

# Antarctic Explorer

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 04 – 14 March 2023





# Frei Station, King George Island

DAY 1 | Saturday 04 March 2023

Position at 0700 on Mar 4

Latitude: 62°12.52'S

Longitude: 058°42.32'W

Course: 320°

Speed: 5.6 knots

Wind Speed: SW 3 knots

Barometer: 982

Air Temp: 4°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Antarctica!

After months of planning, weeks of anticipation and long-haul flights from around the globe, we finally arrived at Punta Arenas, raring to begin our adventure.

We gathered at the hotel in Punta Arenas and were met by Tomas Holik – Aurora's Vice President of Operations and Lelia Cataldi – Ground Operation Coordinator. We were told about our attempt to fly the following day to King George Island on the South Shetland Islands and Tomas led us through the IAATO guidelines (International Association of Antarctic Tour Operations) that we need to follow. Tomas also spoke about careful measures to make sure that we're able to maximise our experience in Antarctica whilst also making sure that we give wildlife the right of way.

The following day we headed to Punta Arenas airport where we checked in, dropped our bags, and jumped onboard the plane. Overflying the Southern Ocean while being treated to a substantial lunch, it was enticing to imagine the many expeditions that have journeyed across this rough stretch of ocean in centuries past.

Landing on King George Island in the beautiful evening sun, from across the bay and into buses, we were met at the shoreline by the Aurora Expedition Team. We entered through the mudroom where we were greeted by Anne, Reza and team, shown our lockers, had our photo taken by Matt assisted by David - and then the hotel staff showed us to our cabins. A delicious buffet dinner was served, and we had a bit of time to explore our new home-away-from-home, the *Sylvia Earle*.

Onboard we total 106 Expeditioners with nationalities representing Australia (17), Canada (1), China (2), Belgium (1) France (2), UK (7), USA (53), Estonia (1), Latvia (1), Lithuania (1), Poland (1), Switzerland (2), Taiwan (2) along with 20 Expedition team and 87 Ship's crew from all over the world.

Afterwards, we received our welcome briefing with Howard, an introduction to life on board and met some of the wonderful hotel and medical staff.

Then it was time for the important lifeboat and safety briefing and readied ourselves for the abandon ship drill.

The sound of seven-short-one-long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes, bulky orange lifejackets and gather at the muster station to sample our safety gear. Our safety officers and crew guided us up to lifeboats to get us familiar with their whereabouts.

While some enjoyed a nightcap at the Tektite bar, the rest of us were more than happy to head for a well-earned sleep in our cabins after a long and eventful day.



# Elephant Point

DAY 2 | Sunday 05 March 2023

Position at 0700 on Mar 5

Latitude: 62° 46.45' S

Longitude: 060° 25.4' W

Course: 027°

Speed: 5.2 knots

Wind Speed: WNW 13 knots

Barometer: 993

Air Temp: 4°C

Light:

Whether you're photographing amazing icebergs or your adventurous travelling companion, photography is all about light. Wherever possible position yourself to have the sun behind you with your subject illuminated by the sun. Overcast days present optimum conditions for photographing your subject, with even diffused light which can create a greater sense of mood or drama.

We awoke to a partly cloudy warm Antarctic morning for our first day of this adventure. After a lovely breakfast amongst calm seas off the coast of Livingston Island a morning of briefings began for Zodiac operations, biosecurity and specialist activities.

As we cruised down the coast of Livingston Island, taking in the frozen landscape with its ice fields and glaciers flowing down to the coast, we were so lucky to see a pod of whales off the starboard bow.

Our first landing was at Elephant Point on Livingston Island. The beach was lined with elephant seals basking in the weak Antarctic sun. The elephant seal is the largest species of seal in the world. The male can grow to 6 metres, (20 feet) in length and can weigh as much as 3600 kilograms (4 tons) females are much smaller than males and grow to about 3.6 metres (12 feet) in length and 900 kilograms (1 ton) in weight.

Numerous fur seals were scattered just inland from the beaches and the gentoo colony was busy with moulting penguins dreaming of heading out to sea in the near future. A small number of individual chinstrap penguins were also spotted amongst the gentoos. Many whale bones were located in different parts of the beach.

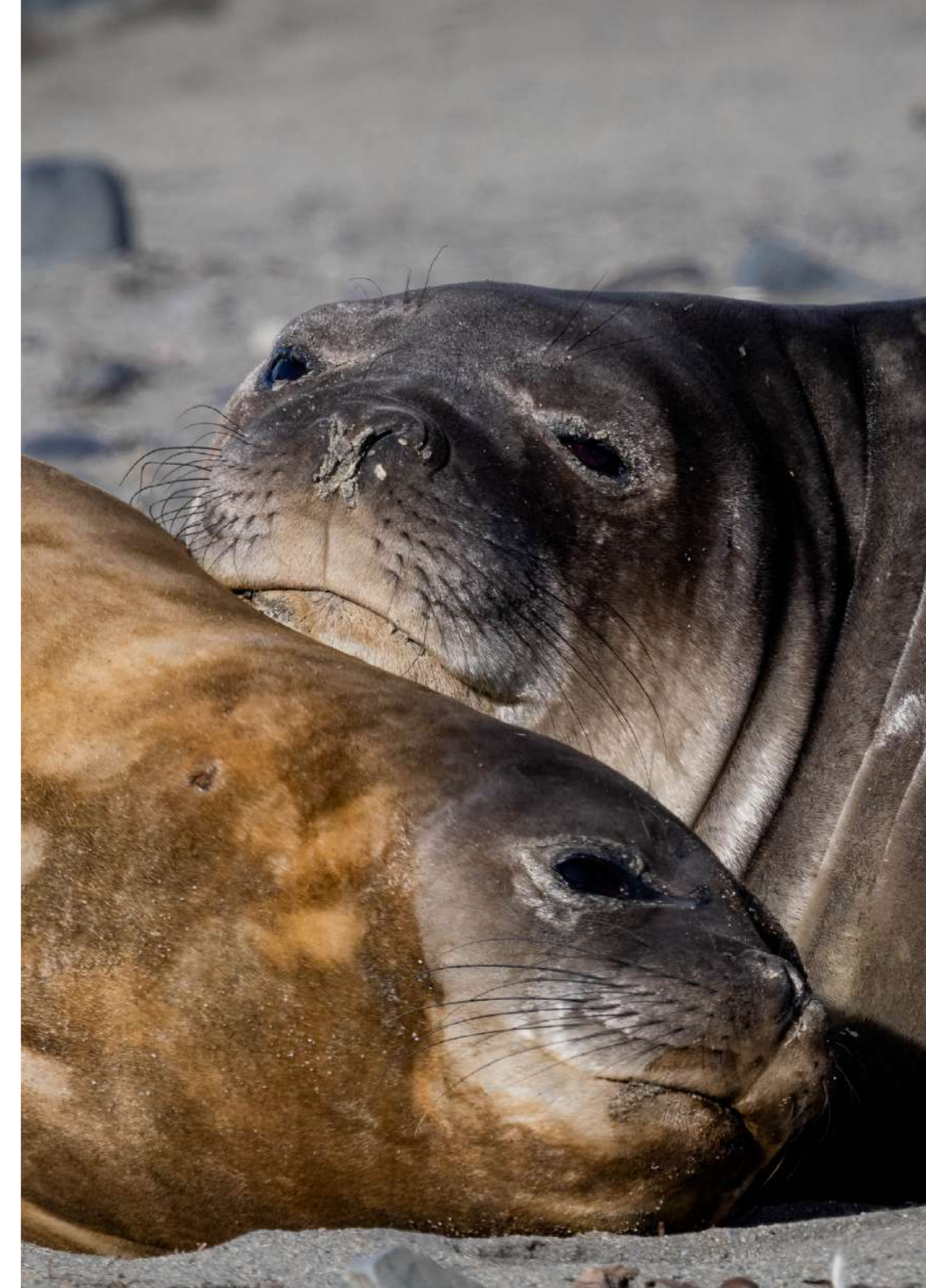
At the north east end of the beach, many giant petrels could be seen on a rocky outcrop. These birds are widespread and common, readily seen from shore and ferries in Tierra del Fuego. Giant petrels are known as vultures of the Southern Ocean and can scavenge with gulls at sewage outflows, or with albatrosses at fishing boats. A number of skua sea birds were also present on the beach. Skuas are large predatory birds related to gulls and Terns. Skuas are much more pelagic, and aside from breeding season, spend most of their time at sea.

Jonathan entertained passengers at the ruins of an old sealer's camp with the history of sealing in this part of Antarctica. A snowy sheathbill listened in on Jonathan's history talk and these birds will migrate north come winter to Tierra del Fuego and Southern Argentina.

The evening was spent with Expedition staff introductions and the traditional Captain's welcome where he

introduced his officers. This was followed by dinner.

After dinner, Matt, our ship photographer rounded off the evening with his extremely insightful and practical tips on cell phone photography.



# Recess Cove, Graham Passage

DAY 3 | Monday 06 March 2023

Position at 0700 on Mar 6

Latitude: 64° 20.40' S

Longitude: 061° 40.90' W

Course: 177°

Speed: 9.2 knots

Wind Speed: S 8 knots

Barometer: 991

Air Temp: 4°C

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

—Mark Jones, *Wild Ice: Antarctic Journeys*, 1990

The anticipation on board was electric. The morning outing was set to be our first and potentially only landing on the continent, which, for many passengers, was their seventh and final continent.

Our fearless leader Howard, and his trusty sidekick Jonathan, carved out a snowy route up to a vantage point that overlooked the spectacular cove. Despite the rocky scramble from the shoreline, the happiness on everyone's faces was contagious as many lifelong dreams were realised.

Our kayak team of 16 departed the ship and paddled a loop of the 4.6 kilometre wide bay, sighting some fin whales as they made their way to the White Continent for their own landing.

Eager to freshen up their faces, our snorkel team ventured northeast of the small island and jumped in the water for their first taste of the Antarctic waters. They were greeted by starfish, isopods and an inquisitive Weddell seal who came to make new friends.

Not to be outdone, our dive team headed off on a checkout dive to a shallow area in the cove, where they encountered starfish and kelp.

In the afternoon with the temptation of fantastic wildlife encounters, all passengers loaded into the Zodiacs for a stellar afternoon on the water. The first two Zodiacs, led by Matt and Jonathan, were jam-packed full of budding photographers eager to capture an award-winning image.

The cruises began peacefully, protected from the elements by the enormous peaks of the passage which dwarfed our Zodiacs. The peaks towered 260 metres above us, measured and calculated by our self-proclaimed mathematician, Lucas.

Continuing our running streak of stellar weather conditions, the southern end of the passage produced some magical reflections in the water. Over the radio, we hear a distant voice calling in a sighting of multiple leopard seals frolicking in the water around beautiful icebergs.

Matthew and Tracy braved the rolling swell of the incoming high tide and ventured out to sea towards the enormous icebergs that had gathered at the northern end of the passage. Not to be outdone, a small group of six adventurous paddlers headed towards a rocky outcrop in the newest addition to the Aurora arsenal, inflatable kayaks.

As the last Zodiac time neared, a call was put out that some humpback whales were sighted amongst the brash ice of the passage bend. While we have become accustomed to seeing whales out in the open ocean, it was a special moment to see them cruising silently near the moss-covered cliffs. Patience is key with encounters averaging around 6-8 blows before diving below the surface again. This didn't deter our keen photographers who managed to capture some incredible photographs of a feeding session.

Our divers chose to explore outside of the passage, where Catherine led the team of four, to a new dive site where they were greeted by sun starfish and fish.



# Port Lockroy, Fournier Bay

DAY 4 | Tuesday 07 March 2023

Position at 0700 on Mar 7

Latitude: 64°44.04'S

Longitude: 063°15.30'W

Course: 213°

Speed: 9.9 knots

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

—Annie Dillard - Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

We were all woken up early today, as we entered the Neumayer Channel – one of the Peninsula's most breathtaking landscapes. As the ship sailed part of this narrow (2.5km wide) channel we all enjoyed the snow-capped mountains towering on each side. Although the weather did its best to hide some of them, and as we got to discover reaching our morning landing at Port Lockroy, today was a day for proper polar weather. Antarctica wanted to show us its true self and not only the sunny side we have been blessed with so far during the trip. Neumayer Channel was first named Roosevelt Channel during a German 1873/74 expedition but was later renamed to today's official name during a Belgian Antarctic expedition led by Gerlache in 1897- 99. Georg Balthazar von Neumayer was a German polar explorer and scientist.

After a quick brief about the history and their daily life on the small island of Goudier where Port Lockroy is situated, we all went ashore eventually between the snow shower and 40-knot gusting winds to let our shopping itch released and post our postcards at this southernmost post office in the world. We were greeted by a few hundred gentoo penguins, and we could enjoy a little look into these birds' daily struggles as well as the museum and small shop on the island. Heavy snowfall caused a late spring and delayed start of the breeding season at this site so there were still some chicks around in the colony. Port Lockroy is run by the United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust and during the five month summer season they receive some 18,000 visitors and send off roughly 70,000 postcards! We were one of the very last ships for the season and in only five days after our visit they will close down the station for the season.

Due to windy weather, we changed plans in true expedition style for our afternoon outing. After a very interesting presentation by Julia about the secrets of whales and dolphins, we ventured out into Fournier Bay on the northeast side of Anvers Island. The contrast from this morning's polar weather could not have been greater. Surrounded by glacier cliffs and big mountains in the distance, the glassy calm seas, colourful icebergs, and humpback whales everywhere greeted us as we entered our Zodiacs and kayaks for an evening packed with

Wind Speed: NE 20 knots

Barometer: 982

Air Temp: 2°C

wildlife. The small, sheltered bay had both Antarctic minke whales and numerous humpbacks feeding as well as curious crabeater seals and even a leopard seal on ice. A rare snow petrel circled our boats for a while.

Even after two hours on the water very few actually wanted to return to the ship as we all enjoyed the outing so much.



# Port Charcot/Pleneau Island, Petermann Island

DAY 5 | Wednesday 08 March 2023

Position at 0600 on Mar 8

Latitude: 64°59.80'S

Longitude: 063°48.10'W

Course: 228°

Speed: 4.9 knots

Wind Speed: E 20 knots

Barometer: 984

Air Temp: 2°C

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

—Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad

We were gently awoken at 06:15 by an announcement from our Expedition Leader Howard. The *Sylvia Earle* was at the entrance of the Lemaire Channel, often referred to as Kodak Alley (after the old Kodak cameras) as the channel is so photogenic. Flanked by the Peninsula on our port side and Booth Island on our starboard side, we felt insignificant against the majesty of the channel as we sailed slowly through.

The Zodiacs took everyone ashore, and we made our way up to a snow-covered slope with stunning views across the bay. Blue-tinged icebergs of various shapes and sizes had grounded in the bay. The sun, hidden by the clouds, created a beautiful yellowish hue to the sky and landscape. We were greeted by colonies of gentoo penguins and a couple of fur seals were tussling with each other, possibly assessing each other in preparation for the next breeding season when they will fight for real to become beachmasters. Many also walked up to the top of the hill to the cairn. The effort was worth it as the views were amazing.

Following the landing, there was a short Zodiac cruise to explore the magnificent icebergs. Each iceberg is a unique piece of art and we were all in awe of nature's beauty.

After returning to the ship, it was time for the polar plungers to make a big splash. Nearly half the passengers jumped into the icy cold water.

It was a short sail to our next destination, Petermann Island. It looked very different from our other landings with lots of green and red algae on the snow covering the island, except for the exposed rock occupied by gentoo penguins. There was also an Argentine refuge hut and a memorial cross, in honour of three British Antarctic Survey researchers who disappeared out on the sea ice. The divers had an amazing dive with sightings of many marine critters including sea stars, polychaete worms and limpets, and the kayakers circumnavigated the island. Amongst the beauty of this place, Dane and Lily got married with the ceremony being officiated by the Expedition Leader Howard. Congratulations to them both!



# Polar Plunge

DAY 5 | Wednesday 08 March 2023









# Deception Island, Yankee Harbour

DAY 6 | Thursday 09 March 2023

Position at 0900 Mar 9

Latitude: 63°16.8'S

Longitude: 060°40.5'W

Course: 021°

Speed: 13 knots

Antarctica is the windiest place on earth. Wind dominates all activity, sets schedules, imperils lives, makes one a hostage indoors.

—David G. Campbell

The only thing we can predict for a voyage to Antarctica is that it will be unpredictable, and Howard showed us why in the recap on 08 March. Weather updates revealed a phenomenal weather system heading for the Drake Passage, with winds in excess of 50 knots expected, due to coincide with our predicted departure from Antarctica on 11 March. The sea state chart showed a swirling mass of luminous magenta and bruised purple, indicating an incredibly uncomfortable crossing, the so-called "Drake Shake" turned up to the maximum.

The opportunity to outrun the storm means turning northwards a little earlier than planned, but also brings us an unexpected opportunity to visit the beautiful Falkland Islands, which as a bird nerd is a very exciting prospect.

So after an event-filled day where we reached our farthest South, celebrated the wedding of Dane and Lily, and danced late into the night, we turned towards the South Shetland Islands to make the most of our last day in Antarctica.

After a leisurely breakfast, we approached Deception Island, entering the sunken caldera of the volcano through a narrow channel known as Neptune's Bellows. It all sounds very much like a story from the pages of Jules Verne.

Deception played a key role in Antarctic history, and Johnathan's commentary led us from the early days of exploration, where the island was a safe haven for shipping, to the industrial whaling era, to the dramatic rescue of Chilean and British scientific teams in the 1960s when the island erupted.

As we continued our voyage, Eirik gave an informative talk on penguins, diving deeply (as deeply as an emperor penguin) into the ecology, physiology, and behaviour of the different penguins encountered on our expedition, encouraging us to observe the soap opera drama within the colonies.

The afternoon brought our final landing in Antarctica, at Yankee Harbour, named for the fleet of American sealing vessels of the mid-19th century. Banks of fog rolled across the dark shingle spit giving perfect atmospheric conditions for our last Antarctic encounters, revealing and concealing views of mountains and glaciers, then

Wind Speed: NW 10 knots

Barometer: 992

Air Temp: 4°C

pulling close focus to wildlife on shore: gentoo penguins, with chicks ready to fledge and take to sea; enormous elephant seals, along with smaller weaners, elly pups born this year, but already approaching the weight of a small car; many fur seals, thriving again after almost being pushed to the brink of existence.

Now to the Drake Passage, the wildness of the open ocean, before we return to the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives. It's an opportunity to relax a little and reflect on our memories and experiences of Antarctica, an otherworldly place in which it is an extraordinary privilege to bear witness.



# At Sea

DAY 7 | Friday 10 March 2023

## Position at 1200 on Mar 10

Latitude: 59°10.30'S

Longitude: 058°35.10'W

Course: 354°

Speed: 11 knots

Wind Speed: NNW 38 knots

Barometer: 985

Air Temp: 7°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

For a full week, our eyes, ears, nose and skin feasted on the pleasures of the Antarctic Peninsula. Taking in the epic scenery would indulge every sense. The cool bite of the wind, whipping our hair; the sensation of melting snow, on lips and skin; the visual spectacle of the rugged and wild landscape; the sounds of raucous life, contrasted against, graceful splashes, windswept crashes and deep girding, ice-like thunder. We would need a day to let our minds and body, fully digest the experience that had been bestowed unto us.

Friday provided such respite. With anticipation, excitement and a sprinkle of trepidation filling the common spaces, the not-so-quietly murmured expectations of our trip across The Drake gave many the time to find a quiet nook and focus inwardly.

The *Sylvia Earle* had left the safe harbour of South Shetland Islands with a charted trajectory that would ride the calmest seas in front of the impending storm. The wild dance of The Drake would send some to chambers, to experience the passage internally. For others, the 3-metre high swells and 30 knot winds provided an opportunity to see the animals that call the Drake home.

Further to the west of our position, winds gusted to 60 knot and seas grew into 9-metre wells. Like us, it seemed that the animals of The Drake Passage were moving to calmer waters. Black-browed albatrosses were sighted, following us astern. Skimming low, and riding the crests of lumbering, watery giants, their impressive 250 centimetre wingspan carried them effortlessly over and around the marching swells.

Hourglass dolphins made a brief appearance; like tiny killer whales, their black and white bodies were spotted chasing the crests of *Sylvia Earle's* bow waves. They breached a number of times, giving passengers a view of their sleek bodies and distinctive black and white patterning, and then, as quickly as they appeared, they were gone.

Feeling the rise and fall of the ship's hull against the swells of the Antarctic Ocean, the ever-present feeling of adventurous turmoil would provide the perfect backdrop for the documentary "Ice and the Sky." The lecture theatre came alive, to a nostalgic, humble and yet chillingly poignant film about the experience of Claude Lorius, and his scientific expeditions to Antarctica. The film elegantly reminded us of the place we had just visited, and

the ethos of international collaboration, science and friendship as it delved into the evidence of climate change he found buried within the ice.

Tucking myself into bed, I smiled a proud Australian smile, knowing that the discoveries of Claude Lorius had been inspired by an Australian, taking some of the ice samples and putting it into his glass of whiskey. A tradition unwittingly kept alive by many of my expeditioners on this very cruise.

It would appear that great minds think alike, and that the world could be changed forever over a chunk of black, glacial ice in a glass of single malt!



# At Sea

DAY 8 | Saturday 11 March 2023

## Position at 0700 on Mar 11

Latitude: 55°22.00'S

Longitude: 059°12.00'W

Course: 354°

Speed: 11.8 knots

Wind Speed: NW 4 knots

Barometer: 986

Air Temp: 8°C

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

—T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

It was another day at sea on our way north as we sailed towards our bonus landings on the Western Falkland Islands of Saunders and West Point Islands. It was a lazy day aboard the *Sylvia Earle* with relatively moderate seas, which she handled with ease, giving us a comfortable ride.

The mild weather also enabled us to be out on deck at various times of the day watching for wildlife. An elephant seal, hourglass dolphins and a young gray's beaked whale were spotted together with numerous seabirds. In the morning there were many wandering albatrosses, some black-browed and in the afternoon, flocks of great shearwaters, soft plumage petrels, fairy prions and sooty shearwaters. Some whale blows were seen in the distance, but they did not come close enough to be identified. Our more northerly location and position over the shallower water of the Burdwood Bank which causes an upwelling of nutrient-rich water leads to a greater abundance of bird life.

In the morning Howard and Jonathan entertained us with a presentation about their roles in the making of the Kennedy Miller Academy Award-winning animated film, *Happy Feet*.

In the afternoon Julia led us through several sessions of the Citizen Science cloud watching project where we noted the different types of clouds and their altitudes. The observations have to be coordinated with a NASA satellite passing overhead. Our data helps the verification of the the data obtained by the satellite's images.

In the afternoon Captain Artem and several other officers gave us a virtual tour of the ship from the equipment on-and workings of the bridge, to the galley, the engine room and even the cutting-edge waste disposal system.

At the "precap" we learnt about the history geography and economy of the Falkland Islands from Jonathan and then Howard gave us details of the two landings proposed for the following day. We also saw a fascinating timelapse of the construction of the *Sylvia Earle's* sister ship, the *Greg Mortimer* which took 6 million man-hours to construct in a Chinese shipyard in 2019.



# Saunders Island, West Point Island

DAY 9 | Sunday 12 March 2023

Position at 0700 on Mar 12

Latitude: 51°17.0'S

Longitude: 060°23.7'W

Course: 113°

Speed: 7.4 knots

Wind Speed: N 5 knots

Barometer: 990

Air Temp: 13°C

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

—Edwin Mickleburgh, *Beyond the Frozen Sea*

Calm sea conditions, 17 knots of wind, 12 degrees Celcius and the most beautiful sunrise is what we woke up to this morning. We were so excited to see the Falkland Islands just in front of us!

After a delicious breakfast, we are all eager and ready to get out in the Zodiacs to explore Saunders Island. It does not take long before we are in the Zodiacs heading towards the beach, where swimming South American Sea lions, porpoising gentoo penguins and curious Falkland flightless steamer ducks, which are endemic to the Falkland Islands, welcome us.

David, who lives here, greets us at the beach and we then take a picturesque walk up the beach and hill. We feel overwhelmed by the amazing amount of birds surrounding us. In addition to the huge amount of gentoo penguins, we see king penguins, magellanic penguins, black-browed albatrosses, southern rockhopper penguins, upland goose, skuas, striated caracara and turkey vultures. From the hill we even see commerson's dolphins playing among the waves. The divers have a blast while diving among beautiful kelp in the company of sea lions and diving gentoo penguins.

Also, the snorkellers are enjoying being in the water among the kelp where occasionally gentoo penguins swim by.

Back onboard our comfortable expedition ship, we enjoy a tasty lunch and take a group photo before it is time to explore more of the amazing Falkland Islands.

The Zodiacs are back in the water and off we go to visit West Point Island, where we get the most lovely welcome from the adventurous sailors Kicki and Thies, who now run the picturesque sheep farm on the island. It feels good to stretch our legs while walking among the soft hills and beautiful scenery. When reaching the bird colony, we get to experience close encounters with the majestic black-browed albatrosses and their chicks as well as huge amounts of moulting southern rockhopper penguins.

After our beauty-filled walk, Kicki and Thies invite us for tea time accompanied by delicious homemade cookies. Both divers and snorkelers again enjoy the magical world of the kelp forest and its wondrous inhabitants.



After a good three hours on this magical island, it is time for us to head back to our floating home. Our evening continues with a beautiful evening light cruise through the Falkland archipelago. At recap Eirik answers our questions about today's wildlife observations and Howard briefs us on tomorrow's plan.

A delicious a la carte dinner concludes the day.

Such an amazing day we just had!

To finish it all up we watch Happy Feet 2 before hugging the pillow.



# At Sea

DAY 10 | Monday 13 March 2023

Position at 0700 on Mar 13

Latitude: 53°24.7'S

Longitude: 062°48.0'W

Course: 204°

Speed: 13.9 knots

Wind Speed: W 6 knots

Barometer: 998

Air Temp: 10°C

To anyone who goes to the Antarctic, there is a tremendous appeal, an unparalleled combination of grandeur, beauty, vastness, loneliness, and malevolence — all of which sound terribly melodramatic — but which truly convey the actual feeling of Antarctica. Where else in the world are all of these descriptions really true?

—Captain T.L.M. Sunter, 'The Antarctic Century Newsletter'

A gorgeous sunrise was enjoyed by some early risers. A day at sea, heading from the Falklands to Ushuaia. We were all still reeling from our fantastic visit to the Falklands - the bird life was exceptional (and so was the cake!).

Jonathon kept us busy in the morning with an enthralling history lecture about Shackleton. A story that has been told many times, but always needs retelling again. We sailed close to 'Isla de Los Estados', a poignant marker for Argentinian history.

A delicious lunch, and then in the afternoon we received our disembarkation information. A bittersweet moment as it was the realisation that the voyage was about to end.

Some people enjoyed being on the decks in the sunshine and others enjoyed an afternoon nap. In the middle of the afternoon Catherine gave us a talk about some of the wildlife that is found underwater in Antarctica. So much colour to be found under the waves.

By the evening we had entered some calmer waters and all of the packing was achieved!

But there was still life to see outside, and black-browed albatrosses had kept us company for most of the day. Some dusky dolphins were spotted enjoying the waves from the ship, and there was certainly more out there just beyond our sight.

We then gathered for our last recap/precap in the lounge. The Captain came to join us and toast to a successful voyage. Our Captain is also something of a comedian and had us laughing about a child wanting to be a captain and what that might be like when you are ten years old!

Applause all round for a great Expedition Team, and of course our great passengers – the Expeditioners for this voyage.

Our farewell dinner was served, and the guests got to meet their crew and restaurant staff. So good to see all of the people behind this brilliant floating hotel.

We then all gathered in the lounge for the final time to see what Matt had been busily working on. It did not disappoint, and we were treated to a wonderful slideshow of just some of the memories we had created on our voyage. A fantastic way to finish our evening and voyage!



## Watching

By Jane Appell

A solitary penguin  
One among many,  
Sits waiting for the humans  
Curious yet cautious.

To approach or not  
Those noisy creatures  
With strange feet?  
Observing and watching  
Our species on display,  
We walk, we talk, we climb  
We enter the icy brine,  
Departing at last.

We behold the splendor of  
Our wondrous world.



# Ushuaia

DAY 11 | Tuesday 14 March 2023

Position at 0700 on Mar 14

Latitude: 54°48.6'S

Longitude: 068°11.9'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: ENE 2 knots

Barometer: 988

Air Temp: 9°C

Well, this morning's early start was our final time on the *Sylvia Earle*, and what a fantastic vessel she is. Certainly living up to her namesake with style, strength and stamina.

She has taken us to some truly fantastic places, beyond our imaginings. Places that would have been virtually impossible to visit without her impressive resources.

Howard and the Captain did an amazing job, avoiding the storm in the Drake Passage with the bonus for us all of seeing a little of the Falkland Islands. The range of wildlife there was amazing.

Last night, travelling up through the Beagle Channel was calm and relaxing and sharing a beer and reminiscing was a nice end to the trip.

Ushuaia is a unique, famous port and a bustling outpost at the end of the world and the starting point for many famous expeditions.

Disembarking this morning was certainly very different from how we came on board at King George Island with the Zodiacs. Good to have experienced both though, but very glad not to have been soaked and bounced around like we were at the start.

Hope to see you back with *Aurora* in the future for another adventure.

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



# Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Martin, Tracy, Eamon, Hodei & Ivan

Number of Paddlers: 22

Total Paddle Outings: 5

Total Distance Paddled: 36.3 km

Paddlers:	Lan Nguyen	Emily Vasilou	Eline Verlaetse
Laslo Szajer	Kath Scott	Stanton McComb	Min Wang
Agnes Szajer	Tony Scott	Jack McComb	Bau-Tscheng Dung
Catherine Watkins-Wilson	Cory Stone	Carlos Rodriguez	Jacques Renaud
Matt Stephens	Pamela Stone	Shellee Crook	Françoise Lefebvre
Wendy Crofts	Kevin Sardja	Yang Ping	

## 6th March 2023, AM: Recess Cove - 5.7km

Our first paddle outing and plenty of ice awaited us at Recess Cove. Whales welcomed us as well. A couple of humpbacks were gently swimming beside the ship, not fast, so we had a chance to paddle up towards them. Sadly, they were heading in the wrong direction for us. We turned and headed towards the rocky island just off Recess Cove. Here we could see some cormorants and chinstrap penguins resting on the rocks. The next stop was some big icebergs for us, and we kayaked to see what was around the next corner. It was a cold day, we kept moving, so we turned again to head towards the shore. This cove is on the Peninsula so this would be a landing on the Continent. We landed and some celebrated a little early as the rocky beach we landed on was not on the Peninsula but a small island just off it. It was the only spot to land and an easy Zodiac ride to the landing site. The kayaks were towed back to the ship to rest up for an afternoon outing, and we returned too, via Zodiac. A great outing and a very good start.

## 6th March 2023, PM: Graham Passage - 14.1km. Paddling 4.5km

The kayak team wanted to see whales this afternoon so the majority joined Zodiacs for a cruise in Graham Passage. They did! However, so did Matt and Tracy from their kayak. There was a little bit of wind when the kayaks and paddlers left the ship. As the afternoon progressed the wind dropped to nothing. The sea became calm and glassy. We had Ivan and six paddlers with the inflatable kayaks cruising the coastline and admiring the distant mountains and glaciers in the small bays. Meanwhile, Tracy and Matt headed far up into the spectacular passage, past icebergs and cliffs of ice. Along the way, they saw two leopard seals and humpbacks from a distance. They paddled out to the northern end of the channel and enjoyed a slight swell. A lovely paddle back towards the ship before getting a lift from a Zodiac to return back on board.

## 7th March 2023, PM: Fournier Bay - 4.8km. Paddling 2.9 km

Leaving the wind of Port Lockroy, we were surprised to enter the misty eery calm of Fournier Bay. As soon as we set anchor, we could see whales. Humpbacks blowing, logging, and diving all around the ship. We launched into

the still water off the stern of the ship. We did not have to paddle very long before the whales greeted us. They were relaxed. The scene was serene. The sounds of whales breathing were all around us. We did not paddle far on this outing. The bay is very big and surrounded by impressive ice walls and glaciers. The main attraction was the company of humpbacks though and we set an erratic wandering course back towards the ship. Nobody was ready to finish the outing, but leave we must, Fournier becomes the realm of the humpbacks again. Thank you.

## 8th March 2023, PM: Petermann Island - 8.2km. Paddling 5.1km

Blessed with great weather and good seas we decided to circumnavigate the island of Petermann. There is a lot of history surrounding the island. The first ship to ever over-winter stayed here. We had only three hours to spend admiring this stunning place. Petermann is home to a gentoo penguin colony that in turn attracts the occasional leopard seal, as we would discover. The island is painted many colours with the algae in the snow and the red oxides in the rocks. Once we had rounded the back of the island, we enjoyed the isolation from the ship and the landing party. The support Zodiac even gave us some distance and watched from afar. Steep cliffs rise up on the northern side with moss colouring them green. Today was a special day for two Expeditioners, they had a marriage ceremony. On Petermann! The lovely couple was having photos taken with a leopard seal in the background when our kayak group arrived and photobombed their pictures. We added even more colour. The seal was resting on some ice and we left it in peace. Gentoos launched in and out of the water as we completed our final stretch back to the ship. Petermann Island ...done.

## 9th March 2023, PM: Yankee Harbour - 5.4 km. Paddling 3.5km

The water behind the stern of the ship was calm but with a little swell. It was easy enough for Martin and Shellee to kayak away from but we decided to tow the inflatables a little closer to the harbour. This was to be our last paddle in Antarctica. It was foggy and still. The paddlers entered the shallow harbour and saw penguins along the shoreline. At one point the wind, although light, was blowing the inflatable kayaks towards the shore, luckily Tracy was there to tow them out of trouble, much to the relief of the penguins. Yankee Harbour gathers many smaller ice sculptures. The group made their way to the landing site and enjoyed the rest of the outing on foot.





# Snorkel Log

Snorkel Guide: Lucas Handley & Eddie Hauzer

Number of Snorkels: 10      Total Outings: 6

Snorkellers:	Yee-Hom Shuai	Ken Polasko
Lorraine Kirkwood	Patrick Cohen	Jane Appell
Tory Lane	Angela Cohen	Harriet Whitmarsh
Shannon Lane	Laurie LaPat-Polasko.	

## Monday 6th, March 2023 - Recess Cove

After returning from a 45 minute walk on continental Antarctica, we approached the lee side of a small offshore island. While gearing up, a weddell seal was seen in the vicinity of the boats, swimming along the shoreline.

We covered some of the techniques for getting back into the Zodiac and went through the buddy checklist for donning and checking our gear for watertightness. When everyone was geared up and ready, we moved close to shore and each of us slowly entered the water and tested the wrist and neck seals by lowering them into the icy water. All ok so far!

After a few hiccups with masks, everyone was happily exploring the cove and found that the dry suits were great for keeping warm and afloat.

One lucky snorkeller had Antarctic blessings bestowed upon them this morning with a (usually very shy) weddell seal approaching them in the water where they managed to take a photo. After 20 minutes, seeing the limpets and getting used to the new equipment, we were able to get all the explorers back on board using a variety of techniques (the ladder was our friend for a few of us!)

After seeing some spectacular icebergs on the way back to the ship, everyone was safe and happy back on board by 11:45am

## Wednesday 10th, March 2023 - Port Charcot

After a morning cruise through the Lemaire Channel, the team descended on Port Charcot. The landing site of an early French expedition, the island boasts an impressive gentoo penguin colony and a lovely snow-covered mountain, which offered views over the bay. Those who hiked to the top were treated to sites of fur seals playfully fighting and a cross, installed within a stone cairn.

The bay boasted an impressive 'herd' of icebergs, with some very large, tabular specimens offering a fantastic backdrop to the rafting (and sometimes porpoising) gentoo.

## Wednesday 10th, March 2023 - Petermann Island

Arriving at Petermann Island, the group were treated to the spectacle of pink snow (a green algae which has red pigments in it). The rocky outcrops of Petermann Island hosted a generous gentoo rookery and also had good populations of Antarctic cormorants on the outcrops closest to the water's edge.

After a brief 25-minute excursion on land, our snorkellers boarded the zodiac and travelled north, finding a protected channel which lead into a small cove filled with small bergs. The sheltered channel gave good views of the ice, and curious birdlife watched from the sidelines as the team made their way from one side to the other.

Twenty minutes in the water was enough for most, so, once safely aboard again, we rounded the point of the channel and discovered a leopard seal, laying on the ice flows less than 200 metres from our sheltered snorkelling spot. She was beautiful and reasonably active for a seal, who had hauled out for a nap. With Eddie guiding us carefully around the ice, the leopard scratched, readjusted, yawned a couple of times and repeated. A fantastic experience for all.

## Wednesday 14th, March 2023 - Saunders Island, Falkland Islands

What a fantastic trip!

With fur seals around the boat, and a visit from a sea lion to boot, the expectations for this morning's snorkel were high, and underwater certainly conformed to this expectation. A healthy growth of kelp carpeted the rocky extents of Saunders Island, housing a myriad of fish, with the local mullet and smelt spotted by a few keen eyes. Harriet managed to snap a photo of one of the gentoo penguins who had come in to swim around the group, which was fantastic, as these little speed demons looked like missiles to most, as they flew past in a blur.

It was an exciting day in the Falklands, as black-browed albatross flew overhead. We hadn't seen fish life with this abundance for most of the trip, so the explosion of underwater life provided a welcome contrast to the cooler, ice-dominated environments of the Peninsula.

For those who wandered ashore, colonies of gentoo, rockhopper, magellanic and even king penguins greeted ocean-weary eyes. Recovering from two days on the Drake, shaky legs lead bewildered explorers into the hills where they could see the albatross rookery.

A spectacular day by anyone's standards.

## Wednesday 14th, March 2023 - West Point, Falkland Islands

There was some incredible macro algae at this site, with stands of giant kelp reaching all the way to the surface and spreading into thick mats, stretching seaward. The holdfasts of these colossal kelps were anchored in approximately 12 metres and created an underwater forest that was rich in fish life and echinoderms.

Those with keen eyes spotted spider crabs amongst the stalks, and Antarctic cod were there as well. Joined by a giant silver alien, a curious fur seal made an appearance and enjoyed a full six seconds of attention before disappearing back into the rubbery sub-aquatic shrubbery.

Our snorkel team made for land and a hike through the green fields of West Point to another rockhopper and albatross rookery. Legend has it that the silver alien reappeared and, through a form of interpretive dance, began communicating with the earthlings. An incredible finish to an incredible journey.



# Dive Log

Dive Masters: Catherine Buckland

Number of Divers: 4

Total Outings: 8

Paddlers:

Igor Miesz

Warren Haydon

Tom Mosey

Erik Isaacs

## Monday 6th March 2023, AM - Recess Cove

Recess Cove was our check-out dive, a nice gentle slope in around 6-10 metres of water, with good visibility of around 6 metres meant we could check out all of our kit. Starfish and limpets were on the bottom and as the divers surfaced there were humpback whales feeding nearby. The divers then landed on the continent and enjoyed the views from the top of a plateau after a short hike.

## Monday 6th March 2023, PM - Graham Passage

Graham Passage is a small narrow passage, dominated by ice cliffs along the majority of it. So the divers headed off to the entrance of Graham Passage as it was one of the only places where there were no ice cliffs above. Birds were nesting on the cliffs and it looked like there would be a lot of life underneath. The divers dropped into around 4 metres, close to a steep drop-off. There were some small bits of ice to look at under the water and reasonable visibility to enjoy them with. The divers enjoyed seeing sun stars for the first time, and some small fish as well.

## Tuesday 7th March 2023, PM - Fournier bay

Our original plan was to dive at Base Brown in Paradise Harbour, strong winds thwarted that plan. Instead, we headed to a place called Fournier Bay, here we looked for an iceberg to dive around. Having found just the right iceberg we kitted up. The visibility in the water was slightly disappointing at 3 metres, but the texture and shape of the iceberg under the water was fantastic.

## Wednesday 8th March 2023, AM - Port Charcot

This morning we opted for another iceberg, hoping for better visibility (and maybe a leopard seal). We found an iceberg grounded in around 25 metres of water and the divers kitted up to go and enjoy this structure. The visibility certainly didn't disappoint and the iceberg looked stunning underwater.

## Wednesday 8th March 2023, PM - Petermann

We travelled around further north on Petermann Island to a couple of bays. The original bay we planned to dive in was unfortunately full of ice, so we opted for a smaller channel. The visibility looked stunning from the surface and it didn't disappoint under the water either. All the ice that had been floating around started to become a problem and the recall signal was used to bring all of the divers up safely. Afterwards, we drove around and enjoyed seeing a leopard seal languishing on a small ice floe.

## Thursday 9th March 2023, PM - Yankee Harbour

This steep wall just outside of Yankee Harbour didn't look particularly promising, with a nearby glacier making the water 'milky'. However, the divers persevered and were rewarded with all sorts of life. The visibility cleared up a little bit a few metres down, and fish, sea spiders and lots of starfish were found.

## Sunday 12th March 2023, AM - 'The Neck' Saunders Island, Falklands

The diving here is completely different to Antarctica, with the water temperature a balmy degrees Celsius and huge kelp forests, it's easy to spend an hour underwater looking at everything. The divers descended in around 8 metres of water and were pleased to find good visibility (around 5 metres) and so much life inside the kelp. Sea lions came and joined the divers. Truly a great experience.

## Sunday 12th March 2023, PM - West Point Island, Falklands

The kelp forests in the Falklands are absolutely stunning, every dive offers you something a little bit different. With even better visibility than this morning, the divers really enjoyed these huge kelp forests. So much life in all of the holdfasts. All the divers came up with huge smiles on their faces.

# Citizen Science Log

Project Name

How many times was this project done during this voyage?

Happywhale	4
Secchi disk	1
Cloud survey	3
Bird survey	1



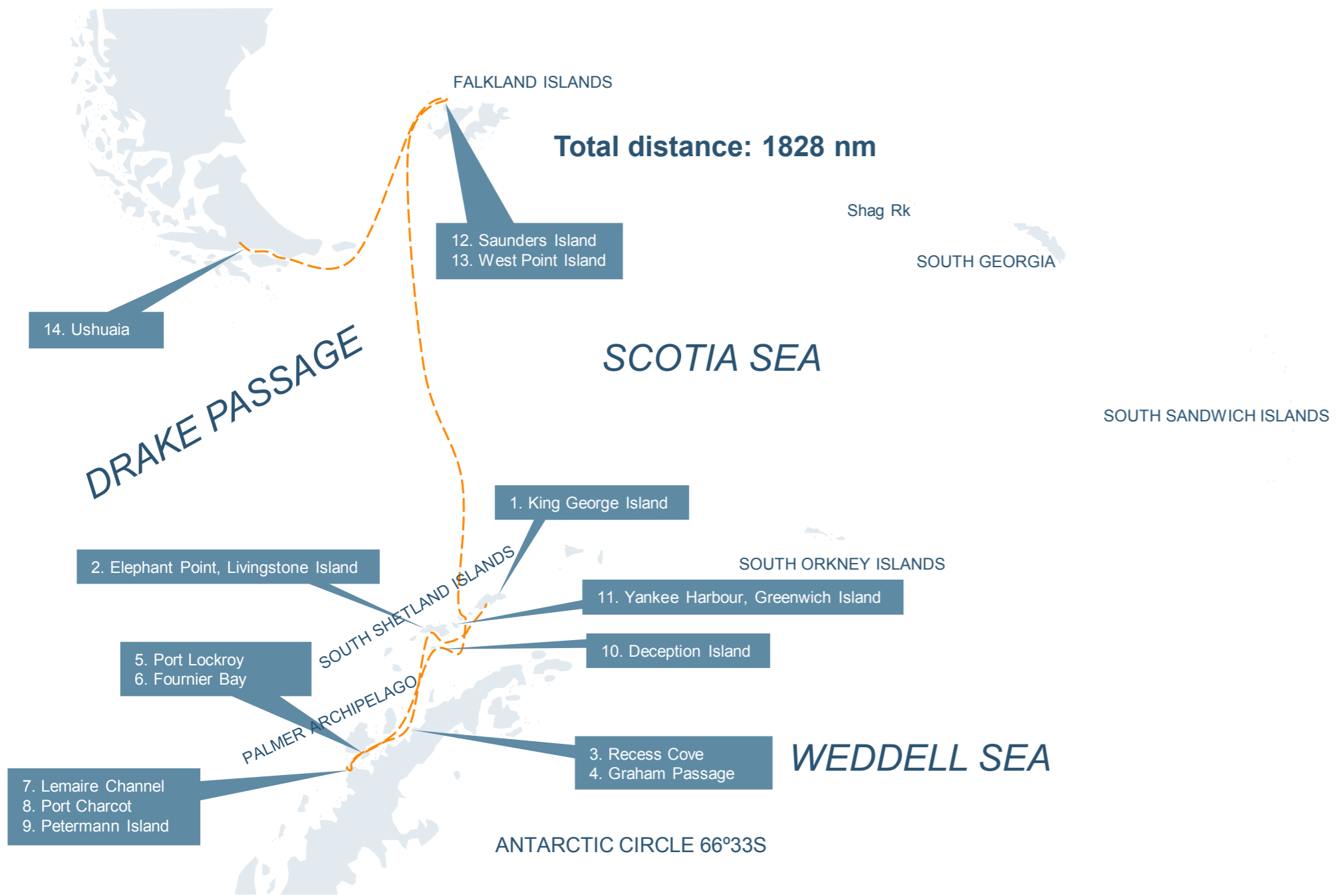
# Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	March												
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				
Wandering Albatross											●		
Souther Royal Albatross													●
Black-browed Albatross						●	●	●	●	●			
Southern giant Petrel	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●			
Northern giant Petrel								●		●			
Snow Petrel			●	●									
Southern Fulmar	●		●	●									
White-chinned Petrel								●	●				●
Soft-plumaged Petrel								●	●				
Kerguelen Petrel								●					
Wilson's Storm-petrel	●	●	●	●	●	●	●						●
Antarctic Prion								●	●				
Fairy Prion											●		
Great Shearwater											●	●	●
Sooty Shearwater											●	●	●
King Penguin													●
Gentoo Penguin	●		●	●	●								●
Chinstrap Penguin	●		●	●	●								
Adélie Penguin		●		●									
Magellanic Penguin													●
Rockhopper Penguin													●
Imperial Cormorant												●	●
Antarctic Cormorant	●	●	●	●	●								
Rock Cormorant												●	●
Snowy (Pale-faced) Sheatbill	●		●	●	●								
Falkand Night Heron													●
Kelp Goose													●
Upland Goose													●

Bird Species	March												
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				
Falkland flightless Steamer-Duck													●
Variable Hawk													●
Striated Caracara (Johnny Rook)													●
Falkland Skua													●
Subantarctic Skua	●	●	●	●	●								
South Polar Skua			●	●	●								
Kelp Gull	●	●	●	●	●								●
Dolphin Gull													●
Antarctic Tern	●	●	●	●									
Magellanic Oystercatcher													●
Austral Thrush													●
Long-billed Meadow Lark													●
Black-faced Chat Tyrant													●

Mammal Species	March												
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				
Antarctic Fur Seal		●	●	●	●	●							
South American Seal-Lion													●
Southern Elephant Seal	●					●				●			
Crabeater Seal			●	●	●								
Weddell Seal	●	●	●	●									
Leopard Seal			●	●	●								
Fin Whale	●												
Humpback Whale		●	●	●									
Gray's Beaked Whale												●	
Commerson's Dolphin													●
Hourglass Dolphin										●	●		







## Expeditioners:

Lucia Algieri  
 Jane Appell  
 George Banick  
 Giovanni Barbieri  
 Richard Bartlett-May  
 Donna Bartlett-May  
 Lee Anne Battiston  
 Frank Boys  
 Mariyana Castleberry  
 Scott Castleberry  
 Yi Hsing Chang  
 Peggy Chang  
 Patrick Cohen  
 Angela Cohen  
 Minna Corona  
 Wendy Crofts  
 Shellee Crook  
 Mike Damore  
 Sharon Damore  
 Paul Dung  
 Em Evans  
 Ying Guo

Katie Harber  
 Julie Harris  
 Deborah Hartness  
 Owen Hartness  
 Warren Haydon  
 Deb Holman  
 Yingwei Hou  
 CH Hsueh  
 Haily Hsueh-Chen  
 Eric Isaacs  
 Chunhua Jin  
 Cathy Jordan  
 Wanda Keller  
 Eliah Keller  
 Robert Kelley  
 Lorraine Kirkwood  
 Carol Koenig  
 Steve Koenig  
 Laurie La Pat-Polasko  
 Tory Lane  
 Shannon Lane  
 Françoise Lefebvre

Jonathan Livingstone  
 Lily Luong  
 Claudia Mace  
 Ian Macqueen  
 Jenny Macqueen  
 Debbie Mann  
 Murray Mann  
 Stanton Mc Comb  
 Stanton Mc Comb JR  
 Dane McMillan  
 Igors Miezis  
 Tom Mosey  
 Helve Murdoch  
 Ric Murdoch  
 Myra Murray  
 Lan Nguyen  
 Gail Oja  
 Matt Oja  
 Yang Ping  
 Ken Polasko  
 Kim Porter  
 Bryan Rahe

Krista Rahe  
 Ann Rahe  
 Jacques Renaud  
 Carlos Rodriguez  
 Debra Ross  
 Nigel Roxburgh  
 Vicki Samuels  
 Thomas Samuels  
 Kevin Sardja  
 Dom Sasse  
 John Scott  
 Kate Scott  
 Tony Scott  
 Steven Shapse  
 Fannie Shuai  
 Yee-Horn Shuai  
 Robyn Small  
 Sandra Smedley  
 Scott Smith  
 Diane Spicer  
 Lilija Spiglazovaite  
 May Starr

Matthew Stephens  
 John Stewart  
 Linda Stewart  
 Cory Stone  
 Pamela Stone  
 Agnes Szajer  
 Laszlo Szajer  
 Eva Thompson  
 Emily Vasiliou  
 Helena Vella  
 Eline Verplaetse  
 Irene Wan  
 Angela Wang  
 Catherine Watkins-Wilson  
 Debborah Wheatley  
 Harriet Whitmarsh  
 Audrey Wybenga  
 Hanling Zou

## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Howard Whelan

Assistant Expedition Leader: Leo Soibelzon

Onboard Expedition Manager: Anne Oeyasaeter

Naturalist: Eirik Gronningsaeter

Marine Biologist/Citizen Science: Julia Benson

Historian: Jonathan Chester

Naturalist: Vicky Inglis

Photography Guide: Matt Horspool

Expedition Medic: David Palmer

Expedition Guide: Birgitta Mueck

Kayaking Master: Eamon Larkin

Kayaking Guide: Martin Rickard

Kayaking Guide: Tracy Gibson

Kayaking Guide: Ivan Klochkov

Kayaking Guide: Hodei Orueta

Snorkel Master: Eddie Hauzer

Snorkel Guide: Lucas Handley

Dive Master: Catherine Buckland

Zodiac Manager: Zak Hinkley

Mudroom/Shopkeeper: Reza Rusooly

Mudroom/Shopkeeper Trainee: Ari Benzo Ciria

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Artem Kolmykov

Chief Officer: Gabriel Eduardo Centella Molina

Second Officer: Fernandes Raymer Rosario

Safety Officer: Sergio Enrique Saldana Hernandez

Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan

Ship Doctor: Sofia Cocunubo Castellanos

Chief Engineer: Ruslan Rotar

First Engineer: Lazar Alexandru

IT Officer: Nathaniel Buhain Vibares

Hotel Director: Osman Ozpolat

F&B Service Manager: Balvant Singh

Head Bartender: Rajesh Sugreev Murao

Chief Purser: Liza Merillo

Executive Chef: Suresh Pai Karkala

Sous Chef: Hubert Ramiro Barreto

Hotel Controller: Reynaldo Hernandez Cañeda

Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska

Receptionist: Jaypee Alota Abonitalla

Head Stateroom Attendant: Sotero (Terry) Agtagma

Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan

Able Seaman: Brosas Anthony John Narvaez

Able Seaman: Aloyan Eduardo Caranoo

Able Seaman: Nestor Fernandez Arangorin

Able Seaman: Rene Balsomo Casipe

Able Seaman: Alvarez Santos Luis Fernando

Able Seaman: Dragan Zivkovic

## Photography thanks to:

Matt

Martin

Ivan


Lucas


Tracy









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