

ANTARCTICA - CLASSIC SOUTH GEORGIA



INTRODUCTION

This 20-day expedition is one of the most complete and varied of Antarctic journeys, allowing you to explore not only the Antarctic Peninsula but also the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and South Georgia Island, the final resting place of Ernest Shackleton. It provides a unique opportunity to experience some of the world's most amazing wildlife and most spectacular scenery and offers an insight into the fascinating history of the early explorers.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Ushuaia - Embark on Ship

Embarkation on the M/V USHUAIA begins in the afternoon at the port in Ushuaia. Embarkation time is set for 4:00pm and is followed by a welcome drink and an introduction to the crew and expedition staff. The ship will then set sail towards the Western Falkland Islands (Malvinas), known for their rugged beauty and wealth of seabirds and waterfowl.



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DAY 2: At Sea

The open bridge policy on the USHUAIA allows us to join the officers on the bridge to learn about navigation, watch for marine life, and enjoy the views of the open ocean. These waters are home to an interesting group of seabirds that often ride the currents created in the wake of the ship, including albatrosses and petrels. Join the expedition staff and naturalists on deck whilst we are at sea as we search for seabirds and other wildlife, such as orcas and dolphins. An interesting selection of lectures will help us to prepare for our first excursions on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). The Falkland Islands, a British Overseas Territory, is an archipelago that lies 490kms east of Patagonia in the South Atlantic Ocean. Surrounded by decades of controversy, the Falkland Islands (or Islas Malvinas as they are known in Argentina) have been settled and claimed by France, Spain, Britain and Argentina. The islands have much to offer with a wide variety of spectacular wildlife, beautiful rugged scenery as well as an interesting history. Five species of penguin breed on the islands (gentoo, king, macaroni, magellanic and rockhopper).



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DAY 3: Western Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

On the western coast we might visit the following islands: West Point Island West Point Island lies off the most north-westerly point of mainland West Falkland. The attractive settlement sits on the edge of a small harbour on the eastern side of the island, in the lee of Black Bog Hill and Michael's Mount. The valley between these two peaks rolls over the centre of the island to the dramatic Devil's Nose, one of the island's main attractions. From here visitors are treated to splendid views of Cliff Mountain, the island's highest point at 1,250 ft (381 m), and the highest cliffs in the Falklands. This is where we will encounter a vast colony of rockhopper penguins and black-browed albatrosses, nesting together in close proximity. Carcass Island Carcass Island lies to the north-west of the Falkland archipelago. A mature tussock plantation covers much of the lower ground below Jason Hill to the east. The availability of abundant cover and the absence of cats, rats and mice throughout the island have made for a spectacularly large population of small birds, which is one of Carcass Island's most delightful features. Gentoo and magellanic penguins also nest here. Peale's and Commerson's dolphins frequently come close to the shoreline. At the settlement with its beautiful gardens, we are invited to enjoy tea with the locals. Overnight we sail around the northern islands of the archipelago in an easterly direction to reach the capital, Port Stanley by the following morning.



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DAY 4: Eastern Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

In the morning we will have time to explore the quaint small town of Port Stanley with its colourful houses, wonderful museum, souvenir shops and pubs. The town was established in the early 1840's. Isolation and the weather conditions made life hard, but progress was gradual and punctuated by the extremely eventful times of involvement in two world wars. For those who are more interested in the outstanding wildlife the islands have to offer, you do not even have to leave town to enjoy it. Southern giant petrels often fly close to the shoreline. The endemic Falkland steamer ducks abound on the shorelines while kelp gulls can often be seen flying together with dolphin gulls. The less obvious but frequent visitors to the Stanley area are black-crowned night herons, red-backed hawks and peregrine falcons. Turkey vultures are regularly seen on top of any prominent building. Many pairs of upland geese frequent the park and you can stroll around the gardens of town to see some of the singing birds as well. In the early afternoon it is time to set sail, heading for South Georgia.



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DAY 5: At Sea - Days 5 & 6

An extensive lecture program will be offered during the days at sea. Expert naturalists share their knowledge of the wildlife and unique ecosystems we will encounter throughout our voyage. South Georgia is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and inspiring places on earth with more wildlife than virtually anywhere else on the planet.



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DAY 7: At Sea / South Georgia

South Georgia will come in sight! Though extremely isolated, it has amazing scenery ranging from high mountains and mighty glaciers to deep fjords and low-lying grassland. South Georgia has been a British Overseas Territory since 1775. It is the largest island in the territory and one of the wildest and most remote places on earth with dramatic scenery of snow-capped mountains and huge glaciers. In the 19th century South Georgia was a prominent whaling base, but whaling ceased in the 1960's and the only remnants are museums and well-preserved buildings. South Georgia teems with wildlife due to the currents that bring nutrients to the island from the Atlantic. Huge numbers of penguins and seals breed here.



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DAY 8: South Georgia - Days 8 to 10

Our exact itinerary will depend on local land and sea conditions but we hope to explore some of the following destinations. Visit albatross nesting sites at Elsehul and land on a volcanic ash black sand beach to see fur and elephant seals and king penguins at Right Whale Bay. Within the Bay of Isles, Prion Island features a breeding colony of wandering albatross that can be viewed from board walk viewing platforms. Visit the wildlife haven of Salisbury Plain, home to tens of thousands of king penguins, as well as elephant and fur seals, southern giant petrels and the occasional gentoo penguin, complete with large glaciers that add a stunning backdrop. Follow in Sir Ernest Shackleton's footsteps as you cross over to Stromness Bay, before toasting his final resting site in the whaler's cemetery, south of Grytviken. His memorial cross stands on Hope Point. See the gentoo penguins that abound at Godthul as well as the many fascinating relics of the whaling era and the impressive collection of whale and elephant seal bones that are scattered along the beach. St Andrews Bay hosts the largest colony of king penguins on South Georgia and early in the season, the beach is also carpeted with fur and elephant seals. Cooper Bay, with its spectacular setting offers a wealth of wildlife including chinstrap, gentoo and maybe one or two macaroni penguins as well as fur seals. The glaciers found in Drygalski Fjord are one of the most striking features of this coastline, particularly the Risting and Jenkins Glaciers. We may be lucky enough to see the glaciers calve and witness the birth of a new iceberg from on board the ship.



DAY 11: At Sea - Days 11 & 12

We spend the next two days crossing the Scotia Sea towards the Antarctic Peninsula offering opportunities to watch for wildlife from the deck, catch up on some reading, check through and edit your photos, or simply reflect on the magical experiences of the last days on South Georgia. Lectures and other activities will be offered throughout these days.



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DAY 13: Elephant Island, South Shetland Islands

We hope to have a chance to visit the enigmatic Elephant Island. Sir Ernest Shackleton fans will need no introduction to this historic windswept island. In 1916 Shackleton was forced to leave 22 of his men stranded on these shores, while he and five others embarked on an unbelievable last-ditch rescue attempt. What followed is one of the greatest rescue stories of all time. Every passenger will return with a greater knowledge of this gripping tale of adventure in a truly remarkable part of the world.



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DAY 14: At Sea

As we head towards the Antarctic Peninsula, our expedition team will prepare you for our experience in the Antarctic Peninsula and South Shetland Islands.



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DAY 15: Antarctic Peninsula & South Shetland- Days 15 to 17

The South Shetland Islands are a haven for wildlife. Vast penguin rookeries, beaches ruled by Antarctic fur seals and southern elephant seals make every day spent in this amazing island group unforgettable. You will have plenty of time to explore its amazing scenery, a pristine wilderness of snow, ice, mountains and waterways with an incredibly wide variety of wildlife. Apart from penguins and seabirds you are very likely to see Weddell, crabeater and leopard seals as well as minke, killer (orca) and humpback whales at close proximity. Navigate beautiful waterways, between towering rock faces and spectacular glaciers. There will be at least two landings per day, dependent on conditions. We may visit the aptly named Paradise Bay, the 200,000 strong colony of Adélie penguins and blue-eyed cormorants on Paulet Island and Petermann Island for the southernmost colony of gentoo penguins. Our plan is to sail through the Gerlache Strait into the northwest Antarctic Peninsula area. Here we may visit Hydrurga Rocks, where chinstrap penguins, blue-eyed shags and kelp gulls are known to breed. Another possibility is a visit to Cuverville Island, which lies in the scenic Errera Channel. Deception Island is the largest of three recent volcanic centres in the South Shetlands and sailing through the narrow passage into the flooded caldera of Deception Island is truly amazing. Half Moon Island, another possible landing site is home to chinstrap penguins in breathtaking surroundings.



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DAY 18: Drake Passage Crossing - Days 18 & 19

We leave Antarctica and head north across the Drake Passage. Join our lecturers and naturalists on deck as we search for seabirds and whales. We will also enjoy some final lectures. Take the chance to relax and reflect on the fascinating adventures we have had over the past days. The Drake Passage bears the name of the 16th century English explorer Sir Francis Drake. At some point on the Drake Passage, we cross the Antarctic Convergence, a meeting of cold polar water flowing north and warmer equatorial water moving in the opposite direction. This mixing pushes nutrient rich waters to the surface attracting a variety of seabirds, whales and other species.



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DAY 20: Ushuaia – Disembark Ship

We arrive into Ushuaia in the early morning and disembark the USHUAIA after breakfast. ***
Important - Please be sure not to book flights out of Ushuaia before 12PM (Noon) on the day of disembarkation from your cruise ship.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation

Cabin on ship.

Inclusions

Shipboard accommodation
All meals onboard
All scheduled landings/excursions
Guiding and lectures by expedition leader and team
English-speaking expedition team
All port fees
All landing fees
Detailed post-expedition log

EXCLUSIONS:

Airfares to/from embarkation and disembarkation city
Visa fees (if applicable)
Travel Insurance
Beverages (other than coffee and tea)
Personal expenses such as laundry, onboard communication (telephone calls, faxes, email service)
Gratuities for the crew (recommended US\$15.00 per person per day)
Pre or post cruise travel expenses
Transfers to/from the pier in Ushuaia

Difficulty Rating

2 (light adventure)

Single Surcharge

No single surcharge if willing to share (Category A, B and C cabin classes only).

Notes

Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather and ice conditions.

Price Dependent upon

Season and availability

SUSTAINABILITY

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GUIDANCE FOR VISITORS TO THE ANTARCTIC

RECOMMENDATION XVIII-1, ADOPTED AT THE ANTARCTIC TREATY MEETING, KYOTO, 1994

Activities in the Antarctic are governed by the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 and associated agreements, referred to collectively as the Antarctic Treaty System. The Treaty established Antarctica as a zone of peace and science.

In 1991, the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties adopted the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, which designates the Antarctic as a natural reserve. The Protocol sets out environmental principles, procedures and obligations for the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment, and its dependent and associated ecosystems. The Consultative Parties have agreed that as far as possible and in accordance with their legal system, the provisions of the Protocol should be applied as appropriate. The Environmental Protocol was ratified in January 1998.

The Environmental Protocol applies to tourism and non-governmental activities, as well as governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area. It is intended to ensure that these activities, do not have adverse impacts on the Antarctic environment, or on its scientific and aesthetic values.

This Guidance for Visitors to the Antarctic is intended to ensure that all visitors are aware of, and are therefore able to comply with, the Treaty and the Protocol. Visitors are, of course, bound by national laws and regulations applicable to activities in the Antarctic.

PROTECT ANTARCTIC WILDLIFE

Taking or harmful interference with Antarctic wildlife is prohibited except in accordance with a permit issued by a national authority.

Do not use aircraft, vessels, small boats, or other means of transport in ways that disturb wildlife, either at sea or on land.

Do not feed, touch, or handle birds or seals, or approach or photograph them in ways that cause them to alter their behavior. Special care is needed when animals are breeding or molting.

Do not damage plants, for example by walking, driving, or landing on extensive moss beds or lichen-covered scree slopes.

Do not use guns or explosives. Keep noise to the minimum to avoid frightening wildlife.

Do not bring non-native plants or animals into the Antarctic, such as live poultry, pet dogs and cats, or house plants.

RESPECT PROTECTED AREAS

A variety of areas in the Antarctic have been afforded special protection because of their particular ecological, scientific, historic, or other values. Entry into certain areas may be prohibited except in accordance with a permit issued by an appropriate national authority.

Activities in and near designated Historic Sites and Monuments and certain other areas may be subject to special restrictions.

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Know the locations of areas that have been afforded special protection and any restrictions regarding entry and activities that can be carried out in and near them. Observe applicable restrictions.

Do not damage, remove, or destroy Historic Sites or Monuments or any artifacts associated with them.

RESPECT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Do not interfere with scientific research, facilities or equipment.

Obtain permission before visiting Antarctic science and support facilities; reconfirm arrangements 24-72 hours before arrival; and comply with the rules regarding such visits.

Do not interfere with, or remove, scientific equipment or marker posts, and do not disturb experimental study sites, field camps, or supplies.

BE SAFE

Be prepared for severe and changeable weather and ensure that your equipment and clothing meet Antarctic standards. Remember that the Antarctic environment is inhospitable, unpredictable, and potentially dangerous.

Know your capabilities and the dangers posed by the Antarctic environment, and act accordingly. Plan activities with safety in mind at all times.

Keep a safe distance from all wildlife, both on land and at sea.

Take note of, and act on, the advice and instructions from your leaders; do not stray from your group.

Do not walk onto glaciers or large snow fields without the proper equipment and experience; there is a real danger of falling into hidden crevasses.

Do not expect a rescue service. Self-sufficiency is increased and risks reduced by sound planning, quality equipment, and trained personnel.

Do not enter emergency refuges (except in emergencies). If you use equipment or food from a refuge, inform the nearest research station or national authority once the emergency is over.

Respect any smoking restrictions, particularly around buildings, and take great care to safeguard against the danger of fire. This is a real hazard in the dry environment of Antarctica.

KEEP ANTARCTICA PRISTINE

Antarctica remains relatively pristine, the largest wilderness area on Earth. It has not yet been subjected to large-scale human perturbations. Please keep it that way.

Do not dispose of litter or garbage on land. Open burning is prohibited.

Do not disturb or pollute lakes or streams. Any materials discarded at sea must be disposed of properly.

Do not paint or engrave names or graffiti on rocks or buildings.

Do not collect or take away biological or geological specimens or man-made artifacts as a souvenir, including rocks, bones, eggs, fossils, and parts or contents of buildings.

Do not deface or vandalize buildings or emergency refuges, whether occupied, abandoned, or unoccupied.

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