

# Falkland Islands, South Georgia & Antarctic Peninsula

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 28 November – 17 December 2022





# Ushuaia, Argentina

DAY 1 | Monday 28 November 2022

Position at 0700 on 28 November

Latitude: 54°50.10'S

Longitude: 068.10.4'W

Course: Docked

Speed: Docked

Wind Speed: ENE 1-2

Barometer: 1014

Air Temp: 12° C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Here we are in the stunning town of Ushuaia, “el fin del mundo”, the end of the world.

The wharf was abuzz this with arrivals, departures, fishing vessels unloading their catch, and all sorts of activity. Our expeditioners were met by the Aurora team and had their photos taken for our “photo board” to help us learn each other’s names. Drinks and a buffet awaited us in the Elephant Island Bar, then our hotel team helped us navigate the decks to our staterooms and settle into our home-away-from-home. It had been a long couple of days of travelling, and many of us probably wanted to crawl into the comfort of our beds, but there was no time to rest just yet!

After a welcome briefing from our Expedition Leader Graham and a quick intro from Dr Andres and Hotel Director Ulises, Anne then gave us some handy hints about life onboard.

Then an all-important safety drill. The sound of the ship’s horn signalled us to don our orange lifejackets and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed our crew up to Deck 7 where the polar class life vessels are kept (they can hold 136 people each, for 5 days).

With the safety drill completed, we were cleared to begin our journey.

We gathered outside to watch the *Greg Mortimer* cast off her lines and pull away from the dock, at last on our way to Antarctica!

After having done some domestic chores such as setting up internet, labelling water bottles and thermal mugs, we made our way to the dining room to enjoy a delicious dinner, prepared by our talented galley team and served by our smiley and welcoming waiting staff.

The last task was the jacket swap, so that we are prepared for whatever weather Antarctica may bring.

So, we’d had our last glimpse of town life, knowing that from now on we are more likely to see a colony of penguins than a crowd of people.

Together we total 100 passengers (25 Americans, 42 Australians, 11 Canadians, 15 from the UK, 1 German, 1 from Israel, 1 from France, 1 from South Africa, and 4 from New Zealand,) along with 78 crew from all around the globe.

Our 20 strong Expedition Team have variety of specialities including polar exploration, mountaineering, skiing, glaciology, geology, history, marine biology, ornithology, photography, medicine, kayaking and snowshoeing.

After the journey to reach the *Greg Mortimer*, it’s time to kick back, breathe in the sea air, and get excited for the next 19 days of adventure!



# At sea

DAY 2 | Tuesday 29 November 2022

Position at 0600 on 29 November

Latitude: 54°23.3'S

Longitude: 063°54.7'W

Course: 058°

Speed: 14.3 knots

Wind Speed: WSW 4

Barometer: 1002

Air Temp: 5° 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

Our first full day at sea! Late in the evening, we sailed out of the Beagle Channel and literally dropped off our Argentinian pilot before Captain Oleg carefully steered us around the tip of South America and out into the South Atlantic Ocean.

With a following sea, we were rocked gently to sleep waking early the following morning with no land in sight. Graham woke us up with a gentle wakeup call before we devoured a delicious breakfast prepared by our galley team.

First up was Graham's IAATO briefing to prepare us for going ashore at South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. We learnt about IAATO (International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators) of which Aurora is a founding member. This organisation provides us with governance to ensure our voyage to these parts of our frozen planet considers the protection of this unique landscape and the species that call Antarctica home.

Next on the itinerary, Graham explained the correct procedures when embarking and disembarking Zodiacs. We learnt about the 'three step' system, first step Zodiac rubber using the seaman's grip, then onto the pontoon, then onto the Zodiac floor. It'll soon become second nature. Dani then stepped us through the Citizen Science program onboard, and the variety of programs that we can get involved in – from HappyWhale to microplastic surveys.

Our activities finished for the morning – or so we thought. Fin whales and pilot whales! Dani was in her element and spotted a pod of 20 pilot whales including two calves. We raced to the Observation Deck and revelled in the beautiful day outside.

Lunch, a brief siesta, but no rest for the weary. Ben delivered his lecture: 'A mercifully brief history of the Falkland Islands.' We learnt about the historic township of Stanley, the Falklands' bloody history and the eclectic population



# Stanley, Falkland Islands

DAY 3 | Wednesday 30 November 2022

Position at 0700 on 30 November

Latitude: 51°39'9"S

Longitude: 057°39'9"W

Course: 297°

Speed: 10.9 knots

Wind Speed: W 5

Barometer: 1016

Air Temp: 5° C

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

—Robert Cushman Murphy

As we snaked through the narrows into Port Stanley, the overnight pulse of the South Atlantic fell away. The anchors dropped with the same old click-and-roar that has marked the arrival of ships in this harbour thousands of times since first settlement in the 1840s. Reminders of that history can still be seen today, in the carcasses of wrecked ships along the waterfront of the town.

We came to appreciate the reason for the proliferation of wrecked vessels as we prepared for our first landing with winds blowing 40 knots, gusting to 50 plus knots. Layering up for the first time, getting ready in lifejackets and waterproofs, it soon became a matter of 'hurry up and wait'. The scout boat that was sent out to try the run into the town jetty returned with a soaked Expedition Team advance guard. As the winds continued unabated, a serious swell soon developed, and made for precarious Zodiac conditions. So difficult were the conditions that Captain Kelptenko and his officers in the bridge had to work hard to keep the ship in position, by 'jogging' the ship with alternation of thrusters and engine. At one point the anchors started to drag, and the ship had to be repositioned.

The waiting-game lasted for several hours, a decision on whether to attempt a mass landing hinging on the forecast for a drop in the wind for early mid-afternoon. As if on cue and at the last possible moment, the wind moderated, the swell reduced and the sun shone. A good proportion forayed into the Zodiacs, and landed more or less dry onto the Stanley Hard. Walking through the town to the cathedral and museum engaged many, while some took a taxi ride to Gypsy Cove, and others found their way to various taverns, cafes and shops for refreshment. Caracara or 'Johnny Rooks' as the Falklanders call these raptors, swooped and hovered on the wind, while kelp gulls and steamer ducks grazed on the shoreline. By 5.30 pm all were back on board, and the bridge lost no time in 'winning' the anchors and heading out to sea again. Back through the narrows we went, past the dunes of Gypsy Cove shining brilliant in the dying sun, with a lone remnant artillery silhouetted on the ridge, a poignant reminder of the suffering that had come to this place not so long ago. With another stupendous meal to hand, a restless swell welcomed us onto the mighty Southern Ocean, and on our way to South Georgia.



# At Sea

DAY 4 | Thursday 01 December 2022

Position at 0700 on 1 December

Latitude: 52°10'6" S

Longitude: 053°26'3" W

Course: 100°

Speed: x 13.1 knots

Wind Speed: NW 7

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 6°C

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

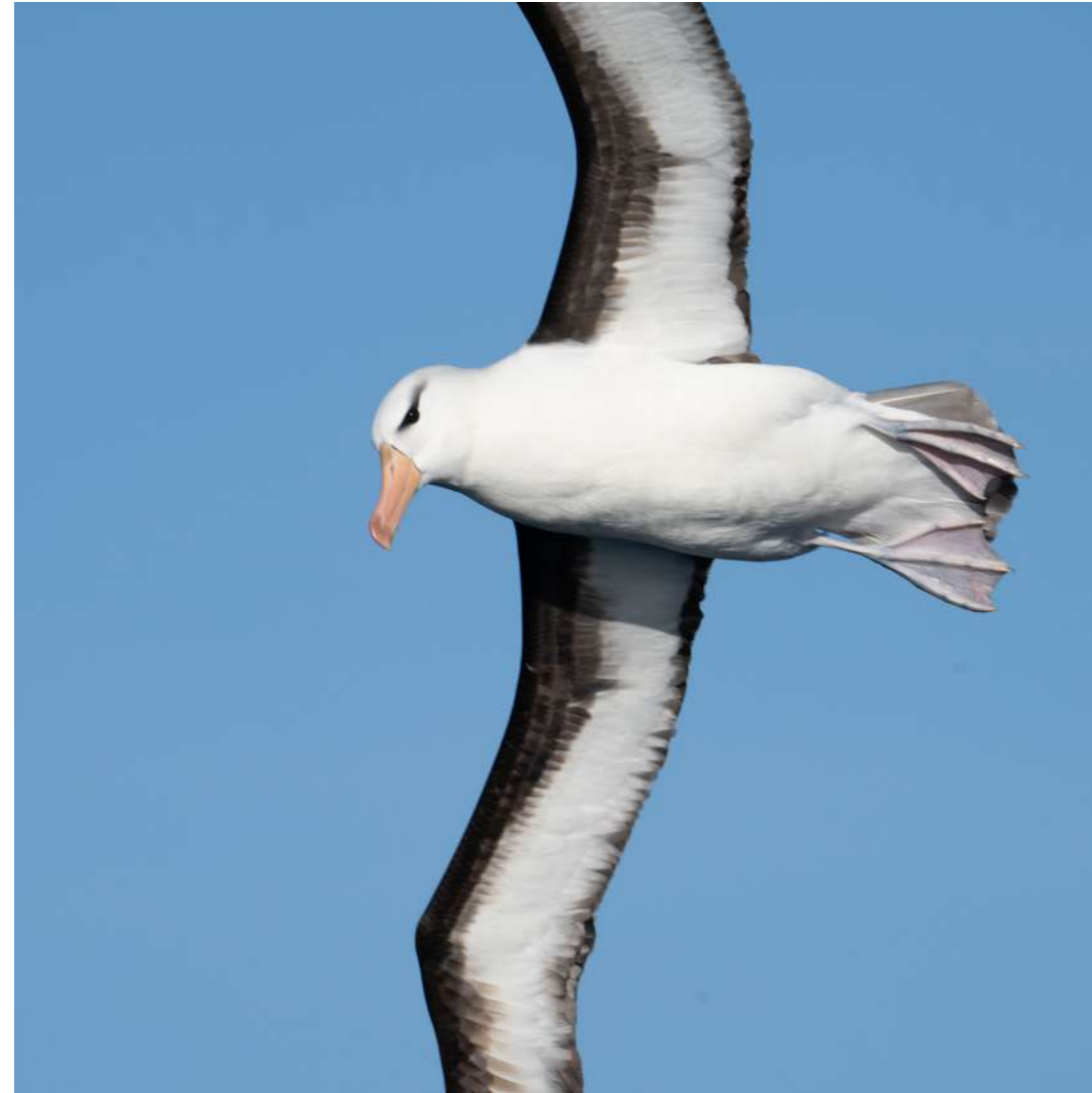
—David G. Campbell, *The Crystal Desert*, 1992

We started the morning with a lovely, gentle rolling sea with up to a 4-5 metre swell at times and following seas that made for quite comfortable travel on the blue water. The combination of favorable seas and the high tech X-BOW® of the *Greg Mortimer* made for a very comfortable trip today. The weather for our crossing from the Falkland Islands to South Georgia has been relatively consistent in this range of conditions, light winds from the northwest, with little change forecast on the horizon, so yay for us! We are sitting to the north of some very rowdy wind conditions on the Drake passage which hopefully will have abated by the time we get to crossing it. The Ocean Gods appear to be smiling on us so far, let's hope that keeps up.

The bird life has been distinctly quiet thus far on our open water voyage, but this is to be expected for our latitude and the time of year. If you have a keen eye and a bit of patience it is possible to spot the odd avian visitor to our airspace, but from here onwards we should start to see a little more activity in the skies which will be very exciting for the "birders" amongst us. And of course, soon enough the penguins will make an appearance which is very exciting.

In terms of activities on the ship we had a great time in the boot room detailing our muck boots and removing individual grains of sand to appease the biosecurity powers that be as well as doing our part in keeping South Georgia pristine. Then we went into a firestorm of fascinating lectures including seabirds, smart phone photography and a historical look at the sealing industry and South Georgia's heritage.

Other than that, we enjoyed a lovely day at sea with great food and plenty of opportunity to chat and tell stories, maybe meet new friends with a passion perhaps for photography or history and of course, the Antarctic beasts and birds are a hot topic of conversation. Finishing off the day with a very entertaining quiz night which provided a night of great laughter and learning. So popular in fact that there have been many requests for a rematch and repeat of the night's antics, so watch out for developments on this.



# Scotia Sea, Shag Rocks

DAY 5 | Friday 02 December 2022

Position at 0700 on 2 December

Latitude: 53°09'2" S

Longitude: 045°17'5" W

Course: 100°

Speed: 12.9 knots

Wind Speed: NNW 7

Barometer: 1016

Air Temp: 4°C

The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.

—St Augustine

Our final day at sea before we really get this party started!

Everyone woke up this morning to another beautiful day in the northern reaches of the Scotia Sea. Sunny weather, lots of sea birds, and big, beautiful swell that wasn't rocking the ship too much.

After breakfast most of the ship went and saw Dani talk about one of her big passions, pinnipeds (seals). We learned everything from the Elephant Seal Beachmasters to how Weddel Seals carve out their breathing holes in the ice with their teeth. I think everyone left excited to immerse themselves in the sealpocalypse we're about to enter tomorrow.

Before lunch the sea kayakers got together to finish their briefing where they learned about all the ins and outs of paddling in Antarctica. Next up was burger day at lunch.

Once our stomachs were full people headed off for a quick nap, gym session, or out on deck for some bird watching. Next up was a lecture by Laura on the rat eradication of South Georgia. It is absolutely mind-boggling how the South Georgia Heritage Trust actually pulled that off. . . An island so large, so mountainous, so glaciated, and so rugged and they managed to fully eradicate all rats by 2018. Wild!

A quick breather for everyone then we rolled into Ben's talk on the history of whaling in Antarctic waters. Ben did a fantastic job at showing off the decimation that the whaling industry had on populations of all sorts of whale species down here. It should be really interesting to get to Grytviken in a few days to see first-hand the size of that singular operation and the society that existed based around such a grotesque industry. It makes you wonder if people questioned what they were doing back then, or if they were simply oblivious to it.

At 4:00 pm we finally sighted land! Unfortunately, not landable land, but land nonetheless. Shag Rocks consists of a few jagged rocks jutting out of the ocean like fingers absolutely covered in bird guano. The light was magnificent for photographers and there were a tremendous amount and diversity of birds for the birders so there were heaps of people out on deck. The captain took us for a quick loop around the rocks to appreciate their rugged beauty before carrying on to South Georgia proper.



# Rosita Harbour | Right Whale Bay

DAY 6 | Sunday 03 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 3 December

Latitude: 53°09'2" S

Longitude: 045°17'5"W

Course: 100°

Speed: 12.9 knots

Wind Speed: NNW 7

Barometer: 1016

Air Temp: 4°C

Birds have it better than we do, in many ways, and here are three, with wings they fly by day and night, and never have a cancelled flight, with feathers they have clothes that always fit, in styles that never change a bit, and what we envy most, I'd say, with bills they never have to pay.

—Anonymous

Our first day at South Georgia after two days at sea and there was an air of excitement throughout the ship at breakfast. Conditions for our first Zodiac cruise around Rosita Harbour were reasonable for South Georgia with light winds and the temperature balmy at 1 degree centigrade. The kayakers and photographers set the pace with the rest of the passengers close behind.

From the safety of our Zodiacs we watched in awe colonies of fur seals as the large territorial bulls fought furiously with each other to guard their harem surrounded by the tiniest of black pups. Fur seals were nearly wiped out by sealers between 1786 and 1912, but now numbers are growing rapidly. The world population of fur seals is now 6 million and those on South Georgia account for 95 per cent of those. We spotted some "blondies" - about one fur seal in 800 is cream coloured. Pipits are no longer a rare sight after the rat eradication. The other endemic bird, the South Georgia pintail, was also seen. The morning remained cloudy with some drizzle and wind.

After warming up over a tasty lunch back on board we set off for our first landing on South Georgia at Right Whale Bay. As we made our way there by Zodiac the sun shone for the first time today and transformed our surroundings into something otherworldly. Fur seals gathered on the beach made our progress to the nearby king penguin colony interesting, to say the least. Staff made a corridor through the "fur zone" and several groups hiked past growling males, tiny newborn pups (one was still wet), skuas and scattered king penguins to the colony with a waterfall as the backdrop. No one was disappointed. The towering snow-capped mountains and sunshine glimmering through clouds completed the stunning scene.

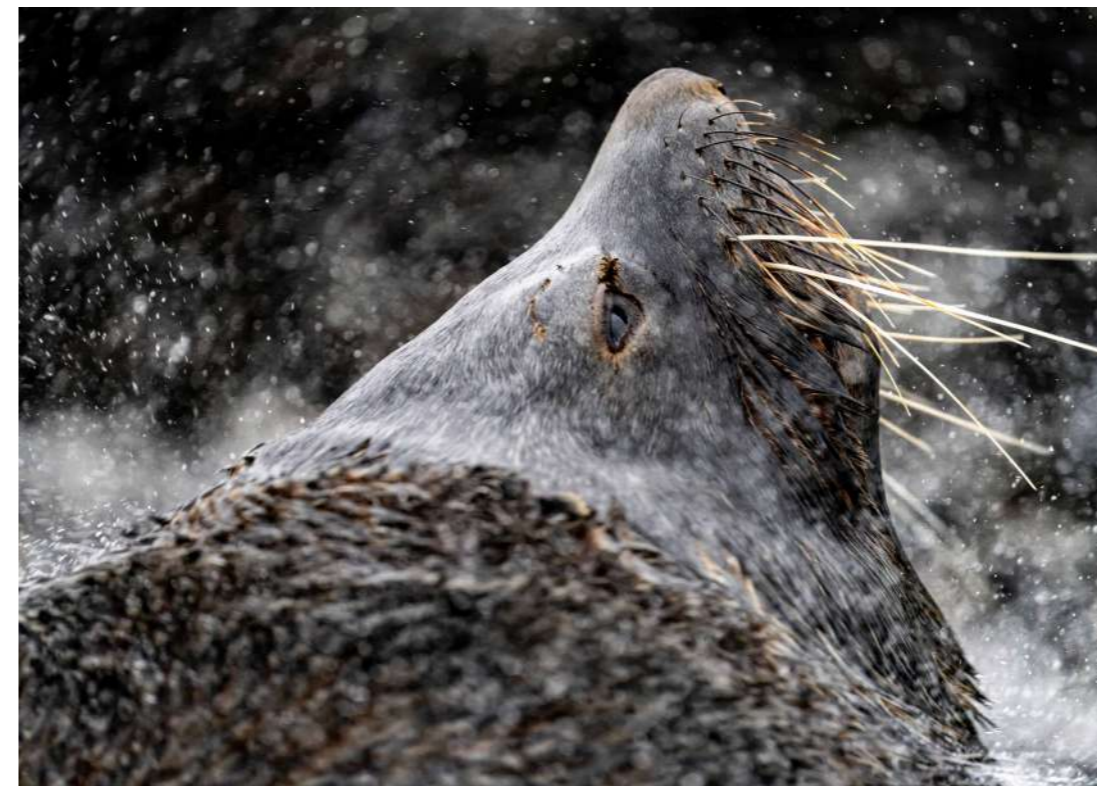
On return to the ship, we were all pinching ourselves at the dream come true today.

Fun facts:

The penguin chicks we saw today are nicknamed "oakum boys". This derives from the dark brown colour of the waterproof corking between seams of planks on the old sealers ships.

An unusual feature of the king penguin is their high rate of divorce. Long-lived birds, like penguins and albatrosses, usually stay faithful to their mates. In king penguins, the divorce rate can be as high as 80 per cent. The reason seems to be that because penguins arriving for the breeding season have limited food reserves, they can't afford to wait for a mate that may return late.

Facts from Conrad's recap talk about the wandering albatross: they have a 4 metre wingspan and live 70 years. They cover 5-600 miles a day. During their lifetime they fly a whopping 15 million miles, which is the equivalent of 18 round trips to the moon!





# Godthul | Grytviken

DAY 7 | Sunday 4 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 4 December

Latitude: 54°14'5" S

Longitude: 036°11'5"W

Course: 321°

Speed: 5.1 knots

Wind Speed: N 1-2

Barometer: 1006

Air Temp: 4°C

What the ice gets, the ice keeps.

—Shackleton to Worsley and Wild in July 1915 as the *Endurance* was beset by the ice of the Weddell Sea.

From the decks of the *Greg Mortimer*, there didn't appear to be much room to move at Godthul, an old whaling station on South Georgia's north coast. After a path was cleared through a maze of blustering, whinnying fur seals, it was clear there was plenty of evidence of the old trade still ashore: rusting whale oil barrels, and the bones of long-dead cetaceans lying around like the wreckage of ancient ships.

The reason for the visit wasn't to focus on South Georgia's dreadful old industry, but instead to enjoy a stiff hike through the tussock grass, which was led by Jane and Dan, and left most people needing to remove some layers in the mild weather.

Despite many finding it hard going under the weight of heavy camera gear, no one regretted summiting a ridge that offered views out across a gentoo penguin colony full of new-born chicks, out across a bay where the *Greg Mortimer* waited for our return.

If Godthul offered a hint at South Georgia's gory past, Grytviken demonstrated just what an enormous industry had once been here. Vast tankers for storing oil and blubber still stand in the town, along with rusting machines used to disassemble massive whales into profit for far-off European corporations. Testimony from George Marston, who visited South Georgia with Ernest Shackleton, gives a good sense of just how nightmarish a place Grytviken once was: "There was no escaping it. In the bay dead whales floated, on the shore their carcasses rotted, and the beach was thick with their bleaching bones. We breathed the smell of whale day and night, and fed on whale meat in company with the dogs."

Thankfully the vile business has long since stopped and today the settlement acts as South Georgia's capital. Before being allowed to go ashore, we were inspected by island officials looking for traces of seeds and other contaminants that might endanger the fragile ecosystem. Several days of worry were finally let go as we passed with 98 per cent success, and were welcomed ashore for the chance to explore the old station, follow local guides on tours, or simply visit the excellent museum and shop.

Some chose to visit the old Norwegian church at the top of the town, ringing its mournful bell as rain fell, but whether there was interest in religion or not, we all found ourselves gathered at the graveside of a stranger.



# Fortuna Bay | Stromness

DAY 8 | Monday 05 December 2022

Position at 0700 on 05 December

Latitude: 54°07'4" S

Longitude: 036°35'8" W

Course: 299°

Speed: 5 knots

Wind Speed: W F5

Barometer: 1012

Air Temp: 2°C

Visually and emotionally, the island of South Georgia overwhelms. At first glance, it resembles the far South Atlantic branch of Dr Doolittle's fantastic zoo: a profusion of captivating animals that quickly transforms even the most discriminating observer into a raving anthropomorphic.

—Ron Naveen, Wild Ice

Three days deep into our South Georgia adventures with hardly a wet glove in sight is quite a remarkable run.

Settled weather prevailed, with the odd punchy gust to remind us of where we were – on a tiny island surrounded by large ocean in the Roaring Forties.

The morning saw us anchored in Whistle Cove/Fortuna Bay, to head across for a shore landing to a moderate sized King penguin colony with plenty of 'Oakum Boys' in amongst them.

"Fortuna-ty" the fur zone was relatively mellow, and soon enough the golf course appeared out the back, dotted with wandering kings and the odd elephant weaner, making for easy travel to the main rookery.

Sea kayakers launched for a morning paddle, and had an encounter that will forever remain in the realm of impressive dinner time stories. As they were cruising near the shore line observing the seals, one resident fur seal seemed to also fancy the idea of kayaking and launched itself onto the bow of a boat, promptly depositing its current helms people into the water. All three ended up in the waves lapping ashore and no seals or humans were harmed in the process.

It was a quick transition through lunch into the afternoon's outing for around 30 passengers who were taking part in the Shackleton Walk across to Stromness.

This historic piece of terrain was originally travelled by Shackleton, Worsely and Crean, on 20 May 1916, and that is where the similarities with us end.

Their adventure is seared in the history books of incomprehensible stories of survival, which we can only barely imagine from our comfortable existence.

The weather was idyllic – for this part of the world. The odd gust to remind us of where we were but plenty of

blue sky and rugged mountain landscapes to keep even the most amateur of photographers happy.

A pause at Lake Crean, and then again at the view out to Stromness, as the gumboot clad team negotiated their way down to the valley floor and out to the coast and waiting ship, around three hours later.

Some industrious gentoo penguins have created a nesting zone up on the old moraine mounds, now covered in tussock and moss, and have transformed the space into a perfectly adequate home.

For the rest of the expeditioners, the afternoon involved relocating the ship around into Stromness Harbour, going for a Zodiac cruise and/or shore landing to Stromness.

The derelict whaling station there is now off limits due to asbestos being rife and the severely structurally-impaired rusting iron, that in a gust of wind could happily turn into a samurai sword.

But the seals were the star feature of the landing, with pups being born and plenty of reproductive activity going on, as enthusiastically recounted by Dani in the evenings recap.

Thanks to all those who shared in Shackleton's footsteps today – a pleasure to walk the journey with you all, and long live your gumboot adventures.



# Salisbury Plains | Prion Island

DAY 9 | Tuesday 6 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 06 December

Latitude: 54°00'6" S

Longitude: 03702'6"W

Course: 277°

Speed: 6.5 knots

Wind Speed: WF7

Barometer: 1003

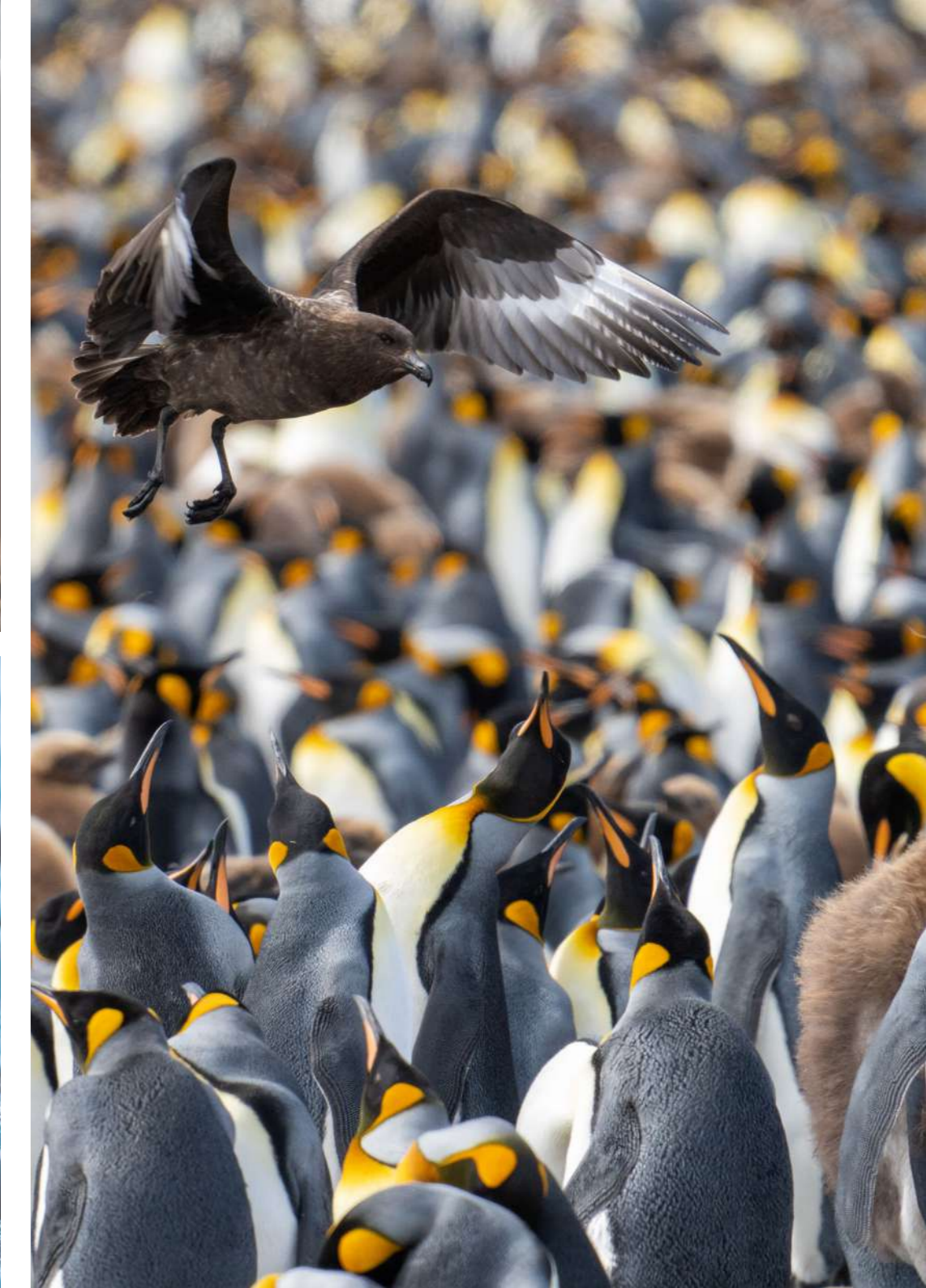
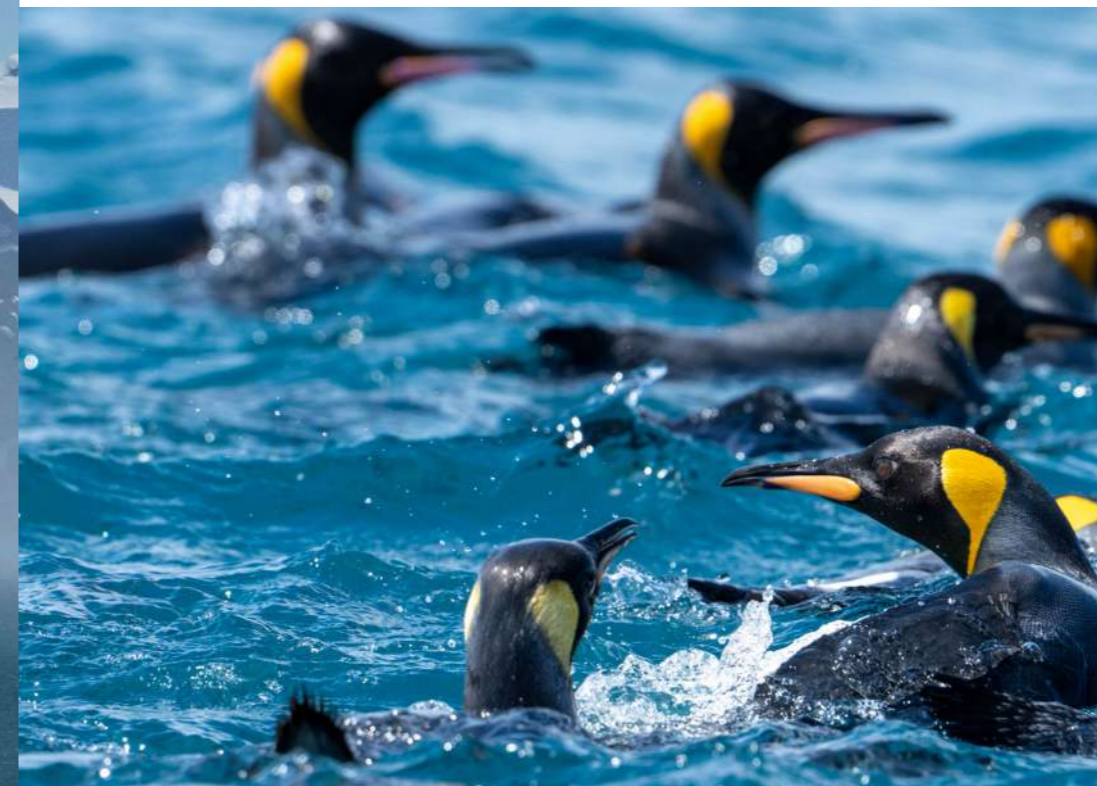
Air Temp: 2°C

I am getting better every day. I can now give some good advice as a result of this experience ... Try to eat as much fresh meat as possible.

—Roald Amundsen

After a hearty breakfast on board the *Greg Mortimer*, we stepped ashore at Salisbury Plain. What a breath-taking sight. While we have seen king penguins and fur seals at several landings on South Georgia, the sheer density of wildlife was astounding. As far as the eye could see, fur seal hareems were scattered along the beach and plain, each big male guarding his hareem of females and adorable little black, fluffy pups, some only days old. Intermingled amongst the fur seals were elephant seal weaners (pups which have been recently weaned from their mothers) with their big brown eyes and roly-poly bodies. We wonder how such cute babies can turn in to such big burly males with their long ugly nose and colossal muscly body. Groups of king penguins could also be spotted making their way to-and-fro from the water, or quietly undertaking their yearly moult. The freshly moulted penguins look so handsome with their creamy white bellies, dark grey backs and gold neck markings. This countershading is an important adaptation which helps them to camouflage when they are at sea. For a predator looking up from below, the light belly blends in with the lighter surface water, while for a predator looking down from above, the dark upper body blends in with the deep dark ocean depths. We were able to freely wander across the plain, photographing the wildlife against the stunning backdrop of the snow-capped mountains and glaciers – the sensational South Georgia view we were all hoping for. After a leisurely stroll we found ourselves at the edge of a huge king penguin colony – over 220,000 birds spread out across the landscape. Groups of fluffy brown chicks wound their way through the adult birds, making an intricate pattern viewed from above by the few adventurous souls who hiked up the hill behind the colony. This birds-eye view gave a great perspective of the sheer size of this colony.

After lunch we visited Prion Island which must be up there as one of the most phenomenal wildlife experiences in the world. The beach was a crush of fighting fur seals, barking pups and basking elephant seals. At the back of the beach gentoo penguins were proudly posing with their eggs and new chicks on top of the tussock. During our Zodiac cruise, we were also thrilled to see the sky alive with all manner of seabirds – black-browed albatross, white-chinned petrels, kelp gulls, giant petrels and prions.



# Gold Harbour | At Sea

DAY 10 | Wednesday 7 December 2022

Position at 0500 on 07 December

Latitude: 54°35'3" S

Longitude: 035°50'0" W

Course: Docked

Speed: Docked

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

Few would have chosen to wake at 4.30am for a landing, but when three of the more senior members of the expedition team insist that Gold Harbour is their favourite of all landings in South Georgia, it was always going to be worth the effort.

With pastries in our bellies, we made the early landing on a remarkably calm sea. Travelling so close to the austral summer solstice meant that the sun was already high in the sky by the time we were ashore, and it seemed most of the thousands of animals thronging the beach had been awake for many hours before us.

After eight previous landings, the sight of tens of thousands of king penguins still had the ability to astonish, but the real delight here lay with the pinnipeds. The belligerent and wearisome fur seals were still here, but in such small numbers that they could be largely ignored. Instead, we found ourselves deep in elephant country.

The elephant seal is the largest South Georgian resident, and while the most humongous males had already left for sea, there were still thousands of tonnes of blubber hauled out on Gold Harbour's black sand.

Great mounds of bachelors lay on top of one another, waiting for the latest round of facial flatulence to set off another quarrel. Once in a while, these giants would rear up and slam into each other in a sort of armless wrestle, practising their clumsy combat ahead of the day when they will be locked in a very real battle for survival as they bid to become beachmaster.

If there was potential for violence among those adults, it was hard to imagine a more different world than that inhabited by the elephant seal pups. Named weaners because they have been brutally weaned by their newly absent mothers, these pups wriggled and jiggled their way into the heart of almost every person on the ship. It was impossible to feel any malice when looking into their enormous eyes, and doubly so when we learned that they were approaching us in the hopes that we would become their surrogate parents. Before long it was difficult to know if the weaners wanted to adopt us or if it was the other way around.

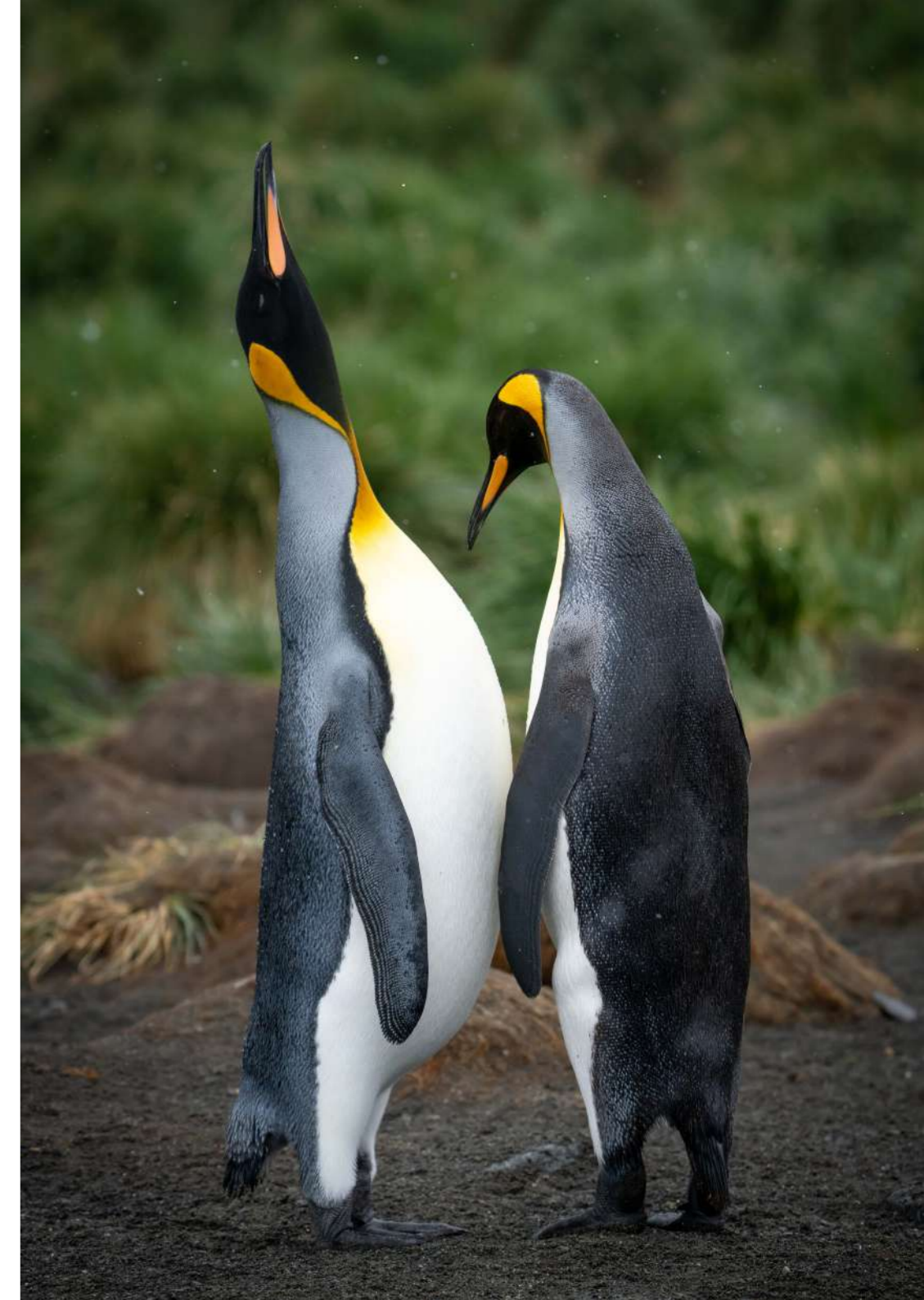
Wind Speed: N2

Barometer: 994

Air Temp: 0°C

Snowy led an energetic group up a ridgeline to find sooty albatross nests, but as the weather turned cold and snow began to fall across the beach, most were content to spend time with the adorable pups, finding peace in their eyes before what we knew would be a tumultuous crossing to the Antarctic Peninsula.

The pups would be our final sights on South Georgia, offering a huge dose of cuteness in a place more often associated with hardship. There are certain things the archipelago taught us over our five days of exploration: that weather isn't always against us, that fur seals are not our friends, and that absolutely everyone loves a fat weaner.



# At Sea

DAY 11 | Thursday 08 December 2022

Position at 0700 on 8 December

Latitude: 57°36'2" S

Longitude: 040°31'5"W

Course: 239°

Speed: 12.9 knots

Wind Speed: NNW 4/5

Barometer: 988

Air Temp: 0°C

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

—Aspley Cherry-Garrard

After five consecutive active and highly productive days in South Georgia, culminating in the previous day's 4.30am wakeup call it was a change of pace for many to rise at whatever time took their fancy, and to enjoy a leisurely breakfast, or even sleep-in.

At 10am our expert ornithologist Ryan kicked off our 'at sea' interpretative entertainment with a wonderful talk on penguins. Ryan's lecture began with a description of the adaptations of these birds to their cold and watery environment: wings that evolved to flippers, with flattened bones and major joints fused, to act as high propulsion paddles in the water. Salt glands under their eyes that allow penguins to drink sea water. Interlocking feathers that are unusually stiff and densely packed, which trap air next to the skin that the body warms and waterproofs the body. We have already seen penguins rearranging their feathers by preening. Penguins 'porpoise' out of the water allowing them to breathe without reducing their swimming momentum. Their short legs, set well back on the body to maintain streamline in the water, also serve to propel them over snow when tobogganing on their bellies, and are bestowed with strong webbed claws to grip on ice. Their long brush-tail acts as a rudder in the water, and their beaks are full of spiky papillae that help grip slippery fish or grill.

We also learnt a lot about safe penguin handling from Ryan, mainly to treat every penguin as if it's loaded and that it's best to simply avoid handling them at all cost. Ryan finished his lecture with a summary of the lifecycles and breeding biology of the three smaller penguin species that we are likely to see on the Antarctic Peninsula in a few days time.

After lunch, our charismatic historian Ben gave us an overview of the early exploration of the southern continent, providing a particularly fascinating insight into one of the earliest scientific explorations of the Antarctic Peninsula - Adrien de Gerlache's expedition aboard the Belgica. Hailing from the less renowned naval power of Belgium, his was the first expedition to overwinter, beset in the ice. Many of the Peninsula's famous landmarks owe their name to this expedition, and one of the most eminent polar explorers of all time, Roald Amundsen, learnt and refined many of his skills for polar survival on this voyage, together with his friend the doctor Frederick Cook.

In the afternoon, Max and Ryan went up on to Deck 8 supported by a few hardy birders to conduct a sea-bird

survey. They spotted southern fulmars, cape petrels and prions. At other points during the day, a light-mantled albatross and a snowy petrel were spotted around the ship.

Later our wonderful marine biologist and baleen whale specialist Dani gave us a highly informative and pertinent talk on the "Whales of the Southern Ocean" and what to look out for to identify the different species of baleen whales in these waters. It was fascinating to learn about their migratory routes, their reproductive cycle, the evolution of their anatomy and their morphological adaptations to thrive in this environment. Dani showed us some stunning and extremely rare footage and stills of a humpback calf being born and feeding!

In true serendipity we were treated to a pod of about 10-15 baleen whales swimming close by to the ship a little later on during the recap.

We also got to experience a 360 degree close-up view of a large tabular iceberg, likely originating from one of the Larsen ice-shelves, that was estimated as being about 45 metre high and probably 250 metre in length above the water-line!



# At Sea

DAY 12 | Friday 9 December 2022

## Position at 0600 on 9 December

Latitude: 61°03'5" S

Longitude: 054°47'6" W

Course: 258°

Speed: 2.5 knots

Wind Speed: S F6

Barometer: 999

Air Temp: -5°C

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

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

Even though we spent the day at sea, it was full of events. The ocean was relatively calm, and we didn't feel too much movement thanks to the great stabilization system of our vessel. At 09:15am we saw a massive pile of brash ice on the port side of the ship – an obvious sign that meant we were getting closer to Antarctica! Another sign we noticed – the ship was gradually covered in fog which appeared because of the difference between water and air temperature.

At 09:30am we all gathered in the lecture theatre to clean all our gear after multiple landings in South Georgia. It is critically important not to transfer anything from South Georgia to Antarctica, that's why we need to be thorough.

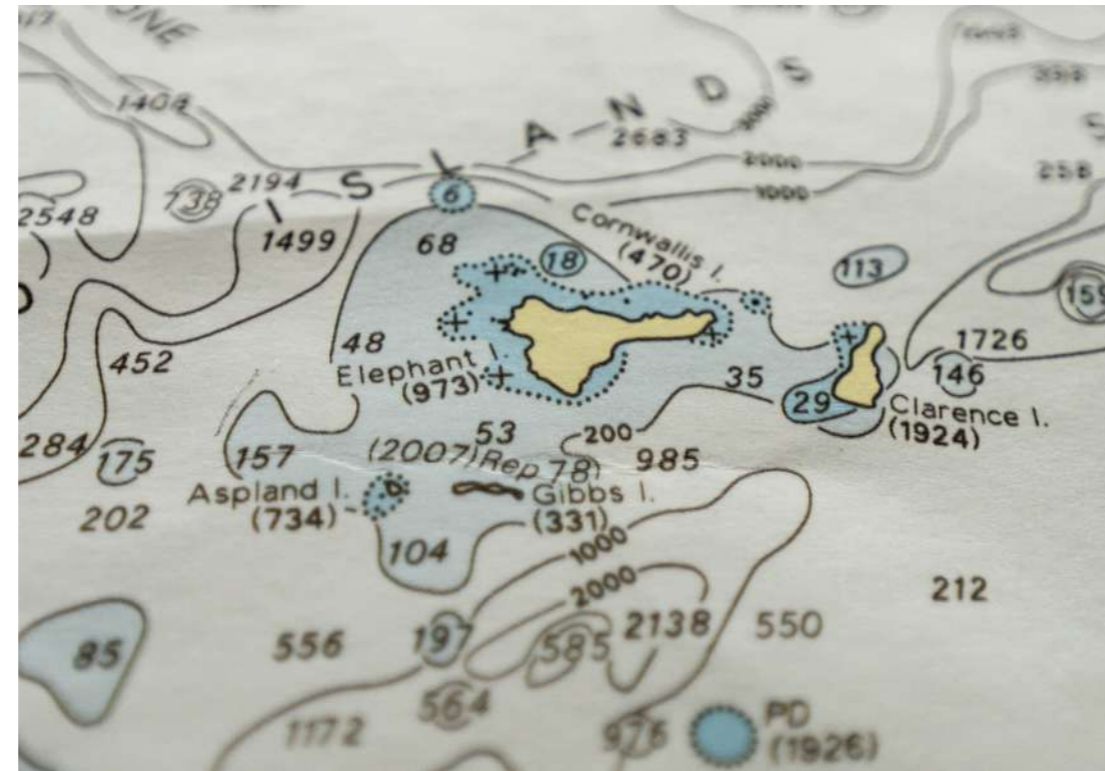
The delicious lunch was followed by Russell's lecture about one of his main passions – phytoplankton and most importantly, zooplankton. Most of the time people pay more attention to bigger marine animals like whales or seals, but there is so many amazing small creatures hiding under the surface of the ocean.

Meanwhile, despite the poor visibility and snow, dedicated birdwatchers gathered on upper decks with Ryan and Max to observe birds following our vessel. Cape petrels, Antarctic prions, blackbrow albatrosses and southern fulmars were spotted.

At 2.30pm Jack held a lecture on Antarctic politics. It was interesting to discover so many new facts about interactions between countries on the Antarctic continent – bases, icebreakers, even airport and several overlapping claims. Many things have changed a lot since the year 1961 when The Antarctic Treaty came into force. Jack helped us to get some understanding of this process.

And of course, it would not be fair to forget to mention Peter Eastway's amazing presentation of the movie *Tales by Light* where he and his team visited places of the famous Shackleton Expedition to South Georgia and Antarctic taking breathtaking photos. Peter's expedition was based on *Polar Pioneer*, the old ship of Aurora Expeditions. The lecture was followed by many useful photography tips.

The passage from South Georgia to Antarctic Peninsula takes some time and Scotia Sea might be not be the most welcoming place on Earth, but it is impossible to deny its beauty. We will remember the amazing sunset pouring golden light on the icebergs and dozens of seabirds following our ship as we are approaching Elephant Island, our next stop on this incredible journey.



# Elephant Island | At Sea

DAY 13 | Saturday 10 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 10 December

Latitude: 61°03'5" S

Longitude: 054°47'6" W

Course: 258°

Speed: 2.5 knots

Wind Speed: S F6

Barometer: 999

Air Temp: -5°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*

This morning was our first official day in Antarctica, and what a wonderful start to our adventure here on the southern continent it was! We arrived at Elephant Island and were fortunate to have light winds and calm seas, so we started out the day with a brief Zodiac cruise around Point Wild. This is the historic location where Shackleton's men were stranded for four months while they waited for him to return with a rescue boat. It's one thing to listen to the stories of their incredible hardships, but to see this rugged, rocky and remote location in person really puts it into perspective just how difficult it must have been to survive here in this inhospitable place.

After the Zodiac cruise, the expedition team spotted whale blows on the horizon so we turned the ship and approached in their direction. To our surprise, it was a super pod with hundreds of fin whales mixed with humpback whales. We spent half an hour surrounded by these massive animals, which were feeding on krill and plankton and lunge feeding all around the ship. It was one of the most impressive whale watching spectacles many of us have ever seen. Fin whales are the second largest mammals on earth and were surfacing just metres away from the ship, giving us amazing views at these massive creatures. Not only were we lucky enough to have incredible views of the whales, but there were also hundreds of albatross and cape petrels flying around the whales, picking out leftover krill and landing on the surface of the ocean to eat any leftovers they could manage.

This has been an unbelievable start to our trip down to Antarctica, and we look forward to what the rest of this continent has to offer over the next few days! For the rest of the day, we head back out to sea as we continue our journey down south to the peninsula for tomorrow's operations. Just before lunch, we had a Q&A with some of the ships officers to learn more about the operations on board (like how do we keep the salad fresh, and how much water is produced on board every day). In the afternoon, our expedition leader Graham gave a fabulous lecture on his kayaking adventures down in South Georgia, followed by a lecture by Jamie about photojournalism adventures in polar regions.



# Mikkelsen Harbour | Cierva Cove

DAY 14 | Sunday 11 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 11 December

Latitude: 63°51'3"S

Longitude: 060°28'7"W

Course: 190°

Speed: 10.7 knots

The three great elemental sounds in nature are the sound of rain, the sound of wind in a primeval wood, and the sound of outer ocean on a beach. I have heard them all, and of the three elemental voices, that of the ocean is the most awesome, beautiful and varied.

—Henry Beston

In the morning we dropped anchor at Mikkelsen Harbour and disembarked right in front of the hut of the Argentinean base which was closed as usual. It was a great chance for people to see the dynamics of the gentoo penguin's nesting. These will nest in colonies. The photographers had a field day since they got a chance to use all their lenses. This was due to the fact that we had a very sunny day with no wind and they were able to change lenses without dust particles getting into their camera bodies. Jane and Ben led the snowshoers to the other side of the bay. They led a hike over a slope that allowed all to experience how it may have felt in a bygone era to explore the unknown heart of the continent. Naturally, people's minds were transported to the days of Amundsen and Shackleton. Several of the group had not snowshoed before and it was a new experience for them. From the main landing, everybody could see penguins high up on the mountain and wondered why, before realising it was our fellow expeditioners. Weddell seals were seen on the back of the island, and everyone had plenty of time to view them in situ. Seeing them from land provided an opportunity to use tripods for photography which allows to play around with the stop and shutter speed settings on the camera. This changes the depth of field, and it is a way to blur the background or even make everything in focus. Also, we had great views of massive pieces of ice falling off the glacier and creating waves that reached the opposite shore to where we were.

In the afternoon we enjoyed a great Zodiac cruise around Cierva Cove. There were humpback whales popping up through the brash ice which indicates to us that these waters are rich in krill. Humpback whales alternate travel to the tropics to give birth. Populations from the northern and the southern hemisphere do this, never meeting as this happens during their corresponding winter. Antarctic brown skuas were flying everywhere everywhere; they're known to scavenge in penguin colonies. They are also known by their kleptoparasite behaviour, meaning they will harass that they will also harass seabirds until they stress their victim so much that they regurgitate their catch. Then they quickly eat it as it reaches the water, land or sometimes even in mid-air. It can be a tricky group of birds to identify since they breed among other members of their gens and produce hybrids that can produce offspring that can then. Examples of this happen between South polar skua and brown skua or Falkland's skua and Chilean skua from the mainland since some Falkland skuas make it to mainland South America. This has been confirmed by studying the genetic material in these species

Wind Speed: E F2

Barometer: 1012

Air Temp: 0°C

Antarctic terns were busy picking their catch right at the surface of the water and taking flight immediately after.

The weather was an important factor that made this a perfect day on the Antarctic Peninsula.





# Orne Harbour | Paradise Bay

DAY 15 | Monday 12 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 12 December

Latitude: 64°34'1" S

Longitude: 062°26'9" W

Course: 228°

Speed: 3.6 knots

The cold, dry climate and dust-free air of Antarctica mean that there is a complete lack of haze. In such conditions, as many explorers have discovered to their cost, distant objects seem close and mirages are common.

—John May, *The Greenpeace Book of Antarctica*, 1988

What a fantastic Antarctic day! We awoke early in the morning in ice-filled Orne harbor to tranquil water, clear skies, and stunning mountain and glacier views. Sharp-eyed early risers spotted a minke whale around the ship before breakfast. When the time came for our first outing of the day, dense ice in the bay thwarted a planned landing and hike to a penguin colony. Cold temperatures in recent days had frozen together clumps of brash ice from the nearby glaciers to form sheets of ice covering most of the water's surface between the ship and our intended landing site.

The Antarctic Peninsula had other plans for us however - while we waited for Graham to access the ice movements and decide on a 'Plan B', our friendly neighborhood minke whale became curious about the Zodiac drifting near the ship. The whale, which turned out to be a 9m adult male, repeatedly swam under and around Max and Ryan's Zodiac, displaying what can only be described as curiosity. As word spread, more and more passengers and crew flocked to the ship's port side until every railing was filled by those enjoying the view.

Max slowly motored the Zodiac nearer the ship, hoping the whale's playful inquisitiveness would draw it closer to the enthusiastic onlookers, and this effort was rewarded by more than 30 minutes of incredible views of the minke through crystal clear water! More Zodiacs were launched, and many were able to climb on board one of these vessels to get eye-level views of the whale. Coming on the heels of our super-pod of humpback and fin whales several days ago, this experience left even the most seasoned expedition staff in awe of these great spectacles of nature that we've shared on this voyage.

Our Zodiac cruise ended with the call for that frigid Aurora tradition, the Polar Plunge! 39 passengers and staff donned swimwear and dodged icebergs to jump into the sub-zero water of the bay. Most scrambled immediately for the ladder, although several paddled for a few moments to savor the chill. All found it to be invigorating and appreciated the sunny and warm conditions on deck.

After lunch, our intended route to Paradise Bay was full of ice so the captain took an alternative route, dodging icebergs among glacier-capped mountains reflected in still water under clear skies. We arrived at an anchorage

Wind Speed: ESE F3

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 2°C

off the coast of a currently uninhabited Argentine station, where we set foot on the Antarctic continent for the first time and climbed through unseasonably deep snow past gentoo penguin colonies to a scenic lookout. Snowshoers climbed higher, roped together with Jane and Dan for glacier travel, while kayakers and Zodiac cruisers were rewarded with calving glaciers, humpback whales, and views of weddell seals.

Our day ended in Paradise Bay with an outdoor BBQ on the top deck, prepared by the hard-working ship's crew during our day of exploration and adventure. Birthdays were celebrated and dances danced with a spectacular panorama of high mountain peaks flanked by glaciers that wind their river-like flows down to the sea. Less benign weather may await us, but today Antarctica was as welcoming as can be.



# Polar Plunge

DAY 15 | Monday 12 December 2022



# Neko Harbour | Port Lockroy/Jougla Point

DAY 16 | Tuesday 13 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 13 Dec

Latitude: 64°49'13"S

Longitude: 062°58'4"W

Course: 116°

Speed: 6.5 knots

Wind Speed: SE 3

Barometer: 1006

Air Temp: -1° C

Who would believe in penguins unless someone had seen them?

—Connor O'Brien

We awoke to another glorious day, with Neko Harbour bathed in sunshine. We had the opportunity to have both a hike ashore and a short Zodiac cruise in the bay. The hike took us through deep snow, up to a small rise where we had wonderful views out over the harbour which is backed by towering peaks and surrounded by heavily crevassed glaciers. These glaciers give us just a small taste of the 300 glaciers found across the Antarctic Peninsula.

From both the shore and the Zodiacs we were able to admire the gentoo penguins setting up their nests for the breeding season and flitting and flopping around in the water as they groomed themselves and played on the surface. While we were seeing gentoo chicks at South Georgia, here on the Peninsula we were only spotting the odd egg, partly due to the heavy snow preventing laying, and partly because the gentoos on the Peninsula have a contracted breeding cycle, fledging their chicks much later and much faster to fit breeding into the shorter summer. The Zodiacs ventured into the brash ice and found tiny storm petrels skimming over the water feeding on phytoplankton (Wilson's storm petrels are thought to be the most abundant birds on the planet!) and a minke whale feeding quietly amongst the bergs. The kayakers had another epic wildlife encounter, with four very playful minke whales diving beneath the Zodiacs and showering the kayakers with stinky-minke breath.

After a quick lunch we had a double landing at Port Lockroy and Jougla Point. Port Lockroy is a British post office and museum perched on the tiny Goudier Island in the Palmer Archipelago. Port Lockroy is the most southerly operational post office in the world, and so we were all kept busy scrawling post cards to our friends and family and buying keepsakes of our remarkable time in Antarctica. We also had a stroll around Jougla Point, wading again through thick snow, and home to another colony of gentoo penguins and also two stray chinstraps resting on the rocks!

Back on board for dinner and the adventures still weren't over. As we enjoyed our dinner, we began to transit the Lemaire Channel, also known as Kodak Crack for the spectacular photo opportunities of towering mountains and steep glaciers dropping down to a narrow channel filled with growlers and brash ice. The evening light on the peaks was lovely, and once again we were blessed with such mild weather we could stand on the outer decks and admire the view – as well as have our group photo for the trip taken – twice in fact!



# Useful Island | Fournier Bay

DAY 17 | Thursday 14 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 14 December

Latitude: 64°45'1"S

Longitude: 062°58'4"W

Course: 037°

Speed: 2.6 knots

Wind Speed: N F3

Barometer: 999

Air Temp: -3°C

Little do you know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.

—Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque*, 1881

Useful Island? Not. Exposed as it is in the Gerlache Strait, we found ourselves blown out, with a 20-30 knot breeze throwing up a tricky wind chop. Ice was also blocking the landing site, so we upped-sticks and were off to try our luck at Fournier Bay, a promisingly deep indentation in Anvers Island. This bay was probably first seen by a German Antarctic expedition in the 1870s, but was re-discovered and named in 1904 by Emile Charcot on his French Antarctic expedition. As we slide into the depths of the bay, the surrounding mountains hold the clouds from falling into the sea and we find perfect conditions - almost windless and glassy at the anchorage. Nine kayakers ventured out for their final Antarctic paddle, meanwhile the rest of us jumped into our trusty Zodiacs and sped out under lowering skies to see what Fournier had to show us. It was all about humpbacks, with an initial group that included a female and calf plus six others. The group eventually divided into two, and we were treated to some classic humpback behaviours: one spectacular breach, bubblenet feeding (or just blowing bubbles at times), a lot of fluking (tail displaying), diving and blowing, and finally a 'poonami'. Many of the characteristic 'fingerprints' on the tail flukes were photographed, and Dani emphasised that clear images can be sent to the researchers at [HappyWhale.com](http://HappyWhale.com) to build understanding of the movement and lifespans of these amazing cetaceans.

The wildlife bounty of Fournier Bay was augmented by a pair of chinstrap penguins, and a lone adie standing unconcernedly atop an icefloe. Over by the shore shags roosted and Antarctic terns cut and dived. Here also were some incredible ice cliffs, up to 80 metres high, full of ravines and ice caves which made us feel that we were sitting in the middle of a crevasse field. By late morning the snow clouds that had been hanging across the bay started to send down soft wet flakes. Amidst the steadily falling snow and dropping temperature, it was great to get back into the warmth of the *Greg Mortimer*.

Back on board, with another enticing lunch before us, we began the transit from one mighty continent to another. The long slow lobe of the swell held out an early promise of a relatively smooth passage across the Drake. Kayakers and snowshoers cleaned up and organised the gear, while it seemed that the rest of the ship took the opportunity to relax after a couple of intense days in the trumpet-blare of the Antarctic summer sun. The sun reappeared and with it the characteristic Southern Ocean seabirds – Antarctic petrels, prions, albatross, as we left Antarctica in our wake.



# At Sea

DAY 18 | Thursday 15 December 2022

Position at 0700 on 15 December

Latitude: 61°03'1"S

Longitude: 064°19'2"W

Course: 348°

Speed: 12.6 knots

Wind Speed: W 3/4

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: -1°C

Only the most careful planning .. and endless patience in working out the tiniest details of equipment, will ensure a fortunate outcome.

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

We woke this morning to reasonably calm seas as we made our way north across Drake Passage on our first full day at sea on our return crossing. As the morning went on it became pleasantly sunny and smooth, making the Captain's decision to leave the Antarctic Peninsula slightly early to ensure we missed approaching bad weather a very good one.

First up in the day was an entertaining presentation from Conrad on the migration of birds. As well as explaining the reasons for them traveling such long distances throughout their lives - to take advantage of good conditions, abundant food and long hours of daylight when breeding and to avoid unfavourable conditions when they're not - he also showed some of the species we've been seeing during the trip and explaining where and when they travel to different parts of the world.

After his talk it was a great opportunity to put some of his identification tips to good use and a small group joined Ryan and Max out in the sunshine on deck to do some Citizen Science with an eBird survey. With the calm conditions we were enjoying, it turned out not to be so popular with the seabirds and the number of citizen scientists outnumbered the number of birds counted! But even a very small number of sightings is valuable data for science, so it all helps.

After lunch it was time for Dani to tell us more about her favourite subject - whales. She explained that where whales were once hunted in huge numbers for their oil and to make other products, the focus today is more on conservation. And with increasing populations and public awareness, they now produce more income through whale-watching than they ever did from hunting. It's a great result for everyone, especially the whales.

Later we heard from Laura with an interesting look at what Antarctica might look like in the year 2050, with changing climatic conditions causing many changes in the environment and the resultant effects on the wildlife. It was a quiz to see who will be the winners and who will be the losers, but unfortunately it's most likely that the majority of species will be losers.

At recap it was Dani again, this time with a summary of all the Citizen Science projects we've done over the course of the trip. There were numerous eBird and cloud surveys, an interesting look at the changing sea water conditions near Neko Harbour through the season so far, with fluctuating phytoplankton levels and, of course, the numerous whales we've seen which she was able to check with the Happywhale database. Of the thirteen different individual Humpback whales we saw, nine had been sighted previously and four are new to science. We've done our bit to add to the body of scientific knowledge.

And finally, after dinner, one of our expeditioners, Steven Wyatt, gave a presentation on his successful attempt to climb Mt Everest. It was a fascinating look at an extremely tough challenge, which some said they were envious of and others decided was definitely not for them. It certainly didn't look as comfortable as life on the *Greg Mortimer*.



# At Sea

DAY 19 | Friday 16 December 2022

Position at 0700 on 16 December

Latitude: 56°35'1"S

Longitude: 065°51'7"W

Course: 350°

Speed: 8.4 knots

Wind Speed: NW 5

Barometer: 1015

Air Temp: 5°C

Yet I believe firmly there is a tract of land near the Pole, which is the source of all the ice spread over this vast Southern Ocean.

—Captain James Cook, January 1775

Among the many myths and legends surrounding Sir Francis Drake, there's an outstanding anecdote about him playing croquet. The great English man of war was enjoying the lawn game with some of his captains when news arrived that the mighty Spanish Armada, then one of the strongest navies ever assembled, was gathering in the English Channel ahead of an invasion. Drake was said to have acknowledged the missive, then carried on playing. For a man capable of extraordinary violence, he was calm.

Mercifully it was this side of the Drake Passage that the returning passengers of the *Greg Mortimer* were able to enjoy – not quite flawlessly calm, but largely unperturbed. As what were almost three weeks of travel came to an end, instructions were issued on checking out procedures and transfers.

By late afternoon, South America and the storied Cape Horn, the continent's final extremity, had come into view. Surrounded by mean-looking mountains and often buffeted by gales, it looks like a suitably dramatic terminus. Prior to the opening of the Panama Canal thousands of miles to the north, ships had to make the long and often arduous trip around the Cape. Consequently, there are dozens of shipwrecks in this region, but also many of the great names from maritime lore sailed around here: from Magellan to Shackleton to Drake himself. A young Charles Darwin followed suit aboard HMS Beagle 200 years later in 1832. His writing at the time paints a suitably dramatic scene: "Cape Horn, however, demanded his tribute, and before night sent us a gale of wind directly in our teeth. We stood out to sea, and on the second day again made the land, when we saw on our weather-bow this notorious promontory in its proper form – veiled in a mist, and its dim outline surrounded by a storm of wind and water. Great black clouds were rolling across the heavens and squalls of rain, with hail, swept by us."

With the Cape successfully navigated, the Expedition Team were charged with a daunting task: how to sum up the last three weeks? The windy day in Stanley felt so long ago that it may as well have been part of a different era of human evolution. Even the belligerent fur seals of South Georgia had become a distant memory while still remaining unforgettable.

As Sir Ernest Shackleton famously said when describing Antarctica, "tongue and pen fail in describing the magic".



Instead, we turned to photographs. There was a second photography competition which attracted more entries than the first, with an even more competitive standard. This was followed by a slideshow, which ran to 250 images, shown over 20 minutes, a mix of passengers' images and those shot by ship's photographer Jamie. As the sounds of Morcheeba's song *The Sea* faded out, people applauded, not for the slideshow, but for Antarctica, South Georgia, and the magic of the far south.



# Ushuaia

DAY 20 | Saturday 17 December 2022

Position at 0600 on 17 December

Latitude: 54°50" S

Longitude: 068°07'2" W

Course: Docked

Speed: Docked

Wind Speed: NE 2

Barometer: 1006

Air Temp: 7°C

The entire Aurora Team thanks you for joining us on this adventure, and we hope to see you on the high seas again!



# Kayaking Log

**Kayak Guides:** Peter Wainwright, Russell Henry, Ivan Klochkov.

Number of Paddlers: 20      Total Paddle Outings: 11      Total Distance Paddled: 58.4 km

<b>Paddlers:</b>	Janine Judge	Simon Mosalski	David Whalley
Kate Atkinson	Peter Judge	Karen Muller	Jenny Whalley
Paul Bonnitcho	Di Mason	Tessa Neilson	Jill Yeatman
Teri-Lou Dantzler	Warren Mason	Tim O'Hara	
Doug Herchmer	Jo McIlveen	Daryl Standfield	
Jovian Hosko	Allan McKenzie	Deborah Sykes	

## 3 December 2022, AM: Rosita Harbor, South Georgia. Distance: 4.8 km

First outing of our trip! Everyone was so excited to start paddling. It was foggy and chilly morning with light precipitation. We decided to paddle towards the southern wall of the bay around the Ram Head and then hug the coastline moving to the Camp Bay. At the beginning the wind was relatively calm, but at some point, it picked up – the good thing was that we decided to stay close to the coastline and use kelp beds and cliffs as a protection. On the coast we saw lots of fur seals rookeries – it is our first wildlife encounter in South Georgia. Besides that, we did quick coaching session on some kayaking basics. On the way back the wind started to gust up to 25 knots, so we decided to hop in the Zodiac and tow our kayaks back to the ship from the sheltered spot near the coast. Glorious and adventurous first paddle.

## 4 December 2022, AM: Godthul, South Georgia. Distance: 4.7 km

Godthul is a big, sheltered bay that met us with relatively calm wind and overcast skies. The western coastline of the bay looked spectacular but what really captured our attention when we were looking at the map is Cobblers Cove, which was literally around the corner. Small, protected bay with super-narrow entrance – what a nice place to paddle! To get there, we would have to get out of the shelter of Godthul and pass Long Point – the cape where we will be exposed to the swell coming from the open ocean. That sounded like real adventure, but it was 100 per cent doable because the wind was not too strong. We started paddling along the western coast of Godthul, exploring beautiful rocks and intertidal structures. As we were coming closer to Long Point, the waves were becoming bigger, and once we got out of the bay, we started to feel a true ocean swell. At this point we had split our team in two groups – some paddlers decided stay in Godthul and explore more of its coast, and some decided to push it to Cobblers Cove. The way to the cove was adventurous – we had to paddle in the waves coming from different directions, it was a bit choppy. But our team did great and finally we found ourselves in crystal clear and calm waters of Cobblers Cove. From there we towed our kayaks back to the ship. Amazing and adventurous paddle.

## 5 December 2022, AM: Fortuna Bay, South Georgia. Distance: 5.6 km

With a moderate northwesterly breeze blowing into our anchorage in Whistle Cove, we decided to tow the kayaks almost to the entrance of Fortuna Bay and then kayak our way back to the ship on a downwind run. We paddled past huge cliffs, at the base of which every pocket of beach was festooned with rambunctious fur seals. We rounded the corner into Anchorage Bay with the dramatic backdrop of Turnback Glacier behind – to seek shelter from the wind we crept along between the shore and the giant kelp belt just 10 metre offshore. We watched a marauding bull fur seal fight that resulted in the challenger being chased off the beach at close quarters, the seal then fled into the water next to us, swimming under Peter's kayak and surfacing just beside Allan and Jill's kayak. With only a split second to decide what to do, the bull fur seal elected to hurdle their kayak in the metre space between the two cockpits. A bold and miscalculated move! It seemed to realize mid-jump that it wasn't going to make it, but too late to completely abort. It landed smack bang between Jill and Allan and then realizing it's mistake it beat a hasty retreat, inadvertently capsizing the kayak with its 130-190 kilogram mass. Heroically Jill and Allan were still keen to carry on, and after quickly getting back in their kayak, on the beach we continued to hug the shoreline admiring the tenacity of the king penguins to go about their business amidst the throng of feisty fur seals. We passed a large yacht, the occupants of which had just completed the Shackleton crossing, and we continued downwind past Peruque Point and Breakwind ridge. We watched many giant petrels tearing apart an unfortunate king penguin, and then decided to cut across back to the ship to avoid a surf landing, and instead took a Zodiac ride to the beach to explore the landing on foot. A very memorable outing in beautiful sunshine.

## 6 December 2022, PM: Prion Island, South Georgia. Distance: 4 km

What a cool island! There was some decent swell and wind at the ship, so we all hopped in two Zodiacs and towed the kayaks into the eastern edges of the island. Being in the lee of the wind it was surprisingly sheltered and ended up being a lovely paddle. Looking back at South Georgia the views were magnificent with a stunning mountain landscape. We paddled up and down the east side of the island poking through small coves and channels, and then did a bit of skills practice working on draw strokes.

## 7 December 2022, AM: Gold Harbor, South Georgia. Distance: 5.1 km

This morning we met at 5:30 am!! On the water shortly thereafter in a moody overcast morning. We paddled north of the beach into some really cool tidal channels. There was a light swell coming in which made it quite fun but not too challenging to maneuver our boats through the rocks. We eventually found ourselves in this little bay absolutely surrounded by elephant seal weaners. They were incredible curious, coming right up to our boats and even trying to climb on a couple times. It was hard to leave the cute big-eyed pinnipeds, but we then poked around the rocks a little more and headed back south. We paddled hard through a stiff breeze that had picked up to the south end of the beach and the entrance to the lagoon. Once inside past the small breaking waves, we found calm water and glaciers crawling down the cliffs above us. What a magical spot. Everyone jumped into Zodiacs from there and headed to the beach for a landing.

## 11 December 2022, AM: Mikkelsen Harbor, Antarctic Peninsula. Distance: 7.6 km

Our first morning in Antarctica was completely serene. Taking advantage of the exceptionally calm seas we paddled out of the sheltered harbour and over to the southern end of Trinity Island. We admired the clarity of the water and being able to see the rocky sea floor and various types of seaweed and kelp. We steered clear of the looming glacier faces and instead found various low-lying islands to paddle among. We made a landing on one island with with numerous Weddell seals hauled out, and about 20 giant petrels including one white morph southern giant petrel. And here we found a tiny gaggle of four adelia penguins. We then made our way back into Mikkelsen Harbour and paddled along the east end of the bay watching for any calving events from the myriad of glacier faces around us. We could have spent the whole day exploring the bay but with time running short we made a quick landing on D'Hainault island to inspect the gentoo penguins and admire several other basking Weddell seals, and from here we jumped back in the kayaks to complete the circuit around D'Hainault and paddled back to the ship. An unbelievable first outing in Antarctica in which we were more in danger of overheating than being too cold.

## 11 December 2022, PM: Cierva Cove, Antarctic Peninsula. Distance: 5 km

The beautiful day continues. Blue sky and calm wind meant fantastic paddling conditions. We launched from the ship and were joined with a few celebrity guests. Sharra and George, two of the lovely dining staff, and the ship doctor Andres joined us for our paddle. We made our way through thick brash ice to check out cool icebergs, gentoos on shore, and explore the rocky coastline. A nice paddle.

## 12 December 2022, PM: Paradise Harbor. Distance: 7.6 km

That was literally a paradise paddle. We got on the water near Brown Station, the Argentinian Antarctic base. It was sunny and calm – perfect conditions for kayaking in Antarctica. We had some nice time with gentoo penguins on the rocks near the station and then paddled along the coast entering the picturesque Paradise Harbour. Right around the corner there was a shag colony on the cliff – these birds picked an amazing spot for their nests. After that we entered the harbour trying to stay away from threatening but beautiful glacier faces. It was so fun to paddle between huge icebergs of different shapes - we also saw some crabeater seals taking a sun bath right on them. At some point Russell told us some interesting facts about glaciers and avalanches – it was super-useful because we saw so many avalanches during this outing. In the end we passed the Paradise Harbour and landed on a small beach to the west from it – it was so good to stretch our legs. Then Pete came to pick us up – a nice ride back to the ship after such a glorious paddle.

## 14 December 2022, PM: Fournier Bay. Distance: 4 km

The last outing of our trip was amazing. As the ship dropped anchor in the Fournier Bay, we saw dozens of humpback whales all around the bay. Though we did not have lots of time, we decided to give it a go – we wanted to paddle with whales. As soon as we got on the water, we tried to approach two humpbacks in the distance, However, they started to move towards us! It is unforgettable experience to be so close to these giants.







# Snowshoeing Log

Snowshoeing Guides: Jane Morris, Dan Phillips

Number of Snowshoers: 7      Total Outings: 3

Snowshoers:  
Zvi Artzi                      Linda Parsons  
Nicki Corkill                Ian Parsons  
Nigel Palmer                Oliver Ridgewell  
   Sarah Ridgewell

## 11 December, 2022: Mikkelson Harbour.

After two weeks aboard our new floating home, we finally donned snowshoes and began the program, on the Antarctic Peninsula.

The team were well practiced with shore landings and general Zodiac movements, so it made for a smooth transition into snowshoe operations.

However, this particular location wasn't a relaxed introduction for our first outing, with the initial pull up off the beach setting the scene.

A trench needed to be dug through the large shore line snow bank, to a flat area where we could rope up and for some, use snowshoes for the first time.

The initial slope was steeper than ideal for first timers, but it soon eased and we meandered our way onto the top plateau for some fantastic views from a snowy dome on Skottsberg Point, Trinity Island.

Downhill proved to be more difficult than going up, as the boggy snow created problematic travel on the steeper slopes, with some creative acrobatic techniques being utilised.

With an outgoing tide there was a short hop along the reef to where the Zodiac was waiting.

And so it was a happy bunch of snowshoe adventurers returning to the ship after their successful first outing.

## 12 December 2022: Paradise Bay.

The warm, calm temperatures continued, as the afternoon snowshoers set off behind Almirante/Brown Base. Yet again there was a steeper than ideal slope to begin with, and boggy, rotten snow to contend with.

Both angle and conditions improved as we headed across a high bench to a small outlier peak, with a great view out over the bay, watching the kayakers and Zodiacs bobbing around in the water below.

Nicki was celebrating a birthday, so a wee dram of whiskey was shared amongst the team.

We looped back past another small peaklet, before the dreaded downhill.

Three of the party opted to do a short bum slide down the last slope, finding that a far more efficient way to travel in the soft conditions.

## 13 December 2022: Neko Harbour

The final outing saw a small team head out on yet another stunning morning – calm, clear and thankfully slightly cooler temperatures.

There had been an attrition of snowshoers, some not wanting to endure any more boggy snow negotiations, so we were a team of five. We did gain two young, fit and enthusiastic members in Olivier and Sarah, in what was arguably the best conditions we had had thus far. We headed up the broad rib behind the penguin colony in ideal conditions, with a final traverse across a broad bench amongst the glacier. The Zodiacs gave some sense of scale to the landscape, being tiny dots bobbing on the water. Although we weren't aware of it at the time, this would be our last snowshoe outing for the trip, as the final possible day got blown out with weather and icebergs precluding shore landings. Great to finish with such an idyllic and memorable final day.

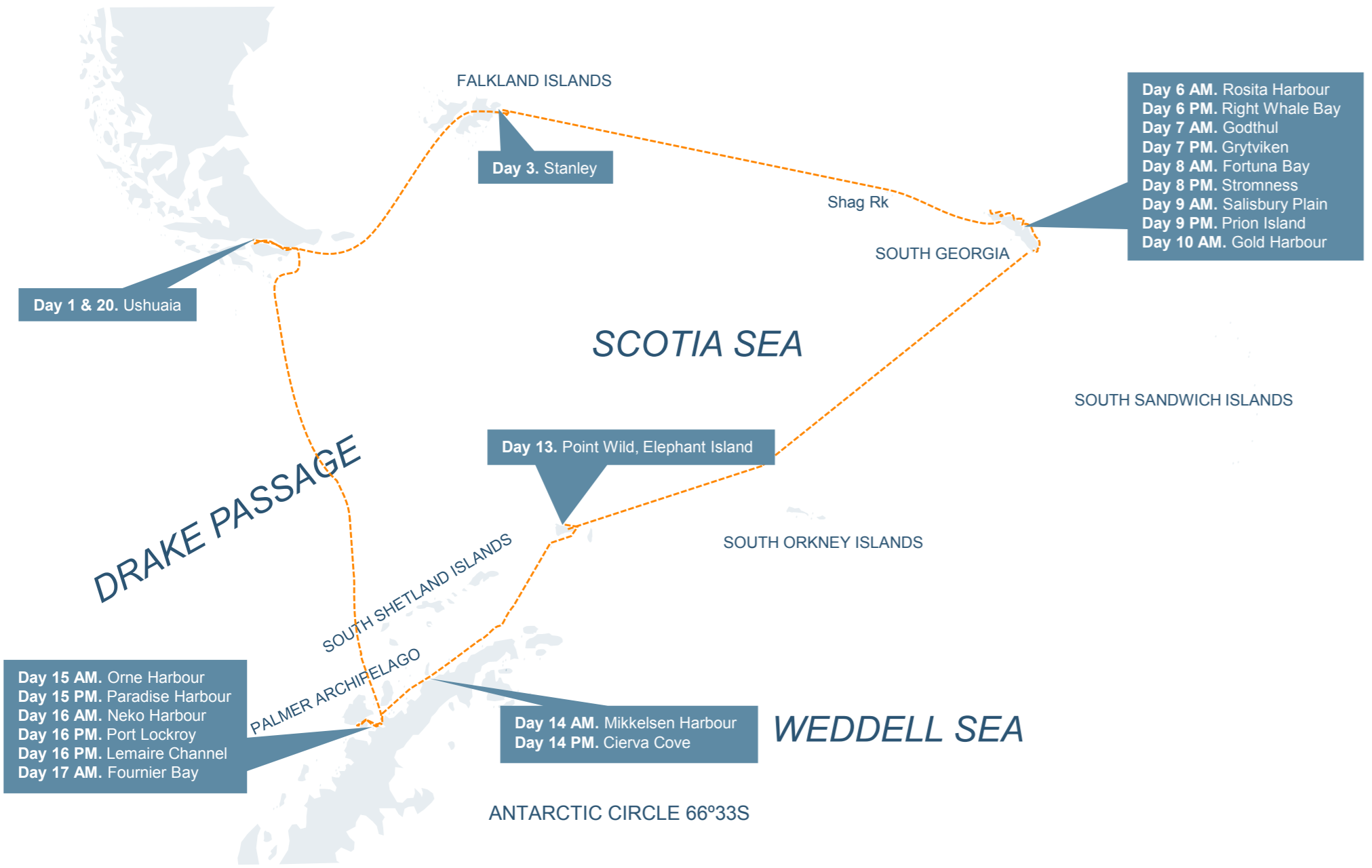




# Mammal Sightings

Mammal Species	November - December																			
	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Antarctic Fur Seal					•	•	•	•	•	•										
South American Sea Lion	•		•																	
Crabeater Seal																				
Weddell Seal																				
Southern Elephant Seal						•	•	•	•	•										
Commerson's Dolphin			•																	
Long-finned Pilot Whale		•																		
Antarctic Minke Whale		•			•		•							•	•	•				
Humpback Whale													•						•	
Fin Whale		•											•							







## Expeditioners:

Zvi Artzi

Kate Atkinson

Janette Barnes

Stephan Barthelmess

Richard Bennett

Susie Bennett

Quirin Benrubi

Paul Bonnitcha

Jenni Bonnitcha

Don Bonnitcha

Denise Bunker

Linda Chen

Nicki Corkill

Jolanda Corona

Therese Costes

Teri Lou Dantzler

Robert Della-Sala

Vincenzo Dettori

Shirley Dobson

Catherine Evans

Ian Field

Tina Field

Paul Finch

Carol Gleiberman

Erica Haas

Timothy Hallman

Brian Haynes

Doug Herchmer

Jon Hind

Sue Hind

Jovian Hosko

Peter Judge

Janine Judge

Steve Kisely

Elizabeth Kondo

Mary Kormendy

John Kormendy

Rita Leone

Terry Lilley

Barry Lyon

Sharon Magin

Don Magin

Lori Manson

Bill Manuel

Warren Mason

Di Mason

Michael Matthews

Jo McIlveen

Allan McKenzie

Chris McKibben

Scott McKibben

Susan McLeod

Andrew Mei

Simon Mosalski

Karen Muller

Tessa Neilson

Robyn Norris

Graham Norris

Margaret Norris

Timothy O'Hara

Nigel Palmer

Linda Parsons

Ian Parsons

Jane Patrick

Shaun Patrick

Morissa Pawl-Frederico

Mark Pearson

Sue Pearson

Michelle Peters

Helen Pollock

Sarah Ridgwell

Oli Ridgwell

Lynn Roark

David Roark

Jane Roberts

Simon Roberts

Eva Rosinger

Herbert Rosinger

Ray Ruffell

Debra Ruffell

Mark Sinreich

Brooke Smith

Eliana Sorokin

Yoram Sorokin

Daryl Standfield

Deborah Sykes

Andrew Tan

Melissa Teller

Sing Ting

Mindy Wang

Gregory Wang

Jenny Whalley

David Whalley

Adrian Williams

Cori Williams

Steven Wyatt

Jackie Wyatt

Jill Yeatman

Ying Zheng

## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Graham Charles

Assistant Expedition Leader: Graeme Snow

Onboard Expedition Manager: Anne Oeyasaeter

Historian: Ben Maddison

Marine Biologist / Citizen Science Coordinator: Dani Abras

Naturalist: Laura Williams

Ecologist: Ryan Burner

Expedition Guide: Tamsin Both

Expedition Guide: Jack Alcher

Lead Sea Kayak Guide: Peter Wainwright

Sea Kayak Guide: Ivan Klochkov

Sea Kayak Guide: Russell Henry

Lead Alpine Guide: Jane Morris

Alpine Guide: Dan Phillips

Expedition Medic: Mari Fleri

Expedition Medic Trainee: Laura Boenish

Photography Guide: Jamie Lafferty

Photographer Guide: Peter Eastway

Photography Guide/Naturalist: Max Seigal

Zodiac Master: Conrad West

Mudroom/Shopkeeper: Gabriel Hernandez

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Oleg Klaptenko

Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi

Safety Officer: Alexandru Chiriac

Bosun: Giovanni Dela Torre

Deck Cadet: Miguel Delgado

Deck Cadet: Goncalo SarIV Aniceto Costa

Ship Doctor: Andres Peralta

Chief Engineer: Dimitar Vasilev

Hotel Director: Ulises Cantillo

Chief Purser: Willie Lirio

Executive Chef: Ron Reyes

Head Waiter: Allan Liscaro

IT Officer: Ihor Yesmieniev

Receptionist: Jeremiah Castillo

Receptionist: Pirma Pakpahan

Head Stateroom: Tyron Cayasso Hodgson

Able Seaman: Muhammad Karier

Able Seaman: Ramanda Vitrian

Able Seaman: Hardik Rao

Able Seaman: Ajay Fnu

Able Seaman: Andrii Mezentsev

Able Seaman: John Noble

## Photography thanks to:

Max Seigal

Jamie Lafferty







