

EXPEDITION LOG

CHEESEMAN'S' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

South Georgia and Antarctic Peninsula
Earth's Greatest Wildlife Destination

October 19 to November 10, 2023



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Lauren In The Wild

Clark Snodgrass

Our intrepid team of expedition leaders all deserve recognition for their work guaranteeing our October 2023 odyssey to South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula was filled with unparalleled encounters with the wild and endless moments in the breathtaking Southern Polar Realms. We would like to take this opportunity to also offer special recognition to Lauren Kleppin, our Wildlife Safari Coordinator, for this trip's success. Amid our company's changes in 2023, Lauren took the helm of this massive project of an expedition, contributing extensively to ensuring this journey was nothing short of magical. Her attention to detail, tireless work, and steadfast commitment helped considerably in providing an incredible experience for you, our adventurers. Lauren's modesty might keep her from the spotlight, but key reasons for the trip's success—from managing logistics to meeting and exceeding passenger expectations—underscore her exceptional skill. Her behind-the-scenes planning and heartfelt dedication helped lay the foundation of a memorable expedition, ensuring it was a once-in-a-lifetime adventure filled with unforgettable experiences. Thank you, Lauren, for your great work, and thank you, Guests, for letting her be your expedition coordinator from start to finish on this fantastic, transformative adventure!

- The Cheeseman's Ecology Safaris Team

INTRODUCTION

BY: HUGH ROSE, EXPEDITION LEADER



Hugh at Shackleton's Grave

Elizabeth Loun

FOND MEMORIES

I'm sitting in my office in Fairbanks, Alaska at the other end of the world from Antarctica and South Georgia with the conditions outside more like one expects for the frozen continent of Antarctica, where we all visited not so long ago in weather conditions 60 degrees warmer than exists on the other side of my office windows! Tepid midwinter light filters through the birch forest at -40°F air outside as I reflect on the amazing memories from the journey we all shared to the "Antarctic Oasis" of South Georgia and the frozen southern continent of Antarctica. It is difficult for me to choose a favorite experience from the many we had: setting foot on the king penguin and elephant seal packed beach of Salisbury Plain, the magic of seeing the first macaroni penguins return to Cooper Bay, and the indescribable spectacle of thousands of gentoo penguins throwing themselves on the beach feet from us at Danco Island, to name a few. There are so many special memories from our adventure that I have a hard time picking a favorite. I do know that everyone endured some challenging weather on the voyage and the uncertainty of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and how it would affect our journey, but the amazing Cheesemans' staff worked extra hard to make sure that we made almost all of our landings safely despite the weather, and you, the passengers, kept your good humor and patience when dealing with all the new regulations thrown at us because of HPAI and delays due to weather. Thank you to

all of you for your good spirits while on board the *Plancius* and being part of the great memories for me from this expedition. I hope that our paths cross again and we have the opportunity to explore the natural world together again soon.

This was the first Southern Ocean trip without a Cheeseman at the helm of Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris. I wanted to say welcome and thank you to Scott Davis and Krista Hanni, the new owners of Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris, for deciding to steer the company into the future. I know as the new owners they plan on taking Cheesemans' into a new era, including voyages to the southern oceans.

EMBARKATION

After traveling from many different countries from around the world, passengers and staff gathered in the lobby of the Hotel Cabo de Hornos in Punta Arenas, Chile to board buses to the Punta Arenas airport and our flight to the Falkland Islands. A few hours later we touched down at Mount Pleasant Military base, which serves as the international airport for the Falklands and is located a one-hour drive from the port town of Stanley where we boarded the *Plancius*, our transportation and home for the next 19 days and 2,937 NM trip to South Georgia, the Antarctic Peninsula ending at our disembarkation port of Ushuaia, Argentina. Additionally, we met up with roughly 20 of our passengers who were in the Falklands before the voyage began exploring the islands

INTRODUCTION

BY: HUGH ROSE, EXPEDITION LEADER

either on their own or with Scott Davis on the Cheesemans' pre-trip extension. After transporting everyone's luggage to the *Plancius* by zodiac, passengers were ferried to the ship through rising wind chop and greeted at the gangway by Aleks and Bobby, the Hotel Manager and his assistant, and shown to their cabins by the capable hotel staff of the *Plancius*. Later in the evening after safety briefings and orientation to the ship, Evgeny Levakov, our very capable captain, welcomed everyone aboard the *Plancius* and toasted to the success of the voyage. The next few days saw mixed weather and sea conditions and were filled with mandatory lectures about the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO), zodiac safety, South Georgia rules and HPAI, and some nonmandatory lectures on the wildlife and history of the southern oceans. Pelagic birding from the decks of the *Plancius* was quite good at times, and after two and a half days at sea and roughly 700 NM, we finally sighted land and South Georgia through mist and 50 knot winds!

SOUTH GEORGIA

We were all briefed on HPAI, and speaking for myself, I was worried what we might find when we arrived at South Georgia, so I was pleasantly surprised that as we cruised into Elsehul Harbor, our planned first landing, everything looked normal with penguins and seals covering the beaches and gray-headed and black-browed albatross filling the air and covering the slopes

above the beach. Unfortunately, conditions were too rough to operate a gangway for a landing at Elsehul, but the captain brought us in close enough so that everyone could see the epic number of albatross nests on the bluffs above the beach and our first king penguins loafing on the beach. From this moment, the magic of South Georgia surrounded us for the next 5 and half days. Landings at renowned king penguin colonies like Salisbury Plain and Right Whale Bay in fantastic weather were mixed with visits to the abandoned whaling stations at Stromness and Grytviken. Everyone pitched in to do an outstanding job on biosecurity, such that our ship scored 96 out of 100 on our biosecurity audit performed at Grytviken by one of the Government officers of the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI). Sadly, the day before our planned landing at St. Andrews Bay, HPAI did impact us when "suspected HPAI" was encountered at Hound Bay, a site located adjacent to St. Andrews Bay, and the GSGSSI closed St. Andrew's Bay out of an abundance of caution. This, however, did not stop us from doing a half day zodiac cruise along the beach at St. Andrews so that you all would get a view of this, the largest king penguin colony in the world! Weather only caused us to cancel one landing at Fortuna Bay, which sadly also canceled our hike from Fortuna Bay across the Shackleton Gap to Stromness. A zodiac cruise at Gold Harbour was added to replace half of the day we were planning to spend at St. Andrews Bay.

We ended our South Georgia time with a magnificent morning at the Cooper Bay macaroni penguin colony, where the early arriving males were just establishing nesting territories. We followed the morning by a stunning ship cruise up Drygalski Fjord, where the captain took the *Plancius* up to the Risting Glacier, which fills the end of the fjord with ice that pours off the Salvesen Range. As we sailed away from South Georgia, the glacier-crowned peaks fading into the golden hues of sunset, I felt grateful that our journey was minimally affected by HPAI. Yet, I couldn't help but worry about the challenges the island was facing. Since our return to our daily routines, the situation has evolved; many of the major sites we visited, and several we didn't, have had to close their doors as HPAI began its toll on the local fauna, affecting birds, elephant seals, and fur seals.

My heart goes out to the wildlife enduring the brunt of this disease. It's a stark reminder of the fragility of our natural world and the importance of safeguarding it against such threats. And, given time, the ecological systems we experienced should return from the effects of HPAI, gradually restoring equilibrium through natural processes.

ANTARCTICA

After a very long navigation of three and a half days and almost 1,000 nautical miles, sailing into the prevailing wind, waves, and currents, we made our first landfall at Deception Island in the Bransfield Strait.

Starting with this magical afternoon at snowy Whalers Bay inside an active volcano, our time on the Antarctic Peninsula did not disappoint. Still looking for signs of HPAI, we made our way southward down the west side of the Peninsula to Useful Island and Cuverville Island, near the southern end of the Gerlache Strait. Due to a mandatory whale speed limit of 10 knots, we were limited in the distances we could travel at night, and we also knew that more bad weather was approaching the Peninsula and Drake Passage in a week, so I made the decision to head as far south as the weather and time would allow us on the first overnight navigation, then make our way back north, positioning ourselves so that we could depart the Peninsula in time to get to Ushuaia by the morning of November 9 with whatever weather the Drake Passage would throw our way.

Fortunately, we were not limited to where we could land by other ships because it was still early in the season. This allowed us to shuffle our schedule such that we picked landing sites that would have the most favorable weather conditions in the area at the time. This favored an early start the next day with a before breakfast landing at Paradise Bay then relocation to land at Danco Island after breakfast. The landing at Danco was a highlight for everyone as we watched the 1000's of gentoo penguins all descend on the beach at once as they made their spring return to their colony to start the breeding cycle. What made this landing so special was the fact

INTRODUCTION

BY: HUGH ROSE, EXPEDITION LEADER

that when the staff scouted the landing, there were 7 gentoos on the beach where we normally would have landed. To not disturb those 7 birds, I chose the place we landed simply because I knew we could safely offload zodiacs at that place. I also knew that as the tide dropped, we would have to relocate our landing spot down the beach to where the original 7 birds were sleeping. After scouting for HPAI and getting the landing set up, the zodiacs returned to the ship to bring passengers in, and you all know what happened next... Truly amazing and pure luck that I chose the place right where the birds returned! That is an Antarctic morning I will never forget! From Danco we navigated around the corner to Neko Harbor, a continental landing with gentoo colony and then turned north to make miles during our overnight navigation. We woke up at Cierva Cove where we had a zodiac cruise planned, but stormy weather delayed us, and I decided to position the ship closer to the ice to get protection from wind and waves before starting the zodiac cruise. Of course, you all know how this morning went! Fast moving ice and cold conditions combined to make *Plancius* pull anchor and outrun the ice and delayed our reboarding, resulting in some very cold passengers. Despite the cold, many people enjoyed the morning cruise and a few got to see the only crab eater seals of the trip. Whiteout conditions and high winds in the afternoon at Mikkelson Harbor forced a cancellation of the landing after a group of staff ventured out in two zodiacs to see



Elephant Seals

James Lee

if the landing was possible. With a heavy heart, I made the decision to cancel the landing because the conditions were too marginal. Again, we headed north for our last day in the Antarctic at the South Shetland Islands. We were greeted by a glorious morning at Half Moon Island and spent the entire morning at the chinstrap penguin colony located on this small island in the strait between Livingstone and Greenwich Islands. The weather forecast for the Drake gave us enough time for one last landing in the sun at Yankee Harbor off the coast of Greenwich Island. Our final landing featured a "polar plunge" and a beautiful gentoo penguin colony that everyone enjoyed under a sunny afternoon. The final zodiac ride back to the *Plancius*

was a truly "nautical" experience with wind and waves that got most everyone wet!

SUMMARY

Looking back on this trip with its memorable moments, weather, wildlife, and people, I know that without our incredibly hard-working staff and their teamwork in combination with Captain Evgeny and his excellent crew, we never could have made half the landings that we did. Combine these people with the very capable *Plancius* and her amazing hotel staff, and we had a winning combination to make this an epically memorable trip for all! All of you played a major role in the success of this trip as well. Your flexibility, cooperation, good humor,



Iceberg

Jenny Silva

and cheerful understanding made it easy for the staff and me. Thank you!

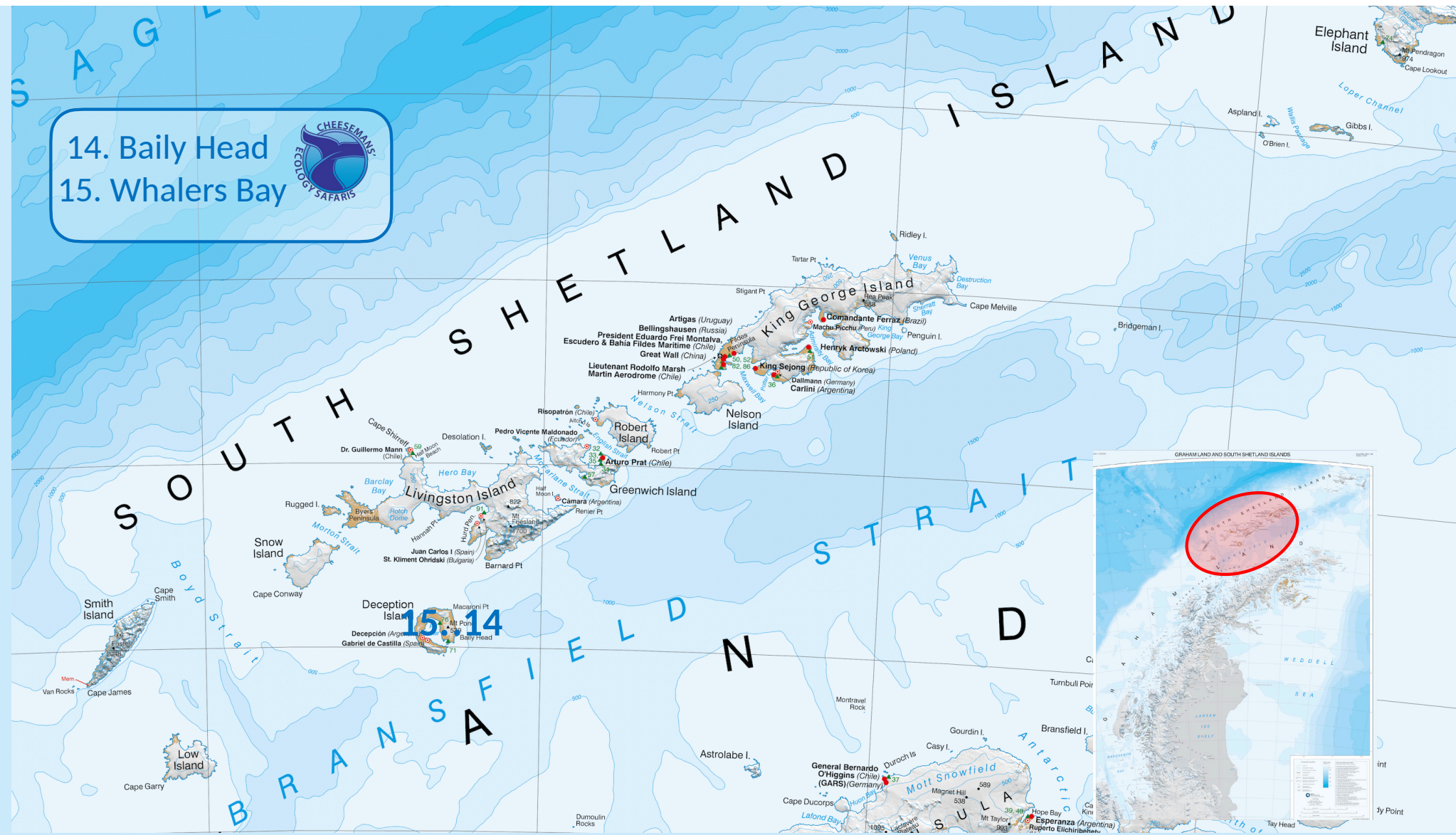
Throughout the trip I thought back many times to my first trip to the southern oceans with Doug and Gail Cheeseman in 1998 and all that they taught me over the years after that first trip. They will be missed by many, and a big thank you to them for all the travelers they touched. The staff and I were very pleased to welcome back so many past Cheesemans' travelers (many of you who were on trips with Doug and Gail in the past) and to make new friends with first-time Cheesemans' travelers. Thank you for expending the effort, time, and expense to join this voyage. I sincerely hope the trip fulfilled your expectations of a trip to South Georgia and Antarctica!

On a final note, we have all watched the world change over recent times and not in a good way. I hope your visit to the last frontier of the planet with its many wildlife extravaganzas gives you hope and fortitude to look to the future and the many ways we can all do our part to help the planet. Happy Travels! 🌍

VOYAGE MAPS



VOYAGE MAPS



- 14. Baily Head
- 15. Whalers Bay



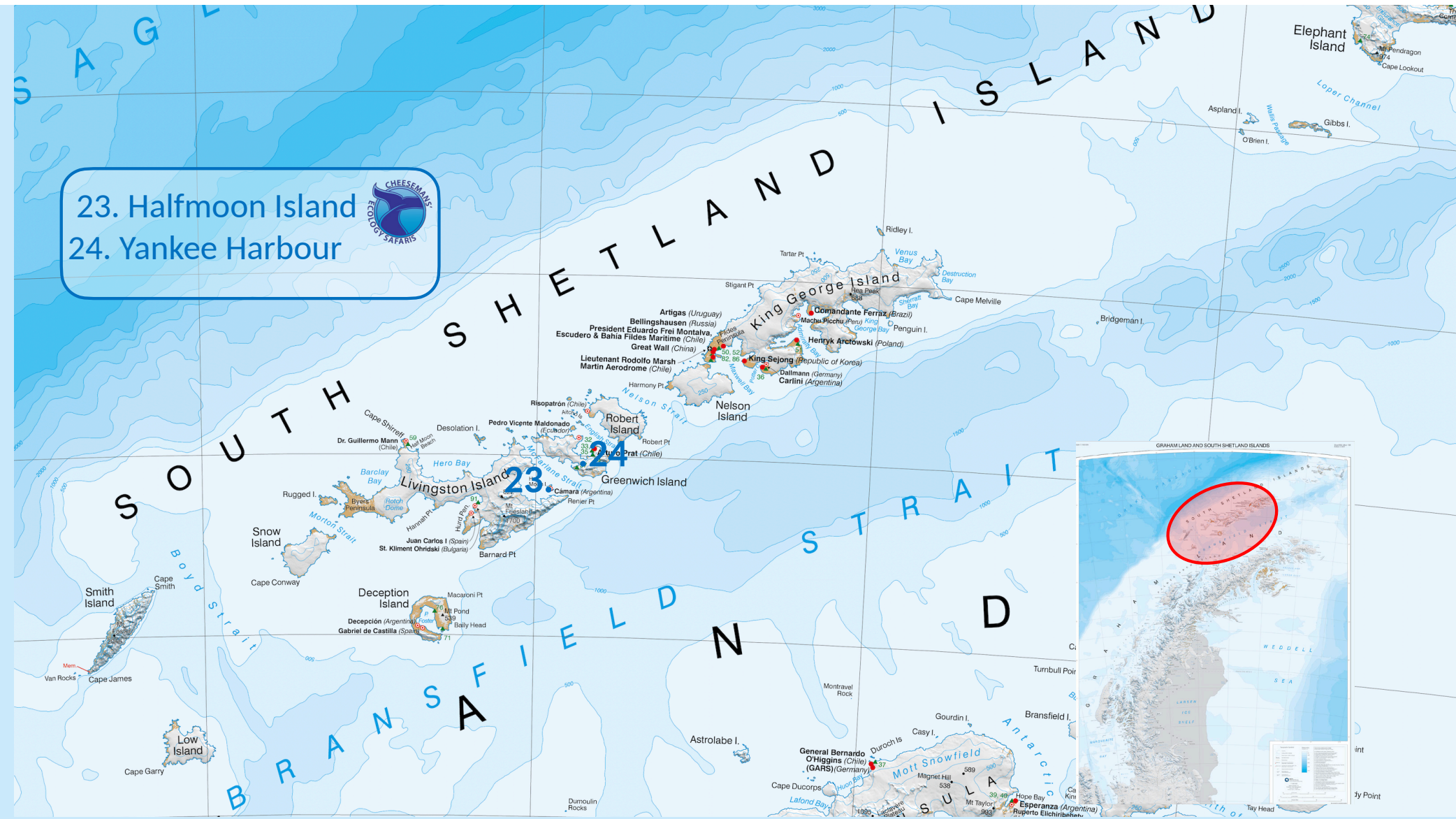
VOYAGE MAPS



- 16. Useful Island
- 17. Cuverville Island
- 18. Paradise Bay
- 19. Danco Island
- 20. Neko Harbour
- 21. Cierva Cove
- 22. Mikkelsen Harbour



VOYAGE MAPS



THE VOYAGE BEGINS



Leaders and Guests

Clark Snodgrass

Over the days prior to our voyage, many of us gathered in Punta Arenas, Chile. Punta Arenas translates to Sandy Point in English. Today this city in Southern Chile serves as a gateway to the Antarctic by air and sea. Indigenous people have lived in this part of the world for 10,000 years. There are at least four distinct groups who occupied the region, and two held adjacent territories near Punta Arenas until colonization. The Yamanas or Yaganes lived on the bounty of the sea near the Beagle Channel. The Qawasqar or Alakalufes were nomadic people who lived off the land and sea as they roamed the area. They undoubtedly had their own names for this area, but today we use the name given by early explorers in the mid 1600's.

This is only the third trip to the Southern Ocean that Cheesemans' has made since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we have a new pandemic to contend with, this time amongst the wildlife. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza has been sweeping across the globe with devastating effects on bird and pinniped populations. Many of us are still traveling with our own masks on, but how can we manage a pandemic in wild animals? This year we visit with new restrictions on shore to help minimize the potential of spreading the illness from one landing site to another. We travel with the awareness that this may change our plans and that we are one of the first trips of the season to South Georgia and Antarctica.



Wandering Albatross

Barry McKenzie

PUNTA ARENAS, CHILE
53°10' S 70°56' W

We gathered most of our group for the first time this morning in the lobby of the hotel. Some were already in the Falkland Islands awaiting our arrival. We loaded into buses and headed off to the Punta Arenas Airport with our packed lunches and excited energy. The Punta Arenas airport was quite busy this morning, but after a little bit of organizing with the airline, we got everyone checked in and bags sent to the plane. Shortly after everyone cleared security, we started boarding our flight to Mount Pleasant airport in the Falklands. After two hours in the air, we got our first glimpses of the

Falkland Islands, a wind-swept land in the middle of the sea.

The Falklands are comprised of 778 islands about 300 miles east of Tierra del Fuego. This place has a complicated history between Argentina and the United Kingdom, made known on a global scale in 1982 when the two countries went to war for two months. It is currently an Overseas British Territory with its own self-governance. There is little evidence supporting any history of visitation to the Falklands by the indigenous peoples of South America, so when the first European explorers arrived in the 1700's, they did not find any indigenous people. The residents now support themselves

with the sales of fishing permits, tourism, and sheep farming for wool.

RAF MOUNT PLEASANT
51° 49'22" S 58° 26'50" W

On the ground in Mount Pleasant, the winds were fierce across the airstrip. The flight crew coached us on how to disembark the plane to not lose any clothing, caps, or glasses to the wind. No photos are allowed at Mount Pleasant because it is a military base, but it was so windy we would have been hard-pressed to hold the camera steady anyway. Despite the huge bottleneck process to clear customs at baggage claim, it went smoothly, and everyone's bags made it! This was a positive first step to our journey.

From the airport, we loaded onto buses to exit the military base and ventured to Stanley. On board the bus we had an informative narration from a local Falklands guide about the history of the area, interesting landmarks, and life on the islands. The road was recently paved so most of the ride was quite smooth. We saw sheep and upland geese from the windows of the bus. We passed interesting rock formations called Stone Runs, which appeared as rivers of white rocks flowing downhill. This formation occurs by erosion of a particular rock type due to freezing-thawing cycles at the edges of a glacier during past ice ages. These formations are quite rare and only occur in a few places around the world.

STANLEY HARBOR, FALKLAND ISLANDS
51° 41'42" S 57° 51'20" W

We were dropped off in front of the Jetty Visitor Centre with only a brief window of time to stretch our legs as the *Plancius* and Cheesemans' team began loading our luggage on zodiacs to be craned on board the *Plancius* and sent to our rooms. Some of us walked down the street to buy gifts and souvenirs in the gift shop or to check out the cathedral on the main street. There were South American sea lions on the dock to entertain us while we waited. A young male hauled out for a while irritating all the females. It was the beginning of the breeding season, and hormones were ramping up for the males. The female sea lions were not interested in his advances as he barked and moved around the pier. Eventually they all slid into the water and either swam around or hauled out on another dock. The male unfortunately had some injuries; the large gash around the back of his neck was likely from an entanglement that has now broken loose. Hopefully he continues to heal nicely. We also sighted a few birds such as the dolphin gull, Falklands steamer duck, and the rock shag.

After the luggage was all loaded onboard, we were next in the zodiacs. We donned our lifejackets and headed down the dock to take a quick ride to the ship, our home for the next three weeks.

Everyone had a chance to settle in and see their rooms before we gathered in the lounge for our safety briefing and lifeboat drill. The wind made the air cold as we marched to the fifth deck in our life-jackets, but at least we were under sunny skies. Once the drill was completed, we weighed anchor and set sail. Not long after, we gathered again in the lounge for a welcome from the captain and a toast with sparkling wine or juice. Hugh Rose, the expedition leader, also briefly introduced the expedition team. We finished up the evening with dinner and then headed to our cabins to finish settling in and get some rest for the sea days ahead.

DAY 2	
AM Weather	Sunny Skies
Wind	22 kts
Air Temp.	44°F / 7°C
Barometric Pr.	1010.5 mb
Making Speed	12 kts
NM Since Stanley	158 mi

We awoke to sunny skies and great bird action on the back of the ship this morning. After breakfast, we had a morning marathon of mandatory briefings for the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI), The International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO), and updates on what to expect regarding Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) for this Antarctic season. After our briefings we then launched our biosecurity efforts in



Hourglass Dolphin

Jeff Davis

preparation of landing in South Georgia. This year we leveled up on biosecurity amid HPAI – including the things we can and cannot do on shore. After much scrubbing, picking, and vacuuming in the lounge and scrubbing and using Virkon on the deck – we were prepared to make our first landing on shore in the coming days. We also have an extra passenger on board for this trip: Chris Locke, an observer from IAATO. Joining us during our operations throughout the voyage, he will make a final report for IAATO as part of their management and oversight of Antarctic tourism.

After lunch, Joe Kaplan gave a lecture about seabirds as a primer for what we may see on our voyage. We spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying the birds and settling into our new home aboard the *Plancius*.

DAY 3	
AM Weather	Overcast Skies
Wind	21 kts
Air Temp.	34°F / 2°C
Sea Temp.	5°C
Barometric Pr.	1010.3 mb
Making Speed	12 kts
NM Since Stanley	434 mi

DAY 3	
AM Weather	Overcast Skies
Wind	21 kts
Air Temp.	34°F / 2°C
Sea Temp.	5°C
Barometric Pr.	1010.3 mb
Making Speed	12 kts
NM Since Stanley	434 mi

Cloudy and windy skies greeted us as we continued our voyage to South Georgia. We had one last mandatory briefing to take care of this morning about zodiac operations and safety, and now, with all our mandatory sessions out of way, we could move on to the more enjoyable topics such as wildlife and history. Emily Burke started off lectures for the day with an introduction to the seals of the Southern Ocean to get us excited about some

of the marine mammals that await us in South Georgia and Antarctica.

Not long after Emily's lecture, those attuned to the movement of the ship could feel it slow down without an apparent reason. We later found out that the crew of the *Plancius* deployed a research buoy for a project called Argo. The project's website describes this undertaking: "Argo is an international program that collects information from inside the ocean using a fleet of robotic instruments that drift with the ocean currents and move up and down between the surface and a mid-water level. Each instrument (float) spends almost all its life below the surface." The government of the Netherlands is a partner with Argo and sent the *Plancius* south from Vlissingen with buoys to deploy throughout the season.

After lunch, Ryan Hope-Inglis gave a lecture about South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands which covered a little bit of everything: geologic history, human history, and natural history. Brent Pikolas followed with a lecture about Frank Worsley, the captain of the *Endurance* during the failed Shackleton Expedition to cross the Antarctic continent including how he navigated at sea with the technology of his time.

Once gathered and over dinner we received some sobering news that HPAI had been confirmed on Bird Island off the north end of South Georgia. The recent fears we had about HPAI reaching South Georgia and the wildlife we were anticipating seeing were coming true.



Southern Elephant Seal Pup

Victor Nemeth

DAY 4

AM Weather	Overcast & Fog
Wind	25-27 kts
Air Temp.	33°F / 1°C
Barometric Pr.	1009 mb
NM Since Stanley	708 mi

A foggy and gloomy sky greeted us this morning accompanied by a cold, biting wind. The sea water was much colder this morning creating an intense wind chill. We have crossed the Polar Front. Icebergs were seen floating by from the decks of the ship, and seabirds swooped around the stern. After breakfast, Katelyn Taylor gave a lecture about whales in the southern oceans and what we know about their movements and migrations. About an hour into the whale lecture, we could finally make out a welcome sight – the island of South Georgia.

We navigated in to Elsehul with a hope of making a landing despite the swells and windy conditions. Captain Evgeny Levakov brought us deep into Elsehul Bay so that we could view nesting light mantled and black browed albatrosses. We also got our first views of king penguins, southern elephant seals, and Antarctic fur seals. There was also one white morph of the southern giant petrel also called a “white nellie,” mixed in with a flock of petrels feeding near a kelp bed. Unfortunately, the swell at the anchorage was too intense for the gangway to



Antarctic Fur Seal Scott Heppel



Antarctic Prion Scott Heppel



Orca Scott Heppel

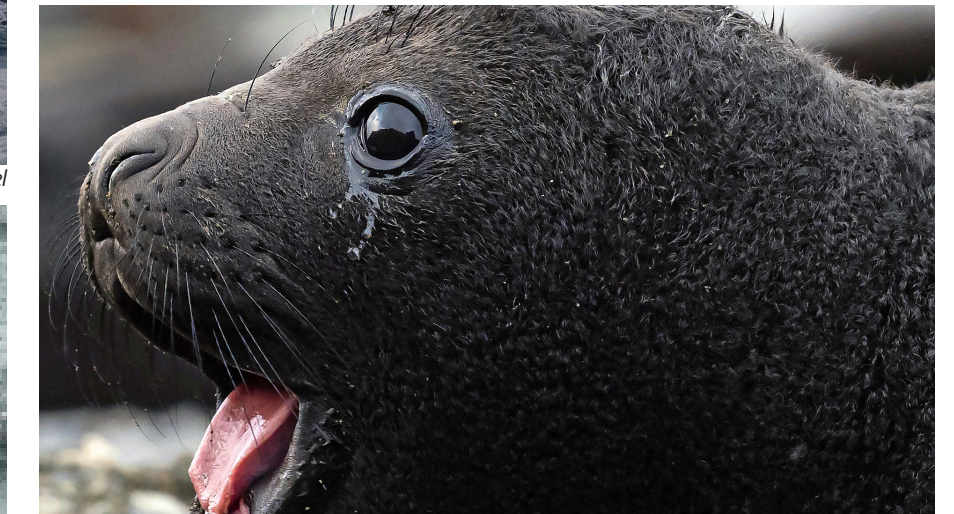
load zodiacs safely, so we opted for a ship cruise in Elsehul Bay and then made our way to a new location.

ROSITA HARBOUR
54° 01'04" S 37° 26'52" W

We had our lunch as the ship steamed toward Rosita Harbor for our next attempt at a landing operation. The weather was still a bit challenging, but we were able to land for about two hours of shore time. This was a welcome chance to touch solid ground for the first time in days. There were a few Antarctic fur seals around – males scoping out their territories early before the rest of the competition arrives in a few weeks. Southern elephant seals were piled in the corner of the landing beach with their pups, and more were sprawled on the beach on the other side of the headland. One lonely king pen-

guin stood quietly on the beach near a patch of tussac grass throughout the entire landing. A few of us who needed a leg stretch took a longer walk up the slope with Tashi Tenzing and enjoyed an aerial view of the area. Near the streams and on top of the headland, there were many South Georgia pintails. This is a species that has recovered remarkably after the rat eradication efforts were successful a few years ago. There were also frequent but fleeting views of the South Georgia pipit for those who were willing to stand patiently on the headland as they zoomed back and forth. The South Georgia pipit has also experienced a very successful recovery post rat eradication.

We headed back to the *Plancius* for dinner with lifted spirits and excitement brewing, stirred from our first landing.



Southern Elephant Seal Pup

Janet Bush

DAY 5	
AM Weather	Windy / Wavy
Wind	10 kts
Air Temp.	33°F / 2°C
Barometric Pr.	1000 mb
Sea Temp	2°C
NM Since Stanley	802 mi

RIGHT WHALE BAY:
54° 00'37" S 37° 40'58" W

We started our day entering Right Whale Bay for our morning operation. Conditions were windy and partly cloudy. We were greeted by a few feisty Antarctic fur seals and the cacophony of sounds from hundreds of southern elephant seals. King penguins scattered the beach in small groups weaving their way around the piles of noisy pinnipeds. We had plenty of room to roam on the glacial carved plain to stretch our legs and explore. The beach was lined by a creek of meltwater from the glaciers that flowed off the peaks behind the beach. Penguins and skuas came to the creek to dip their feet or take a little bath. A few male elephant seals laid in the creeks, occasionally bellowing and scooting around. Tashi led a group on a longer walk around to another beach and then across the glacial plain. On the

way to the penguin colony, whale bones were scattered along the beach. Fur seals and elephant seal pups were tucked in sleeping next to vertebrae and mandibles. The views at the king penguin colony were thrilling, and we got our first views of fluffy brown king penguin chicks, called "oakum boys." The chicks look so different from the adults that the whalers thought they were a different species of penguin and gave them the name "oakum boys" due to their brown fluffy feathers resembling the material oakum, which was used to caulk the planks in wooden whaling ships.

SALISBURY PLAIN:
54° 03'19" S 37° 19'40" W

If we thought that Right Whale Bay was breathtaking – we had no idea what was in store for us in the afternoon as we cruised the Bay of Isles to Salisbury Plain. The expedition team had some assessments to make for the swell conditions at the beach, which was complicated by a very "curious" leopard seal. However, we eventually found a place to land on shore where we could safely spin the zodiacs in the mild surf. Once on shore, the scene was captivating. The afternoon light shone on the snowcapped peaks lining the bay. As we walked the glacial plain, there were thousands of king penguins. At the

colony, we were overwhelmed with the sounds of chicks tweeting and adults whistling. The chicks outnumbered the adults transforming the landscape to appear brown and fluffy everywhere you looked. As the evening came, the sky put on a show of gorgeous colors. We dragged our feet as we walked back to the zodiacs, not wanting the magical afternoon to end.



Brown Skua *Athena Georgiou*



King Penguins *Alex Fine*



Southern Giant Petrel *Athena Georgiou*



Antarctic Fur Seal Pup *Nick de Cent*



King Penguins *Daphne Tsui*



King Penguins *Cindy Marple*

DAY 6	
AM Weather	Windy, Rain
Wind	20-30 kts
Air Temp.	40°F / 5°C
Barometric Pr.	990 mb & dropping
Sea Temp	2°C
NM Since Stanley	863 mi

FORTUNA BAY:
54° 08'47" S 36° 48'61" W

The wind was howling and brought rain as we anchored in Fortuna Bay this morning. We stayed near the beach for a few hours before ultimately deciding that landing at Fortuna was not safe due to the 60 knot wind gusts. Unfortunately, we were not able to make the hike from Fortuna Bay to Stromness, which is the last part of the epic Shackleton crossing from King Hakkon Bay to the whaling base at Stromness. We began cruising towards Stromness to see if conditions would allow us to land there. In the meantime, George Desort gave a presentation about video editing and showed the beginning of a documentary he was making about the trip, filmed entirely using only his iPhone. Hugh Rose, our Expedition Leader, reviewed the plan for our biosecurity inspection at Grytviken, so we were all

prepared for the next day. During lunch we received the news that unfortunately, Saint Andrew's Bay had been closed due to HPAI being detected at an adjacent location. It was clear we would have to remain flexible in this current and unfolding situation and hope that other locations stayed open for the duration of our voyage.

HUSVIK:
54° 10'41" S 36° 41'51" W

After lunch, we took a short detour to Husvik to view the whaling station from the ship. The rainy and gloomy conditions added to the mood and viewing effect of the abandoned station and made for an appropriate back drop for Ida Olsson's lecture on whaling. We then continued our course to Stromness. As we arrived at Stromness, the conditions had not improved, so George hosted a small group session to help people further learn about video editing on their devices.

STROMNESS:
54° 09'31" S 36° 42'12" W

We continued to standby for a break in the weather at Stromness, and Katlyn gave a lecture about whales as ecosystem engineers. By the end of her lecture, the wind had died down significantly, so we decided to try for a landing. Rain



Iceberg

Arthur Hussey

continued for the entirety of the landing, and the wind gusted strongly on occasion, but we did manage a few hours on shore at Stromness. Tashi led a small group on a walk up the glacial plain toward where Shackleton had come down

at the end of his harrowing crossing from Peggotty Bluff to Stromness in search of help to rescue his crew. Soaking wet and cold from our time ashore, we arrived to the *Planicius* for dinner to gather and warm up at the end of the day.



King Penguins

Chris Conner



Gentoo Penguins

Mark Bobb



South Georgia Pintail Duck

Glenn Bartley



Antarctic Fur Seal

Ken Curell



Hiking Godthul

Jenny Silva



Southern Elephant Seal

Alex Fine

DAY 7

AM Weather	Windy, Rain, Snow
Wind	11 kts
Air Temp.	33°F / 1°C
Barometric Pr.	993 mb
Sea Temp	2°C
NM Since Stanley	909 mi

GRYTVIKEN:
54° 16'59" S 36° 30'02" W

The rocking of the ship stirred some of us awake before Hugh's voice came on the PA system in the early morning. We were arriving in Maiviken, and conditions were not safe to land hikers planning to trek from Maiviken over a low pass to Grytviken. The *Plancius* circled around to Grytviken, and it was a windy rain/snow mix in Cumberland Bay; however, as we inched in past King Edward Point, the wind began to die down and conditions improved. Today was our inspection day! This is the day we had all anxiously been preparing for since Punta Arenas. As we were finishing breakfast, the government officer came on board to begin paperwork for our visit to South Georgia. After completing paperwork and checking the ship for rodents, it was our turn as passengers to be inspected before landing to explore Grytviken. About half the group received a biosecurity inspection at the gangway, and once the officer approved, we were all allowed to proceed

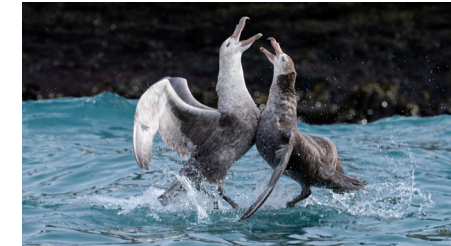
ashore. The weather had cleared up and was quite pleasant as we landed near the wreck of the *Dias* in front of the Grytviken Museum.

Compared to years prior, much more of Grytviken was open to explore. The road to Hope Point recently concluded a successful plant eradication and was now useable for us to walk to King Edward Point and view the cross that Shackleton's crew installed after his death in 1922. On the road to King Edward Point, there were elephant seals and fur seals, along with good views of Antarctic terns. At Larsen House, where the road ends before the footpath to the crosses, there was a small group of king penguins with one little chick standing on a pile of snow. There were many elephant seals that caused us to alter our path around Larsen House several times. Brand new wet pups were nursing from their mothers, likely born the night before or early in the morning before we arrived. A few pintails also wandered the route between the dock where the South Georgia government vessel, the *Pharos*, was tied up and Larsen House. Out at the Shackleton cross, the song of the South Georgia pipit filled the air, often perching on the cross itself. The museum, post office, church, and two auxiliary buildings were open for us to walk around and even do a little shopping. In the building next to the museum there was a wandering albatross taxidermy specimen, which gave a sense of how large the bird really is –



King Penguins

James Lee



Southern and Northern Giant Petrels
Nick de Cent



King Penguins, S. Elephant Seal
Athena Georgiou



Leopard Seal
Jack Hochfeld



N. Giant Petrel, King Penguins
Kevin Reedy



King Penguins
Daphne Tsui



Leopard Seal
Daphne Tsui



Zodiac Salutations

Daphne Tsui

the wings stretch from the floor to the ceiling. Inside this building was also a replica of the James Caird, the altered lifeboat that Shackleton and his men crossed from Elephant Island to South Georgia over the course of 16 days. It's hard to believe that six men fit in the boat when you stand next to it. In the church we could ring the bells, and the sound echoed around the harbor for all to hear. An old machine shop that had been renovated was open on the way to the cemetery to visit.

At the end of the landing, we gathered as a group in the cemetery to share a whiskey toast with the boss. Hugh said a few words for Shackleton including the famous quote by the Antarctic explorer Sir Raymond Priestley:

"For scientific discovery give me Scott;

For speed and efficiency of travel give me Amundsen;

but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone,

get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton."

We all raised our glasses and sipped some Shackleton whiskey and then poured a little on his grave in respect for him to enjoy as well.



Snowy Sheathbill Wing

Richard Williams

These mountain climbing penguins chose a home with a beautiful view but a challenging climb. Tashi led a group on a further walk up to one of the peaks for an even better view of Godthul, the "Good Cove" and beyond.

As the sun lowered, the bay was serene and perfect for our evening BBQ dinner. You could bundle up warmly and enjoy your meal outside as the full moon rose to brighten the sky or eat inside with lively music in the dining room. Toward the end of the BBQ and as more people gathered inside, Prince, one of the dining room stewards, broke out in a dance session in the dining room. Lots of cheering and applause followed his dance routine and added to the fun of the evening.

GODTHUL:
54° 17'49" S 36° 17'34" W

Back on board over lunch, we found out that we passed our inspection with a 96%, proving that our biosecurity work had paid off. We also learned that the afternoon plan was to go to Godthul, a slight alteration to the original schedule, to take advantage of the protected bay found there.

Conditions in Godthul were spectacular. For those that felt keen to scramble up the tussac grass, excellent and scenic views awaited them at two gentoo colonies. We had seen an occasional gentoo penguin on our previous landings but were treated to full colonies of the birds on the mountainsides above Godthul.

DAY 8	
AM Weather	Sunny
Wind	5.5 kts
Air Temp.	37°F / 3°C
Barometric Pr.	995 mb & rising
Making Speed	10 kts
Sea Temp	2°C
NM Since Stanley	936 mi
Visible	Allardyce Range

SAINT ANDREW'S BAY:
54° 26'19" S 36° 10'46" W

We awoke in Saint Andrew's Bay. Con-

ditions were glassy but with a rolling swell. The area was still closed for landings, but we did load up in the zodiacs for a cruise to see the site from the water. Most of the zodiacs started at Clark Point where the rocks were full of king penguins roosting. Conditions were rough at the Point, but a leopard seal hunting king penguins put on a memorable show for all zodiacs. The leopard seal took its time playing with a king penguin for about 20 minutes before finally finishing it off. Quite a sight to see from a rolling and bouncing zodiac! The rest of the cruise included views of elephant seals, fur seals, and king penguins displaying a variety of activity and behaviors near the rocky or sandy shores. Many groups of king penguins arrived and departed from the water allowing us to get photos of them swimming in the surf. A few chicks were visible from shore, but many of them were tucked back in the colony. All the zodiacs enjoyed a nice view of a white giant petrel ("white nellie") sitting on the water taking a bath.

As the zodiacs began returning to the *Plancius*, clouds rolled in and blanketed the high peaks of the Allardyce Range, which tower almost 10,000 feet over St. Andrews Bay. Upon returning to the ship, we were treated to a hot lunch as we repositioned to our next location. During and after lunch we cruised past towering icebergs along the coast.



Icebergs

Chris Locke

GOLD HARBOUR:
54° 37'28" S 35° 56'15" W

As we arrived at Gold Harbour, snow began to fall in little powdery flakes. The team went out to scout for a landing site but were unsuccessful in finding a piece of beach to land on that wasn't

covered by densely packed elephant seals. After further scouting, the team decided to operate a short zodiac cruise instead. The snow continued to fall, and the wind increased as well, but for the hardy folks who opted to get in the zodiacs, a 2-hour cruise in falling snow was the ultimate treat. Sightings included intimate views of elephant seals

and fur seals on the shore, and a leopard seal in the water. During the cruise multiple feeding frenzies of Giant and Cape petrels were observed as they fed on floating seal carcasses. At one point during the cruise, we experienced near white-out conditions, and those on the ship lost sight of the zodiacs briefly, as large, heavy snowflakes fell sideways on

a strong wind.

By the time dinner came around, the snow and wind had stopped, revealing a wonderful view of the shore and the Bertrab Glacier draped on the cliffs behind the beach at Gold Harbour. The glacier was visibly hanging over the cliff face and into the bay behind Gold Harbour beach.

DAY 9

Wind	5 kts
Air Temp.	39°F / 4°C
Barometric Pr.	996 mb
Sea Temp	2°C

COOPER BAY:
54° 47'17" S 35° 48'27" W

Bright skies greeted us this morning as the *Plancius* dropped anchor in Cooper Bay. We were hoping to find a handful of macaroni penguins at this location. The scouting of the expedition team informed us that not only had the macaroni penguins arrived, but they were also visible from the zodiacs. The steep slopes up to the colony required the team to build snow steps and install snow anchors, to hold ropes, which was not something that all passengers were comfortable navigating. For those passengers who didn't feel up for the climb to the colony but still wanted to see macaroni penguins, a few accommodating birds were resting on the rocks at the beach and visible from the zodiacs. Zodiac cruisers were treated to the spectacle of macaronis marching up a steep path to their colony, offering an equally exciting vantage point and view from the water.

As zodiacs were coming ashore and passengers were briefed by the team, tension among several fur seals came

to a boil. A few large males had come ashore already and were establishing their territories. Two particularly stubborn males couldn't find spaces to agree upon, and a massive fight broke out. We gathered around the shore equipment with expedition team members on the outside as the seals chased each other around the landing site. Fur was flying, and blood was drawn before the seals finally settled down. Since the weather had improved dramatically, once everyone was ashore, an extended hike was offered from above the penguin colony to a mountain peak 1200 feet above Cooper Bay.

At the penguin colony there were approximately 30-40 macaroni penguins starting to pile up rocks for their nests amongst the tussac grass. It was quite entertaining to watch them fuss over their building materials. The colony also offered elevated and stunning views of all of Cooper Bay.

The zodiac cruises viewed elephant and fur seals, including a golden fur seal, known as a "leucistic" color morph, which occurs in only 1/1000 births. This adult male lounged on some rocks near where the macaronis were coming ashore throughout our landing. As the morning progressed and waves in Cooper Sound diminished, a few zodiacs ventured to Cooper Island, where they were treated to a large raft of 50 or more black browed albatross and many stranded icebergs. Zodiacs were also

able to visit a chinstrap colony, and a lone Weddell seal was spotted loafing on the beach surrounded by chinstraps.

DRYGALSKI FJORD:
54° 46'50" S 36° 04'33" W

The weather was so gorgeous as we finished up our landing at Cooper Bay that we could not resist the temptation of taking a cruise in to the iceberg graveyard at Cooper Sound and a trip down Drygalski Fjord. Unfavorable weather was in the forecast, but the bridge team was confident that the detour would not increase our navigation time to the Antarctic Peninsula. So, we enjoyed an incredible cruise past enormous icebergs and on the cerulean blue waters of Drygalski Fjord. The glaciers were stunning, and bird watching was excellent. As we neared the end of the fjord, we took our group photo with a spectacular

Risting Glacier serving as the backdrop.

From Drygalski, we set sail into the Scotia Sea to begin our crossing to Antarctica. The views of the peaks on the south end of the island of South Georgia were a lovely backdrop for our cruise, and we passed many icebergs as South Georgia disappeared behind us. As we navigated into more open waters past Cape Disappointment and Brode Island, the seabird action began to pick up. Thousands of prions and petrels flew by the ship and to the delight of the birders, large numbers of diving petrels were seen feeding in the productive water. Large groups of penguins swam past the ship as golden overcast light illuminated our last views of South Georgia.



Mantled Albatross

Cindy Marple



Southern Elephant Seal

Alex Fine



Black-browed Albatross

Nick de Cent



Common Diving Petrel

Athena Georgiou



Antarctic Fur Seal

Mike Mitchell

DAY 10

Wind	20 kts
Air Temp.	32°F / 0°C
Barometric Pr.	987 mb
Sea Temp	1°C

Today was our first day crossing the Scotia Sea. We started the morning after breakfast with another IAATO briefing and another round of biosecurity, which kept us busy until lunch time. After lunch we sighted a large iceberg with penguins on it. The bridge team circled the iceberg giving everyone a close view of the many chinstrap penguins resting on it. As we were circling the ice, we also spotted a few humpback whales. It is likely the penguins and whales were feeding on krill in the area.

Joe Kaplan gave a lecture in the afternoon called "Leftovers in the Freezer." He spoke about species we could expect to see as we approach Antarctica and the breeding cycles of a few species of penguins. The weather conditions worsened as the afternoon went on, and the outer decks eventually had to be closed. Ryan gave a late afternoon lecture about the geology of South Georgia before dinner.



High Seas Photography

Richard Williams

DAY 11

Wind	24 kts
Air Temp.	34°F / 1°C
Barometric Pr.	987 mb
Sea Temp	-1°C

Happy Halloween! We started our second morning in the Scotia Sea with slightly improved weather. The outer decks were once again opened for those who wanted to be outside in the fresh air or to watch for wildlife. Sadie Youngstrom started off the morning lecture program with a talk about killer whales. Milo Burcham followed her with a pre-lunch lecture called “Photographic Devices” about how to frame your shots and what to consider for cropping and

post processing to add interest to your photos. The crew of the *Plancius* had decorated the ship with cobwebs, bats, and pumpkins to celebrate the holiday. A few costume appearances happened throughout the day and night by staff and guests alike.

After lunch, Katlyn gave a lecture called “A Year in the Life of a Humpback Whale” about the yearly migrations and behaviors of these whales. The weather began to worsen again throughout the afternoon. Ida gave a lecture before dinner about the race to the South Pole between Scott and Amundsen, an interesting comparison between the two expeditions and how these teams of men reached the South Pole. After dinner, we enjoyed spooky treats the galley team had created for dessert including sugary eyeballs and fingers.

DAY 12

Wind	32 kts
Air Temp.	32°F / 0°C
Barometric Pr.	987 mb
Sea Temp	1°C

Worsening weather conditions overnight slowed our progress toward Antarctica. When we awoke, we were not as far as we had hoped to be on our third day crossing the Scotia Sea. In the morning, Scott Davis and Milo hosted a round up for photos from South Georgia in preparation for the group retrospective slideshow at the end of the voyage. After, the Chief Engineer of the *Plancius*, Floris, gave us a virtual engine room tour and answered questions about how the *Plancius* operates. By mid-morning we could make out the silhouette of Clarence Island. Glenn Bartley gave a lecture about post-processing of images before lunch for those that were interested in learning the more technical parts of photo editing and the various programs available for use.

ELEPHANT ISLAND:
61° 09'27" S 55° 26'56" W

Just before lunch, Elephant Island came in to view but was quickly lost again as the visibility declined in the snow and fog. After lunch, there was

a screening of the short film “Round Cape Horn.” Emily gave a lecture about her time in a field camp at Cape Crozier studying Adélie penguins called “Butter Without Fear.” As the weather calmed again, we played a pub quiz game with South Georgia Trivia. The stakes were bragging rights and a few bottles of wine. After a fierce competition, the results were as follows:

SOUTH GEORGIA TRIVA RESULTS

1st
St. Andrew's Yacht Club

2nd
The Pipit Peepers
The Rockhoppers

3rd
TWA Trans World Airlines

4th
The Bergy Bits
The Macaroni & Cheeseman

5th
Flamboyance of Flamingos
The Bird Brains

6th
Low Expectations



Deception Island

DAY 13

Wind	25 kts, gusts 35 of kts
Air Temp.	25°F / -3°C
Barometric Pr.	980 mb
Sea Temp	1°C
Making Speed	7 - 7.5 kts
NM Since Stanley	1,859 mi

After another slow night's sail due to strong westerly winds, we awoke to brighter skies and a cold wind. The decks were closed due to wind and ice, but that didn't stop us from sighting an Antarctic petrel through the dining room window at breakfast. The bridge allowed guests to go out on the bridge wings to enjoy the sighting and kept the area open throughout the morning. We were still quite a distance from our intended destination of Deception Island, so we had a few lectures in the morn-

ing. One of our guests, Clark Snodgrass, gave an excellent talk on satellites and how much we use them to monitor the earth – including the ability to monitor penguin colonies in Antarctica! You never know who is going to be on board the ship with you, and Clark's lecture illustrated how fun and interesting your fellow guests can be.

Clark's presentation was followed by Sadie giving the second part to her killer whale lecture. This talk focused on the different ecotypes of killer whales

around the world, especially around Antarctica. This sparked an interesting discussion about how to define a species and whether killer whales really need to be divided into different species or if ecotype/morphotype designation is sufficient. The jury is still out on that one, but interesting to consider, nonetheless.

As we finished lunch, Deception Island was in full view off the bow of the *Plancius*. We were greeted by distant views of whales as we approached this caldera covered in a thick blanket of



Penguins On Iceberg

Clark Snodgrass

snow. Gentoo penguins were seen porpoising around the ship, and chinstrap penguins covered the snowy slopes. Smaller icebergs were present and rolling in the crashing waves at Bailey Head. The island provided some shelter from the wind and waves, and we enjoyed a scenic ship cruise along the shoreline and through Neptune's Bellows into Port Foster, the interior of an active caldera volcano. Just before the Bellows, there was an iceberg covered with gentoo and chinstrap penguins, which provided some entertainment as a half dozen penguins tried to ride the waves up at the right moment to climb up the steep icy slope. Another chinstrap colony stood watch as we transited through the Bellows, and soon after, we were anchoring in Whaler's Bay.

**WHALER'S BAY, DECEPTION ISLAND:
62° 59'01" S 60° 33'44" W**

As we surveyed the landing site – there was a surprising number of gentoo penguins throughout the area of Whaler's Bay – more than usual. There were plenty of opportunities to stretch our legs on the volcanic steaming shores by either taking a guided walk to Ronald Hill on one end of the landing site, or up to Neptune's Window on the opposite end of the landing site. On the route to Neptune's Window, there was a leopard seal resting on the beach. When the staff first arrived, the seal did not react to their presence, and it was apparent that it was injured. As the seal lay fast asleep, staff drew a generous boundary on the sand and monitored the seal while setting up the route to Neptune's Window. The seal

did perk up throughout the afternoon which relaxed some of the concerns about its health, and we were able to determine that it was a male. Unfortunately, he had a complete amputation of the hind right flipper. While this will hinder his ability to swim, he was in good health, and his wound was healing. Identification photos were taken for the seal so he can be tracked in Happywhale over time. Near the leopard seal, there were also many Cape petrels swimming and flying around. They were nesting in the cliffs above and could be heard calling loudly at Neptune's Window. As we wrapped up the landing after watching the gentoos throughout the afternoon, the staff began to get the sense that the gentoos may nest at Whaler's Bay this season. Time will tell.



Leopard Seal

Mike Mitchell

**UPDATE ON
THE LEOPARD SEAL**

This seal is a well-known individual in Whaler's Bay with an ID number in Happywhale: HW-HL1300065. Some guides have nicknamed him "Chunk." There are photos of him with this flipper injury going back as far as 2016, but the actual event that led to his flipper loss probably happened in the years prior to 2016. This update shows he has successfully lived with this injury for many years, and it continues to slowly heal over time. If you want to look at the sighting records of Chunk, search the ID number listed above in Happywhale.

Happywhale.com



Snow Petrel

Glenn Bartley

**USEFUL ISLANDS
64° 42'31" S 62° 51'45" W**



Leopard Seal

Vic Nemeth

Our wakeup call found us transiting the Gerlache Strait between Anvers Island and the mainland of the Antarctic Peninsula. Filtered sunlight lit up the peaks and glacier faces of Anvers Island as snow petrels and southern fulmars swirled around. We arrived at the Useful Islands for our morning landing. Chinstrap penguins use the peak of the larger island for their colony while gentoos populate all the lower spaces on multiple islands. There was a leopard seal resting on an ice floe near the landing site. Once on shore, we were greeted by snowy sheathbills as we put away our gear to explore the island. Snow petrels and giant petrels swirled around the islands all morning and Antarctic fur seals lounged on the snow just up the hill from the landing site. A white morph of the southern giant petrel (white nellie) was sitting

on the snow near other giant petrels and a few Weddell seals. As we started our path up the slope to the chinstrap colony, we had to cross a penguin highway. We could get through in groups when there was a break in the flow of gentoos who waddled and belly slid from one side of the island to the other.

Stunning views awaited those who trekked all the way the top. Those who enjoyed the seals and the gentoos below were treated to a surprise Adélie penguin who came ashore. The Adélie was a bit frantic at first, scurrying between the gentoos and humans as we waited and watched from our viewing area. After scrambling around for about 15 minutes, it ran across the penguin highway to another part of the colony and was chased by some gentoos and then disappeared. A third Weddell seal was hauled out near the first viewing area close to the landing



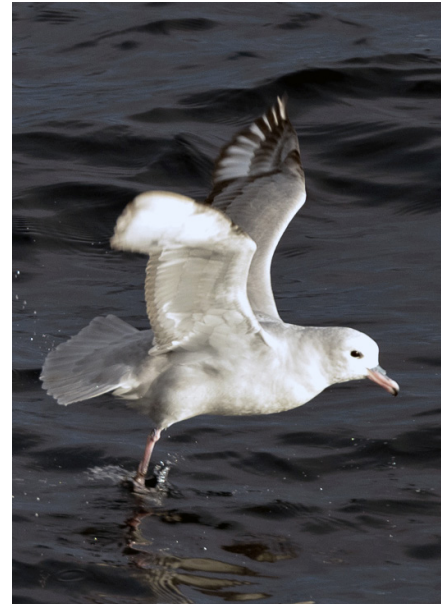
Gentoo Penguin

Egle Hansen

site and just could not get comfortable on the snow. This seal was very large and seemed to be a pregnant female, close to giving birth. Perhaps before our voyage's end in Ushuaia, a new Weddell seal pup was born at the Useful Islands and is now in company with its mother. As the landing was coming to an end, the lone Adélie penguin reappeared. Trekkers coming down from the gentoo colony on the hill and those already on the zodiacs headed back to the ship were able to catch a final glance as the Adélie moved back and forth between the shoreline and the gentoo colony closest to the water.

**CUVERVILLE ISLAND
64° 40'35" S 62° 37'11" W**

During lunch we repositioned to Cuverville Island. The shortest route to Cuverville Island from Useful Island is through the Errera Channel. However, the channel was full of ice when we arrived, with heavy snow and fog making this navigation unsafe, so we took the long way around to Cuverville Island instead, and several hours later we found ourselves in front of Cuverville Island amidst a graveyard of grounded icebergs. Wind gusts over 20 knots and snow made for a cold and wet zodiac ride that weaved through the maze of grounded icebergs to the beach at Cuverville. As we came through the last gap in the bergs, we were greeted by thousands of gentoo penguins mottling the island, waiting for the snow to melt in order to build their nests. The snow and ice bank from the winter was



Southern Fulmar Jeff Davis

so high that we had to cut steps and use the landing barrels to get up on the island to walk around. Those who stayed on the beach found themselves eye level with gentoos that were moving around, courting each other, and socializing. Zodiac cruises offered stunning views of the iceberg graveyard in the icy breeze. Snow petrels danced around the spectacular ice formations along with terns and kelp gulls. A few seals were around, and we also were able to get decent views of the gentoo colony on Ronge Island located adjacent to Cuverville. A wet and windy ride in the zodiacs took us back to the *Plancius* in time for dinner and to settle in for the night.

DAY 15

Wind	5 kts
Air Temp.	32°F / 0°C
Barometric Pr.	984 mb & steady

BROWN STATION, PARADISE BAY
64° 53'31" S 62° 51'59" W

This morning started off with an *early* wakeup call at 4am for our first of *three* landings for the day. We set foot on the mainland of Antarctica this morning as the moody golden light peeked through the clouds and reflected off glassy and icy seas. We landed at the Argentinian Brown Station in Paradise Bay. No one was at the station yet, so we had quite a bit of trailblazing to do through a thick blanket of snow. The staff ended up cutting and digging out quite a few steps throughout the landing to keep the paths easy to navigate. There were a few penguins coming to shore near the base, and the zodiac ride back to the ship included a brief view of the shag colony tucked in a concave cliff face near the base science buildings.

DANCO ISLAND
64° 43'11" S 62° 36'24" W

During breakfast we repositioned to Danco Island for our second operation of the day. Danco is not far from Cuverville where we were the afternoon before.



Gentoo Penguins Mike Mitchell

In fact, we had seen Danco quite clearly during zodiac cruises the previous afternoon and spotted gentoo penguins high on the slope of the island. The staff went ashore to scout and found seven sleeping gentoo penguins that blocked our normal landing spot. This caused us to choose a secondary site landing that would become unusable later in the morning due to the dropping tide; however, we did not want to disturb the seven birds and figured we could move the landing site as the morning progressed. Additionally, a 10-meter-wide zone of floating ice blocks had to be negotiated with the zodiac to place the bow against the snowbank on shore to off load. Once our landing spot

was ready, the zodiacs returned to the ship to proceed for landing. Nothing however would or could have prepared us for the sight that would greet the first zodiacs as they came ashore.

While the zodiac drivers returned to the ship to pick up passengers, a few penguins began approaching our newly established landing site and proceeded to climb on shore adjacent to our pile of shore safety gear. By the time the first zodiacs with guests arrived, hundreds of penguins had appeared on the shore. Some were resting and preening while others began their march up to their colony site, located hundreds of feet above



Adélie Penguin Glenn Bartley

the shoreline. Rafts of gentoo penguins, consisting of hundreds, swam around the landing area and then, without warning, would throw themselves on shore at once. Their sudden movements at the surface sounded like a heavy rain. This spectacle went on for hours, until thousands of birds were gathered ashore at Danco Island and the scene was reminiscent of salmon jumping a waterfall on their way upriver to spawn. Views were jaw-dropping from all angles and perspectives, no matter if you were on shore, or seated in a zodiac watching from the water. Soon the island was marked by a massive black swarm of birds moving uphill. This was arrival day for the Danco Island gentoo penguin colony, and it was a rare and special sight that not one of us had witnessed before.

Among the gentoos' spectacular arrival,



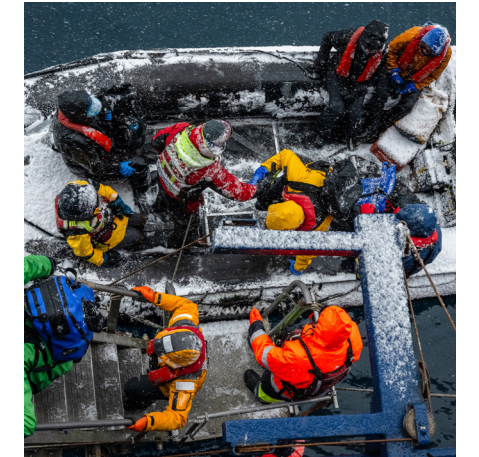
Danco Island Cindy Marple

a few Adélie penguins also arrived in the chaos. This became a fun monochromatic game of "Where's Waldo?" to spot the other species mixed in with the gentoos. One Adélie made it most of the way up the steep slope of Danco before scurrying back down toward the water. Weddell seals cruised around the landing site, coming quite close to the zodiacs and the expedition team who were in waders catching the boats at shore. For those who wanted more aerial views of the Errera Channel and the island, snowshoes were required for the thirty-minute hike to the top of the island. The wind picked up during the end of the landing sending the snowshoers down and off the mountain earlier than anticipated. As the tide dropped, the landing site had to be moved 200 meters, where deeper water allowed zodiacs closer to the beach. Simultaneously the wind increased, pack-

ing ice against the shore, and forcing the landing to end early. A sporty and splashy zodiac ride back to the *Plancius* ensured that we would be ready to get onboard our warm ship and have a hot lunch.

NEKO HARBOR
64° 50'29" S 62° 32'34" W

During lunch we repositioned to Neko Harbor for our third and final operation of the day. The wind was howling and blasting snow on the ship when we first arrived which made dropping the zodiacs more difficult than expected. The team took their time and waited out the weather as they inspected the landing site. Eventually the winds died down and the snow began to fall lightly, so the landing at Neko Harbor commenced. Those that went ashore for our final landing



Zodiac Off-Loading Jeff Mott

of the day could explore a large spread out gentoo penguin colony surrounded by glaciers. A single Weddell seal was hauled out on shore and another lone Adélie penguin was spotted among the many gentoos. The glaciers in the area calved a few times sending mini tsunamis onto the empty beach below the gentoo penguin colony. A few boats attempted to zodiac cruise, but visibility was too poor due to the heavy snowflakes falling.

Now covered in a nice layer of fresh snow, we finished our landing with plenty of time for our BBQ dinner. Due to weather, we had to host this BBQ inside, but it was still a fun time. Lively music and another dance performance from Prince in the dining room was a perfect ending to our grand and eventful day.



Crabeater Seal



Antarctic Cormorant

Jim Greenwood

DAY 16	
AM Weather	Snow
Wind	27 kts, gusts of 38 kts
Air Temp.	29°F / -2°C
Barometric Pr.	973 mb
NM Since Stanley	2,700 mi

CIERVA COVE
64° 09'15" S 60° 56' 40" W

The *Plancius* wound through icebergs and around islands to reach Cierva Cove for our morning operations. The weather was cold and windy, but we bundled up and loaded into the zodiacs for a cruise to enjoy views of icebergs and wildlife near the Argentinian base “Primavera.”

Large groups of gentoo penguins swam around in the ice providing photo opportunities, and the penguins started to emerge on the beach in a large group near the base buildings, and then scrambled up a steep hillside to access their nesting colony. Antarctic terns perched on small pieces of ice posing for photos as snow petrels flew low over the zodiacs. Penguin Island provided great viewing

and photo opportunities of chinstrap penguins coming and going from their elevated nesting colony. The pack ice unfortunately shifted, and bergs began to surround the *Plancius* during our cruise. Before we could finish the zodiac cruise and offload back onto the *Plancius*, she had to heave anchor and move into more open water. A few zodiacs found crabeater seals in and around the ice to

watch, while others cruised the icebergs until the ship was free. A windy and wild ride back to the gangway made for a chilly ending to our morning outing.

MIKKELSON HARBOR, TRINITY ISLAND
64° 54'33" S 60° 46'34" W

During lunch we repositioned to Mikkelson Harbor. Fog and snow accumulating on the windows made it difficult to make out where we were. The expedition scouting team dropped a zodiac despite windy conditions to see if a landing would be at all possible. They returned in heavy wind and sideways snow to sadly report that we would not be able to safely operate for the afternoon.

Our alternative plan was to watch a film in the lounge about Tashi fulfilling a dream his family shared with a Swiss family to reach the top of Everest together. Tashi comes from a family of Sherpas in Nepal. His grandfather and Sir Edmund Hillary, whom he was guiding on the climb, were the first people to reach the top of Everest in 1953 after an unsuccessful attempt with a Swiss climbing party the year prior. Tashi has summited Everest multiple times himself over the years. The film was about Tashi, Eve Lambert, and Peter Hillary summiting Everest 50 years after the 1952 Swiss expedition got within 820 ft of the top. Tashi gave commentary throughout the film and was happy to answer questions afterward. During the 1952 expedition, poor weather caused them to turn around, but in 2002 they

made it. The wisdom of knowing when to turn around and try another time saved their lives – seeing their families ultimately fulfill their dream together was very special.

DAY 17	
AM Weather	Sunny
Wind	20-30 kts
Air Temp.	32°F / 0°C
Barometric Pr.	983 mb
NM Since Stanley	2,345 mi

EVENING ONBOARD CHARITY AUCTION FOR CONSERVATION

BENEFITTING:
Polar Citizen Science Collective, Whales of Guerrero in partnership with Happywhale, & Friends of South Georgia Island in partnership with the South Georgia Heritage Trust

AMOUNT RAISED:
\$6,110.00

HALF MOON ISLAND
62° 36'25" S 59° 54'04" W

This was our final morning in Antarctica. Our day began at Half Moon Island with stellar conditions. The sun was shining brightly, and the wind was mellow. The calls of chinstrap penguins filled



Weddell Seal

Egle Hansen

the air as we climbed up to the ridge on top of the island. Crossing penguin highways in between waves of chinstraps, we wandered our way to some of the nesting areas. The penguins were busy setting up their nests and reuniting with their mates. The lichens and mosses on the rocks near their picturesque nesting sites gave color to the largely black, white, and blue scenes. At the beach, just past the nesting areas, a mom and pup Weddell seal were hauled out sleeping on the snow. The pup was starting to lose its fluffy lanugo coat, revealing the spot pattern that it will keep for all of adulthood.

Tashi took a group for a snowshoe hikers on the other side of the island past the Cámara station. There were more Weddell seals on the beach along the route and out to the far side of the island. Other wildlife included gentoo penguins resting ashore in the snow next to another mom and pup Weddell seal.

YANKEE HARBOR
62° 31'22" S 59° 48'21" W

During lunch we repositioned for our final landing of our voyage – Yankee Harbor. Two humpback whales were feeding just outside the anchorage. We were able to identify them as HW-MN1301776 & HW-MN1302692 in Happywhale. These two encounters were the first two humpbacks reported by any voyage in Antarctica this season. HW-MN1301776 was seen in January 2019 in almost exactly the same spot. HW-MN1302692 was first seen in 2019-2020 as a juvenile.

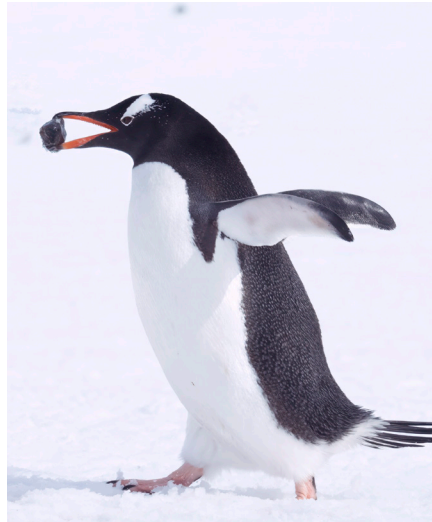
The snowbank was incredibly high at Yankee Harbor, and once again the team had to chop steps in the snow and lend hands to get everyone from the beach to dry ground. Once atop the snow, a nice flat walk of a half mile led to a large gentoo penguin colony. On the walk to the gentoo colony a very pregnant Weddell



Weddell Seal Victor Nemeth



Cape Petrels Scott Heppel



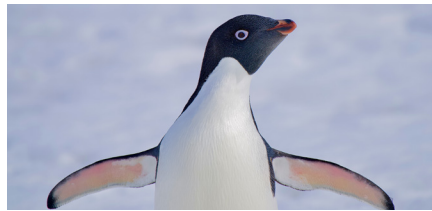
Gentoo Penguin Egle Hansen



Chinstrap Penguin Victor Nemeth



Gentoo Penguin Janet Daley



Adélie Penguin Daniel Sands



Gentoo Penguins Egle Hansen



Iceberg Jennifer Silva



Light-Mantled Albatross Steve Hampton

seal slept on the snow just off the trail. If you were patient and watched her belly, you could see the pup moving around. An Adélie penguin was also scurrying around on shore and made its way toward the landing site. The gentoo colony was bustling with activity as they built their nests together. Before the end of the landing, we offered a Polar Plunge to those who felt brave enough to get in the icy waters. Eight people decided they were up for the challenge. Helen, Lauren, Juan, Grace, Corey, Clay, Jack, and Ananda took the plunge while two zodiacs of spectators watched them. After much yelling and splashing, the intrepid swimmers bundled back up for a quick ride back to the *Planicius* for hot showers and beverages.

After dinner, as we sailed out of the South Shetland Islands, we hosted our charity auction in the lounge. Joe was

our enthusiastic auctioneer selling a record 54 items over the course of the evening hours to benefit Polar Citizen Science Collective, the Whales of Guerrero in partnership with Happywhale, and the Friends of South Georgia Island in partnership with South Georgia Heritage Trust. Items varied from handbags to books to rum, a surprise mystery box, and even a week-long vacation rental. This evening of fun and bidding raised \$6110 for these organizations to support conservation and citizen-science initiatives in the Antarctic region.



Gentoo Penguins Nina Waffenschmidt

DAY 18

Wind	25-35 kts
Air Temp.	36°F / 3°C
Barometric Pr.	980 mb
Making Speed	9.5 kts
NM Since Stanley	2,503 mi

The Drake Passage was not a “Drake Lake” as the ship rolled overnight and into the morning. By the time Ida gave the first lecture of the day though, things had settled slightly, and many came into the lounge to hear her story of skiing the last degree to the North Pole on the Euro-Arabian North Pole Ski Expedition. It was a moving and empowering story that left a few of us in tears by the end. The weather was calm enough by the conclusion of her lecture to return all our borrowed muck boots back to the mud-

room, the final “chore” before arriving back to Ushuaia. Ryan gave a lecture just before lunch about the ozone layer in the Southern Hemisphere.

After lunch, the conditions were fair enough to open some of the outer deck access so we could participate in bird-watching while enjoying the fresh air. Juan gave a lecture about cetaceans and pinnipeds after lunch as a follow up to lectures that were given earlier in the trip. We had a few more guest lectures in the afternoon. Steve Hampton gave a short talk on his experience monitoring HPAI in the Pacific Northwest this past summer in tern and gull colonies. Pablo Fernicola shared more about the Insta360 camera he had been using throughout the trip and gave us a preview of some of the footage.

Fin whales were sighted throughout the afternoon. At 5:00pm we were able to join the crew of the *Planicius* on the back deck while they deployed another Argo buoy. Nino, one of the bridge officers, gave an explanation about how the buoy worked while preparing to deploy it. Then we watched them drop it over the side and float away.

DAY 19

Wind	15-30 kts
Air Temp.	35°F / 4°C
Barometric Pr.	1,001 mb steady
Sea Temp	4-5°C
Making Speed	12 kts
NM Since Stanley	2,937 mi

Conditions improved this morning as we woke up to warmer and calmer waters. The sea temperatures indicated that we had crossed the Polar Front, as we continued navigating towards Ushuaia. Bird-watching on the back deck was excellent this morning. Hugh gave a lecture about some of his work in Alaska and the back story of contributing to the production of the book *A Wild Promise* about Prince William Sound. John Bocci followed up that lecture with a talk about his restoration project at the remote Cape St. Elias Lighthouse, an incredible and rugged place on the Alaska coast between Yakutat and Seward. To support John's restoration project and to learn more about it you can check out the website at www.capestelias.org.

As we sat down to lunch, land – Tierra del Fuego – was clearly visible ahead of us. As we continued to approach the opening of the Beagle Channel, the wind dropped to nearly zero. Conditions were beautifully calm, a welcome feeling after many rough days at sea. Our onboard

IAATO observer, Chris, gave a lecture about life in the Falkland Islands and his time living there.

As we approached the pilot station, we sighted a few Peale's dolphins and Magellanic penguins swimming near the ship. They were quick and fleeting glimpses, but people who were on deck enjoying the weather were able to observe these species for the trip. We anchored at the pilot station to wait for our 2am rendezvous with the pilot who would take the ship through the Beagle Channel to Ushuaia.

Juan gave a lecture about the Galapagos Islands natural history. Sadie followed him with the final lecture of the trip, "The Sounds of Seals." After the lectures, Captain Evgeny came down to toast our voyage and say farewell. We raised glasses to him and his crew for an excellent voyage and then headed to dinner. We then gathered again in the lounge after dinner



Chinstrap Penguin *Nina Waffenschmidt*



Weddell Seals *Nina Waffenschmidt*



Adélie Penguin *Nina Waffenschmidt*

for our retrospective slideshow. Clark and Jeffrey Mott started off the evening with a short compilation of footage from the gentoo arrival at Danco Island, then George showed his finished short film that he shot on his phone throughout the voyage. Finally, we watched the slideshow of everyone's photos that Scott and Milo had compiled. This was a great way to commemorate the voyage, and every-

one did a wonderful job documenting our experience in various ways.

DAY 20

AM Weather	Cloudy
Wind	5-10 kts
Air Temp.	41°F / 4°C
Barometric Pr.	998 mb
NM Since Stanley	2,937 mi

USHUAIA, ARGENTINA:
54° 48'27" S 68° 18'35" W

Hugh delivered our final wakeup call in the morning as we approached the dock in Ushuaia. It was a beautiful and crisp spring morning in Argentina. We ate our final breakfast together as luggage was offloaded and buses arrived at the pier to collect and transport us to our next destinations. We said our farewells and disembarked the *Plancius* a final time. After over 20 days and 2,937 nautical miles together, our adventure had come to an end. We made meaningful friendships, had an adventure of a lifetime, and collected memories to cherish for years to come. 🌐

POST TRIP RESOURCES:

- IAATO: iaato.org
- Antarctic Ambassador Program: iaato.org/antarctic-ambassadors
- HPAI Monitoring in the South: scar.org/resources/hpai-monitoring-project
- Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands: gov.gs
- Argo Project: argo.ucsd.edu
- Happywhale Voyage: happywhale.com/org/2;svy=92460
- Cape St. Elias Webpage: capestelias.org

AUCTION BENEFICIARIES:

- Polar Citizen Science Collective polarcollective.org
- Friends of South Georgia Island in partnership with South Georgia Heritage Trust: fosi.org | sght.org
- Whales of Guerrero in Partnership with Happywhale: whalesinmexico.com happywhale.com



POSTSCRIPT



Gentoo Penguins *Richard Williams*

What an incredible privilege it was to visit these places. The Southern Ocean is such a powerful and yet fragile place all at the same time. Now having seen these incredible places firsthand, hopefully we all feel obligated to do what we can to protect them. Amid HPAI, we witnessed firsthand how fragile this ecosystem really is. We, of course, operated this trip under the thoughtful guidance of GSGSSI and IAATO, but what we do at home has an effect across the globe. As you journey onward from this unforgettable experience, let the majesty of the environment inspire your choices. Consider the environment as a stakeholder in your decision-making for your day-to-day life and your future travels. With consideration and care, we can all act to prioritize conserving and protecting these beautiful places on this planet for years to come. You can become an Antarctic Ambassador through IAATO to stay inspired at home.

In total we spent 20 days together on our adventure, traveling almost three thousand miles. We were able to operate at 9 locations in South Georgia, 7 of them were landings on shore and 2 were zodiac cruises. In addition, we visited 9 locations in Antarctica, 8 of them as landings during our time on the Antarctic Peninsula and surrounding islands. We endured heavy weather and adapted our plans more than once. Throughout our journey, we were surrounded by beautiful icy scenery and the remarkable unique wildlife of this extreme climate. We learned with and from each other about the ecosystem, ice formations, and more. We also did some science! On behalf of other researchers through Polar Citizen Science Collective, we carried out science and gathered great IDs to contribute to Happywhale. Thank you all for helping facilitate this work and sharing this voyage with us. 🌐

COMPANIONS IN EXPLORATION:



A TAPESTRY OF TRAVELERS



SPECIES LIST

Species List by Date & Location		Antarctica Expedition	
Species	Date	Location	Observed
Falkland Steamer-Duck	9-Nov	Ushuaia	✓
Yellow-billed (South Georgia) Pintail	8-Nov	at sea/Beagle Channel	✓
Snowy Shearwater	7-Nov	at sea	✓
Chilean Skua	6-Nov	Half Moon Island/Yankee Harbor	✓
Brown Skua	5-Nov	Cierva Cove	✓
South Polar/Brown Skua	4-Nov	Paradise Bay - Brown Station/Danco Is./Neko Harbor	✓
Dolphin Gull	3-Nov	Useful Is./Cuverville	✓
Keelp Gull	2-Nov	at sea/Whaler's Bay - Deception Island	✓
Arctic Tern	1-Nov	at sea	✓
South American Tern	31-Oct	at sea	✓
Antarctic Tern	30-Oct	at sea	✓
King Penguin	29-Oct	Copper Bay/Drygalski	✓
Adelle Penguin	28-Oct	St. Andrews Bay/Gold Harbor	✓
Gentoo Penguin	27-Oct	Grytviken/Godthul	✓
Chinstrap Penguin	26-Oct	Fortuna/Stromness	✓
Magellanic Penguin	25-Oct	Right Whale Bay/Salisbury Plain	✓
Macaroni Penguin	24-Oct	Eisehul/Rosita	✓
Northern Royal Albatross	23-Oct	at sea	✓
Southern Royal Albatross	22-Oct	at sea	✓
Snowy Albatross	21-Oct	Stanley	✓
Light-mantled Albatross			
Gray-headed Albatross			
Black-browed Albatross			
Wilson's Storm-Petrel			
Gray-backed Storm-Petrel			
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel			
Southern Giant-Petrel			
Northern Giant-Petrel			
Southern Fulmar			
Antarctic Petrel			
Cape (Pintado) Petrel			
Snow Petrel			
Kerguelen Petrel			
Atlantic Petrel			
Blue Petrel			
Fairy Prion			
Antarctic Prion			
Slender-billed Prion			
White-chinned Petrel			
Sooty Shearwater			
Common Diving-Petrel			
South Georgia Diving-Petrel			
Common/South Georgia Diving-Petrel			
Magellanic Cormorant			
South Georgia Shag			
Imperial Cormorant			
Antarctic Shag			
South Georgia Pipit			
House Sparrow			
Seal Whale			
Blue Whale			
Fin Whale			
Humpback Whale			
Hourglass Dolphin			
Pearle's/Dusky dolphin			
Commerson's Dolphin			
Orca			
Southern Bottle-nose Whale			
Southern Elephant Seal			
Crabeater Seal			
Leopard Seal			
Weddell Seal			
Antarctic Fur Seal			
South American Sea Lion			





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