

Expedition Log

To the Ross Sea and Beyond!

**Bluff – Campbell Island – Ross Sea
Peter I Island – Antarctic Peninsula – Ushuaia
15th February – 17th March 2017**

On board the
M/V Ortelius



M/V *Ortelius* was named after the Dutch cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) who published the first modern world atlas, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Theatre of the World) in 1570. MV *Ortelius* was built in 1989 in Gdynia, Poland, as a research vessel for the Russian Academy of Science and was named *Marina Svetaeva*. In 2011 she was purchased by Oceanwide Expeditions. The vessel was re-flagged and renamed *Ortelius*. Now the ship is sailing as a 125-passenger vessel. *Ortelius* is 91 m long, 17,6 m wide and has a maximum draft of 5,80 m, with an Ice Strength rating of UL1/1A, top speed of 13 knots and one diesel engine generating 3200 kW.

With:

Bridge Crew:

Captain: Mika Appel (Finland)
Chief Mate: Sam Cook (Great Britain)
Second Mate and Helicopter Mate: Philippa Bowden (Great Britain)
Second Mate: Laimonas Choroscia (Lithuania)
Third Mate: John Williams (Great Britain)
Third Mate: Hernani Regala (Philippines)

Deck crew:

Bosun: Neil Apawan (Philippines)
and Andy, Edgar, Jayson, Eniano, Jaylor, Philip, Bardino and Joe

Helicopter Crew:

Chief Pilot: Felipe Henriquez (Chile)
Pilot: Julio Cesar (Argentina)
Pilot: Aldo Puebla (Chile)
Mechanics: Felix Mora, Marcos Henriquez, Manuel Baeza (Chile)

Engine room crew:

Chief Engineer: Aleksandr Bondarev (Lithuania)
2nd engineer: Valeri Paramonov (Estonia)
3rd engineer: Andrej Abakumov (Lithuania)
4th engineer: Jhunwel Yuzon (Philippines)
Chief electrician: Michael Mahiya (Philippines) Assistant electrician: Harold Mina
(Philippines) and Jess, Efren, Rogie, Janusz and Volodymyr

Hotel Staff:

Hotel Manager: Dejan Nikolic (Serbia)
Assistant Hotel Manager: Sava Savov (Bulgaria)
Head Chef: Heinz Hacker (Austria)
Sous Chef: Khabir Moraes (India)
Baker: Roger Nopre (Philippines)
and John, Rolando, Alfred, Alice, Charlotte, Ian, Noelle,
Charlemagne, Maricel, Raquel, Marvin, Joana, Kim and Pamela

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Rolf Stange (Germany)
Assistant Expedition Leader: Lynn Woodworth (Canada)
Guide & Lecturer: Shaun Norman (New Zealand)
Guide & Lecturer: Dmitri Banin (United States)
Guide & Lecturer: Victoria Salem (Great Britain)
Guide & Lecturer: Cheryl Randall (Great Britain)
Guide & Lecturer: Arjen Drost (Netherlands)
Permit Holder: Darrel Day (Australia)

New Zealand Government representative: Andy Cox

Day 1 – 15th February 2017

Bluff, New Zealand

After months of planning, days of travelling and hours of eager anticipation, our journey was finally beginning! We met in the Kelvin Hotel in Invercargill, where we checked in with Victoria and handed our oh-so-carefully packed luggage over for chalking before it disappeared into the luggage truck. We took the bus at 2.30pm to the tiny port town of Bluff where we first spotted M/V Ortelius tied up alongside the wharf, with red-beaked gulls calling to us as we embarked.



Scrupulous New Zealand Customs officials ensured all was above board, and we settled into our new home for the next 32 days. Once all passengers were onboard, we met down in the lecture room for our safety briefing with Chief Officer Sam and our Hotel Manager Dejan gave us some pointers to make our stay onboard as comfortable as possible. We then had our lifeboat drill and had the pleasure of donning our SOLAS lifejackets and hoping that we would never need to squeeze into the orange lifeboats with 83 of our closest friends!

Our first evening onboard was passing rapidly, but our Captain Mika Appel made time to welcome us with a toast in the bar to an exciting trip of a lifetime to the Ross Sea! The wind was forecast to calm down during the course of the evening, so we would leave the dock at midnight. Until then we could get used to walking around onboard, without the ship moving!



We broke bread at 8pm and enjoyed the first of many delicious meals in the dining room. At midnight we duly cast our lines, and enjoyed a pleasant slumber until the rolling waves woke some of us at 5am, our first feeling of being at sea on our extraordinary voyage together!

Day 2 – 16th February Towards Campbell Island

After the excitement of boarding the ship yesterday, and our first night in our new beds, we woke to our first day at sea in very moderate conditions. Rolf woke us half an hour before breakfast with information on the day - water temperature 10°C, but that is going to drop quickly. Dejan invited us to our first breakfast on board, and we started to get to know our fellow travellers as we all gathered around the buffet tables.



Following on from breakfast, Andy Cox gave a talk covering the Campbell Island Code of Conduct, letting us know how we need to behave in order to protect the unique flora and fauna of the island. Not long after Andy started to get us excited about landing at Campbell Island, Lynn gave us all the practical knowledge we need to stay safe in the zodiacs, the small rubber boats we will come to be very experienced with.

The wind stayed steady all day, a good strong breeze at about 25 knots, or Beaufort Force 6, so when we went outside the cool 12°C seemed a bit colder than that. We will need to get used to much colder air soon. Lunch was another opportunity to share a table, make new friends, and contemplate what a Vacuum Party might be. After lunch, jet lag caught up with a few of us, and we snuck off for a little nap before being called to vacuum and wash our gear. The sight of five vacuum cleaners going, with people gathered around each one, polar fleece, hats and gloves scattered around ready for inspecting and vacuuming, was not something we had expected, but we all understood, and appreciated that it was important in order to protect the island's wildlife from invasive species. Next was the collection of boots and lifejackets, so that we were ready to go ashore in the morning. We felt a bit silly wearing big rubber boots and lifejackets in the lecture room, but we all left prepared for the trip ahead.

Later in the day, we gathered on deck 3 in the lecture room to hear from Dmitri about the wildlife of Campbell Island, and by the time we left, all of us had a good understanding of what we hoped to see tomorrow.



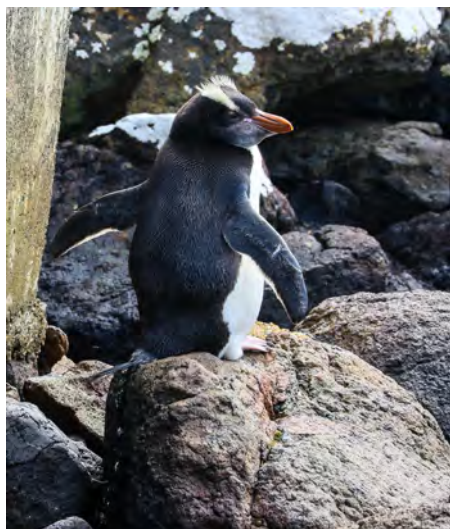
During the day, the water temperature dropped a bit to 8°C, but the barometer, wind and air temperature remained steady, a good sign for tomorrow. Just before dinner, Rolf invited us up to the bar for a briefing for Campbell Island and recap of the day. Arjen showed some photos and helped us identify the birds we had seen so far, and Victoria gave us the low down on the history of the island. We went down to dinner after the briefing, then, even though it had been a quiet day, most of us retired early to catch up on sleep lost while travelling to New Zealand.

Day 3 – 17th February

Campbell Island

We enjoyed fabulous weather as we approached Campbell Island, the southernmost of the New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands, with low, broken cloud, but so warm that many people sat on the bridge deck enjoying the sunshine and the beautiful aerobatics of albatrosses who glided close by, sometimes hovering alongside.

Ortelius made her way south down the east coast of Campbell Island, then turned north-west into Perseverance Harbour, passing the outbound New Zealand Fisheries Protection Vessel “HMNZS Otago”, which was headed east.



After an early lunch, at 1pm we had the zodiacs in the water and we stepped onto Campbell Island to be greeted by an Erect Crested penguin, some extremely tame Campbell Island pipits and shags.

Our Department of Conservation Observer Andy Cox led us up the narrow boardwalk, past the meteorological office buildings and past thick lush vegetation. Megaherbs grow in abundance in the wet and windy conditions of Campbell Island and the carpet of purple daisies, tussock grass and ferns was a feast for the senses.

After an hour's walk up into the hills we reached a fantastic site where many Southern Royal Albatross were nesting, sometimes just five metres from the boardwalk.



Parent and chick looked on in lofty disdain whilst camera shutters whirred. They took absolutely no interest in these weird creatures with five legs and a very long nose. For us though, the chance to see that dark line on the cutting edge of the mandible, the small nostrils on their long beaks and the beautiful preening rituals was unforgettable.



Towards the summit, mist prevented scenic views, but provided an atmosphere of intimacy with these great creatures that brought us closer to nature. Such grace and elegance!

We returned to the landing site for a zodiac cruise along the rugged shoreline, with New Zealand sealions, fur seals, kelp gulls, shags and light mantled albatross nesting on the cliffs just beyond the ship. A truly remarkable afternoon.



Day 4 – 18th February

At sea in the Southern Ocean

This morning we woke up in the open ocean. Campbell Island was far behind us already and we still had several days to go to reach Cape Adare in the Ross Sea.

The wind had picked up to 25 knots, but fortunately it was pushing us, so we made good speeds all day without the ship pitching or rolling too much.

Seabirds love these windy conditions. The whole day there was a constant stream of different tubenoses around the ship. Shy, Campbell, Southern Royal, Bullers and Grey-headed Albatrosses were seen and a great variety of petrels like Sooty Shearwater, Grey, Soft-plumaged, Mottled and White-chinned Petrels.



In the morning Arjen told us more about the diversity and biology of this interesting group of true seabirds that is fully adapted to life at sea. After lunch Victoria gave a

talk about the first wintering on Antarctica by Borchgrevink at Cape Adare, the place we are heading for at the moment.



Before dinner there was a long recap with several different stories on Campbell Island with the difference between the different great albatrosses, the breeding biology of Southern Royal Albatrosses and the mystery about the identity of our penguin at the landing site. And our 'walking calendar' Victoria told us about what happened on this day years ago.

After dinner the classic Sean Connery James Bond 'You Only Live Twice' was shown in the cinema/lecture room, including popcorn!

Day 5 – 19th February

Southern Ocean towards Ross Sea

This was our second sea day since leaving Campbell Island. No need to hurry this morning, since breakfast was at a civilised 08.00 – 09.00. It was a bit foggy outside and overcast, but not too cold.

We were summoned to an important mandatory briefing in the lecture room at 10.30 as Expedition Guide Cheryl took us through our helicopter briefing. As soon as we arrive in the Ross Sea we hope to start flying, so now is a good time to learn how to enter and exit Tango, Victor and Quebec (our three helicopters!) safely. We also filled in a helicopter waiver form and signed up for helicopter groups before lunch.



Buffet-style lunch today was Moroccan chicken, with chips (french fries if you're not British) and mixed vegetables – delicious. Once we had finished digesting for a quiet half hour or so, we started the 'walk through' practice for our helicopter operations.

It was good to experience physically what we had been shown this morning. We listened out for PA announcements, which first gave us a 15 minute warning to get dressed warmly and gather in the bar, and second instructed us to head out on deck to the muster station.

Over the next couple of hours we all had our life-jacket tubes checked in the bar, mustered on the outer deck, were assigned a helicopter, picked up a pair of ear-defenders, dropped our backpacks into a tray for the baggage compartment, then practised getting in and out of the helicopters and doing up the seat belts. This was also our only opportunity to take photos on the heli-deck. Normally this area will be very noisy and we will be guided straight to the helicopter and back again – taking special care not to trip over any obstacles - in order to maintain a safe operation.



Tea-time was at 16.00, with a slice of cake available to accompany our beverage of choice. And the bridge was a popular place from which to enjoy watching *Ortelius'* progress towards the Ross Sea during the course of the late afternoon and evening. A sprinkling of rain fell from time to time and the sun even appeared briefly, which was cheering.

The renowned documentary '*Frozen Planet*' Part I was shown at 17.00 and then it was time for Recap & Briefing at 18.30. It was also Happy Hour, so whilst cocktails were being shaken and drinks consumed, Rolf got the ball rolling with an update on our progress, then Lynn talked to us briefly about Bridge Etiquette. We now all realise

the importance of keeping our voices down and not pressing any buttons whilst enjoying spending time on the bridge bird-watching and looking at the various bridge instruments. After that, Arjen explained to us all about the political and biological boundaries of Antarctica which we have just crossed (with the Antarctic Circle still to come!), and Victoria presented the four contenders for first seeing

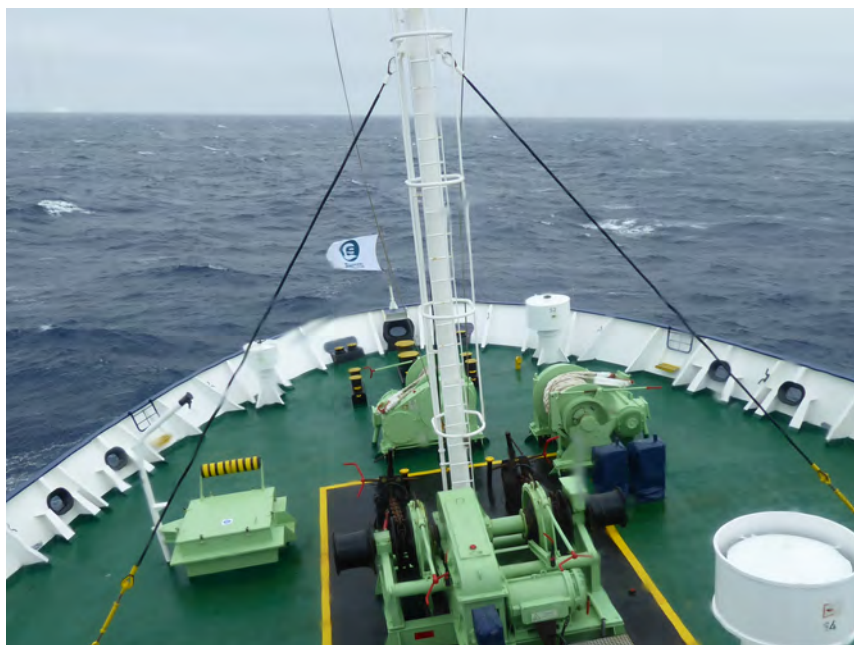
Antarctica (Smith, Bransfield, Bellingshausen and Palmer – all ably portrayed by staff and guests) – quite a lively session!

And the day was not yet over. The documentary 'Chasing Ice' was shown (after a dinner of 'Eight Treasures') in the lecture room. This featured a team whose work focused on recording the advance and retreat of glaciers, presenting their finds in such a way as to convince the world that climate change has become an important environmental issue; there was some pretty amazing footage involved.

There was a small, but convivial group at the bar in the evening, talking over the events of the day and what will soon come in the Ross Sea. A couple more sea days and we hope to be THERE.

Day 6 – 20th February At Sea in the Southern Ocean

Two days ago we left Campbell Island and now we are at sea heading south to the Ross Sea. Outside is cloudy and windy, but we were able to keep good speed.



There are many fewer birds around the ship than yesterday, but from the bridge we could still see Southern Royal Albatross, Grey and White headed Petrels, Sooty Shearwaters and most likely Antarctic Prions.

Today we also identified our first Snow Petrel, which is an excellent indication that we are entering Antarctic waters.

After breakfast Victoria gave her talk about Mawson's explorations of the Antarctic continent. After lunch Shaun presented in the lecture room his story of building a Route to the South Pole. Later we watched the film made from the first ascent of Mount Minto, the highest mountain in northern Victoria Land.

We had recap before dinner, where our Expedition Leader Rolf gave information about our progress towards the Antarctic continent.





After dinner we noticed our first tabular icebergs, which suddenly surrounded our ship. It was a spectacular sight. Those who could tear themselves away from the icebergs watched the movie the Prestige. At around 10pm we crossed the South Polar Circle and truly made it into Antarctic waters!

Day 7 – 21st February

En route to Cape Adare

We hope that today is our last day of sailing in open ocean as we expect to arrive at Cape Adare tomorrow! The sun was shining all day long and bird viewings were excellent, both from bridge and deck. In the earlier part of the day Deck 4 was the safest to access, but as the day progressed it became possible to enjoy the outer decks at all levels.

Breakfast was served between 08.00 – 09.00 again and then we had time to get ourselves together for the 10.30 mandatory IAATO (International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators) briefing. This was delivered by Expedition Leader Rolf in the lecture room on Deck 3. His briefing dealt with how operations are run in Antarctica in order to minimise disturbance to flora and fauna. The idea is to leave nothing but footprints and take away only photos and memories...We have to keep our distance from wildlife in order for Antarctica to remain a natural wilderness undisturbed by mankind, and of course we need to operate safely too.

After the IAATO briefing Rolf gave us some more details about Plan A for our possible landing at Cape Adare tomorrow. Borchgrevink's hut is the oldest of the historic era huts in Antarctica and very well built, despite being tiny (10 men spent a year in a space just 5.5 x 6.5m!). No wonder the men spent a lot of time privately, closed off in their 'coffin' bunks...

Ortelius was still rocking quite a bit throughout today, though conditions improved by mid-afternoon and the sun continued to shine. There were lots of birds around the ship, though now we have crossed the Antarctic

Convergence the species have

changed quite a bit – we saw a few Sooty shearwaters, Cape petrels, Southern fulmars, Giant petrels, Lesser Snow petrels and (a first for Arjen) even a few Greater Snow petrels, which are of course much larger. No albatross any more until we get into the Drake Passage towards the end of our voyage.



Lunch was served to us again rather than buffet style, which made life much easier both for us and the Hotel Staff (who are used to all kinds of sea conditions). After

lunch we had a second opportunity to experience an Antarctica Biosecurity Vacuum Party. All our outer clothes, backpacks, tripods, etc. needed checking to prevent any seeds or other organic materials being transferred from Campbell Island to the Ross Sea. Fortunately we are all professionals having been through the process once, and having been provided with vacuum cleaners, brushes and Virkon solution for dipping, easily carried out this important procedure to a high standard under the supervisory gaze of expedition staff – Dmitri, Shaun and Darrel were particularly helpful as they offered to do the vacuuming for us!



By 17.00 we were ready for other entertainment; we were called to the lecture room on Deck 3 to find out about a very special project one of our fellow passengers was involved in. Tom Edvindsen was there, waiting to show us segments from his work 'My Cape Adare Project' as its working title. Tom is travelling with a grandson of Nikolai Hanson, who was a member of the Borchgrevink expedition and died at Cape Adare in 1899. His grave (marked by a cross) can just be seen through binoculars high on the cliff above Ridley Beach. It was a splendid opportunity to view black-and-

white photos of the expedition and hear an insider's view on this first historic wintering on the Antarctic Continent. Thank you for sharing, Tom.

Recap & Briefing time arrived at 18.30, kicked off by Rolf with 'final' plans for tomorrow. Then Victoria took over to tell us about Captain James Cook, who circumnavigated Antarctica at high latitudes between 1772 – 75, though he never knew for sure that the continent of Antarctica was THERE. What a feat that must have been, almost 250 years ago, in a small sailing ship, with the loss of very few men. He was a true pioneer and must be considered one of Europe's greatest explorers.



Arjen took us up to dinner time with a summary of the sea-birds we have seen flying round the ship in the last couple of days – a reminder of how important it is to get outside in order to see as much as possible. There was a brief Humpback whale sighting just before recap, but if you're not outside (or on the bridge) when they are announced, the chances of seeing them are slim. From now on there will be plenty to enjoy from deck – scenery, ice, wildlife – the total remoteness of being south of the circle in Antarctica's Ross Sea.

At 20.30 *'Frozen Planet'* Part II was shown to help us achieve total immersion in all matters polar! And the bar was open until we were ready for bed. Most of us slipped away to our cabins relatively early so as to get the sleep we need before getting up to watch our early morning approach to Cape Adare.

Day 8 – 22nd February

Cape Adare

We had arrived in the Cape Adare area by 5am and as a result enjoyed a restful few hours in the early morning. The grandson of Nikolai Hanson and a Norwegian film-maker researching Borchgrevink's Southern Cross expedition, took-off in a helicopter shortly after 5am and landed close to the grave of Hanson. An emotional ancestral moment unfolded as the first of the family to visit Hanson's grave.

From the ship, the view of land ahead was wonderful after four days at sea, and we were keen to pull out the binoculars to get closer views of those penguins still remaining in the large Adelie colony, as well as the first hut ever erected in Antarctica and used for the first overwintering on the continent.



The sturdy Norwegian pine construction looked ready to withstand another hundred years of Antarctic wind blasts beside the roofless storage hut, but the same cannot be said for the remains of the hut erected by Campbell and his men from Scott's Northern Party during the Terra Nova expedition. With only one doorframe remaining, it stood as testament to the ferocious weather conditions often experienced on the Cape.

Not so today though. The wind was light and conditions were great. Upon closer inspection in the staff scout boat, the band of large icebergs washed up against the shoreline prevented a landing by zodiac.

Instead everyone enjoyed a beautiful first Antarctic zodiac cruise amongst the ice, with Adelie penguins playing on the ice, with one porpoising right into a zodiac! Seals lounged in the light winds and the magnificent Transantarctic Mountains glittered in the dappled sunlight.



Once everyone was back onboard and well fed, the ship headed south into the depths of Robertson Bay, passing tumbling glaciers, folded rocks and misty mountain tops. We travelled all the way into the southern end of Protection Cove before turning to the west coastline of Robertson Bay.

Later there was much discussion as to whether the shelter created by Borchgrevink on Duke of York Island had been spotted. As we came in closer, it appeared to be a natural rock formation, but the excitement of a potential discovery was palpable!



All afternoon we enjoyed spectacular views and fabulous weather to view them, with everyone wrapped up in our big jackets, looking in awe at the magnificent landscape surrounding us. As we passed by Cape Adare after dinner we had a final

check in case there was an opening between the icebergs on the beach large enough to admit a zodiac. Alas, the fickle nature of Cape Adare proved herself and Antarctica made it clear that we would have to earn our passage!



Day 9 – 23rd February

Possession Islands, Cape Hallett

It snowed quite heavily overnight, not stopping until around 04:30. The wind swept some of the snow away, but the decks were still white when we woke. It was an overcast day, with the wind creating whitecaps on the water. The sea and landscape around us consisted of layers of grey, with dark sea and pale cloud merging in the distance. Nearby, the rocky, snow covered outcrop of volcanic rocks magnanimously titled the Possession Islands provided sharp contrast but no more colour, adding black and white to the greys.



Our planned zodiac cruise could not go ahead due to wind and swell, but the Ortelius proved to be an excellent base for observing our surroundings. We ship cruised around and between the islands, dodging icebergs and sea ice as we went. The Possession Islands are not large, with two main islands, Foyn and Possession, partly covered in snow and, in some areas, Adelie penguins. Smaller but more impressive are the volcanic plugs, Favreau Pillar, Dickson Pillar and Kristanser Rocks. These volcanic remnants rise straight out of the sea as tall thin spires and arched rocks.

After having a good look at the islands, we turned the ship towards Cape Hallett, navigating through some good-sized tabular icebergs. The giant tabular bergs are unique to Antarctica, breaking off the massive ice shelves only found down South, and it was great to get close to so many.

At 11.00, Victoria began her talk on Shackleton's Nimrod Expedition, but she was



soon interrupted by Rolf calling "Orcas, port side!" over the PA system. We all rushed out on deck to watch, and sure enough, the whales were very close off the side of the ship, in a very tight group.

There were 6-8 Type A individuals, including one very small calf and

one very large male, with the remainder of the pod females and much younger males. We turned the ship slightly to stay with them, and they remained next to us on the port side, then turned and approached us. After having a good look, the whales decided they had seen enough, and turned the other way, quickly increasing the distance between the pod and the ship. An amazing encounter, it was good to know the animals had been in control the whole time, choosing when to stay close and when to depart. Not long after we saw the last of the orcas, we all returned inside and Victoria resumed her lecture.



During the morning, the weather had stayed windy with high cloud and occasional light snow blowing gently across the ship. As we progressed South, we could just make out Mount Herschel (3335m) and the Admiralty Mountains through the light blow. While heavy snow and glaciers marked the mountains, there was also fresh snow sticking to the bare rock sides of the steeper parts of the landmass, dusting everything to soft grey.

After lunch we were all excited about getting to Cape Hallett, and a chance to touch down on Antarctica. Unfortunately, it was not to be. When we arrived, there was a broad band of rotten sea ice across our path. It was not until the ship had passed that ice that we could see behind it a clear band of open water, hardly ruffled by wind, and then another army of ice blocks lined up on shore, being beaten against the beach by the swell. The moving ice was quite large and powerful and it was not something to take on in a zodiac -again, ice on the shoreline was stopping us from landing.



We quickly changed plan to zodiac cruising, and launched more boats. The first half of the group was on the water and away by 14:30, off to explore the coast, ice, and waters of Moubray Bay and Edisto Inlet. The boats did not get too far from the ship when word got out that an Emperor penguin had been spotted on the ice. All the boats gathered at a

respectful distance from the bird, cameras clicking and video being recorded in huge amounts, but the bird apparently oblivious to all our boats.

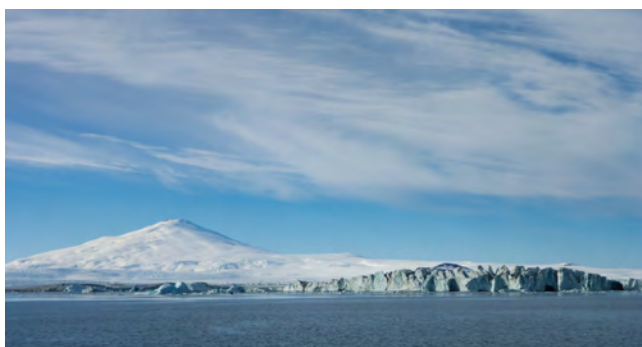
That evening, we traded pictures and stories of what we had seen, and enjoyed the recap topics of Orcas and Emperors, getting some more information on the unique wildlife we had seen today. All in all, it was a great day in the Ross Sea. After dinner, many of us headed downstairs to watch Frozen Planet part 3, while the rest of us went through our photos or headed to our cabins for an early night.

Day 10 - 24th February

Terra Nova Bay

Overnight we had been steaming south down the Ross Sea coast. First light brought us a dismal morning - gray skies and eight eighths of stratus cloud at 500ft.

Fortunately this state of affairs changed dramatically so that by mid-day we were getting into sunshine as we rounded Cape Washington and entered Terra Nova Bay.



Northwards, beautiful Mount Melbourne slowly shook off its cloud cap whilst ahead we were looking at the spectacular mountains and glaciers surrounding Inexpressible Island. This name came from Scott's Northern Party who survived an awful winter here.

As we closed the land we could also see the bare rocky strip where the Italians had located Mario Zuccheli Base. This was a surprisingly large collection of red and blue buildings and roads, all very neat and tidy and closed down for winter. The skuas had taken over and swooped around in a very tame and relaxed fashion as we walked up to a high lookout point in bright sun and glorious calm weather. Back to the ship and half an hour's journey north to the German "Gondwana" base.



A brief shore visit allowed lots of Weddell seal and penguin photography before a return to the ship and bubbles all around in the bar to celebrate setting foot not once but twice on the Antarctic continent.

Day 11 – 25th February

Franklin Island

This morning we all realised the importance of nature for our itinerary. Overnight we had made a big detour to avoid fields of sea ice that were a lot larger than expected. This of course meant that we weren't close to the Dry Valleys, as we had hoped. Instead we were now making our way towards Franklin Island, a small island in the Ross Sea with a large Adelie Penguin rookery. But it would still take all morning to get there.



The morning was spent listening to another lecture by Victoria. This time she took us with her to the huts of Scott and Shackleton's Nimrod expedition at Cape Evans, Cape Royds and Hut Point. It was really nice to see the inside of the huts and Victoria told us many stories about the different artefacts we could find inside the huts. How

exciting the thought that in a few days we might stand in the same huts and see all those things with our own eyes.

After lunch it was time to get into our outside gear again. Rubber boots and lifejackets were put on and many layers underneath to keep us warm. We were split in two groups, the first would go ashore near the penguin rookery, the second would get a zodiac cruise along the shores of the island. After some time we would swap, so all could enjoy both.

On land we were met with many Weddell seals and Adelie penguins. It was clear that it was getting late in the season, as large parts of the colony were empty, but there were still enough penguins around to make for many good pictures. Even more exciting was the lone Emperor penguin that was found on the shores in between its much smaller relatives. Some of us even found a second one, more inland than the first.





The zodiac cruise took us along the frozen shores of Franklin Island. Beautifully sculptured glaciers towered above us and the parts of the shore that were not glaciated were covered in a much smaller, but equally beautiful layer of ice and icicles formed by the waves frozen to the stones.

Much too soon it was time again to make the long ride back to the ship. During recap Rolf explained tomorrow's plans to us, would we really be able to land in the Dry Valleys?



Day 12 – 26th February

Dry Valleys

During the night we could feel *Ortelius* breaking through ice and the morning found us with ice floes all around and a curious group of Emperor penguins examining us from a safe distance. The scenery was spectacular, but unfortunately we had low cloud cover, especially in the direction of the Dry Valleys. So we got to experience the bane of every Antarctic Explorer's life – a period of patient waiting to see which way the weather would go.



Breakfast finished at 08.30 and then we were out on deck, eagerly examining the horizon for signs of improvement. Rolf kept us updated at regular intervals and at 11.00 a reconnaissance flight took off to go and see what was happening in the Taylor Dry Valley itself. The news was good: Captain, pilots and Expedition Leader had decided to go ahead with Plan A and fly us out for a landing in one of the strangest places on earth...because of our late start, time would be limited to half an hour once there, but this was fantastic news indeed!

Hotel Manager DJ called Group 1 to lunch early - at about 11.45 - followed closely by the next couple of groups. This meant we all stocked up on calories (great curry and profiteroles!) before departing the ship. By the time the staff and equipment had been sent off the first groups were raring to go, but had to contain themselves in patience until all three helicopters were out of the hangar and passed as safe to fly by the mechanics. Then it was all systems go! Each group in turn was called to get dressed and assemble in the bar. Once there, Victoria checked that we had set our life jacket tubes to manual (we last used them in a zodiac, so they were previously

set to automatic) and we finally headed out to the muster station being run by Lynn and Arjen out on deck.

Once assigned a helicopter we watched with mounting anticipation for Tango, Victor or Quebec to land on *Ortelius'* helicopter deck. By this stage we were all ready, wearing ear-defenders, backpacks stacked in the tray provided, camera round our necks and awaiting the hand signals of crew on the heli-deck (too noisy for conversation). One by one we moved towards the helicopter and climbed in, with help from the mechanics to fasten our seatbelts. And then we were up and away, with *Ortelius'* deck disappearing below us, zooming over the ice towards Taylor Dry Valley.



The flight lasted a good 15 minutes and views were spectacular as we flew inland from the frozen ocean. The contrasts in terrain were extraordinary – many different thicknesses, textures and patterns of ice to marvel at en route and then an ice-free, bleak brown valley bottom stretching for miles. A glacier blocked it to one side, but otherwise there was no snow/ice settled at all – one of Antarctica's rare bare-rock surfaces, gently undulating inland towards the horizon.



When we came to land on the 'helipad' in Taylor Valley we had entered a different world. Expedition staff signalled a route for us to maximise our time there.

First off, we came upon a mummified seal, which had lost its sense of direction at some stage and ended up shrivelled and desiccated - in effect freeze-dried - on the floor of this most unusual of valleys.



The route took us up a nearby hill for views over this landscape of great beauty and great desolation.

All too soon we had to return to the muster station for our return flight, which provided us with more unimaginable views as we flew over land and sea ice. The

ship appeared as a speck in the distance while we sank ever lower, finally descending onto the back deck of *Ortelius* – safely home from our adventure.



The bar was buzzing with conversation as the groups mustered and returned, those in-bound enthusing to those gathering ready to depart. By 18.00 all passengers had returned and the bar was filling with noise and good cheer, quite a few people avidly starting to edit their many photos.

This evening we had a BBQ (indoors, which was warmer!) to round off a very special day – with drinks supplied free by our kind Hotel Team. And afterwards most of us went out on deck again to enjoy this special time in the Ross Sea. We were still surrounded by ice floes, with tabular icebergs on the horizon and as the sun dropped lower in the sky the entire panorama of sea, ice and snow-capped mountains was flooded with light. The bar was a great place from which to view all this glory in comfort – popping outside to snap a few photos from time to time, especially of different types of sea ice as we gently made our way towards Cape Evans for tomorrow's planned zodiac landing.

Day 13 – 27th February Cape Evans



Over night our ship moved towards Cape Evans.

Everyone hoped to visit Scott's hut, the largest historic hut in the region, built for the British Terra Nova Expedition in January 1910.

In the morning *Ortelius* slowly approached Cape Evans and it was

possible see the hut from a distance.

It was a real Antarctic morning – cloudy grey sky, temperature was – 12 degrees C plus wind up to 25 knots. Even so, the beach next to the hut was free from ice and our Expedition Leader Rolf decided that it was possible to land.

By 8:30 zodiacs were on the water and they very quickly were covered by ice. The ride to the shore was smooth enough but we tried to hide our faces from the wind and occasional splashes of water that instantly froze to drops of ice.

It was interesting to see the interior of the hut and feel the atmosphere of the hut, lived in by members of the Terra Nova Expedition.

Soon after lunch our ship was relocated to the Cape Royds – half an hour ride from Cape Evans. We were able to see partially Shackleton's hut, but the landing on zodiacs was impossible because ice was blocking our landing site.

The hut was built by the British Nimrod Expedition in February 1908. We ship-cruised the area in the vicinity of the hut and along the shores of Ross Island. There we also had a chance to see Ross Sea orcas.

After dinner we cruised along the ice edge. It was a calm and very beautiful evening with bright sunset colours



falling on Mount Discovery behind the sea ice. On the ice we watched relaxed Crabeater seals and small groups of Emperor Penguins. But most impressive were the dozens of orcas patrolling the ice edge. They were everywhere we looked. We have seen at least a hundred of them, most likely more – a very impressive end of the day.



Day 14 – 28th February

McMurdo Station & Hut Point

Today dawned bright and sunny, so we were all set for our visit to McMurdo station – a highlight of the Ross Sea for many of us. The first helicopter group mustered straight after breakfast, at 08.30. We didn't mind the short wait for the helicopter to be brought from the hangar, blades attached, etc. since we had more orca at the ice edge to watch – a repeat performance of last night and a wonderful sighting and photo opportunity.



Soon we were airborne for the approximately seven-minute flight to Ross Island, then landing safely at McMurdo Station's helipad, having glimpsed great aerial views on the way in. Once the whole helicopter group had arrived we set off with Steph on our guided tour of the base. Summer-only staff have departed, leaving only a couple of hundred folk on this, the largest scientific station in

Antarctica. We were deeply grateful to these busy people for finding the time to take us around their Antarctic 'home'.

Our tour started at the Crary laboratory, the raison d'être for McMurdo. Cutting-edge science is carried out year-round in this facility; as we walked its long corridor we enjoyed glimpses further into the building, including of an insightful poster shouting out the ecological message: 'THE LAST OCEAN: THE TOOTHFISH



AND THE BATTLE FOR ANTARCTICA'S SOUL'. Our guide paused by some showcases featuring many aspects of McMurdo's work – meteorites, specimens from McMurdo Sound, historical photos and artefacts, old scientific apparatus and much more. Here too we signed the Visitors' book before moving on to The Chalet (McMurdo's HQ), in front of which we made a photo stop to admire the flags of the 12 original Antarctic Treaty signatory countries and a bust of Admiral Byrd.

Passing the fire station and hospital, we arrived at McMurdo's central building which housed a most important facility – the store! We devoted a happy 20 minutes or so to choosing souvenirs to take home, carefully avoiding buying food and toiletries, which are of course needed by residents to last the winter.

From here my group adjourned to McMurdo's café (aka 'The Shack'), where we were treated to coffee and cookies before resuming our guided tour. Next we took in the Chapel of the Snows (with a delightful and unique stained glass window featuring a penguin superimposed on a map of the Icy Continent), then the new MacOps centre (which dealt with all radio communication in and out of the station) and Weather centre to complete our tour. We were slightly alarmed to see a weather system coming in in the next few hours! Finally we headed back to the gymnasium (located right by the helipad), which provided us with a base for leaving our backpacks and eating lunch inside – a warm and also environmentally-necessary option.



After this we went on a pilgrimage down the road out to Hut Point, a snow-free (at this time of year) peninsula of land sticking out into the bay. Our goal? The *Discovery* hut, erected by Scott's 1901 – 04 expedition. It was a thrill to be here; although quite large, it had a very different atmosphere from the hut at Cape Evans which we visited

yesterday. It was never intended as long-term living accommodation, but more as a scientific laboratory, provisions centre and theatre for amateur dramatics (of which the British were very fond).

Most impressive were the many boxes of branded provisions still to be seen, piled round the hut; also whole mutton carcasses from New Zealand and hay bales for the ponies in the larder; and most poignant of all the temporary 'living quarters' set up by Shackleton's Ross Sea party in 1916. These five men had to wait it out at Hut Point for four months for the sea to freeze over



and allow them a safe return to Cape Evans. It was primitive, sooty (from burning seal blubber) and cramped. The men lived on seal and penguin meat, never knowing that a metre away from them there were crates of food buried in the icy hut interior.

A short climb to Vince's cross gave us splendid views over Hut Point and McMurdo station and across the bay to Observation Hill - with its much larger cross, erected to the memory of Scott and his four companions who died on the way back from the South Pole in March 1912.



For some of us, this was the end of a marvellous day in McMurdo. But for the brave and extremely fit there remained still the challenge of climbing Observation Hill to the cross so as to read its moving inscription from Tennyson's *Ulysses* for ourselves - 'To seek, to strive, to find and not to yield'. And the views were spectacular, though the wind had got up and cloud was

rushing in by 16.30, which encouraged us to head down again pretty quickly!

We thanked our hosts and the last helicopter departed McMurdo for *Ortelius* at about 17.30. We were grateful to get back just in the nick of time; our pilots would not have happily flown in the conditions of decreasing visibility we were facing. As Rolf mentioned in Recap & Briefing, we were delighted to get there and equally delighted to get back again!

The bar was full of happy faces in the evening, revisiting McMurdo through our photos, writing our diaries and blogs and reflecting on our many and various Ross Sea experiences over the last few days. And so to bed, the wind is rising, winter is coming. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?

Day 15 – 28th February (again!) Ross Ice Shelf at Cape Crozier

This morning we woke up on the 28th of February for the second time this year, having re-gained the day whilst crossing the International Date Line.

We spent the early morning just off of Cape Crozier, with its huge adelic penguin colony, off the eastern end of Ross Island. We brought the ship a little east to the Ross Ice Shelf, where it breaks into ice tongues curling around the edge of the island in long fingers. The long expanse of ice floating ice looked stunning under Mount Terror, though it was difficult to believe that it extended for 800 kilometres past the Bay of Whales to Cape Colbeck in the east, and 1000 kilometres inland. The largest ice shelf in the world, approximately the size of France, was certainly a sight to behold.



The weather was windy and cloudy during the early morning, but we had resolved to persevere in the area, hoping for a favourable change in the weather. The cloud ceiling lifted a little during the course of the morning, but only to tease us. The conditions were not suitable for either zodiac cruising along the ice shelf front, nor for scenic flights in the helicopters. We waited for a number of hours, with the officers on the bridge holding us in position so that we had our bow facing the shelf as well as the strong winds blowing off it.

Unfortunately, in this instance our perseverance did not pay off and the weather declined to “come good” for us. Just before lunch, Rolf called everyone in for a briefing in the bar to explain that the extra day which we had taken in cruising through the ice south from Terra Nova Bay in towards Franklin Island, an ultimately Taylor Valley, meant that waiting here off the ice shelf any longer was not a viable option. Instead, we would turn the ship and head directly for Peter I Island, many days’ sailing from Ross Island.

We took our last cloudy looks at the ice shelf and as the ship turned for the next chapter in our adventure together, we cast furtive glances back, to see how long we could see the natural phenomenon for.



After lunch, Arjen talked about the Ross Sea ecosystem, with excellent timing as we began our eastward journey towards the edge of the Ross Sea. The food web in the Ross Sea is extremely complex as Arjen's diagrams demonstrated, but he succeeded in making the topic accessible for everyone, and we all benefitted from understanding the frailty of the ecosystem and the need to protect it.

Later in the afternoon, Shaun entertained us with tales of his climb of Mount Erebus, spending four weeks on the active volcano.

During recap, Arjen tried to make sure that we would not make mistakes at the commencement of our long sea passage, telling us about some of the marine superstitions which sailors try not to fall foul of. Victoria then told us the story of the whisky found underneath Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds and its re-creation. Then Lynn read us Ponting's sleeping bag poem, somehow getting through the tongue-tying rhyme successfully!

After another delicious dinner, we retreated to the lecture room for another episode of Frozen Planet, to see on the big screen images that we have been watching unfold around us in the Ross Sea over the last few days, rounded out perfectly by a riotous fire of a sunset behind the ship as we made our way east on our semi-circumnavigation around the Antarctic continent.



Day 16 – 1st March

At Sea from the Ross Sea

After our busy days in the Ross Sea, we woke ready for some quiet time. There was a little bit of blue in the sky and everything looked good, but the ship was tilted sideways in the wind. We had 35 knots blowing most of the day, but as we were quite close to shore, we did not have a big swell to contend with. The air temperature had risen to -3.5°C , and the water temperature was up to -2°C . All in all, it seems quite warm, compared to what we have been out in recently! Many of us slept in, and our Hotel Manager DJ had to make a last minute call so that those who needed to could grab some breakfast before it was too late.

in the morning, Dmitri spoke about adaptations to living in the cold, how counter-current heat exchange works, and how to stay warm in cold conditions, as well as talking about how animals ensure survival by ensuring the young look attractive to parents, so that they care for them.

Lunch was hearty chicken and rice, and after so long at sea, everybody was enjoying the fact we still have salad leaves. A good number of us had a nap after lunch, a few of us unintentionally, in the bar or lobby. Generally, it was a very relaxed day, with lots of time looking at the images from our time in the Ross Sea, and a few books consumed at leisure.



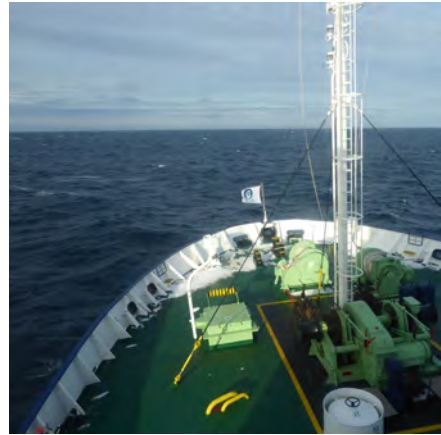
After a rest period, Arjen woke us gently, with the offer to join him in the lecture room to hear more about Antarctic Orcas. After seeing so many Orcas in the last days, it was great to learn about the different types and where they live around the Antarctic. Now, we are hoping to spot smaller Type Bs when we reach the peninsula.

After watching March of the Penguins, and thinking about the conditions we have seen verses how they survive over cold, dark winter, most of us had a good look outside then went and got a warm drink.

Recap in the bar was topical - Arjen talked about the snow petrel, and how they have been around Antarctica for tens of thousands of years. Victoria talked about the food the explorers used to eat...things have changed a lot, and the heroic age men

clearly did not have our great chefs with them! We were all grateful we did not have to dine on penguin or seal for breakfast, and have no intention of looking for pemmican or hoosh on the menu.

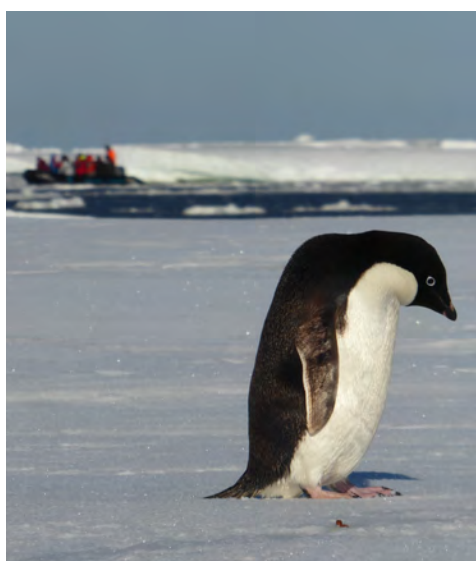
By early evening, one or two small icebergs were showing up, and sunset was a gorgeous bright line on the horizon that lasted for quite some time. The streak of colour was hard to photograph, but easy to admire. We retired with the ship still listing due to wind and current, but we were getting used to walking at an angle. Now, it was time to see how we would sleep with our beds tilted.



Day 17 – 2nd March 2017 Western Ross Sea

We woke to a fine morning with almost no ship movement. The Captain had found us a good position in open pack and we were stopped amongst large, gleaming white 50m rectangles of year-old sea ice. There was the most beautiful collection of pancake ice and also slushy, yellowish frazil and new ice just forming.

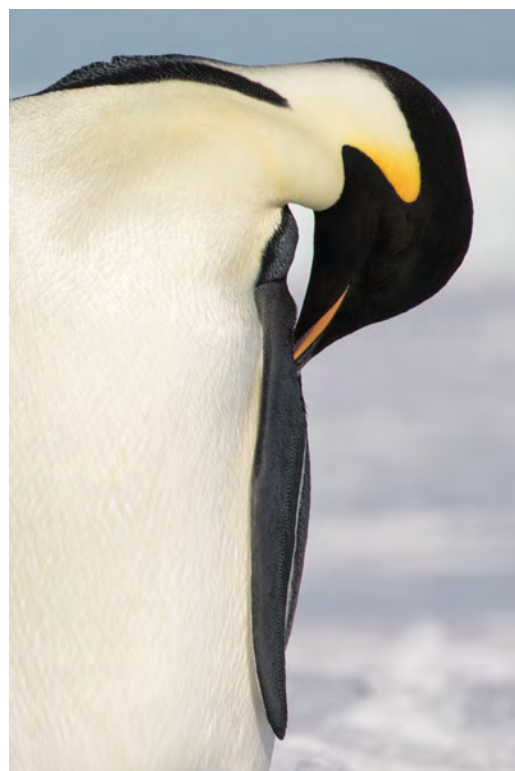
The call which got most folk out of bed mentioned Emperors, Adelies, flocks of 100 roosting snow petrels and seals, all on the same floe!



You could not have asked for more. It was stunning and a scene that most observers will remember for a long time to come.

But in fact, there was more! Around 10.30am the Zodiacs were swung into action and checked the open lanes through the ice, soon finding yet more Crabeater and Leopard seals to photograph. One Leopard came close, causing a certain amount of excitement.

An hour and a half saw the wind ruffling the water and boats heading home with a thousand pictures to compare and a sense of great luck that we had been at this beautiful place at this time.



An easy afternoon of animal spotting as we traversed open sea-ice gave way to an auction sale at 6pm. Our auctioneer Darrell encouraged bids for a variety of prints, books and quality liquor and was well supported by some generous purchasers.

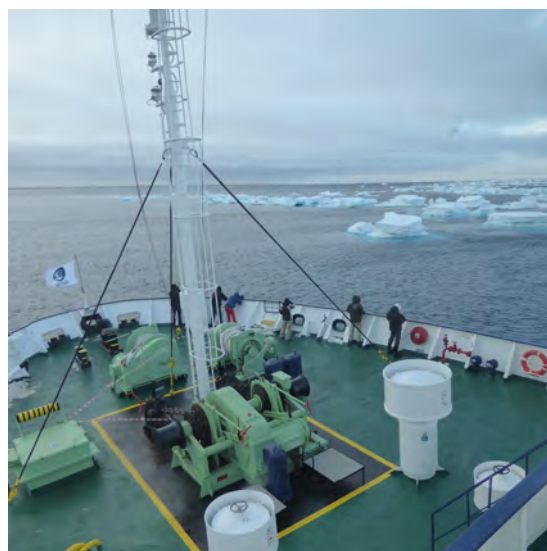


All in all, a little over US\$8000 was raised for the Antarctic Heritage Trust. This money will go towards preservation of the historic huts which date from the heroic era.

Day 18 – 3rd March Amundsen Sea

Today we spent all day at sea en route to Peter I Island through the Southern Ocean. Slowly we were settling into our sea day rhythm. Breakfast in the morning, lecture, lunch, two more lectures, then recap and dinner and then an evening in the bar or in the cabin.

As we were moving east, we had to move the ships time one hour forward overnight, giving us less sleep. Not that this was much of a problem, as there was enough time to catch up with this during the day.



In the morning Cheryl gave a talk about the oceanography of the Antarctic region. It was nice to learn a bit more about the seas (and the ice in it) that we were sailing at the moment.

The seas were calm today and it was quite calm on the bridge. The officers and watchmen didn't have much to do as there were hardly any (icy) obstacles on our way and as there wasn't too much wildlife around, not many of us went to have a look either. Those who did saw several Snow and Antarctic Petrels and in the evening even a few Humpback Whales were seen.



After lunch Rolf gave an introduction to the geology of Antarctica. With so much exposed rock, there is a lot of this to see in the places we've visited and it was really nice to hear the explanation of some of the things we have seen in the past days.

A little later Shaun took us along on a journey to the South Pole, together with four other guys and a few Emperor Penguins.

After dinner Victoria showed the first part of the movie 'Endurance' about Shackleton's Endurance expedition. Shortly after that most of us went to bed, as we would lose another hour tonight.



Day 19 – 4th March The Amundsen Sea

Now we are in the Amundsen Sea (though it does not look all that different from the Ross Sea!). Today dawned overcast and continued so throughout the day, with visibility quite limited due to fog on the horizon. It seemed a good opportunity to spend time inside *Ortelius*, listening to lectures and catching up on sleep, but hopefully not at the same time...at 02.00 we had lost an hour again and the steady, cumulative change in diurnal rhythm is proving challenging for some of us!



Still, most people were sufficiently curious to make it to the second part of Rolf's geology talk at 10.30. And he immediately caught our interest by using the image of a rather delicious slice of cake to illustrate how rocks are laid down and mountain ranges built. This worked well to explain initial deposition (cake base), metamorphosis (heat changing the form and flavour of the cake, without altering its chemical components) and later deposition (the icing is the 'youngest' layer). But then the cake can be turned upside down and eaten, leaving scattered pieces and crumbs – which is precisely what geologists are left with when they try to interpret the sequence of rocks they find in present-day, weathered mountain ranges. Geology has never seemed so accessible!

After a quick run through the differences between sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous rocks (and don't forget the intrusions) Rolf moved on to continental plate collision and specifically the Ross



Orogeny, about 500 to 400 million years ago, in which most of the erosion has been caused by glaciers. He finished with a detailed look at the geology of the Dry Valleys (with their wind-carved ventifacts) - his last image being of a mummified seal with a bubble issuing from its mouth with – 'any questions'? There were quite a few!

The lunch buffet was chicken, with a delightfully crunchy salad of bamboo shoots, followed by a much-needed

siesta. However, we roused ourselves just before 15.00 to join Cheryl for the second part of her presentation on the story of ice – ‘Glaciers and Icebergs’. This dealt with the mechanisms behind the cycle of fresh ice in Antarctica (as opposed to sea ice, which consists of frozen ocean) and helped us realize the way in which ice flows like slow-moving rivers from the interior of the Antarctic continent, then breaks off ice shelves to create the huge tabular bergs we have been admiring in the Ross Sea; these gradually roll, shrink and melt into the fantastic shapes we are still coming across as we sail northwards.

After a break for tea and cake, Darrel continued Cheryl’s general theme with an introduction to the documentary film ‘Our Rising Oceans’. All who saw it agreed that it was an interesting and informative, but not especially cheering commentary on our planet’s changing climate and human attitudes towards it.



Our usual 18.30 recap was cut short today. Rolf reported on our progress across the Amundsen Sea (which is good), then handed over to Victoria, who gave an account of the fates of various famous ships, including *Erebus*, *Terror*, *Nimrod* and *Terra Nova*, all of which are now at the bottom of the ocean...At this point the bridge announced an impressive iceberg off to starboard, which led to the grabbing of cameras and a mass exodus on deck until dinner was announced at 19.00.

After we’d eaten up the last scrap of our baked apples, Victoria put on Part II of Kenneth Branagh’s ‘Shackleton’ in the lecture room, which was well-attended again (even without popcorn!).

Day 20 – 5th March The Amundsen Sea

Today is another day at sea on our way towards Peter I Island.

The morning was grey and foggy with some snow showers. It was much calmer at sea than yesterday. We passed a few icebergs, but fog restricted our view to the distance of about a mile.



Later, before lunch, visibility had improved. There was not much wildlife around, although we managed to see Snow and Antarctic Petrels and a few Minke whales.

After breakfast Arjen gave his lecture about climate change and its influence on the Arctic and Antarctic environment. This topic was of big interest to us, as a result a long discussion followed the lecture.

In his announcement about lunch, our Hotel Manager DJ promised a surprise. The “surprise” was very delicious salmon and a glass of prosecco!

After lunch Victoria presented lecture “Shackleton’s Forgotten Men” where she described adventures of ten men who laid supply depots in the Ross Sea region in support of Shackleton’s Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

Later Cheryl presented her talk on the Discovery of Antarctica starting with the earliest geographical discoveries of the continent, including some of the lesser-known explorers of the Southern Ocean.



During recap Victoria explained how to use a primus stove and a sextant. Cheryl brought her sextant around the bar and we had fun learning how to take a sun sight!



After dinner which included some song performances by the galley crew, we watched footage about the last dogs in Antarctica.

Day 21 – 6th March

The Amundsen Sea

Most of us slept somewhat longer and more deeply compared with the last few days; we did NOT lose an hour overnight, which felt psychologically luxurious!

After a bacon-and-egg breakfast we were greeted by a 'new' face in the lecture room. Lynn was waiting for us at 10.30 to talk about 'Krill' – such a tiny, insignificant-seeming crustacean to occupy such a key position in the Antarctic food web. Surprisingly to some, the thrill of krill kept us absorbed for the next 45 minutes or so and there were a number of questions at the end – mostly about whether there really was a need for krill fisheries and how to control them.



There was still time for a visit to the bridge before lunch – it had been snowing most of the morning and not many birds were around, though a number of Antarctic petrels were spotted by those who spent significant proportions of their time on the deck or bridge; and in the late afternoon the cry went out 'blue petrel', which was a glorious and unexpected moment for the twitchers.



It required self-discipline NOT to indulge in a siesta after lunch, but most of us now know that we will sleep better at night if we actually manage to stay awake in the daytime, tempting as it is to give in to the gentle rocking of *Ortelius* to the rhythm of the winds in the Amundsen Sea.

Our very own hero Shaun (did you know his name has been given to an Antarctic feature?) was in the lecture room at 15.00 to talk about his personal experiences with dog teams in Antarctica from the 1960s onwards; Shaun's Antarctic career has straddled the transition period, from when science and exploration were supported by dog teams right into the current technological era. It was exciting and memorable to learn how things used to be, accompanied by slides of dogs and equipment that Shaun had worked with and could still recall vividly.

17.00 saw us gathering in the lecture room again to watch the documentary 'A Year on the Ice', filmed at and about McMurdo station. Various over-winterers talked about their work and personal lives throughout a whole 12-month cycle – providing a fascinating insight to those of us for whom such an experience remains just a dream (or possibly a nightmare!). It made for thought-provoking viewing.

And then it was recap & briefing time again. Tonight was a bit different since Arjen showed us the best photos submitted in the Photo Competition (ably judged by himself, Dmitri and Cheryl), finally announcing the prize winners, who were suitably cheered as (mainly liquid) prizes were awarded. The 'dead' and 'alive' categories worked surprisingly well to distinguish between landscape and wildlife photography respectively.



Eefke Esser's winning entry in the Landscape category, from sunrise at Cape Adare

The volume of the over-dinner conversation was greater even than usual – if that is possible! As well as wide-ranging discussion, at my table we decided the potatoes were first class and an extra portion miraculously appeared courtesy of the hotel team (and we ate the tiramisu for dessert too!).

Tonight's after-dinner entertainment was 'Shackleton Part III' and audience numbers continued high. There was a collective groan and boo-ing when Victoria stopped the DVD on a cliff-hanger! Come back tomorrow for the final exciting episode.

We're back to losing an hour again now as we continue north. This did not prevent the usual culprits from being at the bar, but maybe they didn't stay up too late; must remember to check with Charlotte!

Day 22 – 7th March

Amundsen Sea

After losing another hour of sleep overnight, and dragging ourselves in to breakfast upon DJ's plaintive call that food would only be available for another ten minutes in the dining room, we used coffee and tea to bring ourselves into a right frame of mind to listen to another of Victoria's talks on the heroic age of Antarctic exploration. This morning's topic was Amundsen, and ever controversial, Victoria starts by slandering the conqueror of the South Pole as well as the North West Passage as "brutally unsubtle". The following discussion made for interesting contemplation on the virtues we ascribe to explorers and the role they take in history.



After another delicious lunch, we introduced a new concept, the "International Town Hall on M/V *Ortelius*". Participants were invited to give their views and opinions on the world around us, particularly considering climate change, its impact in different countries and what we can do to counteract it, and indeed whether we should. A lively discussion was had as the microphone was passed around the room and people spoke freely and

without criticism on the topics as they observed them.

This was followed shortly thereafter by another vacuum party, biosecuring ourselves between the ecologically distinct regions of the Ross Sea and Peter I and the Antarctic Peninsula. It's certainly true that everyone is going to go home with clothes much cleaner than when we arrived.



At 4pm we heard announcements from the bridge and some of us participated in another abandon ship drill. It was fun to get dressed up for the cold and pull our bright orange lifevests back over our heads and wait for the abandon ship signal. We had a jolly good time when Hernani was carried into the bar by the stretcher team, saved from the fictitious fire in the galley!

Later in the afternoon, Arjen invited everyone down to the lecture room for the first part of his series of photography presentations. There, we learnt some good tips to make our photography better, in an easy to digest way so that everyone benefitted. Some compositional tips were very helpful, including the rule of thirds, having the subject looking into the frame, and considering your background for the story that you're trying to tell.



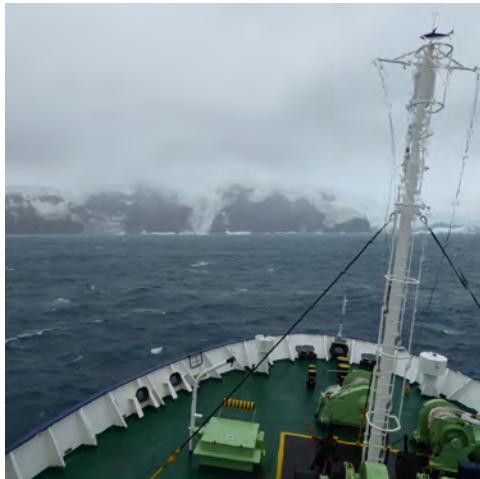
After recap, we trotted down to the dining room and enjoyed another quiet evening in the bar as the ship rocked us gently to sleep.

Day 23 – 8th March

Peter I Island

The night was quite smooth, with the occasional swell causing us to roll in our beds, and it continued that way from when we woke in the morning. Today, after so many days at sea, we were finally going to see land! Peter I Island, ahead of us and due in sight by early afternoon. We all hoped the fog would lift, clear or just plain disappear by the time we got there.

Occasional icebergs passed by, some smaller tabular bergs, but more and more complex and castellated icebergs were coming into view through the uniform grey of the fog. We all gathered in the bar to hear what there is to know about Peter I Oya, the little rock discovered by Russians and claimed by Norway. In the briefing, we learned how few people had been to the island, and Victoria made it clear that the island was named after a unique and not very nice man! Waiting and watching as we approached was a slow time, as we saw very little - only a very few birds, some ice, and lots of fog.



After lunch, more and more people gathered on the bridge, eyes ahead, hoping for that first sight of the island. We were in the middle of some beautiful ice, humpback whales had surfaced recently, and the weather was changing every few minutes, when finally the island emerged. Steep and stark, black rock faces rose to white ice above, which then disappeared into the low cloud crowning the island.

Captain Mika first turned the ship to run along the Northwestern coast, then swung around so that we sailed in a Southerly direction, down the Western side of the island. The weather was beautiful, snowy, windy, foggy, sunny ... there was a little bit of everything, depending on which direction you looked. Everything was changing quickly, as well, so ice would be illuminated one minute, and dark grey and brooding the next. As we came around the bottom of the island, we found a small area that was sheltered from the wind, where there was not too much swell.



Rolf called a briefing to explain conditions, as the gangway was going to be challenging. We are, after all, pretty much in the open ocean, and so waves are to be expected. We planned a zodiac cruise, as the island's glacier and rock faces at water level were not going to offer us a place to get ashore. The expedition team

went down the gangway into a zodiac, and we watched as the boats went over the



side into a very bumpy sea. One by one the drivers got into their zodiacs, and we watched with trepidation as each boat was bounced around - a lot! While we were waiting, the wind got stronger, and conditions got worse. We were losing our shelter from the Southern Ocean swell as the wind curled around the bottom of the island. Rolf, in a boat on the water, called a halt to proceedings, and had to cancel the cruise. It was not an easy decision to make, but it was clear why he had to do it.

We watched as the zodiac drivers came back on board, then headed to our cabins to take off our lifejackets and boots. Antarctic weather had kept us from getting any closer to the island, but we still had a pretty spectacular view (when the fog allowed) of the island off the ship's port side, with a beautiful rainbow illuminated against the ominous sky. We headed up to the bar, hoping for another brownie, or back to the bridge for more photos.

When recap time came around, Victoria entertained us with some poetry, reading parts of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", and Rolf, who had been in a meeting with the Captain and helicopter pilots, came in at the very end of the briefing. Wind, weather and visibility charts had been examined, and the



verdict was that there was no point in staying one more day, as conditions were not going to improve. We were going to head to the Peninsula, where the weather looked better and we would have much increased possibilities for getting ashore.

In the evening after dinner, we tried to find the island in the fog again, but it was behind us, and lost in bad weather. We all went to bed hoping for better weather ahead, while feeling the ship roll and heel over in the strong winds around us.

Day 24 – 9th March Bellingshausen Sea

We departed Peter 1st Island and started our journey towards the Antarctic Peninsula. Talk about rough, mate! Actually it was not that bad providing you went with the roll and kept one hand for the ship. The ship's log states "very rough sea state" and "pitching - moderate swell"



It was a rocking, rolling day with north wind force 7 on the side, causing the ship to lean to port most of the time. Some people turned their beds around to avoid sleeping head downhill!

At only 3°C and cloudy grey, it was a fairly cool day and ideal for some lectures. In the morning, Victoria talked on the Antarctic Treaty System and highlighted the complexities of running an international agreement to protect this pristine continent by consensus.

After another wonderful lunch, Shaun gave a talk in the lecture room on meteorite hunting, and made a few of us long to find a rock flown from Mars through space to crash into our tiny planet.



In addition, the second International Town Hall Meeting on M/V *Ortelius* was held, giving folk a further chance to air their views on climate change and how it impacts on their lives. I am happy to report that most folk seem to still be friends! There was lots of lively debate and discussion continued until briefing and recap wrapped up the last comments, all moderated beautifully by John, who encouraged people to talk his open and frank manner. If you want to

see the town hall video and the documentary "Degrees to Extinction" that was being produced on the trip you can go to the websites www.degreestoextinction.com or www.jferderrankinphotography.com.

During recap, Darrel presented all manner of ship's statistics - from the number of crew on board to the number of meals consumed and the amount of fuel consumed in our 6000 miles journey. As we slept after dinner, the ship progressed ever closer to our next destination – the Antarctic Peninsula.

Day 25 - 10th March

Bellinghausen Sea

Another day in the Bellinghausen Sea. The conditions were quite calm although still a bit windy. In the morning Dmitri gave a lecture about the biology of Antarctic Seals. It was nice to hear about the different groups of seals, their evolution and their biology.

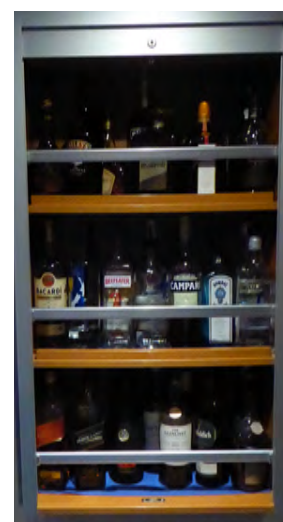
Meanwhile on the bridge it was quite calm. A few birds were seen, surprisingly enough three Mottled Petrels were seen flying by. Very far east for this species. Apart from this we saw a few Wilson's Storm Petrels and Cape Petrels, the latter of the nominate subspecies again.



After lunch Arjen gave the second part of his talk on photography. This time he got into the more technical stuff like what focal length, aperture, shutter speed and ISO to use for different pictures. Very interesting for the photographers amongst us.

A little later Cheryl introduced and started 'the Last Ocean', a movie about protecting the Ross Sea ecosystem and the Antarctic Toothfish which is part of it. It was very interesting to see how the protection of this area and the new Marine Protected Area really started with a few people asking attention for it.

After dinner Darrel played the movie 'South' with original footage from Frank Hurley from the Endurance expedition with Ernest Shackleton. Amazing to see this over 100 year old footage made with much more primitive equipment under much harder conditions as we had.



After this it was time to go to bed, getting ready for the next day where we would hopefully reach the Antarctic Peninsula!

Day 26 - 11th March

Vernadsky Station, Wordie House & Lemaire Channel

Today was very special. It was the day we reached the Antarctic Peninsula and stepped on land again after 11 days spent cruising the ice and at sea! The weather was a bit grey in the morning, but the sea was calm and all looked promising for an arrival after lunch.

Having lost an hour for the final time at 02.00, we felt quite cheery by breakfast time; we're staying on the same time zone for the next week! Bacon, egg and beans slipped down nicely and there was time to go out on deck before Rolf and Victoria's briefing at 10.30.

Rolf presented us with an overview of how we are going to spend the next two and a half days; we are focusing on exploring a relatively small area of the Antarctic Peninsula and South Shetland Islands, so as to spend as much time as possible out and about rather than putting in travel miles in daylight hours – though some scenic cruising en route to destinations is also part of the plan.

Specifically, Rolf needed to find out how many people wanted to go on a guided tour of Vernadsky station (which used to be a British base named Faraday); the other option was zodiac cruising the Argentine Islands, with a stop at Wordie House, a former British base used year-round from 1947 – 1954. Having ascertained approximate numbers, Rolf sketched out plans for the rest of our voyage and then we were free to pursue our preferred 'on board' activity until lunch.

It was lasagne and various salads for lunch - a favourite for many. We had made good progress during the morning and could clearly see the islands and coast of the Antarctic Peninsula from around midday.

Rolf was back on the PA system at about 14.15 to let us know that we could begin our afternoon activity a little earlier than planned. Some expedition staff set off for Vernadsky itself, others picked up the key to Wordie House and the rest were zodiac drivers/guides for the afternoon.

Just over a third of us opted for the Vernadsky base tour. This Ukrainian base (bought from the English in 1996 for £1!) continues to operate a scientific programme which has been running continuously since the 1940s – one of the longest-running in Antarctica. It was here at the British Faraday base that the hole in the ozone layer



was first discovered, and our tour included information about the Ukraine's current scientific programme as well as taking us to the bar and to their small 'tourist shop', where we could buy stamps and post cards among other items.

Meanwhile, Rolf and Victoria had picked up the key to the old British base Wordie House, located on nearby Winter Island, within the same Argentine Island group.



Just under two thirds of passengers had opted for a scenic zodiac cruise and a stop at this former base rather than a Vernadsky tour. Having seen Scott's huts from the beginning of the twentieth century, it was interesting to compare Wordie House (which was still using dog sleds for its scientific and survey work into the 1950s) with Cape Evans and Hut Point in the Ross Sea. Some

forty years later the equipment and technology were recognisably more modern, but there were still plenty of the same brands on the shelves here as we'd seen in the Ross Sea (eg: Sunlight Soap, Fry's chocolate).

Wordie House was indeed a time capsule: we entered through the generator shed, moving past a WC, storage area, heating stove, coal hole and on into the main bunk room/kitchen/living area. There were two other small rooms at the far end of the building, which were used mainly for science and logistics – as could be seen from various pieces of scientific equipment and the 'dog card' box in the Base Leader's room.



Once outside again, there was also time to examine the 'British Crown Land' sign and climb the nearby snow slope to a 360 degree vantage point before returning to our zodiacs for the remainder of the scenic cruise. This 'hike' turned out to be a highlight of the afternoon for many – an amazing panoramic vista spread out before our eyes.

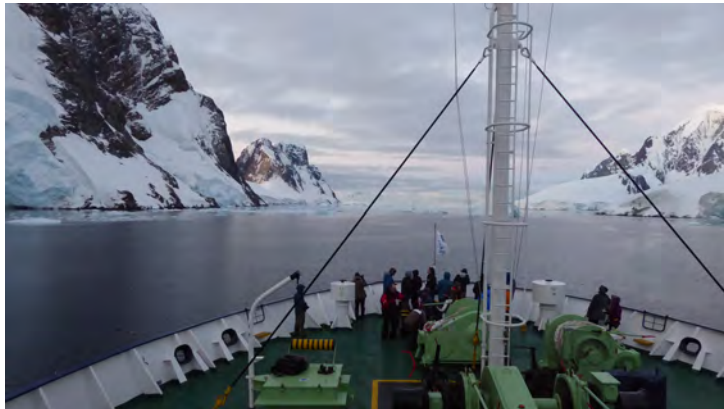
Both before and after our tour of Wordie House we cruised along an enchanting network of channels running through a landscape of rounded rocky islands, ice slopes, ice cornices and icebergs. Although not a penguin breeding area, the Argentine Islands are obviously a favourite hang-out for Gentoo penguins (our first of the trip!) both on shore and also splashing



around in the water, which was most entertaining. We also saw a number of Fur seals, looking placid and benign, but capable of extremely aggressive behaviour when approached. Zodiacs are a marvellous platform for wildlife viewing; we saw Skuas and Kelp gulls too as we drifted along, enjoying panoramic views. The Antarctic Peninsula was revealing itself as a very scenic part of the world.

Finally we headed back to *Ortelius* between 17.00 to 18.00, but rather than change out of our warm clothes we all headed out on deck to see the sun breaking through the afternoon's cloud layer and dramatically lighting up the scenery. We even had some blue sky before dinner!

It was hard to drag ourselves indoors and despite delicious food as ever, most of us didn't linger for after-dinner coffee as we could see we were entering a very narrow stretch of water between the peninsula and outlying islands. This was the famed Lemaire Channel, with peaks towering into the sky on either side of the ship. The good light conditions lasted just long enough for some super photographs.



At 20.45 Rolf summoned us to a short briefing on tomorrow's plans (which will take us back through the Lemaire Channel for more photo opportunities, never fear).

What a day! The bar was buzzing, but since we've had a tiring week of time

changes no one stayed up too late. There's too much going on tomorrow to risk oversleeping!

Day 27 – 12th March

Lemaire Channel, Neumayer Channel, Andvord Bay

This morning we woke up early to be prepared for a scenic helicopter flight in Deloncle Bay. Breakfast started at 7am and helicopter operations began at 7:30. The first helicopter left our ship at 7:33 and returned in 13 minutes. With its return strong winds were reported and the pilots recommended that we wait for the wind to calm down or find more sheltered place for the flights.

So, flights were cancelled and we went north through the picturesque Lemaire Channel. Even though it was windy, the weather was very nice, blue sky, sunshine and breath-taking scenery. Many of us stood on the bow of the ship to take numerous photos of surrounding mountains, beautiful glaciers and giant icebergs. Also on the way we had a chance to see Humpbacks and Minke whales.

We cruised through the Neumayer Channel, hoping to find some protection to recommence flights, but the wind stayed fierce throughout our passage. Rolf and Captain Mika consulted, and decided to continue through to Andvord Bay, to seek protection across the southern Gerlache Strait.



After lunch we arrived at Andvord Bay. We hoped it would be less windy there, but to our surprise it was not just less windy, it was absolutely calm. The weather presented us with the perfect opportunity to start sightseeing flights and to our great excitement very soon we have heard the announcement to be prepared for the flights again.



From the helicopter we could see the most beautiful scenery of Paradise Harbour and surrounding areas. We were flying over the bays, glaciers and mountain tops. The afternoon light provided us a great opportunity for photos.

As soon as the last helicopter came back to the ship we were called for zodiac cruise along the glaciers. During cruise we have seen Gentoo penguins and Kelp gulls sitting on rocks. Curious Weddell Seal swam close to check our zodiac. We also had a great encounter with a couple of Humpback Whales which surfaced next to us. Icebergs under the low evening sun were very pictures. We returned to the ship when it was already getting dark to have a late dinner.



It was very good day and of course we are all looking forward to tomorrow's continuation of our adventures.



Day 28 – 13th March

Danco Island & Wilhelmina Bay

When we woke up this morning we still had a few miles to go before our arrival at Cuverville Island, which was our Plan A landing site in the Antarctic Peninsula region today. And we weren't in any hurry to arrive because we had Humpback whales



almost everywhere around the ship! They were mostly 'logging' (sleeping at the surface) – fins and blows could be seen at almost every point of the compass as we strolled the outside decks before breakfast. Occasionally one could be seen right off the ship, before lazily flicking its flukes in a shallow dive. This was an unexpectedly whale-rich start to the day.

When we tore our eyes away from the ocean we noticed that the sky was mainly cloudy and it looked as if we would experience very different weather from yesterday's glorious sunshine.

Moderately strong winds had got our Captain and Expedition Leader thinking, so we sailed on a few miles to a more sheltered Plan B spot instead, just off Danco Island. Both islands are extremely scenic and home to Gentoo penguins, and at Danco we had far more shelter for our zodiac ride to shore.



The landing began shortly after breakfast at around 08.45, under a rapidly improving sky. By the time most of us were on shore the sun was over the mountain tops and shedding welcome rays over Danco Island and its penguins; Danco Island was so-named in memory of Emile Danco, magnetician on the Belgian *Gerlache* expedition, who died to the south of this area in 1898 during man's first ever wintering south of the Antarctic Circle.



Our long morning on shore today was both one of the most scenic of our trip, and one of the best for wildlife viewing. There were Gentoo penguins EVERYWHERE; in fact they were so widely-dispersed that we too were able to take advantage of the spaces in between them and find ourselves a rock on which to perch away from other passengers, to sit

and study what was going on all round. There were penguins splashing about in the shallows, having a good wash before emerging from the ocean; there were groups of slightly depressed-looking moulting adults; there were chicks just shedding their baby fluff and flapping their wings experimentally; there were penguins posed on the ice of steep penguin highways; there were penguins hurrying along, for all the world as if they were late for an appointment. So many penguins in one place and wherever we looked something wonderful and photogenic was going on!

It wasn't only about penguins either. We saw a few Fur seals, who totally failed to live up to their chasing and biting reputation – they were sleepy and relaxed! A Kelp gull perched on an offshore rock; a Blue-eyed shag landed at the sea's edge and started preening; a Southern skua patrolled the beach; a Snowy sheathbill pecked our life-jacket bags at the landing site.



Even if you forgot about the wildlife, the scenery was spectacular. Most of us walked along the beach to find a solitary space from which to immerse ourselves in Antarctica – the smells, the sounds, the sights. A walk past the foundations of Base O (a former British base, removed in the early 2000s because no longer in use) took us to the other end of the beach and a splendid vista of sea and ice and mountains. It was as if time stood still. On this, our final full day in Antarctica, all of the reasons why we came here were staring us in the face!

We reluctantly prised ourselves away, packed up our cameras and caught our zodiac ride back to *Ortelius* for lunch, after which there was time for a short siesta before reaching Wilhelmina Bay - well known for its Humpback whales and indeed, we were soon surrounded again. They were calmly hanging out and it was a thrill to watch them in their element, undisturbed by our presence. We lingered to enjoy both whales and glorious scenery until nearly tea-time, when we had to start our overnight journey across the Bransfield Strait in the direction of the South Shetland Islands in order to be in position for tomorrow's pre-breakfast landing.



There was time to fit in a Recap & Briefing before dinner. With a big smile on his face, Expedition Leader Rolf informed us that our last landing was planned to take place at 06.30, with breakfast at 08.30 on our return. There were a few astonished gasps, but we all agreed it was important to seize the moment. Then Arjen gave us some detailed information on Humpback whales and Victoria explained the logic behind the place-names of locations we have visited over the last few days in the Antarctic Peninsula area.

By now it was time for DJ to announce dinner, which was appreciated as always for the quality of both food and conversation. And afterwards the bar was surprisingly busy, considering tomorrow's early start! We can sleep in the Drake Passage after all.

Day 29 – 14th March

Aitcho Island, South Shetland Islands

We knew that our wake up call would be early, but that didn't make it any easier to hear when Rolf's voice came over the PA system at 5.45am. Our progress across the somewhat bumpy Bransfield Strait had been slower than predicted, and we would have at least another half an hour in bed if we wanted. We were making our way in towards Barrientos Islands, or Aitcho, as the sun was rising, and the rocky islets strewn on either side of our path made for a glorious view to behold when we made our way out on deck.



At 7.30am we started gangway operations, and six zodiac drivers shuttled everyone in to the landing site on Aitcho in record time. There we were greeted by green! Beds of green lined the rocky island and it took us some time to adjust our thoughts after so long without seeing plants of any description! On closer inspection, it was an extensive layer of algae, called *prasiola crista*, and added something special to our final, and distinctively different, landing.



Groups of gentoo penguins stood calling to each other, amidst piles of tiny feathers being moulted away en masse. Chinstrap penguins gathered in similarly messy groups. Although we had seen one chinstrap yesterday at Danco Island, it was heartening to see so many, calling loudly to each other with their distinctive croaking! There were whale bones strewn on the beach where we landed, long ribs and vertebrae alike

Although we only had a short landing, it was enough time to wander round all the wildlife at that end of the island, to take in the crashing of the waves on the bay on the other side and certainly to treasure up final images from the South Shetland Islands, the micro-



continent we are so lucky to add to the list of wonderful places to visit on this incredible journey together.

We devoured breakfast at speed, feeling we had earned it with our early start. Leaving north from the South Shetland Islands was a slightly forlorn experience, with a thick bank of low cloud greying out our vista. The rocky shoreline was formidable and not a final view to be forgotten



quickly. All too soon we could feel the pitching motion from the renowned Drake Passage. With no slow build-up to the motion, many took it easy after breakfast, and indeed for the rest of the day.

After lunch, Victoria was pleased with a good turnout to her final history presentation, on the explorers of the Antarctic Peninsula. She regaled us with stories of De Gerlache's explorations on the peninsula and then the first overwinter in a ship drifting in the sea ice in the Bellingshausen Sea. Then the amazing story of the Swedish geologist Otto Nordenskjold was told to incredulous ears, with Hope Bay and Cape Well Met ringing in the minds long after the end of the talk. The gentleman of the Poles, Charcot, was lauded for his good library, good wine cellar and thorough charting. And finally the little heard-of British Graham Land Expedition, led by the Australian John Rymill had his day in the sun, though unfortunately Victoria demonstrated amply that death or failure was the surest way of being assigned a worthy place in the annals of Antarctic history.

Later in the afternoon, Shaun told us more of his adventures down in Antarctica, including his time in Deception Island when the volcano erupted, and his epic dogsledding journey when he was Base Commander at Stonington. With such fantastic stories from the good old days of Antarctic exploration at hand, we can't help feeling blessed at having such a humble explorer onboard to inspire us.

Recap preceded dinner which was followed by drinks in the bar with many in attendance, celebrating our final day of excursions as we made our way across the last barrier before the end of our journey in towards Ushuaia.

Day 30 – 15th March

Drake Passage

We have been cruising through the Drake Passage as if on a quiet pond, and conditions continue to be fabulous. This morning, it was calm, with light winds, low swell, and very gentle rocking. Unfortunately, this meant that the bird life, which likes good winds to fly in, was a bit limited, but what we lacked in quantity, we made up for in quality. There was a young Wandering albatross, a white chinned petrel, and a few prions, stormpetrels, and even a fulmar or two flying low near the ship.

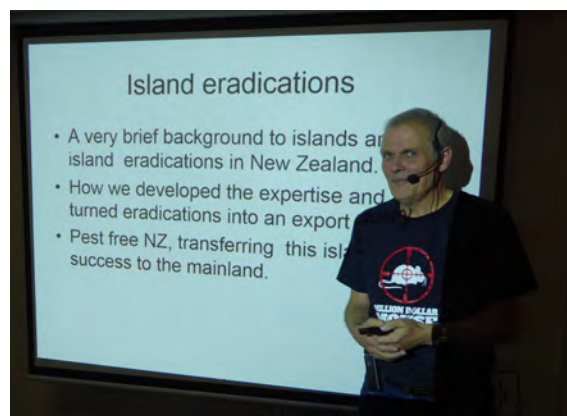


It was nice to finally have a morning with no time change and no early wake up, but it was a bit odd to not hear Rolf's voice! Instead, Dmitri woke us gently with some lovely music, and after a good night's sleep, we all managed to make it to breakfast, even if some of us were a little bit late.

In the morning, Arjen gave us the low-down on Lightroom, illustrating some ideas for managing your photo collection and a few techniques to use after the event to improve your shots.

We had crossed the Antarctic convergence, passing the water-temperature and biological boundary between Antarctica and the rest of the world, so the water temperature was up to +2°C, much warmer than it has been since we went South all those days ago. Those of us on the bridge were keeping a good lookout for new, warm water bird species. After lunch, and the obligatory post-lunch nap, we woke for Dmitri's talk on "Birds of the Wind", all about the birds of the Drake Passage.

After a lovely gooey cake up in the bar, we headed back downstairs to hear from Andy Cox, our New Zealand representative, on how the Kiwis have been in the forefront of the eradication of introduced species from islands like Campbell. With all the questions and comments about removing introduced species and the problems of some eradication techniques, that led almost straight into recap. We are sadly nearing the end of the trip, so Dejan had to give us some information on wrapping up the on board details, and later Victoria provided a comprehensive review of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, where our next adventures will begin. Stepping outside for fresh air reinforced the knowledge we had left Antarctica, we have cool, not icy air passing over the ship now.



A noisy, chatty dinner, followed by the short movie 'Rounding the Horn' narrated by Captain Irving Johnson and all about the old tea clipper sailing ships, rounded out the day for many of us. Others moved up to the bar, where the volume increased to an impressive level, and Charlotte was kept busy until well after her official finishing time.



Day 31 – 16th March Beagle Channel

Low cloud and a touch of damp greeted the early risers who were keen to spot Cape Horn. Sadly the big black 3000ft bluff stayed hidden so we steamed on by, in towards the Beagle Channel. We were joined by a number of Peale's dolphins bowriding with us for some time and we all reveled in the spectacle.



It was finally time for our cashless society to end, and everyone made their way to reception to settle accounts in the morning. Then we had our final lecture of the voyage, when Cheryl gave us a further insight into the whales of the Southern Ocean (as well as chocolates for attendance and questions!)



The moderate wind and pleasant temperatures made it pleasant to stand out on the foredeck and watch the increase of birds as we moved up the Channel. There were good numbers of black-browed Albatrosses along with Chilean Skuas, Cormorants by the hundreds, Black Backed Gulls and Giant Petrels aplenty. Further

on we could see farms with cattle down to the water's edge. This prompted the comment that there would not be many places in the world where you could get Albatrosses and Cattle in the same photograph.

In the afternoon we returned our lifejackets and boots to the lecture room, with some second visits to the bootwash station to remove excess penguin guano! We will certainly miss that smell once we have all washed our clothes back home! We picked up our pilot late morning then in the early afternoon we passed the Harberton Homestead. This family had a big hand in the establishment of Ushuaia.

Once the pilot was onboard, everyone assembled on the foredeck for a huge group photograph.



Later in the afternoon, our helicopters, pilots and mechanics departed for the mainland and Puerto Williams, ultimately to fly to Punta Arenas. A good crowd up on deck bid them “safe travels” with a giant wave and many thanks for excellent service.

We cruised on most enjoyably and anchored at Puerto Williams about 16.30 to take on fuel before heading off to Ushuaia when Chilean Customs and Immigration Officials checked our documents. At 6pm we met in the bar for our final ‘recap’, this time to watch Arjen’s beautiful slideshow from the voyage. Tears crept into eyes as we relived the last month together.

At dinner we had the chance to thank the entire hotel team who did so much for us to make our stay onboard as comfortable as possible, and after dinner the bar was decidedly noisy!

We arrived in Ushuaia just before midnight, with lights twinkling from the streets. By the time we tied up on the dock, we had travelled 5,820 nautical miles together. Many friendships were forged and we all look forward to further adventures on our magical planet, enriched by the many wonders we have seen on this trip.

Day 32 – 17th March

Ushuaia

Today was disembarkation day. We had been alongside for most of the night and thus been able to enjoy a good night's sleep, so we were ready now for the homeward journey or for further adventures in South America or elsewhere on this beautiful planet.

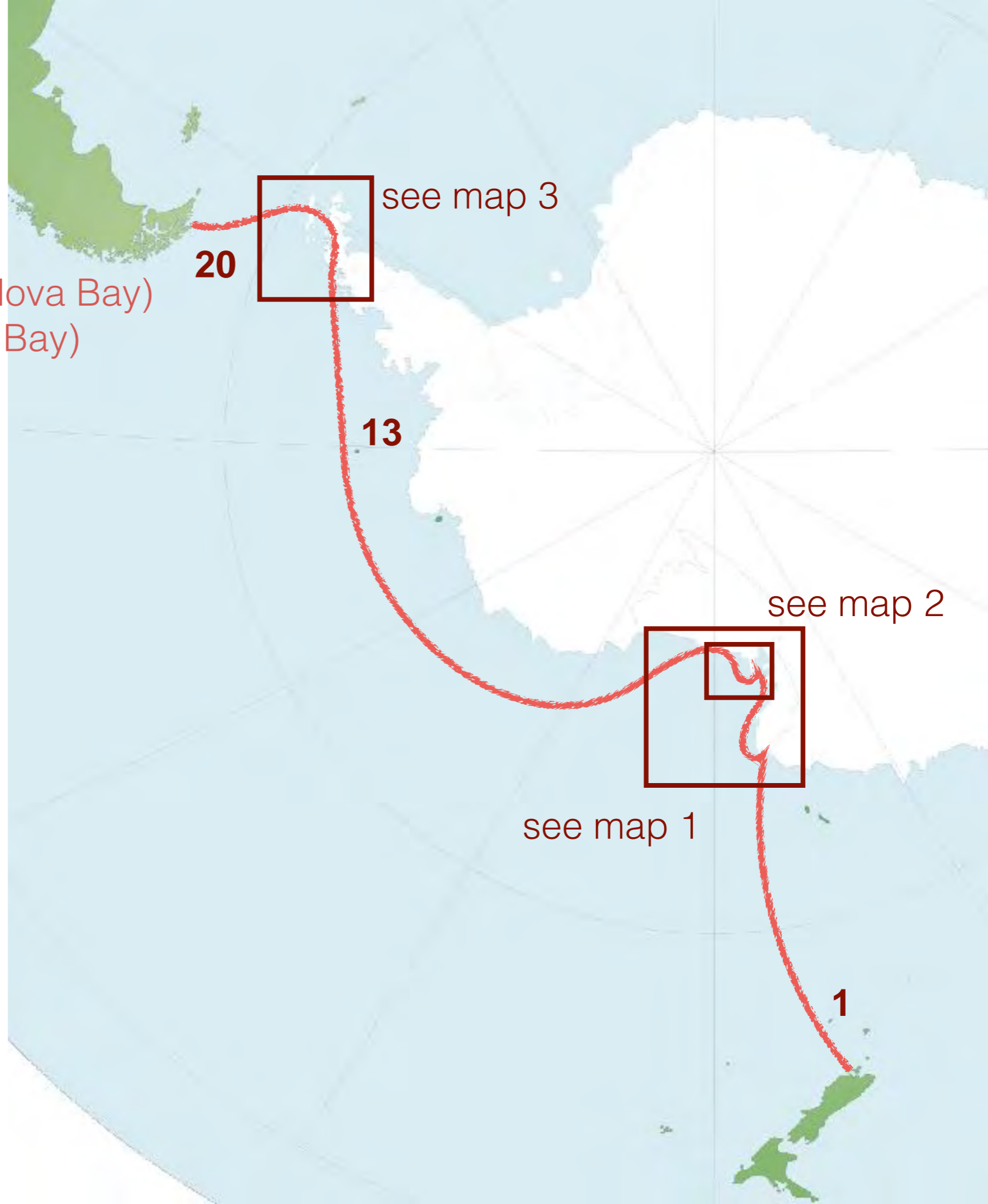
On the pier we bade farewell to crew and staff we have come to know over the past 32 days, and had one last look at the *Ortelius*, the ship that took us on such an incredible voyage from New Zealand to Campbell Island, into the Ross Sea and to McMurdo Sound, around a good part of Antarctica, to Peter I Island, to the Antarctic Peninsula, across the feared Drake Passage and finally safely to Ushuaia.

This trip would stay with us for a lifetime – in our memories, our imaginations, in our dreams and on our hard drives. Not a few of us were wondering when we might return to Antarctica or if we might meet again in the Arctic.

It has been a pleasure to travel with you. On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Mika Appel, Expedition Leader Rolf Stange and all the crew and staff, we thank you for travelling with us and hope to see you again, somewhere between the poles!

Trip Log edited by Cheryl Randall with additional written and photographic contributions by Victoria Salem, Lynn Woodworth, Arjen Drost, Dmitri Banin, Rolf Stange & Shaun Norman.

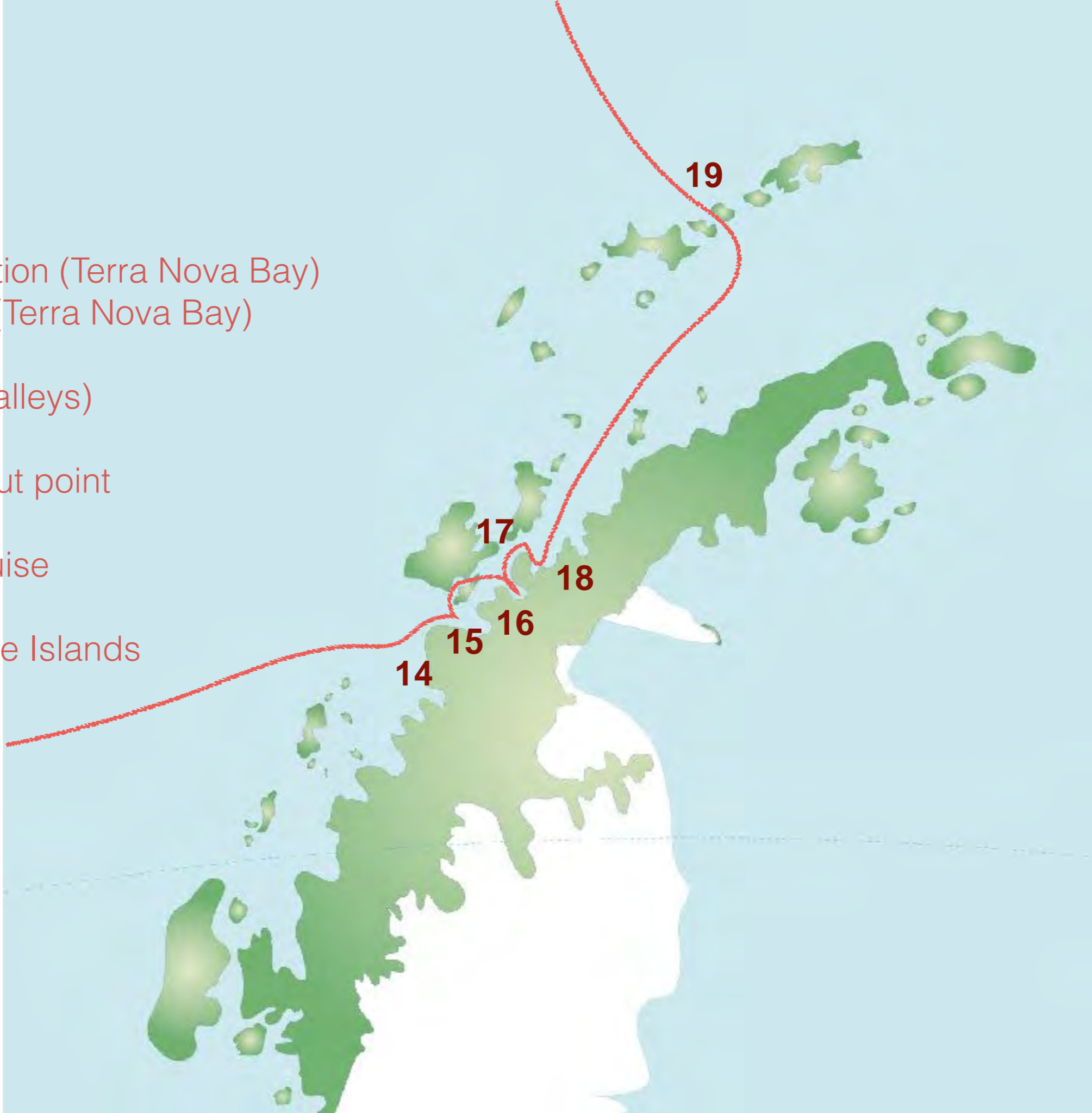
- 1 - Campbell Island
- 2 - Cape Adare
- 3 - Possession Islands
- 4 - Cape Hallet
- 5 - Mario Zucchelli Station (Terra Nova Bay)
- 6 - Gondwana Station (Terra Nova Bay)
- 7 - Franklin Island
- 8 - Taylor Valley (Dry Valleys)
- 9 - Cape Evans
- 10 - McMurdo Station/Hut point
- 11 - Ross Ice Shelf
- 12 - Pack Ice zodiac cruise
- 13 - Peter I Island
- 14 - Vernadsky/Argentine Islands
- 15 - Lemaire Channel
- 16 - Andvord Bay
- 17 - Danco Island
- 18 - Wilhelmina Bay
- 19 - Aitcho Island
- 20 - Beagle Channel



- 1 - Campbell Island
- 2 - Cape Adare
- 3 - Possession Islands
- 4 - Cape Hallett
- 5 - Mario Zucchelli Station (Terra Nova Bay)
- 6 - Gondwana Station (Terra Nova Bay)
- 7 - Franklin Island
- 8 - Taylor Valley (Dry Valleys)
- 9 - Cape Evans
- 10 - McMurdo Station/Hut point
- 11 - Ross Ice Shelf
- 12 - Pack Ice zodiac cruise
- 13 - Peter I Island
- 14 - Vernadsky/Argentine Islands
- 15 - Lemaire Channel
- 16 - Andvord Bay
- 17 - Danco Island
- 18 - Wilhelmina Bay
- 19 - Aitcho Island
- 20 - Beagle Channel



- 1 - Campbell Island
- 2 - Cape Adare
- 3 - Possession Islands
- 4 - Cape Hallett
- 5 - Mario Zucchelli Station (Terra Nova Bay)
- 6 - Gondwana Station (Terra Nova Bay)
- 7 - Franklin Island
- 8 - Taylor Valley (Dry Valleys)
- 9 - Cape Evans
- 10 - McMurdo Station/Hut point
- 11 - Ross Ice Shelf
- 12 - Pack Ice zodiac cruise
- 13 - Peter I Island
- 14 - Vernadsky/Argentine Islands
- 15 - Lemaire Channel
- 16 - Andvord Bay
- 17 - Danco Island
- 18 - Wilhelmina Bay
- 19 - Aitcho Island
- 20 - Beagle Channel





PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST 2017

Your chance to win a € 1000 gift voucher for your next polar adventure.

EVERYONE KNOWS A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS, BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT YOUR PHOTOS MIGHT NOW ALSO BE WORTH A **€ 1000 GIFT VOUCHER**?

Share your experience!

Did you catch a rare seabird on the fly? Do you have a panorama of the Northern Lights filling the sky? Did you get up close and personal with a penguin? Did you capture a look of awe or wonder on a fellow passenger's face?

If you've been a passenger on any one of our past voyages we want to see your pictures.

You're free to send in as many pictures as you wish. The best pictures are the ones that capture what it's like to take one of our special expeditions to the remote and beautiful ends of the Earth.



PRIZES



€ 1000

GIFT VOUCHER

for Oceanwide Expeditions



€ 500 gift voucher

for Oceanwide Expeditions



€ 250 gift voucher

for Oceanwide Expeditions

UPLOAD YOUR PHOTO AT

WWW.OCEANWIDE-EXPEDITIONS.COM/GALLERY

The size of your photo should be between 2MB and 8MB. Our lucky winners will be contacted by e-mail and Facebook by January 15, 2018.

Read the terms and conditions of the contest on www.oceanwide-expeditions.com/page/contest-terms



Kayaking the Waters of Antarctica The weather changes so dramatically down here that you simply cannot say, "this looks like a great day" if it is one – rather you must live in the moment and perhaps a more appropriate phrase might be, "this looks like a great moment"! After enduring Force 8 winds on the Beaufort Wind Scale the Ortelius (our home during this Antarctica cruise) pulled into calm waters at Georges Point affording us our first close look at the breathtaking scenery (icebergs, glaciers and mountains)

TRAVEL WRITING COMPETITION 2017

Your chance to win a € 1000 gift voucher for your next polar adventure.

FANCY YOURSELF AS A TRAVEL WRITER? ENTER OUR ANNUAL TRAVEL WRITING COMPETITION AND YOU JUST MIGHT WIN YOURSELF A **€ 1000 GIFT VOUCHER** FOR YOUR NEXT POLAR ADVENTURE.

Write about your experience!

What was it like to camp out under the Antarctic sky? Was it scary when you encountered a polar bear? Was this your first cruise and were you nervous about crossing open waters?

After all, how your expedition made you feel is what you're going to carry with you for the rest of your life. If you share your experience you just might win yourself a € 1000 gift voucher for your next polar adventure.

Here's what you need to do:

1. Write a post (600 – 1200 words) in Dutch, English, or German about what excited you the most on your Oceanwide Expeditions cruise. The topic is entirely up to you.
2. Make sure you add tiles and subtitles to the story.
3. Create a hyperlink or two inside of your post that links back to the particular trip you took as found on our website. The link could connect to the ship's page, the trip itinerary, the particular destination's page, or perhaps a page related to one of the activities you enjoyed.
4. Add 3 to 5 pictures (they should be 2 MB minimum in size, in landscape format and attached separately when you decide to send your entry to us).
5. Post it online and send us the URL where your story is published. **OR** send your post to us at marketing@oceanwide-expeditions.com. Either way, make sure you include your full name and e-mail address.
6. **Spread the word!**



PRIZES



€ 1000
GIFT VOUCHER

for Oceanwide Expeditions



€ 500 gift voucher
for Oceanwide Expeditions



€ 250 gift voucher
for Oceanwide Expeditions



ENTRIES CLOSE DECEMBER 31

Our lucky winners will be contacted by e-mail and Facebook by January 15, 2018

Read the full terms and conditions on oceanwide-expeditions.com/page/contest-terms

The sleeping bag, a poem.

by Herbert Ponting F.R.P.S

*Some of the men prefer their reindeer-skin sleeping bag
with the fur on the outside, and others prefer the fur on the inside.*

On the outside grows the furside;
on the inside grows the skinside.
So the furside is the outside,
and the skinside is the inside.
One side likes the skinside inside,
and the furside on the outside.
Others like the skinside outside,
and the furside on the inside.
If you turn the skinside outside,
thinking you will side with that side,
then the soft side, furside's inside,
which, some argue, is the wrong side.
If you turn the furside outside,
as, you say, it grows on that side,
then your outside's next the skinside,
which for comfort's not the right side.
For the skinside is the cold side,
and your outside's not your warm side.
And two cold sides side by side
are not right-side when side to side!
If you decide to side with that side,
turn the topside furside inside.
Then the cold side furside skinside,
beyond all question, inside out!

*“Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
- But who is that on the other side of you?”*

Excerpt from TS Eliot’s – “The Wasteland.”

Victoria's advice for a good historical read:-

GENERAL

Let Heroes Speak: Antarctic Explorers 1772 – 1922

By Michael H. Rosove (2000, Berkley Publishing, printed in the USA).

ISBN: 0-425-18330-0

Review: 'Rosove gives the reader a feeling for the explorers' motivations and the hardships they had to face by using their own words – the words of pioneers who were truly heroes. Highly recommended.'

Includes: James Cook, Bellingshausen, Biscoe, Balleny, D'Urville, Wilkes, James Clark Ross, Bull, Gerlache, Borchgrevink, Scott, Drygalski, Otto Nordenskjold, Bruce, Charcot, Shackleton, Amundsen, Filchner, Mawson & Cope.

Antarctica: an intimate portrait of a mysterious continent

By Gabrielle Walker (2013, Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, Boston).

ISBN: 978-0-15-101520-7

Review: 'This book should be a 'must-read' for this trip. She discusses the Antarctic Peninsula, McMurdo Station and scientific research, the Ross Ice Shelf, the Dry Valleys and the Heroic Explorers in a very accessible way for non-scientists'.

Antarctica. Discovering the last continent

By Sebastien Arrebola & Shoshannah Jacobs (2016).

ISBN: 978-987-4079-29-9

Review: 'This partnership of authors works perfectly; biology (geology, glaciology) and history are well covered. This is an excellent reference document for your library with regard to all aspects of Antarctica'.

HISTORIC HUTS

Still Life: Inside the Antarctic Huts of Scott and Shackleton (2010). Essays by Nigel Watson, photography by Jane Ussher – the definitive book on Hut Point, Cape Evans & Cape Royds huts. Extremely detailed, with main focus on photography of huts with in-depth captions, interspersed with interpretive essays.

SCOTT & AMUNDSEN

Scott's Last Expedition/The Voyage of the Discovery – very well-written and readable account by Scott himself

The Last place on Earth/Scott and Amundsen by Roland Huntford – very detailed and well-researched account of Scott and Amundsen's famous race to the Pole. A great supporter of Amundsen and a great debunker of Scott. Very interesting, though extremely (obsessively?) anti-Scott.

Captain Scott by Ranulph Fiennes – A much easier read than Huntford's tome; sets out to debunk the debunking of Scott and vindicate his heroic reputation. Extremely (obsessively?) pro-Scott. Also very interesting – draw your own conclusions!

The Worst Journey in the World by Apsley Cherry-Garrard – A wonderfully written account of Scott's last expedition, with emphasis on Cherry-Garrard/Wilson/Bowers' winter journey to Cape Crozier for emperor penguin eggs.

SHACKLETON

Endurance and Shackleton's Boat Journey by F A Worsley – An easy and fascinating read by a great supporter of Shackleton.

Shackleton by Roland Huntford – Very detailed and well-researched account of Shackleton's life and expeditions. But bear in mind Huntford's obsessive debunking of the Scott myth when considering his objectivity over Shackleton.

SHACKLETON'S ROSS SEA PARTY

Shackleton's Forgotten Men by Lennard Bickel – A fascinating account of the fate of Shackleton's Ross Sea Party, who were laying supporting depots for his Antarctic crossing; he never came, but they completed their appointed task at great cost.

Also try:-

Polar Castaways: The Ross Sea Party of Sir Ernest Shackleton by Richard McElrea.

The Ross Sea Shore Party 1914 – 17 by Richard W. Richards.

The Lost Men: The Harrowing Saga of Shackleton's Ross Sea Party by Kelly Tyler-Lewis.

NOVELS ON ANTARCTICA

Antarctica by Kim Stanley-Robinson – a sci-fi, futuristic, political novel set against a backdrop of one version of a future Antarctica. Highly recommended.

Skating to Antarctica by Jenny Diski – a compelling account of a journey to Antarctica and an inner journey of the spirit.

Mrs Chippy's Last Expedition by Caroline Alexander – a cat's eye view of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition!

MORE BOOKS!

Shackleton: A Life in Poetry. By Jim Mayer (2014, Signal Books Ltd., Oxford).

ISBN: 978-1-909930-10-0

Review: ‘This is an extremely interesting work on a very important part of Shackleton’s character’ (Jonathan Shackleton, polar historian & cousin of Sir Ernest Shackleton).

Victim of the Aurora by Thomas Keneally – a novel.

This is a historical murder mystery set on a fictional British South Pole expedition in 1909, complete with villainous victim and hard-to-spot perpetrator among the winter-over party...

2016: Consultative parties to the Antarctic Treaty:

Argentina (1961)
Australia (1961)
Belgium (1961)
Brazil (1975)
Bulgaria (1978)
Chile (1961)
China (1983)
Czech Republic (1962)
Ecuador (1987)
Finland (1984)
France (1961)
Germany (1979)
India (1983)
Italy (1981)
Japan (1961)
North Korea (1986)
Netherlands (1967)
New Zealand (1961)
Norway (1961)
Peru (1981)
Poland (1961)
Russian Federation (1961)
South Africa (1961)
Spain (1982)
Sweden (1984)
Ukraine (1992)
UK (1961)
US (1961)
Uruguay (1980)

2016 Non-consultative parties to the Antarctic Treaty:

Austria (1987)
Belarus (2006)
Canada (1988)
Colombia (1989)
Cuba (1984)
Denmark (1965)
Estonia (2001)
Greece (1987)
Guatemala (1991)
Hungary (1984)
Iceland (2015)
Kazakhstan (2015)
South Korea (1987)
Malaysia (2011)
Monaco (2008)
Mongolia (2015)
Pakistan (2012)
Papua New Guinea (1981)
Portugal (2010)
Romania (1971)
Slovak Republic (1993)
Switzerland (1990)
Turkey (1996)
Venezuela (1999).