

# ANTARCTICA: 2019

## TRIP NOTES



# Antarctica, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands



27 DEC 2018 – 12 JAN 2019



16 NIGHTS / 17 DAYS



STARTS PUNTA ARENAS

## EXPERIENCE A NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION UNLIKE ANY OTHER - IN ANTARCTICA!

Late December is a beautiful time to experience Antarctica. We enjoy extended daylight hours at this time of the season, the wildlife colonies are busy and as the sea ice continues to break up, our range of landing sites expands even further.

We fly from South America to Antarctica in a little over two hours where we board our ship and enjoy a thorough exploration of the glaciated coastline of the Antarctic Peninsula. We see in the New Year surrounded by the icebergs and towering glaciers of Antarctica, before continuing our journey to South Georgia. We follow the course taken by Sir Ernest Shackleton whose epic small boat journey, from Elephant Island across the Scotia Sea to South Georgia remains one of the greatest feats of navigation in history. We commence our exploration at the remote south-eastern tip of South Georgia and then spend the following days exploring the northern coastline. Here are some of the largest king penguin colonies on earth. The shores are covered in wildlife – including nesting albatross, fur seals and elephant seals. Rusting relics from the old whaling era sit silent and provide dramatic contrasts to the green tussock grass, and snowy peaks that surround us.

We then head for the Falkland Islands and aim to spend one final day exploring the wildlife-rich Sea Lion Island and nearby by Bleaker Island. Our voyage concludes in Stanley – the small capital from where we fly back to South America.



## Expedition Highlights

- > Fantastic glaciated scenery of the Antarctic Peninsula and South Georgia
- > Outstanding wildlife observation on shore, zodiac cruising and from the ship
- > Visits to historic sites and science stations
- > Learn about the environment, wildlife, history and ecology from polar experts

## ON THIS TRIP

-  Zodiac excursions
-  Onshore hiking options
-  Wildlife observation
-  Photographer in Residence
-  Sea kayaking available
-  Whale watching
-  Educational presentations
-  Active Cruising & Wellness

## IMPORTANT VOYAGE LOGISTICS

Your journey commences in Punta Arenas, Chile. You will need to arrive in Punta Arenas at least one day prior to the scheduled departure date. This gives you a buffer in the event of any unexpected travel delays between home and voyage embarkation and departure. From Punta Arenas we fly to King George Island (Antarctica) via a special charter flight where we board the ship.

Our voyage concludes in Stanley (Falkland Islands) and we fly back to Punta Arenas. For guests staying in Punta Arenas, an arrival transfer is provided from the airport to a central downtown location. (Onward flight connections to Santiago are available).

Full joining instructions will be provided in your final travel documentation. If you have questions before this time, please ask us.



## YOUR DAY-BY-DAY EXPEDITION ITINERARY

### DAY 1 / PUNTA ARENAS (CHILE) (THURSDAY, 27 DECEMBER 2018)

Our journey commences this morning in the southern Chilean port city of Punta Arenas. We gather at a central location and transfer to the airport for the two-hour flight across the Drake Passage to Antarctica (this flight is included in the price of your voyage). Upon arrival at King George Island, we embark our ship via Zodiac. After settling into our cabins and exploring our new surroundings, we meet our expedition team and fellow passengers. Excitement is in the air as we enjoy a welcome refreshment and set sail. No doubt, everyone will be looking forward to the adventure ahead.

### DAYS 2-4 / GERLACHE STRAIT AND ANTARCTIC PENINSULA EXPLORATION

Overnight we navigate through the Bransfield Strait and awake to the towering peaks of the Antarctic continent laid out before us. For the next three days we have a varied itinerary exploring the Gerlache coastline. If ice conditions allow, we cruise through the Lemaire Channel and may visit sites which may include Pleneau Island and the Penola Strait. Southerly Petermann Island, is home to a sizeable penguin rookery where both Adelie and gentoo penguins nest side by side. A visit to an active research base nearby provides a fascinating insight into the important climate change science occurring in Antarctica. The landscape all along this section of the Antarctic coastline feature heavily glaciated mountains permanently covered in ice and snow. Our activity program is in full swing by now, and each day we enjoy guided walks on shore, visits to wildlife colonies, and Zodiac cruising among the ice with our expert guides providing insight and interpretation. Planned visits could include Paradise Harbour, Orne Harbour or Andvord Bay, or a cruise through the Errera Channel to visit the penguin rookeries at Cuverville Island. Wilhelmina Bay is another favourite location where we frequently encounter pods of humpback whales.

### DAY 5 / NORTHERN PENINSULA AND WEDDELL SEA

We are now heading north towards Antarctic Sound – the gateway into the icy Weddell Sea. Along the way we hope to make a planned visit at Deception Island. If weather conditions permit, we sail the ship right into the middle of a volcanic caldera. This is a very dramatic place and home to several penguin rookeries along the black sand beaches. History is all around us as we explore the old whaling station, with the rusted relics and dilapidated wooden structures. Fur seals gather among the old structures seeking protection from the elements. At the far end of the beach is an old aircraft hangar. This is where Australian, Sir Hubert Wilkins made the very first flight in Antarctica in 1928. There is an outstanding hike here to a location known as ‘Neptune’s Window’ - high up onto the rim of the crater. Our goal is to enter the icy Weddell Sea, through the broad channel that separates the continent of Antarctica from Joinville Island. At first we are awe-struck by the sheer size of the tabular icebergs in this area and their presence always makes for exciting navigation on the ship. This region is also home to some of the largest Adelie penguin rookeries found in Antarctica.

### DAY 6 / ELEPHANT ISLAND

After several busy days of exploration along the Antarctic Peninsula and entrance to the Weddell Sea, we head for Elephant Island – a location forever connected to the story of Sir Ernest Shackleton and the *HMS Endurance* expedition a century ago. On the windswept north coast, exposed to the swells of the South Atlantic is Point Wild. It was here that Shackleton and his exhausted men camped under their upturned boats – pondering their chances of survival. We enjoy imposing views of the location from the ship and will attempt a landing subject to conditions. From the ship or on shore, this is a thrilling location for anyone with a passion for polar history.



#### DAYS 7-8 / SCOTIA SEA – TOWARDS SOUTH GEORGIA

As we depart Elephant Island we cannot help but ponder the journey made by Shackleton and his four companions – as they attempted the near impossible – navigating 800 nautical miles in a 30 foot converted lifeboat across the tempestuous Scotia Sea to South Georgia. We make a much easier time of the crossing in our state of the art expedition ship. Onboard experts keep us busy with fascinating presentations and lead lively discussions throughout the day. The great pelagic seabirds are sure to keep us company – and we anticipate excellent sightings of albatross and giant petrels soaring on the winds of the South Atlantic Ocean. Anticipation builds as the mountainous peaks appear on the horizon, marking our arrival at South Georgia.

#### DAYS 9-12 / EXPLORATION OF SOUTH GEORGIA

Rounding the remote south-eastern end of South Georgia, we spend the next four days thoroughly exploring the coastline. Dark sand beaches, tussock covered hinterland and a backdrop of towering peaks and glaciers are a feast for all the senses. South Georgia has often been called the greatest wildlife show on earth. Seals cover the beaches, seabirds fill the skies and living in rookeries of immense size, live the majestic king penguins. Our aim is to visit a number of these huge colonies – where naturalists estimate that more than 100,000 adult and juvenile penguins live in close proximity. Locations we hope to visit include Gold Harbour, Royal Bay, St Andrews Bay and Salisbury Plain.

Dotted along the coastline are the rusting relics of the early whaling era. The largest of these locations is Grytviken. Here we find a fascinating museum and a beautifully restored Norwegian Lutheran Church. Adjacent to the old whaling station lies a small cemetery. This is the final resting place of Sir Ernest Shackleton – who was laid to rest here in 1922. For many onboard, being in the presence of the great polar explorer is a highlight of the trip. We continue our journey along the coastline, hoping to visit Stromness – another former whaling station – and the final destination of Shackleton and companions Frank Worsley and Tom Crean having made the near impossible traverse across the interior of South Georgia.

#### DAYS 13-15 / AT SEA – TOWARDS THE FALKLANDS

By now we are in sensory overload, our cameras full of images and our journey towards the Falkland Islands commences. The spectacular seabirds including several albatross and petrel species are our constant companions as they soar above the ship. Photographing these stunning birds in flight takes great patience and skill and our resident photography expert on board will show you the best techniques. The onboard educational program continues and our experts recap our remarkable journey to date. These days provide a good opportunity to catch up on journal entries, sort through your images in the multimedia room and catch some rest after a busy two weeks of activity.

#### DAY 16 / FALKLAND ISLANDS

We wake to the sight of landfall in the Falkland Islands. Approaching Sea Lion Island, we first note the very barren and windswept landscape, exposed to the prevailing weather that originates in the Drake Passage. We launch the Zodiacs and go ashore to view the incredible diversity of wildlife found at this location. Three species of penguin including gentoo, magellanic and rockhopper, as well as southern elephant seals and South American sea lions are known to inhabit the area. King cormorants and striated caracaras are just some of the bird species we expect to see. As we cruise along the coast of the Falklands, bound for Stanley, we enjoy a special dinner attended by the ship's Captain.

#### DAY 17 / STANLEY – RETURN TO PUNTA ARENAS (CHILE) (SATURDAY, 12 JANUARY 2018)

In the early morning, we navigate through the narrows and into the harbour of Port Stanley. A transfer will take us to the airport for our return flight to Punta Arenas in southern Chile (this flight is included in the price of your voyage). It will be possible to connect to flights through to Santiago or other destinations in Chile. Otherwise enjoy a night in Punta Arenas, or venture further afield to explore the highlights of Patagonia.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR ANTARCTICA, SOUTH GEORGIA AND FALKLANDS:** There are no less than five similar itineraries in the 2018/19 season ranging between 16 and 19 nights duration. Two focused 'South Georgia – In-Depth' voyages include additional time in that location. See the website for details.

**ABOUT OUR ITINERARY:** Polar exploration can be unpredictable. Specific sites visited will depend on prevailing weather and ice conditions at the time of sailing. The above itinerary should be read as a 'guide only' and may change. The ship's Captain in conjunction with the Expedition Leader continually review the sailing plan throughout the voyage, making adjustments to the itinerary along the way to take advantage of optimal weather and ice conditions or to maximize our encounters with wildlife. Decades of experience spent exploring these waterways mean we have a large number of outstanding landing sites and zodiac cruising locations to consider, even when the weather conditions may not be ideal or when heavy ice may hinder our planned route. A flexible approach is something we encourage you to bring to the ship.