



OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS

Expedition Log

Antarctic Adventures

01st November – 23rd November, 2013

On board the
M/V Ortelius



MV *Ortelius* was named after the Dutch cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) who published the first modern world atlas, the Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (Theatre of the World) in 1570. MV *Ortelius* was built in 1989 in Gdynia, Poland, as a research vessel for the Russian Academy of Science and was named *Marina Svetaeva*. In 2011 she was purchased by **Oceanwide Expeditions**. The vessel was re-flagged and renamed *Ortelius*. Now the ship is sailing as a 110-Passenger vessel. *Ortelius* is 91 m long, 17,6 m wide and has a maximum draft of 5,80 m, with an Ice Strength rating of UL1/1A, top speed of 13 knots and one diesel engine generating 3200 kW.

Captain Ernesto Barria Vargas (Chile)

First Officer– Artur Yakovlev (Russian)

Second Officer – Martin Metsniit (Estonian)

Third Officer – Matei Mocanu (Romanian)

Our Crew:

Patricio, Kilker, Edvinas, Vyacheslav, Indrek, Ilya, Darko, Andrey, Geasar,
Lauren, Andy, Volodymyr, Andrejs, Olegs, Janusz, Vitalijs,

The Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader – Delphine Aurès (France)

Assistant Expedition Leader – Saskia Travers (Reunion Island)

Guide & Lecturer – Gemma Clucas (United Kingdom)

Guide & Lecturer – Tom Hart (United Kingdom)

Guide & Lecturer – Rolf Stange (Germany)

Guide & Lecturer – Henryk Wolski (Poland)

The Hotel Team:

Hotel Manager –Natascha Wisse (The Netherlands)

Chief Steward – Dejan Nikolic (Serbia)

Head Chef – Christian Gossak (Austria)

Assistant Chef – Khabir Moraes (India)

And:

Lusyianna, Rolando, Rogelio, Recto, Charlemagne, Marjorie, Marvin, Joel,
Maricel, Tootchy, Alfred, Sabrina, Noelle, Mary Jane, Rosie

Ship's Physician – Rutker Stellke (Germany)

Day 1 – November 01st

Puerto Madryn: Argentina

08:00 GPS Position: 42°45.7'S / 065°01.5'W

Weather: +14°C, Clear blue sky with patchy clouds, sea conditions: flat calm, wind: None!

In the afternoon we were picked up at our hotel and driven to the long pier of Puerto Madryn. There, at the very end of it M/V Ortelius was berthed, waiting for us.



Disembarking our buses we were welcomed by the custom dog who had a whiff of our luggage before being scanned and taken aboard. After checking in at reception we settled into our cabins to be for the next three weeks and later on had our first briefing with the safety officer in the lecture room followed shortly after by a safety drill.

Just before dinner we had a welcome cocktail with Captain Ernesto Barria, Expedition Leader Delphine Aures and the rest of her team while the ship was starting to get rid of its moorings and we slowly got off the pier. A wonderful dinner was served in the restaurant as we were sailing out of the bay.

The rest of the night was spent unpacking and it was a nice and smooth sailing through the night.

Day 2 – November 02nd

At sea sailing towards the Falkland Islands

08:00 GPS Position: 44°50'S / 063°22'W

Weather: +11°C, Foggy, sea conditions: calm, wind: None!

We woke up at 07h45 to a foggy morning which enclosed us in our own little bubble. There was a long Northerly swell making the ship roll somewhat. People with patches behind their ears moved slowly around the ship in small numbers; many people stayed in their cabins until the worst of the seasickness had passed. By late morning, the sea had died down slightly and the sun had burned off the fog. In the shelter of the wind it got quite hot on deck. Throughout the morning, we went to the lecture theatre to pick up boots for landings. People seemed to weigh the decision of which boot very seriously, clearly aware that their choice might mean a great difference in comfort when landings started.

At 11h30, Rolf gave a talk on '*Seabirds of the Southern Ocean*', which put in context many of the birds we saw around the ship. Meanwhile, those on deck saw many of the larger South Atlantic seabirds, attracted to the ship and using the ship's wind wake for lift. Throughout the day, relatively large numbers of juvenile giant petrels, both Northern and Southern species overflowed us. Most of these birds are graceful fliers, but once in a while you could see them hanging their



feet to brake their flight, making them a clumsy plane coming in to land. These large birds breed largely on South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, but while they are young, they spend the majority of their time feeding to the North in the Argentine Basin. Lower down skirting the waves, Cape Petrels darted between waves near the bow of the ship, their zebra patterning making them hard to see in the white capped waves.

Time at sea can move relatively slowly. Enthusiastic birders patrolled the decks with long lenses and binoculars. On the whole they were rewarded and were able to catch sight of a large number of species. Other people camped out on the bridge or read in the bar, noticing the passing of the waves but concentrating on getting their sea-legs.



Later in the afternoon, Michael spoke on Seabirds of the Southern Ocean to a German audience, and Henryk gave a talk on Darwin and Tierra del Fuego. The ship was generally quiet with a number of people resting. Those who felt strong enjoyed a fish or lamb dinner before bed.

Day 3 – November 03rd

Sailing towards the Falkland Islands

08:00 GPS Position: 49°33'S / 061°44'W

Weather: +6°C, clear sky with striped clouds, sea conditions: a bit rough, wind: south westerly, 20 knots

We woke up in the morning with some swell and some wind, about 20 knots. Some birds were flying about, Cape petrels, Giant petrels...

Delphine gave us a zodiac briefing in English followed by a German version shortly afterwards. The lecture room was pretty depleted as some of us were not too well. The sea had already taken a few of us in its grip and send them to bed, sea sick.

As the morning developed, so did the seas, with about 2 to 3 meter swell and winds of about 40 knots. This made the sea birds even happier and we could see them flying around in bigger numbers and diversity: Wilson storm petrel, giant petrel, black browed albatrosses, wandering albatrosses and prions to name a few.



Just before lunch time Tom explained the work that he and Gemma were doing on the penguins and Rolf repeated a German version of it before going for a nice lunch.

After the siesta at 15h00, Henryk gave his German presentation “Darwin and Tierra del Fuego” in the bar.

The ship having done a good speed with the following waves through the last days brought us close to one of the North Western Islands of the Falklands: Steeple Jason. Unfortunately we could not land as the sea was still quite rough but with binoculars you could get a good view of the black browed albatross colony on the right, a little house on the beach and the rugged peaks from the island.

Before dinner we got our first recap and briefing where Tom spoke about the Antarctic convergence and Delphine showed us what the plans were for the next day in the Falklands.

Day 4 – November 04th

Fantastic Falklands!

08:00 GPS Position: 51°48'S / 060°30'W

Weather: +7°C, sunny, wind: west/north westerly, 5 knots.



Our first day of landings! We got up for an early breakfast and we were met by bright sunshine but a fierce wind outside. Putting on our warm clothes and boots for the first time, we made our way down the gangway and into the zodiacs for a wet and windy ride to leopard beach on Carcass Island. It was paradise. The sun shone off the white sandy beach and the ocean was a brilliant turquoise. Gentoo penguins stood on the shore, their white bellies glistening in the sunshine, whilst others swam around in the shallows, occasionally 'porpoising' out of the water as they swam at high speed. Inland, magellanic penguins could be glimpsed within their burrows, protected from the sun and the wind. Upland geese, kelp geese and Falklands thrushes could also be seen on the windswept grasslands. The curious striated caracara investigated objects on the beach, including our rucksacks, and occasionally harassed the gentoo penguins to try to steal their eggs. A walk up to the cairn on Carcass Island gave spectacular views across the bay to the settlement and then it was time to head back to the ship for lunch.

Over lunch the ship repositioned to Saunders Island, but due to the high winds and a low tide we were unable to land on either side of the island. So we moved onto West Point Island where the natural harbor offered more protection and Theis and Kiki welcomed us at the jetty. A bracing walk over the stunning island into the wind and the setting sun took us to a colony of Southern rockhopper penguins and black-browed albatross. We weaved our way quietly between the tussock grass to get some fabulous close encounters with the birds. Albatross



were landing over our heads and there was a cacophony of noise coming from the rockhoppers who were displaying to one another and incubating their eggs. I think we were all mesmerized by the beauty and elegance of the albatrosses – apart from when they came into land!

Day 5 - November 05th

At sea sailing towards South Georgia

08:00 GPS Position: 51°09'S / 57°31'W

Weather: +12°C, Blue sky, wind: west/ northwest

We awoke at 07h45, the sea had risen slightly and the waves were hitting us side-on resulting in a rolling motion that affected many people, but less than the trip from Puerto Madryn to the Falklands. People were clearly more comfortable and finding their sea legs as the bridge was never empty. Once again, people were commonly on deck and it was still not cold. Some people were pacing the decks for exercise, while the keen birders took up station on the stern quarters and sides of the ship. All were contented with the number of species sightings by the end of the day.



During the morning, Michael presented on Penguins of the Southern Ocean in German, while Tom and Gemma presented in English a little bit later. These talks anticipated the large numbers of penguins we hoped to see in the next few days on South Georgia. After lunch, Henryk lectured on Shackelton's Endurance expedition in both

German and English, with particular reference to the places we hope to see. He described in detail the Scotia Sea crossing from Elephant Island in the James Caird and the subsequent land crossing of South Georgia; all places we hope to visit.

Crossing into Antarctica from the Falklands seemed fairly benign. Since the Falklands, we saw a large number of black-browed albatrosses. For most, it was a restful day.

By early evening, the ship was much quieter. A few people were in the bar, drinking and checking through photos from the day on deck and the previous day on Carcass and West Point, but it felt like most were conserving their strength for the impending landings in South Georgia. Delphine led a recap on the Falkland Islands, with people sharing their experiences and thoughts. Highlights seemed to revolve around albatrosses and penguins, but many agreed that the chance meeting of round the world sailors Theis and Kiki on West Point was particularly inspirational.

In the bar, many of us sat going through their computers, enjoying the memories of the Falklands, while birders labelled and checked their species identification on many of the harder to differentiate petrels. By the time most we went to bed, the sea was moderate and rocked us to sleep.

Day 6 – November 06th

Still sailing towards South Georgia

08:00 GPS Position: 52°09.'S / 50°19'W

Weather: +3°C, foggy; wind: west / south west, 19 knots

We woke to find the ship surrounded by a dense fog. Seabirds drifted in and out of view in the eerie light and we sailed onwards through the impenetrable mist towards South Georgia. Our guide and lecturer Rolf gave an introduction to plate tectonics in both English and German, where he told us about the three types of plate boundary that we see (subduction zones, spreading centers and transform faults) and he also gave us a brief history of the Earth. Later we attended our IAATO briefings. We learnt about how to be safe on South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula, and how to behave to make sure that we do not disturb the wildlife or have any lasting impacts on these beautiful environments.



In the afternoon the sun broke through the fog briefly and it was pleasantly warm on deck. However as the ship sailed through the Antarctic Convergence (Polar Front) in the late afternoon, the temperature outside dropped dramatically as the ship moved into the cold waters of the Antarctic Circumpolar Current (ACC) and the fog outside returned. The Polar Front is a hotspot for wildlife, as the mixing between the warm waters of the South Atlantic and the nutrient rich waters of the ACC allow high productivity. However with the dense fog, it was difficult to see many of the marine predators that we would expect to see in the region. Instead we enjoyed the stunning footage from episode one of the BBC's Frozen Planet in the bar and in the evening Delphine showed us the wind charts for our final day at sea on the way to South Georgia. We finished the day watching Skyfall in the lecture theatre.

Day 7 – November 07th

Sailing the Scotia Sea to be in South Georgia at sunrise!

08:00 GPS Position: 53°13'S / 42°50'W

Weather: +4°C, Foggy, sea conditions: long swell, wind: northwest, 5 knots

This morning the sunrise could not be seen. The fog was enveloping the whole ship in a thick veil, visibility was no more than 100 meters. Penguins were spotted and also a group of fur seals riding the waves. We had a big swell, probably a residue coming from the storm that had hit the Drake.

Unfortunately with this fog we could not see shag rocks and we proceeded in the direction of South Georgia.

In the morning we had Henryk's wonderful lecture about his re-enactment of Shackleton's epic voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia for our English speakers while Rolf was giving "Antarctic Plate tectonic part II" for our German passengers at the same time.



Just before lunch some of us managed to vacuum clean their clothing and equipment, a mandatory request from the South Georgian government to prevent the introduction of alien plants. Strait after lunch the vacuuming was resumed and all our gear was ready for disembarkation!

A short informative film about South Georgia was shown during the course of the afternoon with magnificent pictures of wildlife and sceneries.

Later in the afternoon, Henryk repeated his lecture in German and Rolf in English.

Just before diner Delphine gave us an overview of the plans for tomorrow which sounded exciting!!! After three days at sea, we were really keen on getting off the ship.

To prevent bird strikes we had all the windows being blacked out and the ship's lights reduced to a minimum.

Day 8 - November 08th

Bay of Isles, South Georgia

08:00 GPS Position: 54°02'S / 037°24'W

Weather: 0°C, Overcast, wind: north/ northwest, 10 knots

We woke to Delphine's call at 06h40 and a look out of the port hole revealed a cloudy day with a lot of promise. South Georgia! Overnight, Ortelius had passed the North-West point of South Georgia, and was now due north of the Bay of Isles. This bay is a large, open bay filled with islands and rocks named after historic features, many of which are named after boats that first hit them. The bay of Isles is a fitting name, with numerous small islands and rocks throughout. We approached Salisbury Plain through the mist, the coast revealing itself within the last mile and a half as a low-lying moraine landscape.



Robert Cushing Murphy's "Logbook for Grace" was written while he journeyed as a naturalist on board the sealing vessel *Daisy*, consisting of biological notes and letters that he wrote to his wife. As we arrive at Salisbury Plain, the glacier at the back of the moraine is the Grace Glacier which Murphy named after the lady he wrote to so elegantly and for so long. It is hard to imagine a modern couple enduring such a long separation without regular contact, but their pair managed and by all accounts lived happily in later life. Maybe Robert was forgiven once he had named a glacier after her. In 1970, 48 years after leaving the island, Robert returned to South Georgia on the MS Explorer bringing his wife with him so that he could finally show Grace her glacier.

We anchored in the middle of the bay, about 500 metres from the shore. Through binoculars, it was possible to see the large King penguin colony stretching up the hill. Large banks of fog remained, but we started to see parts of the shore at sea level clearly.

The first zodiacs were called at 08h30. The first landing took 15 minutes, but rapidly picked up speed with everyone ashore by approximately 09h15. Fur seals, elephant seals and king penguins greeted the zodiacs as they approached. We were rewarded with the sights, sounds and smells of a large king penguin colony. It was a sea of black, white and orange, stretching up the hill in an hourglass shape. The smell in particular was very distinctive and memorable of a large number of penguins living together.

The afternoon looked excellent for a landing on Prion Island; a small island roughly four nautical miles to the north of Salisbury Plain. This island is rat free and has a small population of South Georgia Pipits and Wandering Albatrosses. Over lunch the wind rose to over 40 knots; impossible for zodiac operations. The captain came in close trying to find shelter and several times turned the ship looking for a better anchorage and shelter. It was not to be – after an hour of trying, the ship turned out of the Bay of Isles and we started to run along the Northern coast of South Georgia. The sun was shining but the wind was still very strong. A northerly swell pushed into most of the bays while a westerly wind meant that we could only find shelter close in. We dipped into Possession Bay, looking for shelter and a possible zodiac cruise in Prince Olaf Harbour. Again, we were defeated by the wind and after a tantalising glimpse of the old whaling station, we ran round the coast again. We passed the Fortuna Glacier and Fortuna Bay as Henrik told aspects of the Shackleton story. Finally, we found some shelter in Stromness Bay. The captain brought us in close to Stromness whaling station inside Grass Island. We also got a long view of Leith Harbour. As we cruised slowly towards the shore, we turned away from Tonsberg Point and out to sea. We left Stromness Bay with the light fading in the valleys while the mountain peaks shone with the last of the sun.



By the time dinner was finished and the ship was darkened to avoid seabird strikes, we were able to see a dazzling array of Southern stars.

Day 9 – November 09th

Grytviken & Saint Andrews Bay, South Georgia

08:00 GPS Position: 54°16'S / 036°27'W

Weather: 0°C, sunny, overcast, snow! Wind: north, 15 knots



After breakfast Sarah from the South Georgia Heritage Trust gave a presentation about the rat eradication program in South Georgia. Helicopters were used to spread a specially designed bait that was very attractive to rats but minimally attractive to other animals. Flying on very precise flight paths, the helicopters spread the bait in a trial area immediately surrounding King Edward Point during phase one of the project. Because of the many glaciers that divide up South Georgia, it was possible to bait that area without worrying about rats moving back into it from other areas. The trial was totally successful and the area was declared rat-free, and so they began phase two of the project. This involved using three helicopters to bait all of the infested areas to the North of King Edward Point and again it was successful. Now they are fund-raising to be able to do the south of the island, but the retreating glaciers mean that if they cannot complete the project soon, the rats will be able to move between regions, making eradication very difficult.

After Sarah's presentation we landed on the beach near the cemetery at Grytviken.

A few elephant seals lined the beach, and the sun came out for our toast to Shackleton. Some people went with Sarah for a tour of the whaling station, whilst others preferred to wander through the rusty old buildings and ships at their own pace, reading the placards and enjoying the wildlife that had found a home there. The museum had some excellent historical displays



and the James Caird was on display in the gallery. The gift shop offered lots of lovely mementos and books, and many of us posted our postcards in the post office. As the weather turned from sunshine to snow showers, we returned to the ship for lunch and set sail for Saint Andrews Bay.

Arriving at Saint Andrews Bay it did not look promising as the fog was thick. However after about a 30 minute wait, the fog started to lift and the beach came into view. We landed on the windswept, snowy, black-sand beach amongst lots of elephant seals. Many of the beach-masters were defending harems and occasionally the males would size each other up by grunting and rearing-up at each other. If one didn't back down, then they would fight, crashing into each other with their heads, teeth bared, and often drawing blood. The loser would then retreat, and at quite a speed that meant we sometimes had to move out of the way.



Nevertheless we picked our way between the elephant seal harems and a few fur seals, and arrived at the river, which was thronging with seal pups and king penguins were standing all around. Crossing the river we then made our way up above the main king penguin colony. It was quite a sight to see so many penguins and in front of the spectacular scenery of the Cook and Buxton glaciers. At the peak of the breeding season, it is estimated that 200,000 king penguins breed there. When we visited there were lots of chicks in their woolly, brown, downy coats, huddling together in the wind and snow. And adults stood around the along the stream. A group of reindeer could also be seen grazing in the distance.

Day 10 – November 10th

Gold Harbour, Cooper Bay & Drygalski Fjord, South Georgia

08:00 GPS Position: 54°37'S /035°55'W

Weather: +1°C, sunny, wind: northwest, 3 knots

“Good morning, guten morgen! It is 4h50 and we have good weather with sun for our landing at Gold Harbour”. This was Delphine’s wake-up call this morning and we soon were on our way to the beach after a quick fix up with coffee and pastries up in the bar.



The beach was covered with elephant seals and a lot of weaners. We strolled up from the beach where there was a dead elephant seal carcass that lost its eyes to the scavengers. Giant petrels were taking care of it, a bit smelly though...Then the walk carried on along the river stream to avoid being in the middle of the elephant seals, here we had some king penguins molting in small groups. The scenery of Gold harbor was fantastic, with glaciers coming down overlooking the king penguin colony, some light mantled sooty albatrosses flying high above. The walk went on a bit further to the edge of the king penguin colony, with big male elephant seals to the left with their harems and the weaners to the right, quite curious about us. Once in a while another male elephant seal sneaking up on the “king” of the harem, created mayhem and a fight followed. King penguins coming from the sea and going up to the colony were careful to avoid these giants fighting and were passing by quickly to avoid being squashed by them. As the

morning progressed we started to have some snowflakes falling and soon a snowstorm came. The ship disappeared from sight for a while, some king penguins and a weaner elephant seal came to visit us while we were waiting in the storm but it did not last too long and soon enough we were back on the ship.

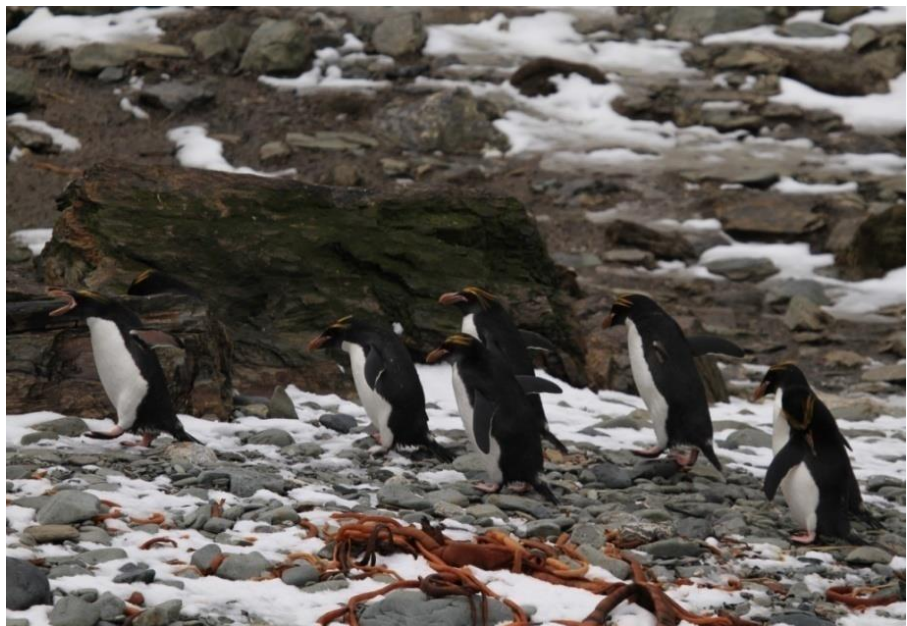


During breakfast the ship repositioned to Cooper Bay. We went for a zodiac cruise along the shore amongst little hidden coves surrounded by beautiful cliffs and around the corner of one bay we found the macaronis that we were looking for. The colony was above a cliff that the penguins could access on a steep hike from the shore. Some were just back from a day foraging at sea and were preening on the rocks so we

could have a good look at them. Not too far off on the cliff face, some light mantled sooty albatrosses were nesting amongst the tussock grass. We also spotted some imperial shags, snowy sheathbill and some chinstrap penguins in another bay. The return to the ship was quite something as the swell was making it difficult for us to go back on the gangway with the zodiac going up and down, but we all made it back safe.

You think our day was over?

No, after lunch the ship sailed into the Drygalski Fjord under over 50 knots of winds with a new snow storm. At the entrance lay three big icebergs, we spotted a group of orcas in the vicinity and further up the fjord some snow petrels joined us. The visibility was not the greatest but we could still see the mountains on both sides and the scenery was very nice and dramatic. Some seals were appearing now and then at the surface of the water and before reaching the end of the fjord we turned around and started our way towards the South Sandwich Islands.



Day 11 – November 11th

At sea towards the South Sandwich

08:00 GPS Position: 56°04'S / 31°57'W

Weather: - 0,5°C, foggy and light snow falling, wind: westerly, 14 knots

We awoke at a leisurely 0800 to a moderate sea that calmed further throughout the morning. Wind was 20 knots and roughly behind us. We've left South Georgia well behind us after three perfect days where she showed her best and a glimpse of her ferocious, fast changing moods.

"You have to get to know the island in all her various moods and guises if ever you are going to understand and appreciate and enjoy her - trouble is, you may then fall in love."

Duncan Carse, who mapped the interior of South Georgia in the 1950s

After three days of perfect South Georgia, how will the South Sandwich Islands be able to compete? As we cross the Scotia Sea, the winds that seemed to be rising have gone down again. There is a slow rolling swell all day, but the sea is pretty calm and we are making good speed. We start to see whales; fin and also possibly sei whales, plus the Cape Petrels and Blue Prions. The Scotia Sea near the South Sandwich Islands is supposedly rich with whales, although whalers seldom spent much time there as the sea and ice conditions were tough.

"We always found ice conditions most severe around the vicinity of the South Sandwich Islands. Huge packs of heavy blue ice lay fast between the islands. Soon they would break up after the winter's freeze, drift away with the prevailing wind and current, and finally erode or melt."

McLaughlin, W. R. D. (1962) Call to the South: A Story of British Whaling in Antarctica.

For us, this means that we should start to see large icebergs and floes of sea ice soon. We have a course for Saunders Island, which gives the best chance for a landing and as the middle island, is a good point to aim for as it doesn't rule out the possible landings on Candlemas or Montagu.

As the day passes with lectures in the morning and afternoon, we see ice but not that much. We end the day with a recap in which Delphine

explains the plan to land on Saunders Island in the morning (possibly very early!). Half-way through dinner, the sun set is red over a calm sea. This looks very good for Saunders Island tomorrow.



Day 12 – November 12th

Saunders, South Sandwich Islands

08:00 GPS Position: 57°47'S / 026°24'W

Weather: - 1°C, wind: westerly, 10 knots

Delphine woke us at about 4am as we made our final approach to Saunders Island. The clouds hung low as the Captain skillfully navigated us through the ice floes. Penguins and seals watched us as we passed. Coming into Cordelia Bay, the clouds were still low but we could make out the shoreline, which was cluttered with ice floes and bergy bits. Initially conditions were calm; there was very little wind or swell. But as we got closer, the wind built very quickly until it was gusting over 40 knots and it was whipping up the waves. This cold, biting wind quickly cleared away the low-hanging clouds and the spectacular scenery came into view. To the east, the dark volcanic headland of Natriss Point stood out against a backdrop of bright ice floes, whilst to the north, the ash-dusted glacier shone brilliantly during moments of sunshine. Between these, the ash-covered hill resembled an active volcano, as clouds formed in a plume above it as the air was pushed up its flanks. Melt-water run-off had created a series of gulleys, which were filled with snow, giving it an unusual rippled appearance. As we moved closer we could make out hundreds of chinstrap and Adélie penguins that were beginning to nest on the slopes and cliffs. However with the high winds it looked like that was as close as we were going to get.



After an hour or so, the winds began to drop but remained gusty. To be sure that they weren't going to pick up again, we waited further to see whether the weather would stabilize. And to

our joy it did! The expedition staff launched a zodiac to check out conditions near the shore. They found a gap in the ice where there wasn't any swell and so we were able to land. This made us only the seventh successful landing out of 21 attempts since the year 2000. On shore, we enjoyed the chinstrap and Adélie penguins as they made their way in and out of the water, and even came across a few macaronis. Many penguins were standing on the ice bergs which were grounded on the shore, and there was even a rare leucistic Adélie penguin which was pale brown rather than black. After a short landing, we headed back to the ship as the ice was closing in around the shore. The last few zodiacs had to push their way through, showing just how lucky we had been to arrive at that time; any later and we would not have been able to land.



The plan for the rest of the day was to sail to Montagu Island to the south of Saunders. However it quickly became apparent that this was not going to be possible, as so much ice had moved in to surround Saunders. Moving at about 2 knots with the Captain steering us carefully through, it took us all day just to clear the ice that surrounded the island, and so once we were clear we had to say goodbye to the South Sandwich Islands for fear of being trapped there. However we were all very pleased with such a successful visit, and so we enjoyed champagne in the bar later that evening.

Day 13 – November 13th

At sea

08:00 GPS Position: 57°30'S / 29°47'W

Weather: - 1,4°C, cloudy & foggy, sea conditions: waves about 4m, wind: north westerly, 30 knots

The night was bumpy and we woke up to a Beaufort scale 6, there was a big swell outside hitting the ship nearly from the front and it made Ortelius pitch when going up and down the waves. At breakfast a few of us were missing, may be seasickness or just catching up on sleep after a busy exciting day at Saunders.

Some birds were flying around the ship but not as many as we would have thought with such winds. A whale was spotted by some of us close to the ship, the blow disappearing quickly taken by the wind.

All lectures were redirected to the bar so that it would be more comfortable for us and the morning started with the “Autumn” episode of “Frozen Planet”.

A little bit later on Michael followed with his lecture about seals for our German passengers and then a nice lunch was served in the restaurant.



After a little siesta, our Penguinologists, Gemma and Tom talked about their project: “Penguin Lifelines.” Tom explained that the cameras he was putting up were used to record lots of data, for example: the date of arrival of the penguins, the mating time, when eggs were laid and how many, when chicks hatched, survival of the chicks, and fledging time, which was very impressive! Tom also explained how he was creating a computer

algorithm to automatically record the number of penguins in each photo and whether they were adults or chicks.

Gemma explained how she had been using shed penguin feathers to get samples for genetic analyses. She used them to see if there was genetic differentiation between different archipelagoes, or whether there was migration and mixing of gene pools. The results were yes there was genetic differentiation for all the populations of gentoos, 2 different populations for the chinstraps and no differences for the Adelies. This has implications for how these species should be conserved and how many protected areas are necessary to preserve as much genetic diversity as possible.

The auction that was supposedly taking place in the afternoon got cancelled and postponed to a later date due to the sea conditions and instead Henryk gave his talk about the German explorer Filchner and his Antarctic expedition in German.

Day 14 – November 14th

Sailing Westwards

08:00 GPS Position: 57°18'S /035°55'W

Weather: - 6°C, overcast, wind: south/southwest, 20/25 knots

Time at sea – the birders are out on decks again, but even they are seen on the bridge and indoors slightly more than before. The temperature has fallen, and the occasional banks of fog make it damp and a penetrating cold on deck. Records from the heroic age of exploration frequently refer to methods of fending off boredom. Boredom was destructive and reduced morale, so expedition leaders would put team members to work maintaining ships, or building and maintaining huts, or practicing skills needed for upcoming summer journeys.

'It's time enough to do it when you've got to; until that time comes, make yourself as comfortable as circumstances permit.'

Ernest Shackleton, on the Endurance stuck in ice.



Shackleton put all of his team to work – he had the scientists scrubbing the decks to reinforce the sense of an expedition team. Not everyone saw the benefit of this; Thomas Orde Lees was a mechanic from the navy and grouped with the scientists. He makes a number of references to some parts of manual labour being beneath him.

'This is not work I should like mind a bit except for the disgusting way everyone spits all over the deck, which would not be tolerated for a moment in a man-o'-war'.

However, the organisation of labour and collective boredom helped to forge many of friendships on expeditions. Fortunately, we don't have to clean, but never the less, some of this spirit is evident on Ortelius on the bridge and the bar. In small groups, people gather and discuss the wildlife seen around the ships, or go through photos from the past two weeks. Many people sit around reading a novel, history book or wildlife guide in between the lectures given by Rolf and Delphine today. Inevitably, there are guesses as to when we will next hit land.

Just before diner Delphine briefed us on the weather forecast – the strength of the wind around South Georgia and particularly the South Sandwich Islands lead us to be very grateful we have left that region. The forecast between here and Elephant Island looks excellent, so we turn in with high hopes for a fast passage to Elephant Island.

Day 15 – November 15th

Sailing Southwest towards Elephant Island

08:00 GPS Position: 58°20'S / 42°42'W

Weather: - 3°C, overcast, sea conditions: 4/5m waves, wind: south westerly, 40 knots +



Winds of over 50 knots ensured we had a very bumpy night's sleep and the dining room was pretty empty for breakfast. However, for those of us who were up and about, we joined Rolf for the second installment of his glacier lecture in the bar, shortly followed by an episode of Frozen Planet. On the bridge, the conditions were far from ideal for whale watching, but there were some spectacular splashes as the bow of the ship dived into the waves. Our shark weather vane hadn't survived

the night, but the crew found him swimming on the deck and so we hope to see him back on the mast sometime soon.

After lunch, the seas had calmed somewhat and the weather had brightened, and we watched a slide show of images and videos from South Georgia, put together by the Doctor. We also had the chance to look at the items that would be on sale at the auction later that evening. Rolf repeated his glacier lecture in German and then at 17:30 Rosie opened the bar with her special collection of South Georgia themed cocktails. Tom was an excellent auctioneer and there were a number of great bidding wars over the items. In total, we raised €1295 for the South Georgia Habitat Restoration project, which means they'll be able to eradicate rats from about 10 hectares of land, hopefully restoring South Georgia's wildlife to its former glory.



Day 16 – November 16th

Sailing towards Elephant Island

08:00 GPS Position: 59°52'S / 49°20'W

Weather: - 3°C, slightly overcast, wind: west/southwest 20 knots

At last the sea calmed down during the night and we all could enjoy a nice calm breakfast.

The day started with a bar talk from Henryk about the German explorer Filchner from which he was interrupted by a whale on starboard. A bit later on Henryk was again lecturing in German about the conquest of the South Pole and this time some killer whales on the port side interrupted his lecture!



There were about 3 small groups of orcas of what seems to be the type A. There are several types of orcas that can be seen in Antarctic waters, differentiating themselves by their saddle markings behind their dorsal fin, their eye patch marking and the coloration of the white markings on their body. They also have different feeding habits, some eat mainly Minke whales, others fish or seals.

Soon the orcas disappeared from sight and the lecture resumed.

After lunch Saskia gave her talk about Adaptations to the cold and in order to show the mammalian dive reflex Tom pretended to be a seal going on a deep dive putting his head in a bucket full of water and ice. It did work and his heart rate went quickly down!



Later in the afternoon Henryk gave again his talk about The conquest of the South Pole, but in English this time, while the German speakers could enjoy a last episode of the Frozen Planet series.

Then just before diner Delphine gave us an update on our progress towards the peninsula and the program that was planned for the days to come.

After diner Clarence and Elephant Island were in sight, with a beautiful sunset through a little opening in the clouds.

Day 17 – November 17th

Elephant Island & Penguin Islands

08:00 GPS Position: 061°05'S /54°32'W

Weather: - 3°C, good visibility, overcast, sea conditions: long swell, wind: southerly 5 knots

Delphine made the wake-up call at about 0315. It was a rude awakening, mentioned the magic words of a “possible landing!” After a recap last night saying that any landing would be extremely difficult, we awoke to a perfect calm morning; what British Explorers called a *dingle day*. A very gentle but long swell rolled past the ship towards the shore. It must have been just past dawn, but the light was still very grey and flat, with no obvious sun. Elephant Island stretched along the horizon all along the port side of the ship.



We got dressed and grabbed some croissants and coffee from the bar and lined up along the rails for news. The scout boat came back and immediately zodiacs were filling up with people eager to get close. We zodiac cruised the area around Point Wild and outlying rocks. The swell close to shore brought spray right over the beach at point Wild from East Cove to West Cove. Seeing the famous site on such a good day brought home the hardships that Frank Wild and the crew of the Endurance had to put up with as they over-wintered on Elephant Island.

As we left the shore, we saw a leopard seal patrolling the cove, looking for lone Chinstrap penguins in the surf and looking back, witness a large avalanche on one of the peaks.

We rejoined the ship to see humpback and minke whales from the deck.



The last three zodiacs were fortunate enough to have a close encounter with a humpback feeding around the ship. There must have been a lot of krill in the area.



By 0900 we were on route around the South side of Elephant Island and passing by Gibbs Island. As we leave, we get the news that there has been a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in the vicinity of South Orkney.

At 1130, Michael gave a lecture on whales in German; *Lifestyles of the big and blubbery*, which he repeated in English in the afternoon.

Throughout the afternoon, views of Elephant Island were amazing as the group retreated over the horizon. Mid-afternoon, we could see King George Island in the distance in excellent visibility. As we progressed South-West, we entered the Bransfield Strait. Large numbers of Cape Petrels circled the ship in the late afternoon sun.

At 1700, Delphine gave a talk on ice seals in English, at the bar and described which species we are likely to see in the next few days.

It was followed by a recap detailing the plan for this evening and the plans for the next three days. Broadly speaking, the plan is: to reach the vicinity of Cierva Cove tomorrow, move down the coast of the Peninsula and visit sites in the region of Paradise Bay, Anvoord Bay and Wilhelmina Bay, before crossing the Bransfield Strait again to attempt more landings in the South Shetland Islands.



We had an early dinner so that everyone was fuelled and ready for a landing at Penguin Island. We came up slowly on Penguin Island and were anchored by about 1900. The scout boat left around 1930 and was back by 2000 reporting a good landing site. The first zodiacs were called and everyone had reached Penguin Island by 2030, many climbing up to the volcanic crater with Rolf and Delphine, while some opted to stay lower nearer small groups of penguins. One Adelie penguin wandered up to the landing site and stayed around for the duration of the landing, apparently completely unfazed by people.

Southern Giant Petrels skimmed the snow slopes in a demonstration of precision flying, possibly showing off in the early stages of courtship.



From the top of the hill, it was very apparent that there was a lot of brash ice coming in to the channel between Penguin and King George Island. Those people who were near the landing site started to move back and escaped early, but it was clear that most people were going to have a wait as the zodiacs took a long time to push through the loose ice.

The uplift back to the ship took a long time as the ice rapidly filled in the channel. Each zodiac took 40-50 minutes to make the round trip between the ship and shore. Despite the slow movement, the line of people at the landing site gradually got shorter. An enormous moon had started to shine above the mountains giving an eerie atmosphere. The final zodiac left the shore by which time their torches were blinking off high-visibility clothing in near-darkness. Finally, the last boat arrived back at the ship at 1115, looking a little cold but still smiling. They had to wait for five minutes at the gangway as some large gusts went through.



Most of the ship gathered in the bar to warm up and to celebrate a mini adventure and a true Antarctic experience!

Day 18 – November 18th

Cierva Cove and Wilhelmina Bay

08:00 GPS Position: 63°26'S /059°22'W

Weather: - 1°C, overcast, wind: Northwest 20 knots

At breakfast time we were still sailing through the Bransfield Strait due to the delay in leaving Penguin Island the night before. The Bransfield Strait is the stretch of water that separates the Antarctic Peninsula and the South Shetland Islands. The visibility was very poor, and so we could only see the occasional iceberg as we sailed south. We had a briefing at 9.30am where Tom showed us one of the propellers from the zodiacs that we used at Penguin Island; the blades were really worn down from the ice. Delphine also reminded us of the three most important things in Antarctica: flexibility, patience and luck. Like most days so far, we needed all three on this day! Originally we had planned to visit Mikkelson Harbour, but due to the bad weather, we headed instead for Cierva Cove, which we hoped would be more protected for a zodiac cruise. We weren't going to arrive there until after lunch, and so Henryk gave a brilliant lecture on the Swedish expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula that was led by Otto Nordenskjöld.



After lunch we arrived in Cierva Cove amidst a storm of high winds and fog. With the winds gusting about 50 knots, the ship was listing heavily to one side and there was no way that we were going to launch any zodiacs or see much of anything in the mist. So we quickly made the decision to abandon Cierva Cove and head to Wilhelmina Bay. On the way, Henryk repeated his lecture in German, and we also watched "South," the film made by Frank Hurley during

Shackleton's Endurance expedition.

When we arrived in Wilhemina Bay, luck was on our side as the mist lifted revealing the spectacular scenery.



Glaciers tumbled down into the bay on all sides; brilliantly carved icebergs shone bright blue in the water and the sun shone on some of the high peaks in the distance. The wind was blowing up the freshly fallen snow on the mountains, creating some impressive spin-drift, but in the bay itself it was calm and peaceful. Crab-eater seals occasionally popped up between the ice-floes and Antarctic terns flew across the bay chattering. Having been patient and flexible, we were rewarded with the beauty of Wilhelmina Bay.

Day 19 – November 19th

Paradise Bay, Neko Harbour, Port Lockroy

08:00 GPS Position: 064°50'S /062°35'W

Weather: - 1°C, wind: Northeast 07 knots



At 04h00 this morning the ship was slowly entering Paradise Bay. It had snowed during the night and the outside decks were all covered by a thick layer of snow. The scenery around us was really breathtaking, overhanging glacier everywhere and Almirante Brown station in a striking bright orange colour, contrasting with the surrounding black and white environment. The bay was covered with brash ice and ice floes, looking like little floating islands.

We were so eager to step foot on the Antarctic continent that some of us were all dressed up with lifejackets and ready to go while taking their coffee at the bar.

A scout boat was launched and went ashore, in the mean time we were already queuing next to the gangway. Some minutes later an announcement was made that we would do a short landing on the Antarctic continent as the ice in the bay was moving quickly and we did not know if we had much time before it all closed in. So we all got dressed and started to make our way to the gangway. The reception was already packed with a lot of us when we heard a second announcement that the landing was cancelled due to the ice closing in, to our great disappointment. All the zodiacs were hoisted back on the ship and as we sailed out of the bay snow started to fall and wind to pick up. In no time we were in the middle of a snow storm and visibility went down to 30m in front of the ship.

Through the Gerlache strait we went and arrived 2 hours later in Neko Harbour.



The visibility was not superb but as we got closer the clouds lifted up a bit and the surroundings appeared even more beautiful than Paradise Bay. A scout boat was again launched, our spirits were up and we were rewarded as we got our first landing on the Antarctic continent itself! Gentoos swimming in the crystal clear waters along the shore came out by the landing site and were puzzled to find the place already occupied by us. Quickly they got their senses back and after a bit of preening started on their way up the slope to the rookery. We had some couples starting to bond with a beautiful glacier in the back ground. As we were enjoying them, a gentle snow started to fall. We slowly started to make our way back to the zodiac before it got too strong.

From there the ship repositioned to Port Lockroy. Before reaching it we sailed through the Neumayer channel under clear blue skies.



There are no words good enough to describe the scenery we were going through, we all extremely enjoyed it while sun tanning on the bow.



Arriving at Port Lockroy we were split in two groups, some of us going to the Goudier Island and the others going on a zodiac cruise.



The colourful museum surrounded by gentoos and sheathbill, had some good displays that took us back in the old days and we even could do some shopping at the end, all of the money being collected to restore other stations around Antarctica. The cruisers on the other side went for a ride around Goudier Island and Jougla point, saw some fast ice where a Weddell seal was having a rest, blue eye shag nesting and a beautiful iceberg with an arch.



For diner we had a fantastic BBQ on the outside deck still under the sun and surrounded by this magic landscape.

Day 20 – November 20th

Whalers Bay, Deception Island

08:00 GPS Position: 063°22'S /060°49'W

Weather: - 2°C, overcast with sun piercing through!, wind: Northeast 15 knots

We awoke to Delphine's call at 0745. We were in the Bransfield Strait heading for Deception and the South Shetland Islands. The sea and wind were moderate, not looking ideal for a landing, but the caldera at Deception is sheltered from waves if not wind.

At 0900, Delphine lead a short briefing for Deception Island, and announced the strong wind warning in the weather forecast, which meant that we would abandon the attempt to land at Half Moon Island in favour of making an early start on the Drake Passage. We anticipated a relatively slow crossing with a strong headwind.

0930 saw us pass through Neptune's Bellows in to Deception Island. The captain demanded silence on the bridge as he took us through the Bellows, very close to the Eastern side to avoid Ravn rock in the middle of the entrance. Suddenly, we were inside a volcano!



At 1000, the scout boat had been dispatched and zodiacs started loading. We arrived on shore in Whaler's Bay to a morning that was quite grey. The sky was overcast and some snow made the relics of the whaling and scientific stations look bleak, a little like when we were leaving Grytviken. Henryk and Gemma each took a small group up the hill to look out over the lake and caldera. Meanwhile, individuals drifted along the shore, looking for a little time to experience the last of Antarctica on their own. Within an hour, the wind had got up to 45 knots and while

the bay was very sheltered, the wind and snow was quite unpleasant.



By 1120, Delphine was calling people back to the landing site. Some people were already queuing up, perhaps mindful of Penguin Island that it is occasionally better to be first in line!

The run back to the ship was extremely gusty. The sea was covered in lots of very small waves, which sent up a nasty cold spray as we crossed Whaler's Bay. By lunch time everyone was back on board and the captain was securing the ship in preparation for a rough crossing. We passed through Neptune's Bellows again, and started to run North-north east up the relatively calm Bransfield Strait. We had an extended recap and Hawaiian happy hour as we left Antarctica for the last time.



Day 21 – November 21st

Drake Passage Take One

08:00 GPS Position: 060°15'S /061°27'W

Weather: - 2°C, sunny, wind: west/Northwest 30 knots

Despite the weather forecast we had seen the night before, we had a quiet night and the ship was pitching gently for most of the day. A light-mantled sooty albatross accompanied us for many hours, as well as the usual flocks of Cape Petrels. In the morning Henryk gave a lecture in German about the Belgian explorer Adrien de Gerlache, which he repeated in the afternoon in English. Aboard the Belgica, de Gerlache and his remaining crew of 19 men were the first to attempt a scientific expedition to Antarctica. Whalers had visited the western Antarctic Peninsula up to that time and so it was largely uncharted. Therefore de Gerlache and his men set about charting it, naming over 70 islands, coasts and channels. Places we've seen and visited like Wilhelmina Bay, the Gerlache Strait, Anvers Island and Brabant Island were all named during the voyage of the Belgica. Sailing further south at the end of the Antarctic summer, the Belgica was trapped in the ice of the Bellingshausen Sea for a total of 377 days. Ill prepared for overwintering, the men suffered from scurvy and depression. However a diet of fresh meat and a schedule of daily activities imposed by the ship's doctor got them through the winter until they broke free at the end of summer the following year.



In the afternoon we watched "Encounters at the end of the Earth," a film by Werner Herzog. And in the evening, after we had sung a happy birthday to our fabulous bartender Rosi, there was the "Great Antarctic Quiz" in the bar. Questions ranged from plate tectonics, through history and biology to the number of seasickness patches that the doctor had given out. And after a lot of discussions and just a little bit of cheating from some teams, the "Flappy Feet" team won fair and square; even guessing how

many seasickness patches the doctor had given out to within 2!

Day 22 – November 22nd

Drake Passage take two(and final!)

08:00 GPS Position: 057°45'S /055°54'W

Weather: 5°C, partly cloudy, sea condition: long swell, wind: Northwest 10 knots

The night was a bit bumpier but it still was not as bad as we thought it would be considering the weather forecast. We had a long swell and light winds bringing up a flock of black browed albatrosses following the ship.

In the morning Henryk gave an interesting talk in English about Cape Horn, then, the footage of an old black and white film about rounding Cape Horn was shown in the lecture room.

After lunch, our nice and warm rubber boots were collected.

With the quite good conditions that we had in the Drake we could afford to sail by Cape Horn on our way to the Beagle Channel. We went as close to as 2 miles under a very nice sun and a mirage could be seen all along the coast, distorting islands and even the waves crashing on the shore.



Then it was time to settle our accounts with Natasha and Dejan.

Just before dinner we had our Captain's farewell cocktail in the bar followed by a delicious dinner with lamb and gambas!

Further South

064°53'S / 062°53'W

Total distance sailed on this voyage:

4405 nautical miles

On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Ernesto Barria Vargas and the Officers, Crew, Expedition Team and Hotel Team, it has been a pleasure travelling with you.

