

# 'Ultimate Antarctica' Weddell Sea and Falkland Islands



22 JAN – 02 FEB 2019



11 NIGHTS / 12 DAYS



STARTS PUNTA ARENAS

## A UNIQUE EXPEDITION VISITING THE WEDDELL SEA AND FALKLAND ISLANDS

This exciting expedition provides great diversity and will appeal to those seeking the complete Antarctic experience. It includes the South Shetland Islands, the western and northern sections of the Antarctic Peninsula, the stunning Weddell Sea region located on the eastern side of the Peninsula, and the historic location of Elephant Island. Adding to the experience will be a visit to several locations in the Falkland Island archipelago – home to nesting albatross and the colourful King penguin.

These diverse locations feature their own unique attractions. Expect stunning glaciated scenery along the Antarctic Peninsula, enormous Adelie penguin rookeries and the flat-topped 'tabular' icebergs in the Weddell Sea, rich history in the South Shetland's and Elephant Island - and observe several new wildlife species in the Falklands.

We maximize our time on this voyage by flying from South America to Antarctica, saving the two days crossing the Drake Passage. A further day and a half is saved by flying from the Falkland Islands back to South America at the conclusion of the voyage. The time saved by flying equals more time exploring down among the ice in Antarctica. Over the course of 12-days, you can expect to be off the ship exploring for nine of those twelve days.

This unique expedition has been designed for those seeking the most in-depth and varied Antarctic experience possible.



## Expedition Highlights

- > Fantastic glaciated scenery of the Antarctic Peninsula and Gerlache coastline
- > Exciting ice navigation and large penguin rookeries in the Weddell Sea region
- > Visits to historic sites and science stations
- > Varied wildlife encounters in the Falkland Islands – including king penguins!

## ON THIS TRIP

-  Zodiac excursions
-  Onshore hiking options
-  Wildlife observation
-  Photographer in Residence
-  Sea kayaking available
-  Whale watching
-  Camping on shore
-  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) (TUESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2019)

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 2-3 / GERLACHE STRAIT AND ANTARCTIC PENINSULA REGION

Overnight we have navigated across the Bransfield Strait and wake to the towering peaks of the Antarctic continent laid out before us. For the next few days we have a varied itinerary exploring the Gerlache coastline. If ice conditions allow, we cruise through the Lemaire Channel and visit sites which may include Pleneau Island and the Penola Strait. To the south lies Petermann Island, home to a sizeable penguin rookery where both Adelie and Gentoo penguins nest side by side. A visit to an active science station nearby provides a fascinating insight into the important climate change research occurring in Antarctica. There's a fantastic walk on a nearby island and hope to make a full traverse across a snowy knoll from one side of the island to the other. The old British Antarctic Survey hut of Wordie House, begs for further investigation.

Returning north, we pass the massive granite sentinels of Mount Scott and Mount Shackleton and may attempt a second transit of the Lemaire Channel. The landscape all along this section of the Antarctic coastline features heavily glaciated mountains permanently covered in ice and snow. Our activity program is in full swing by now. 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 and one where we frequently encounter pods of humpback whales feeding. It is somewhere along this stretch of coastline that we plan to spend a night on shore, camping in Antarctica. We have all the right gear and equipment and an expert team to make it happen - all you need is an adventurous spirit! If the weather is good and site characteristics suit our requirements, we will always go for it. Camping is included in the voyage price and there is no need to pre-book this activity.

### DAY 4 / SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS

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 old wooden structures. 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.

### DAYS 5-7 / ANTARCTIC SOUND AND WEDDELL SEA

At about 25 nautical miles long and about 10 nautical miles wide, Antarctic Sound separates Joinville Island from the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. Navigating into the sound we witness for the first time the vastness and majesty of the Antarctic icecap. This is an awe-inspiring sight. Heading into the Weddell Sea we notice a significant increase in the number of huge tabular icebergs and the presence of sea ice. These massive icebergs break from the huge ice shelves to the south and drift north on the currents. This always makes for exciting navigation – and stunning photographic opportunities in the soft Antarctic twilight. This is wild and remote Antarctica and has a distinctly different feel from locations visited thus far.



The Weddell Sea region is home to Adelie penguin rookeries of staggering size – some contain more than 100,000 nesting birds. Such colonies dwarf the penguin rookeries visited so far. Weather permitting, excursions in the Weddell Sea region may include Hope Bay, Paulet Island and Brown Bluff. All eyes will be trained on the ice floes through which we navigate the ship. We have enjoyed a number of emperor penguins sightings in this area in recent years and they are known to inhabit the area.

The history of exploration in this region is incredibly rich. Remnants of Nordenskjöld's Swedish expedition of 1901-1904 are found in several locations in this area. The epic century-old story of Shackleton and the *HMS Endurance* expedition has strong links to the region. It was here that he and his men drifted north on the ice after the ship had been lost in the ice pack months earlier. As we head north and out of the Weddell Sea, the lavender pink sunset will make some of us pause to consider the bravery (or foolhardiness) of those early explorers who travelled these waters a hundred years before us.

#### DAY 8 / ELEPHANT ISLAND

Point Lookout on the southern tip of Elephant Island is home to an impressive chinstrap penguin colony. Macaroni penguins also breed here and are a species we have yet to encounter to date. Both southern elephant seals and fur seals are hauled out on the rocky beaches. If conditions permit, we may visit the fabled location of Point Wild on the north coast of Elephant Island. It is here that Shackleton and his men were encamped under their upturned life boats, before five men set off on a rescue mission to South Georgia in their tiny lifeboat – the '*James Caird*'.

#### DAYS 9-10 / AT SEA TOWARDS THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

While sailing north to the Falkland Islands our onboard polar experts will recap on our adventures in the Weddell Sea and prepare us for the days ahead. Much of our time is spent scanning the horizon in search of whales and other marine mammals. The spectacular pelagic 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 will show you the best techniques. Our educational program continues and our experts entertain us with interactive presentations and leading lively discussions.

#### DAY 11 / WEST POINT ISLAND AND SAUNDERS ISLAND - (FALKLAND ISLANDS)

Arriving into the Falkland Islands overnight, we explore the island of West Point and nearby Saunders Island – in the West Falkland archipelago. West Point is known for its rockhopper penguin rookeries and substantial nesting black browed albatross colony. The opportunity to observe these spectacular birds in close proximity on the nest is an immense privilege and an experience not easily forgotten. One final highlight awaits – a visit to the wildlife-rich Saunders Island. Along the white sand beaches and in the surrounding tussock grass we hope to encounter no less than four penguin species living in close quarters including gentoo, magellanic and rockhopper - and our ultimate goal during the Falkland Island visit, observing the impressive king penguin. Saunders Island is a fitting end to our epic Antarctic adventure. Charting a course for the port of Stanley in early evening, we enjoy a special dinner attended by the Captain of the ship and reflect on one of life's great travel experiences.

#### DAY 12 / STANLEY (FALKLAND ISLANDS) – RETURN PUNTA ARENAS (SATURDAY, 02 FEBRUARY 2019)

In the early morning, we navigate the ship through the narrows and into port. Stanley - the capital of the Falkland Islands, is currently home to just over 2,000 residents and is reminiscent of a rural town in coastal England or Scotland. It is a charming location, with brightly coloured houses, pretty flower-filled gardens, a quaint cathedral and several local pubs. We have time to explore town before a transfer takes us to the airport for our return flight to Punta Arenas (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 THIS VOYAGE:** This is the only departure featuring this itinerary in 2018/19. A longer voyage 'Epic Antarctica' links this trip with a 10-night 'Quest for the Antarctic Circle' voyage, to create one 21-night 'super itinerary'. 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.