown skuas flying above the rookery looking for a snack – they too need to feed, after all!; and even a sad but very interesting crabeater seal carcass, showing its fascinating tricuspid interlocking teeth, adapted to act as a sieve, allowing the seal to filter krill from the water.

On that note, it's well worth mentioning that, despite whales and penguins being the real reason we're all here, the credit for this ecosystem to thrive should be given to... krill! In Antarctica, everything feeds on krill, or feeds on something that feeds on krill – and you'll have heard the E-team mentioning this topic quite often!

Just before lunch time, our absolute brilliant Zodiac drivers made sure we all got back to the ship safe and sound

Wind Speed: E 3

Barometer: 997

Air Temp: 1°C

– and very hungry! As some of you travelled from far away, the overcast weather and strong winds provided an opportunity for a slow afternoon, with a great lecture from Jeff and a nice cup of hot chocolate.

The hotel department ensured we were comfortable and well fed. The E-team worked hard on the backstage organising activities for the coming days. Oh! And we all made the Medical Department (Mr. and Mrs. Smith – remember them?) very, very happy too – a "negative" day is always a good day!

After the official welcome from the Captain, it was time to return to our cabins from a good night's rest and prepare for the adventures ahead!

The White Continent awaits!



# Enterprise Island | Portal Point

DAY 3 | Wednesday 22nd February 2023

Position at 0700 on 22nd Feb

Latitude: 64°27'9" S

Longitude: 061°55'9" W

Course: 194°

Speed: 3.7 knots

Wind Speed: E 3

Barometer: 993

Air Temp: -4°C

To have a huge, friendly whale willingly approach your boat and look you straight in the eye is without doubt one of the most extraordinary experiences on the planet.

—Mark Carwardine

There aren't many people in the world who get to share their morning coffee with a dozen humpback whales... As we cruised into the calm and misty shelter of Enterprise Island, we were greeted with an amazing feeding display from these gentle giants.

The day only got better as we headed out for our Zodiac cruise with the humpbacks coming right up to us as we sat idle in our boats. Breathing, feeding, playing, breaching and diving all around – it was an amazing show for us all. The kayakers got out for a once-in-a-lifetime paddle on glassy waters and team 'snorkel' had a blast doing their shakedown with sea stars, algae and brash ice.

Talking afterwards with the team and guests about the whales was pretty special too - "it was amazing"; "a once-in-a-lifetime experience"; "what really surprised me was the sound, it was incredible"; "today was wonderful", "life-changing"!

One of our most experienced guides even described it as "the BEST whale experience" of his life.

After a hot shower and a fantastic lunch to re-fuel, we got ready for our afternoon outing at Portal Point. It's always more fun when it's snowing outside! The ride over to the hut remains was an adventure in itself, and it was fantastic to look down on the icebergs and surrounding bays. We also had a number of our cohorts who stepped foot on their seventh continent, congratulations to you all!

We headed back to the boat before the weather set in. John, one of our Marine Biologists, gave a super informative lecture on penguins and on climate change. It was eye-opening to see how human induced climate heating may be causing population decline in our penguin colonies.

We had our first proper recap learning about the voyage slideshow from Renato, Citizen Science from Bia and all about elephant seals from Eloisa! It's crazy to think they can slow their heart rate to 5 beats per minute in order to dive deeper. We finished the day with another fantastic meal from the galley team.



# Neko Harbour | Port Lockroy & Jougla Point

DAY 4 | Thursday 23rd February 2023

Position at 0600 on 23rd Feb

Latitude: 64°47'7" S

Longitude: 062°43'6" W

Course: 119°

Speed: 3.5 knots

Wind Speed: SE 5

Barometer: 995

Air Temp: -3°C

They are extraordinarily like children, these little people of the Antarctic world, either like children, or like old men, full of their own importance and late for dinner, in their black tail-coats and white shirt fronts - and rather portly withal.

—Apsley Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World*

A lovely morning walk at Neko Harbour where we were greeted by a few Wilson's petrel flying, a few skuas, a humpback whale when the first Zodiac went ashore, and many gentoo penguins.

At the Neko Harbour there were two walking areas, to the left was a nice little slope where you can take in the majestic scenery of the glaciers and mountains, where every so often a rumbling of sound would occur. To the right was a nice hike to the top following though the penguin highway.

The sun started to rise higher and the guests grew in numbers with smiling faces ready to take the adventure of what Neko had to offer. At the top, three lovely expeditioners brought their own sign that said, "our 7th continent" and took photos.

Over at the water, there were the snorkel team with 3 snorkellers and 1 crew member, and staff, "Mama snork" said "Stoke level was high" as they played around brash ice, saw gentoo penguins and having a splash of a time.

Another activity that was occurring was the Citizen Science boat with Bia and John along with 7 expeditioners. The excitement grew collecting phytoplankton, measuring the temperature, and depth, and collecting data for the Fjord Phyto project.

But, alas it was time to head back to the ship after the morning hike.

While at Neko Harbour with the fantastic mountains and the sun shining, an announcement was made that there would be a group photo of passengers and E-team at the 7th deck at the aft.

Thank you Renato for your fantastic photography skills and having our group photo. The Captain even came along!

After the group photo the ship shop opened for an hour before lunch where people bought postcards to send to their friends and loved ones in preparation for a visit to the Port Lockroy post office and a walk at Jougla.

There was time after lunch to relax in the afternoon, playing chess and reading books at the library, others enjoyed the jacuzzi and the gym. It was much deserved after a great hike at Neko Harbour.

An exciting thing happened that afternoon before arriving at Port Lockroy, we passed though the picturesque Neumayer channel with mountains alongside the ship, filled with glaciers, and water so calm it was like glass with bits of icebergs, bergy bits, and brash ice.

The sun was shining and guests went on deck to enjoy and photograph the majestic landscape.

When we stopped at Jougla and Port Lockroy, the groups were divided to two locations and then did a switch mid-way though. Port Lockroy has the friendliest of staff and they informed us that there were 1058 single penguins, 529 nests, and 216 chicks.

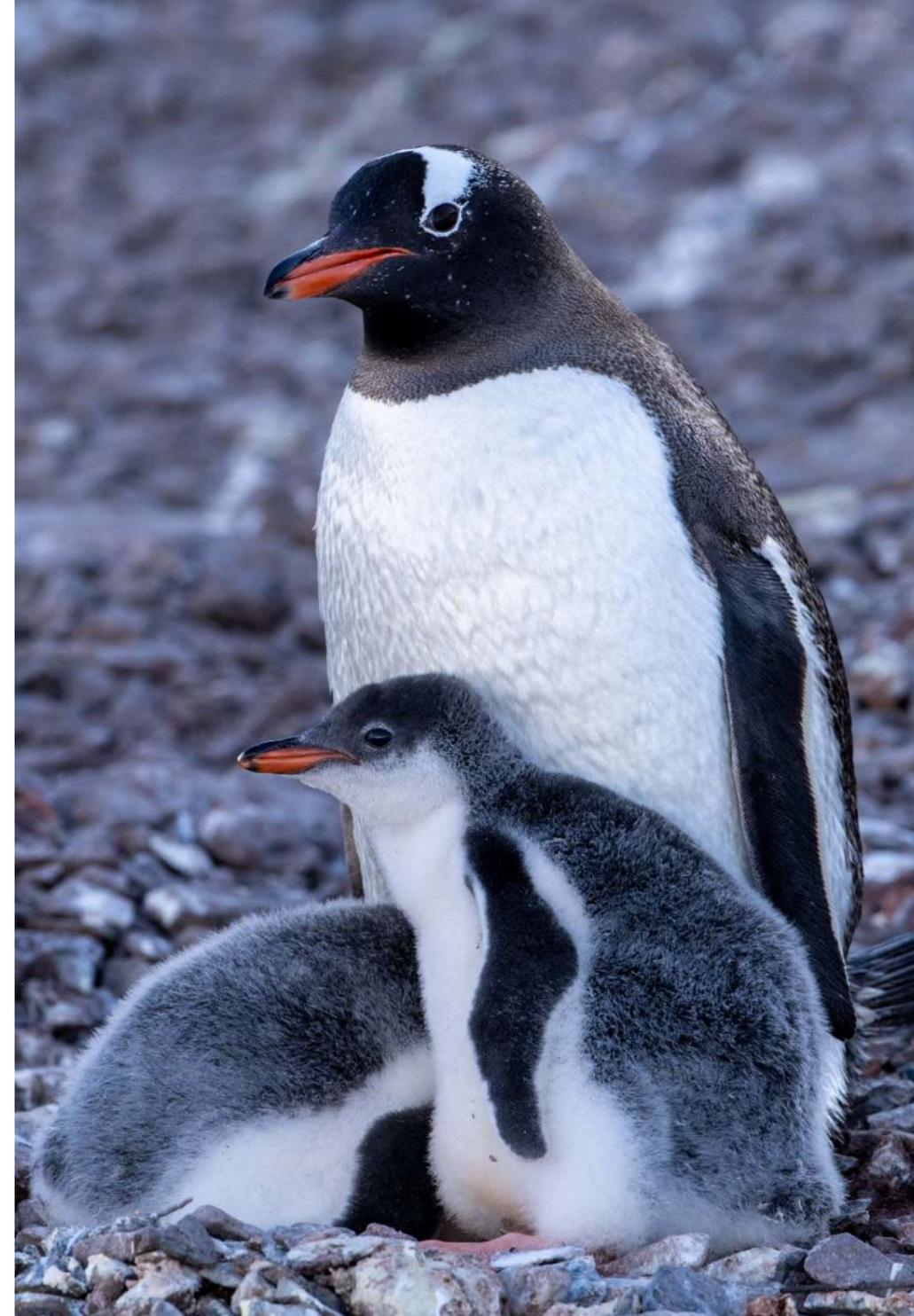
Many people bought souvenirs from their gift shop and many were fascinated by the museum and their collection of artifacts and instruments.

On the water there were snorkellers playing in the water, and many kayakers paddling along the coastline.

In Jougla, we were able to see many stages of gentoo chicks and moulting adults. Over at one end Bia talked about the "Franken whale" skeleton made from Fin and Blue whale and the history of the location.

After Jougla and Port Lockroy we had a recap where Reba and Renato showed the voyage log that the passengers will receive after their journey. Jeff explained the very interesting story of Toby the Pig at Port Charcot, then we finished up with Dan and the random photo of the day, tomorrow's plan for Lemaire Channel, and Yalours for the Adélie penguins.

After dinner dinner, up in deck 8, Richard Morecraft interviewed a panel of E-team members with Dan, John, and Alexandra. Many people came and thanks to Richard and his brilliant interviewing skills and easy conversation the evening was a roaring success where we got to know more of about the E-team and how they got to where they are.



# Lemaire Channel | Yalour Islands | Port Charcot

DAY 5 | Friday, 24th February 2023

Position at 0700 on 24th Feb

Latitude: 65°08'7" S

Longitude: 064°04'5" W

Course: 213°

Speed: 9.8 knots

Wind Speed: LT AIR

Barometer: 1004

Air Temp: -2°C

Ice is the dominant environmental factor of the Antarctic shallow-water marine communities. Not only does it abrade the ocean floor, scraping away benthic organisms and mixing layers of sediment, it also affects salinity, temperature, currents, and the amount of light that penetrates the sea.

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

The day started out like any other, except of course for the cheery yet (pre-coffee) gravelly voice with our wakeup call from our intrepid Leader Daniel coaxing us up on deck for a 6am-rendezvous with Lemaire Channel including wise advice to wrap up warm and be cautious of the ice on deck.

Lemaire never disappoints, with 1,000m-high mountains either side, and ice aplenty. Of course, this was too early for much wildlife and the orcas remained bashful but nevertheless we had some humpback action and gentoos, skuas and Wilsons petrel. We did, however, have the fleeting company of a couple of other ships, one at anchor that Pascal recognised, and the other, the Nat Geo Endurance going the other way, but they didn't wave back!

After a sturdy breakfast, we were soon anchored for an 'ashore' at Yalour Islands. A visit everyone on board was bristling with anticipation for having been primed by Jeff with more tales of daring and a sad but implausible tale of Antarctic explorers burying fresh pork rather than cooking up- a.k.a. Toby the Pig.

Many went ashore for a visit, and many species were at their geographic breeding limits around these parts. Indicative of their vulnerability was a moulting Adélie being surprised on its path by a member of the Expedition Team coming in haste the other way. The penguin shrieked with astonishment and got into a right flap apparently, only to console itself on realising that its close encounter was with non-other than the lovely Bia, champion and advocate of critters of sea, land and air and other places (obviously, she was outside of the proximity limits – just in case anyone was wondering!).

The kayak team, ever stalwart, explored the ice and skerries and found a sleepy Weddell seal, easily identified by those who went to John's lecture.

After lunch, we had a shore trip to Port Charcot on Booth Island named after Booth. Jean Baptiste Charcot named the Island and over wintered his French Antarctic Expedition of 1903 to 1905 here and some historical artefacts remain. Likely fauna to be found here include Weddell, fur and leopard seals and gentoo. Word around the campfire is that some spotted a minke whale here too.



# Paradise Bay | Polar Plunge | Useful Island

DAY 6 | Saturday, 25th February 2023

Position at 0600 on 25th Feb

Latitude: 64°50'5" S

Longitude: 062°57'7" W

Course: 131°

Speed: 3.1 knots

Wind Speed: N 2

Barometer: 1006

Air Temp: -3°C

Tumble and rumble, and grumble and snort,  
Like a whale to starboard, a whale to port;  
Tumble and rumble, and grumble and snort,  
and the steamer steams thro' the sea, love!

—Sydney Thompson Dobell

As our ship glided silently into Paradise Harbour this morning, we awoke to glassy reflections of icebergs and mountains, and news of humpback whales off the bow.

Paradise it was, by both name and nature.

Following breakfast, the E-team deployed the Zodiacs, kayaks and snorkel gear, and we spent an incredible morning marvelling at snow-capped peaks, glaciers, icebergs and wildlife. There were some sightings of a Weddell seal, an elusive leopard seal, and we all marvelled at the gentoo penguins huddled about the buildings of the Argentinian-run Brown Base. Cliffs made of metamorphic rock, over 100m high, rose above our kayaks and Zodiacs, as we watched the blue-eyed shags come and go overhead. The silence was intermittently broken by calving glaciers, and as some groups returned to the ship they rode the rolling swell caused by gigantic blocks of ice crashing into the sea.

Meanwhile, the lucky people in the Citizen Science Zodiac were able to lower the Secchi disk to check for phytoplankton agglomeration. Phytoplankton play a crucial role in the Antarctic food chain, being at the bottom of the food chain, and producing a large percentage of the oxygen that is subsequently released into the atmosphere.

Once back on ship, word was quickly passed around that there was to be a Polar Plunge before lunch. Almost half of the ship's population decided to disrobe and fling themselves - in a strictly managed festival of flamboyant disarray - into the sub-zero ocean, earning bragging rights (and great photos from Renato) for time immemorial.

And thus it seemed unlikely that following our incredible morning, our Antarctic sojourn could feasibly get any better.

Enter Useful Island.

A small speck in what can otherwise be a tempestuous Gerlache Strait, Useful Island offered up a generous smorgasboard of mercurial water, brooding icebergs, sociable gentoo and chinstrap penguins, reclining Antarctic fur and Weddell seals; and possibly rambunctious but obviously famished humpback whales, unashamedly pigging out and offering an intimate masterclass on bubble-net feeding.

And as we return to our base camp, mothership, and umbilical cord to the outside world, and reflect on another day in Antarctica, it seems there is an inadequate supply of superlatives to convey both the enormity and profound intimacy of the experiences that we have had today, and we are left to ponder the majesty of the natural world, and what consequence these experiences may have on the way in which we live our lives henceforth.



# Polar Plunge

DAY 6 | Saturday, 25th February 2023



# Cierva Cove | Mikkelsen Harbour

DAY 7 | Sunday 26th February 2023

Position at 0600 on 26th Feb

Latitude: 64°08'1"S

Longitude: 061°12'5"W

Course: 062°

Speed: 6.3 knots

Wind Speed: SW 2/3

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: -2°C

If you see those pretty things  
that nature likes to show  
Remember all those seals that sing  
And leave them there to grow.

— Stephen Cosgrove

Just when we thought it couldn't get any better, yet another glorious morning greeted us as we approached Cierva Cove in Hughes Bay on the west coast of Graham Land. Named after Juan de la Cierva, a Spanish pilot and engineer who invented the autogiro, considered by many to be the predecessor to the helicopter. The wind and seas moderated inviting another incredible opportunity to explore by Zodiac and kayak as we approached the area, home to the Argentinian research station, Primavera. Originally a naval refuge built in 1954, the facility was expanded in 1977 and operates only during the Austral summer. Its scientists conduct research on birds, limnology, and the ecological impact of mosses and lichens. It has two rooms and a bathroom with supplies for three people for three months. This very nutrient rich area above and below the water is so intertwined with the ice, being in the "banana-belt" of Antarctica as well as its close proximity to calving glaciers stirring up the nutrients from below, creating a veritable trophic feast.

Once again, Mother Nature delivered as we remained open to the possibilities of the day, a mellow swell creating a random yet rhythmical dance of the giant icebergs bobbing and swaying to the beat of the sea. We cruised in awe around behemoth icebergs and bergys bits and through growlers and brash ice. Teachable moments of discovery occurred as we pondered how the blue short wavelengths of light were able to escape the bonds of centuries old extremely dense ice producing the at times electric aquamarine emanating from within. Appreciating the floating art gallery of shapes and sizes, we attempted to decipher their stories of melting and tilting while awed by their beauty. We found ourselves mesmerised and entertained by a huge teeter-totter iceberg, each end rising and falling ten feet. We thought for sure this one would topple but it bobbed on to see another day. Over the radio we could hear reports of others that formed geysers from the waves and others that toppled.

Almost immediately a spout followed by a back and a relatively tall and falcate dorsal fin revealed a small minke whale reminding us of bounty of krill that is so vital to this entire ecosystem. John spotted a leopard seal that we

were able to observe on a bergy bit, very chilled out. We did a quick fly-by of the station and its gentoo colonies, then over to an island with chinstrap penguins as the number of minke whales increased on our way back to the ship. Once back aboard delighted passengers and guides shared their stories of swimming leopard seals and humbling and awe-inspiring paddling conditions.

As we ventured into more exposed waters, the wind and waves increased until finding the lee of Mikkelsen harbour, a three-kilometer-wide bay lined with ice cliffs indenting the south side of Trinity Island between Skottsberg Point and Borge Point, in the Palmer Archipelago. A snow-covered graveyard of massive blue whale skulls, ribs, and jawbones rested next to a whaling water boat. A chilly breeze below zero had us bundled up as we continued to be amused by gentoo chicks mobbing their parents begging for a krill-biscuit. Skuas kept a keen eye on the activities as the snowy sheathbills grabbed penguin poop to feed their chicks. A few fur seals seemed non-plussed by our presence while the snoozy Weddell seals blubbered out their space-age siren songs, possibly dreaming of their previous feeding forays or future amorous encounters.

The icing on the cake was layered on as we all gathered to sing Happy Birthday to the Grand Dame, Laurel, in all forms of our favorite wildlife voices. Earlier she was spotted on the piano while accompanied by her penguin-clad clutch of two daughters and her grand-daughter, as Liz performed a gentoo solo birthday tune. Late into the night our "It's in our blood" Latina guides attempted to teach some of us with two left feet how to Salsa dance, what a fantastic day!

Thank you all for your incredible energy you have brought to this voyage and the gifts we have been so privileged to receive in return from this Great Land of Antarctica!



# Charcot Bay | Bransfield Strait

DAY 8 | Monday, 27th February 2023

Position at 0600 on 27th Feb

Latitude: 63°41'7" S

Longitude: 059°42'6" W

Course: 123°

Speed: 3.0 knots

Its turreted top was no doubt once its bottom, the iceberg having turned over as the equilibrium of its mass shifted, melt drop by melt drop, calorie by calorie. It is striated blue and white: ice and air.

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

For the early risers, the day started out with a beautiful sunrise, some of us even spotted a humpback whale off the ship between the big icebergs. We got our daily wakeup call from our expedition leader Daniel around 07:00: "Beautiful light, some whales, location: 63°47'S, 59°38'W."

Location for the day: Charcot Bay. This bay is also known as Lindblad Cove, in commemoration of Lars-Eric Lindblad, a pioneer in Antarctic tourism. We sailed through some rougher weather in the night, hoping for some calmer seas and a possibility to go off the ship in the morning. Charcot Bay didn't disappoint us, protected from the main swell and winds, surrounded by icebergs breaking the swell, the expedition team found the perfect setting for a Zodiac cruise.

Destination for the Zodiac cruise: that big arch shaped iceberg in the distance! Cruising over there, some of us were surprised by the wildlife we found between these immense icebergs: a big flock of southern fulmars, a fur seal on the ice, snow petrels, and a humpback whale. Once we got closer to the arch shaped iceberg, we could see how unique, impressive, and brittle this one was. The other icebergs around didn't disappoint either, we got treated to some amazing shapes, features, and colours. After we got back from our beautiful but chilly ride in the Zodiacs, we got treated with hot chocolate and baileys in the observation lounge, what a perfect way to warm up!

After lunch, we had a lecture from John about oceanography and ice which was really well attended and very interesting.

Plan for the afternoon and evening: transport ourselves back through a windy Bransfield strait towards the lee of the South Shetland islands.

Some of us had the chance to visit the galley of our beloved ship and learned where all our amazing food is coming from and made. Did you know we have our own pastry chef and station aboard?

Wind Speed: NE 5

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: -6°C

Pascal surprised us in the afternoon with his "crêpes suzette", French pancakes with a caramelized sugar, butter and orange juice sauce.

After recap and dinner, some of us enjoyed a talk by Richard Morecroft in the Lecture Theatre about "Raising Archie" where he spoke about his experience with wildlife rehabilitation in Australia. We then all headed to bed, making sure we are well rested for our last day of this amazing expedition.



# Half Moon Island | Cruising the South Shetlands

DAY 9 | Tuesday, 28th February 2023

Position at 0600 on 28th Feb

Latitude: 62°34'0" S

Longitude: 059°55'0" W

Course: 018°

Speed: 3 knots

Wind Speed: NNE 7

Barometer: 1008

Air Temp: -2°C

If Antarctica were music it would be Mozart. Art, and it would be Michelangelo. Literature, and it would be Shakespeare. And yet it is something even greater; the only place on earth that is still as it should be. May we never tame it.

— Andrew Denton

We woke today to slightly less sunshine than we have been used to but it didn't stop our enthusiasm, nor Daniel's, for getting us up and raring to go.

After a hearty breakfast, the Expedition team got the Zodiacs and landing ready for us and we were called down to the mudroom to get dressed warmly, ready to face the cold and wet weather outside.

We used the marina deck for our expedition today, which was another a new experience – right up to our last landing.

We landed on Half Moon Island, greeted by our intrepid leader and the team, not to mention a haul out of fur seals as well as an elephant seal that didn't seem bothered about our presence at all – did anyone actually see him move?

A 'weaner' was spotted nearby – not the hotdog variety – and apparently had the same feelings of disinterest as its parent.

The Expedition Team led us on a walk up the hill for some spectacular views of the bay where we were joined at the top by chinstrap penguins, snowy sheathbills and a giant petrel.

From the Zodiacs, we got to see a couple of young fur seals battling in the water. Whether they were just playing or trying to show each other who was boss, for us it was a natural sight to behold.

Once back on board, the ship shop opened for our final purchases to fill up the small spaces that we still found in the corner of our suitcase. Lunch was then served and we again enjoyed all the wonderful dishes and desserts served up by our galley and restaurant team.

With the fog setting in, Daniel let us know that we were going to have a relaxing afternoon onboard with our disembarkation briefing with Isabelle – the part of our trip we never like to hear about – and Jeff regaling us with historical accounts of the Belgica Expedition.

Suitcases were more or less packed by the time we headed to the Elephant Island Bar, glass of bubbly in hand, for Captain Vadym to wish us farewell. Another fantastic surprise awaited us as the entire hotel team paraded into the Lecture Theatre for us all to thank them with huge rounds of applause.

Dinner was served and afterwards Renato's featured slideshow was shown for us all to remember the amazing moments we have had over these past eight days on board *Greg Mortimer*. These memories will stay with us forever.

But wait, there's more. We got our voices warmed up and sang along with Reba in the Elephant Island Bar – what a fun way to finish. A unforgettable trip of a lifetime, that we had been waiting for for so long, was now coming to a close – but what a trip it was!



# Frei Station, King George Island

DAY 10 | Wednesday, 1st March 2023

Position at 0400 on 1st Mar

Latitude: 62°12'17"S

Longitude: 058°55'05"W

Course: VAR

Speed: 0 knots

Looking outside this morning, it was a very different view of King George Island to what we had experienced when we flew into the island 10 days ago. A low lying fog brought with it a mysterious atmosphere around the bases on the island.

A later start to the day – thank you Daniel – with breakfast starting at 8am, Bia then treated us to a fantastically interesting presentation mid-morning about whaling in Antarctica. She told us about the history and industry of whaling and how these gentle giants of the ocean were turned into a highly profitable commodity during the 18th and 19th centuries. She finished up with the current status of the industry – something that will help us all become advocates in protecting these wonderful creatures.

Lunch was then served – because we obviously needed to eat again!

As the afternoon began, Daniel then updated us again about our flights or lack of due to the snowstorm that was happening all around us.

Jeff regaled us with an afternoon talk about the story of the Endurance and survival in modern times. We learnt all about the ship that was trapped in ice and then sank leaving the men marooned. As if in an American blockbuster movie: the story culminated in the greatest small boat voyage ever, sailing in the James Caird in a bid for survival.

Bing-bong – the announcements now quieten us all down immediately as we waited with baited breath to hear what updates Daniel had for us. We all gathered in the Lecture Theatre to hear the news, that we really did expect, that the flights had been cancelled for the day. The Expedition Team were around to help with questions here and there, but some of us felt it better to help the revenue at the bar and have friends, family and travel agents at home change our plans for us while we enjoyed extra time on board.

Dinner was served early this evening and Alexandra gave us a brief crash course in the Inuits from Greenland to Alaska, and Eastern Siberia (even though they weren't on the map). She told us about the different clothing styles, dialects, history of whalers, the creation of Nunavut, traditional knowledge and practices, the language and food, and explained how throat singing works. To top it all off, Alex sang a few songs and had a few volunteers to dance along for a song.

An extra, unexpected day onboard, where we were given the wonderful opportunity to chat to some fellow expeditioners and had the chance to find out more about their lives and what incredible lives they have had! We

Wind Speed: E 3

Barometer: 992

Air Temp: 1°C

are all so like-minded, having booked this trip to see something that we had all wanted to experience for so long, however, coming from such different, and highly interesting, walks of life. What a fantastic array of people we are!



# Frei Station, King George Island

DAY 11 | Wednesday, 2nd March 2023

Position at 0700 on 2nd Mar

Latitude: 62°12'17"S

Longitude: 058°55'05"W

Course: VAR

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: E 3

Barometer: 992

Air Temp: 1°C

Another "sleep-in" and later breakfast this morning as we woke up to a misty, foggy morning in King George Island.

The Captain kindly allowed us to join his bridge team for bridge tours to see how the 'brain' of the ship works and which buttons we're not supposed to push!

Renato began our morning teaching us how to create award-winning images. Having just won the grand prize winner of the National Geographic Traveller photography competition 2023, he knows what he's talking about! This talk was a behind the scenes look of some internationally awarded images, with tips on how to create powerful images using the best possible light. We enjoyed his stories from the fields which focus on conservation issues across different environments.

More food? OK! The galley and restaurant team treated us to some more delicious dishes over lunch. We might have enjoyed a glass of wine or two... but no one noticed!

Elo took the floor this afternoon talking about how much plastic is going into the ocean and what the lifespan of plastics is. We heard about microplastics in Antarctica and with the surprising stats of how much plastic goes into the food we eat. Elo finished off with letting us know different ideas and ways to live with less plastic, which then has the knock-on effect of having less plastics in the ocean.

And then the bing-bong sounds again as Daniel's voice announcement over the PA system that there was a weather window at approximately 8pm this evening and that we were, hopefully, going to be able to get our flight to Punta Arenas.

We had our luggage ready outside our staterooms and enjoyed an early buffet dinner. As the planes flew over the ship and landed on King George Island, we realised that our trip of a lifetime was finally coming to an end. Slightly bittersweet as we have enjoyed this bonus time onboard, but real life is calling to us, as well as our family and friends eagerly waiting to hear all our stories, but maybe we should only show them four or five photos of penguins.



# Kayaking Log

**Kayak Masters: Elo Berrier, Neri Grieve, Pete Clarke, Tim Vanhouthtenghem, Matt Barnes**

Number of Paddlers: 15      Total Paddle Outings: 9      Total Distance Paddled: 44.1 km

Paddlers:	Joane Horn-Smith	Spike Pilcher	Deborah Deutsch
Susie McMahon	Sandy Cardin	Andrew Daubney	Kheng Chiew
Mattias Urwyler	Melody McCoy	Debbie Daubney	Ah Toh
Andrea Buser	James Cameron	Mark Deutsch	Joane Bujnoski-Clayton

## 21 Feb 2023, Yankee Harbour - 1.18 km

The Captain anchored us off the south coast of Greenwich Island at Yankee Harbour. The kayak guides recced the eastern shore of the harbour and decided to Zodiac the kayaks to the lee of some rocks and launch with some shelter. Was not a long kayaking session but a good place to test our kayaks and refresh our technique in truly Antarctic weather. Cloudy, snowy and windy.

We saw from the kayaks our first gentoos and hauled out on a nearby island were fur seals and some young elephant seals. After 40 min, we Zodiaced back to the ship just on time as the wind picked up.

## 22 Feb 2023, Enterprise Island - 5.68 km

Today dawned fair for our visit to Enterprise Island. Although misty, the sea was calm and there were many humpback whales. We launched in two groups from a Zodiac at the marina, one team had a close encounter with a 'logging' whale. There were many fur seals both active on land and in the water, gentoo too.

There were a couple of yachts anchored by the wreck of the Governoren, a Norwegian whalers factory ship which caught fire in 1915, full of oil and about to return home. No lives were lost.

## 23 Feb 2023, Neko Harbour & Port Lockroy - 4.8km

With the wind forecast increasing and not much shelter from calving glaciers in Neko, we opted for a Zodiac shore party in the morning.

The afternoon at Port Lockroy and Joogla Point allowed for a combination of going ashore by Zodiac for some light shopping and to visit the museum followed by a kayak paddle. We were joined by some crew members in the double inflatable kayaks for a pleasant meander amongst the ice and plenty of gentoo activity. We have the chance to stop and look around and feel very small while being surrounded by big mountains full of glaciers.

## 24 Feb 2023, Yalour Islands - 6.2 km

An early start at 06.00 and up on deck for viewing the Lemaire Channel. While waiting for the Zodiac to take out the kayaks, we took advantage of the wait to have an impromptu paddling lesson in the mudroom before shuttling to the kayak Zodiac.

We were ready and excited for our kayak session around the Yalour Islands. These islands were surrounded by icebergs in every shape and size, which made for a beautiful kayak environment. We started off with a Zodiac drive from our ship, and then boarded the kayaks one by one from the Zodiac. After this we did our first paddling through brash ice, a very exciting and challenging version of Antarctic sea kayaking. Everyone made their own way through the brash ice, following the direction of our guides. Once at the island, we had a close look of the Adélie colony. We paddled our way between the small channels of this islands group, and even found a Weddell seal taking a powernap. After this we paddled around more between the islands, and explored the beautiful colored and shaped icebergs. We made our way back to the Zodiac, which picked us up and transported us back to our ship.

## 24 Feb 2023, Port Charcot - 5.23 km

After lunch, we kayaked from the Zodiacs in the lee of Port Charcot and paddled around and through some brash and bergy bits around Herveon Point and then returned the same way. Some big icebergs and whales were in the area. This was a bit more challenging kayak session wind was gusting 15-16 kn against us, but all kayakers managed to make it. At the end everybody got the chance to visit the landing site also and hike all the way up to the top view point.

## 25 Feb 2023, Paradise Bay - 7.2 km

What a beautiful morning for a paddle! Calm conditions and reflected mountains and icebergs greeted us as we embarked our kayaks from the Zodiac at the rear of the ship. We paddled towards a glacier and took the chance for a group photo, before meandering around the shoreline past bergy bits and a small colony of gentoo penguins.

Beyond the Argentinian-run Brown Base, we marvelled at the 100m high metamorphic rock cliffs, and watched as blue-eyed shags moved to and fro over our heads.

Further along we rounded a corner and marvelled at a huge blue archway made of ice in the wall of a glacier. As we turned to make our return journey, the silence was broken with the crack of a calving glacier, thankfully a few kilometres away.

Further along we bumped our way through some brash ice, and took a moment to be still and silent, immersed in the immensity of raw nature all around us.

As a grand finale, as we returned to the back of the ship, a huge block of ice calved from a nearby glacier, and we rode out the low rolling swells in our kayaks before finishing our paddle and re-boarding the ship.

## 25 Feb 2023, Useful Island - 5.47 km

The afternoon was a smaller team on the water but amply rewarded. Everybody was a bit tired after so many kayaks sessions. Calm conditions surprised us, so we decided to circumnavigate the island. A big number of humpbacks were feeding in the area and slowly they were getting very close to our kayaks, seals, penguins and a beautiful calm sea. At the end, some of the kayakers decided to paddle back to the ship and some others decided to explore the island and we got the chance to observe whales from the top.

## 26 Feb 2023, Cierva Cove - 5.13 km

We launched our kayaks from the inflatable platform at the rear of the ship and set off into Cierva Cove towards a glacier and some massive icebergs in the distance. As we meandered around some bergs, we spotted a minke whale in the distance. A game of hide-and-seek ensued as she kept us on our toes, popping up for a breath in the distance and disappearing again. We paddled over to a small island and marvelled at the mosses and lichens clinging to life on the igneous rock, and saw a small colony of gentoo penguins huddled safely above the surging waves.

As we rounded the base of the island, we detoured through some heavy brash ice, and had fun weaving through the ice and forging a path with our kayaks.

Time flies when you're having fun, and before long it was time to head for home and return to the ship, having enjoyed an ice-filled morning on the water.

## 26 Feb 2023, Mikkelson Harbour - 3.21 km

After launching from the marina at the back of the ship, we first paddled due west towards a rocky point. As we got closer, we realised that there were numerous seals on the coast here: Weddell seals looking impossibly comfortable asleep on the snow, and closer to shore some Antarctic fur seals reclining on the rocks at the back of the stony beach.

After spending some time watching them, we paddled around the bay of Mikkelsen harbour, watching blue-eyed shags fly overhead, and marvelling at the precarious chunks of ice on the edges of the distant ice cliffs. We soon reached the small island that we were to eventually land on, and paddled close to shore in the shallows to watch the antics of the gentoo penguins; we also spotted some more Weddell seals and fur seals resting on the beach.

Further around, we came across 2 sleepy Weddell seals, each claiming their own small rocky islet for an afternoon nap. We spent some time watching them before retracing our steps to spend some time on shore, inspecting ancient whale bones, penguins and sleepy seals, before returning by Zodiac to the ship.





# Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guide: Liz MacNeil, Ella Knobloch, Stas Zakharov

Number of Snorkels: 2

Total Outings: 5

Snorkellers:

Jodie Eden

Ruby Kohler

## 22nd Feb 2023

A magical morning. As we sat in the calm waters of Enterprise Island on our Zodiac, we were paid a visit by some curious humpbacks. It was amazing to witness them feeding, breaching and playing while we made our way around the shores.

We found our magic spot – shallow, clear and lots of algae to do our first polar snorkel. It was important to warm up before we got in the water, so we did our banana dance and had a laugh. Getting our gear on for the first time was a lot of effort but once we were in the water we absolutely understood why! Sea stars, algae, krill and brash ice.

It was a lot of fun getting used to the buoyant nature of drysuits and laughing at each other bobbing around.

## 23rd Feb 2023

As the sun peaked into Neko Harbour we knew it was going to be a fantastic day. Large glacial views and so many different iceberg shapes and sizes made our Zodiac cruise magical – not to mention another humpback whale joining us for part of the ride.

Our team this morning had Stas, Jodie, Ruby and Gonzalo (our friend from the crew) were in the water with Ella and Liz manning the boat. The snorkel site had crystal clear visibility and (more importantly) penguins with local gentoo colony was heading in and out of the water right before our eyes. It was also a lot of fun playing in the brash ice.

This afternoon Port Lockroy/Jougla Point put on a glassy display. It was amazing seeing the old whale bones under the water at such a historic site. Ruby (our polar snorkel mermaid) stayed in right until the very last moment before we had to head back to the ship. There were some pretty awesome growlers and lots of brash ice to play in around Jougla too.

## 24th Feb 2023

We started our afternoon by cruising around the 'iceberg graveyard' at Port Charcot. All the different types and shapes and textures made for a fantastic afternoon. We parked up in a shallow bay near the landing site for our snorkel, and boy was it fantastic.

The visibility was endless and there were so many different types of algae swaying with the water's movement. We took lots of underwater photos and also did our best whale impressions.

## 25th Feb 2023

Paradise Harbour really was paradise – clear skies, glassy waters and some minke whale action too! We started our morning with a Zodiac cruise checking out the moss, lichen, copper deposits, glacier faces and ice.

Afterwards we jumped in the water for an ice snorkel and played on some little growlers. It was great for snorkel guide Liz to get into the water and our friend Alex from the crew came along too! The water was so clear, and it was amazing to witness the underside of some bergy bits.

## 26th Feb 2023

Laurel's birthday meant time to celebrate! We had the whole family on board for our special birthday Zodiac cruise with hot chocolates, leopard seals and even rolling icebergs! Jodie and Ruby got into the water to sing a snorkel happy birthday rendition, do some 'synchronized snorkeling' and play around in some brash ice. It was the perfect end to a fantastic trip with Team Snork!



# Bird and Mammal Sightings

## Bird Species

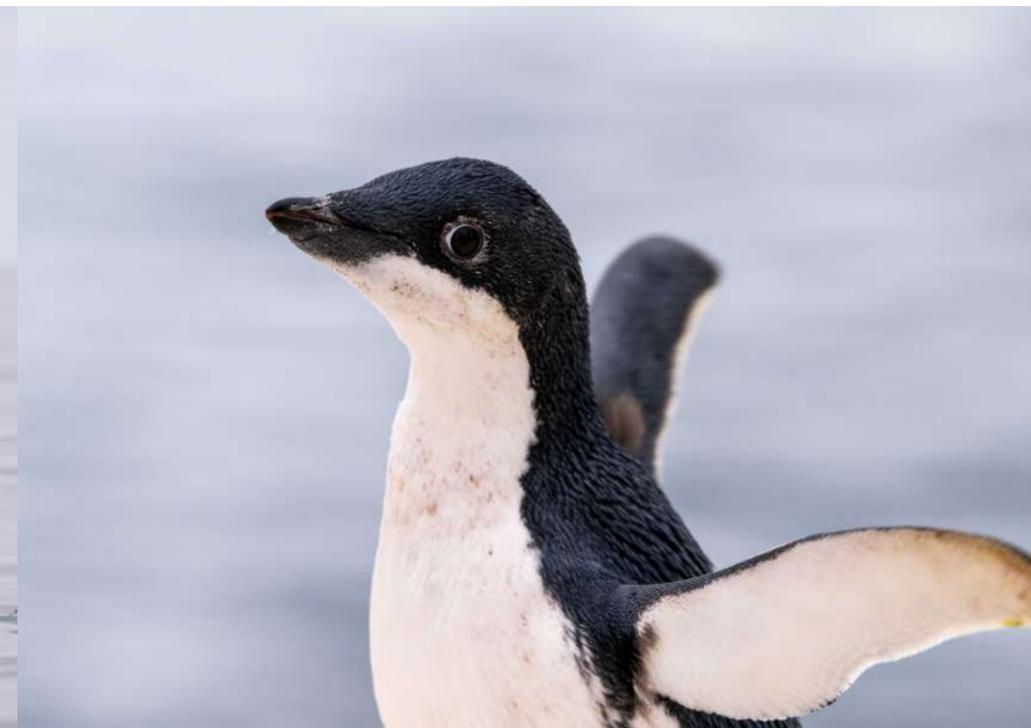
February - March

	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1
Gentoo Penguin	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•
Chinstrap Penguin	•		•		•	•	•		•	
Adelie Penguin					•					
Wandering Albatross								•	•	
Royal Albatross							•	•	•	
Giant Petrel (Northern or Southern)	•					•		•	•	•
Cape Petrel								•		
Snow Petrel						•	•	•		
Antarctic Fulmar (Southern)						•		•		
White-chinned Petrel							•	•		
Wilson's Storm-petrel	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Antarctic Cormorant			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
American Sheathbill (Snowy)				•		•	•		•	
Skua (Brown and/or South Polar)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Kelp Gull			•	•			•	•	•	
Antarctic Tern			•		•	•	•	•		

## Mammal Species

February - March

	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1
Antarctic Fur Seal		•	•			•		•	•	
Southern Elephant Seal		•							•	
Crabeater Seal				•	•					
Weddell Seal			•			•	•			
Leopard Seal				•			•			
Minke Whale				•	•	•	•			
Humpback Whale	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	



# Poems

## Antarctic Explorer

Here, we all are, on this trip of a lifetime  
Having weathered a pandemic, we felt this would be the right time  
To transfer Antarctica from the bucket list to the “f\*\*\*-it” list  
And head south for it surely should not be missed.

So, to the Greg Mortimer we flew  
Risking weather and covid flu  
The PCRs, a threat as we bared our throat  
Just to get a room on this amazing boat  
And still we all made it, as Reba will attest,  
For indeed, we all even passed the RAT test.

And so, to the crew, there is nothing but praise  
There skill and care kept us all in amaze  
From Captain Vadym to Pascal, Preston and all of the team  
We thank you for sharing your personal space,  
And to carry us safely to this most wonderful place.

But what about the Adventure staff?  
A most over qualified bunch, you make me laugh  
For you showed us things we could never imagine.  
I am humbled by the generosity with which you share your passion  
I now feel a duty on my return to pass on your wisdom in the same fashion

From Daniel, so young and yet so wise a leader by any measure,  
To John, Alex, Hans, Bia, Neri and all the rest of the team, you are a treasure.  
I thank you and wish you great lives,  
Our planet is in good hands as you help this world to survive.

And now to the guests, a ragbag lot  
You come from all walks of life and yet rise to the top.  
I admire your courage in taking a risk, to visit this place which is not to be missed

There are, however, amongst us some who deserve a special mention,  
Especially the matriarch of the family where there is so much birthday tension.  
Laurel, you are such a joy to meet, your spirit shines through from your head to your feet  
Your family all love you and now we all do  
We thank you and hope we can be like you too.

So lastly, Greg Mortimer, we thank you for allowing us to be part of your family,  
To share in this adventure and the tradition that you yourself set out to be.  
I hope like you, we can keep learning  
And visit places far and wide, and never stop yearning.

– **Peter Gregory**  
February 2023

## Air & Sea

Oh, Antarctica  
Your mountains and icebergs float  
Like clouds on the ground

– **Melody McCoy & Sandy Cardin**

## The Whales

Mist in the water  
Signals ocean royalty  
We bow from the stern

– **Melody McCoy & Sandy Cardin**

## The View

Blue, black and white shades  
Mingle with sky and water  
Birds soar; whales wave

– **Melody McCoy & Sandy Cardin**

## The Party

Waddling while sober  
Formal attire; sans bow tie  
Life of a penguin

– **Melody McCoy & Sandy Cardin**

## Movement

Awesome to witness  
Nature’s choreography  
Wind and icebergs dance

– **Melody McCoy & Sandy Cardin**

## The Penguin

A penguin waddles  
Looking inebriated  
Tuxedo intact

– **Sandy Cardin**

## Spirituality

Wonderous Antarctic  
Majestic and magical  
Uplifting my soul

– **Sandy Cardin**

## Antarctica

Each voyage is a self-questioning  
A listening  
A tending to things  
Each voyage is a voyage within ourselves  
And the direction we take depends on the depth at which we travel

This continent belongs to no one  
People are recent and animals unafraid  
Sometimes they laugh  
Leaping in perfect arcs from the slate grey sea  
Slick like rocks  
But swifter against the slide rule of geological time

In another dimension a child left her playthings scattered on this ocean  
We zigzag among the pieces, the ice flowers,  
The castles of cobalt shadows

A floating mountain rolls, infinitely gentle, infinitely powerful  
like an inflating lung  
Its unsung history written into the waterline and the runnels and scars on its sides

I am learning to accept the signs  
To read between the lines  
Snow is like stone  
Layers compressed like sand

Under the cloud cover on the horizon  
An invisible scythe cuts swathes of light  
And ice moves like cogs or teeth  
Ferrying erratic rocks that question my relationship to language and pace, and peace

Dark shiny stones serve as a currency between wind and water  
I am too profligate for this economy of survival  
But I am allowed to pass

Here there are no burning cars  
No cars at all  
But rocks pretend to be shipwrecks  
Or is it the other way round?  
Half-submerged silhouettes  
Outlined against small red stacks of human endeavour  
Nestled in the folds of shallow moraines

Fur seals reign over narrow spits of land  
And gentoo penguins blast shit into the wind  
Last year’s feathers flying into the airstream  
As they flip their outer garments before heading out to sea

– **Suzanne Lapstun**

**Antarctic Explorer**  
**20 February – 1 March 2023**  
 Total distance travelled:  
**716 Nautical Miles**





## Expeditioners:

- |                         |                  |                      |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Paul Abu-Elias          | Mark Deutsch     | Wanjun Li            |
| Miguel Aleman           | Thomas Donelan   | Rita Manninen        |
| Maritza Aleman          | Mary Donelan     | Gerald Manninen      |
| Melanie Aleman          | Shimon Eckhouse  | Melody McCoy         |
| Gil Amid                | Musia Eckhouse   | Susan McMahon        |
| Yael Amid Man           | Laurel Eden      | Richard Morecroft    |
| Natalie Best            | Catherine Eden   | Andrew Morecroft     |
| Kathryn Bond            | Jodie Eden       | Ann O'Keefe          |
| Briony Bond             | Neil Fifer       | Spike Pilcher        |
| Penelope Broadbent      | Karen Fifer      | Petronella Proctor   |
| Janet Brown             | Peter Gregory    | Alexis Rendon Ayerbe |
| Joanne Bujnoski Clayton | Mary Gregory     | Bareket Shani        |
| Andrea Buser            | Joane Horn-Smith | Susan Terley         |
| James Cameron           | Peter Houghton   | Ah Toh               |
| Sanford Cardin          | Martin Kandes    | Matthias Urwyler     |
| Jeffrey Carter          | Jeffrey Kapor    | John Wallis          |
| Kheng Chiew             | Ruby Kohler      | James Wang           |
| Bruce Crenshaw          | Suzanne Lapstun  | Walter Werner        |
| Derek Daubney           | Fiona Lavan      | Anita Werner         |
| Deborah Daubney         | Deanna Lee       |                      |
| Teresa Deutsch          | Jiajie Li        |                      |

## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Daniel Stavert  
Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells  
Onboard Expedition Manager: Reba Minett  
Onboard Expedition Manager (Trainee): Samantha Deer  
Historian: Jeff Nagal  
Oceanographer/ Citizen Science Coordinator: Bia Figueiredo  
Naturalist: John Kirkwood  
Naturalist: Hans Bruning  
Expedition Guide Trainee: Alexandra Anaviapik  
Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Elo Berrier  
Sea Kayak Guide: Pete Clarke  
Sea Kayak Guide: Neri Grieve  
Sea Kayak Guide: Tim Vanhoutteghem  
Sea Kayak Guide: Matt Barnes  
Lead Snorkel Guide: Liz MacNeil  
Snorkel Guide: Ella Knobloch  
Snorkel Guide: Stas Zakharov  
Expedition Medic: Linda Steutel  
E-Team Photography Guide: Renato Granieri  
Zodiac Master: Serghei Hincu  
Mudroom/Shopkeeper: Flor Torti

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Vadym Tavrovetsky  
Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi  
Safety Officer: Alexandru Chiriac  
Bosun: Giovanni Dela Torre  
Deck Cadet: Goncalo Alexandra Saraiva Aniceto Costa  
Ship Doctor: Gloria Saraiva Aniceto Costa  
Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze  
Chief Engineer: Sergiy Melnyk  
Hotel Director: Pascal Joubin  
Chief Purser: Willie Lirio  
Executive Chef: Ronwaldo Reyes  
Executive Chef: Edgar Mangliano  
Head Waiter: Allan Liscaro  
IT Officer: Yury Kovyrshin  
Receptionist: Sean Akbar  
Receptionist: Jona Ecija  
Head Stateroom: Roniel Garcia  
Able Seaman: Bobby Payumo  
Able Seaman: Muhammad Karier  
Able Seaman: Tim Kitson  
Able Seaman: Joel Noble  
Able Seaman: Andrii Mezentsev

## Photography thanks to:

Renato Granieri          James Wang          Maritza Aleman

## Poems thanks to:

Peter Gregory  
Suzanne Lapstun  
Sandy Cardin  
Melody McCoy





