



OCEANWIDE

EXPEDITIONS



DIVE LOG

17th FEBRUARY - 8th MARCH 2018

DIVE TEAM

Dive Team Leader: Catherine Buckland

Dive Guides: Chris Booker, Andre Fahrni,
Danny Copeland

For more information, contact us via:
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The Falklands, South Georgia &
the Antarctic Peninsula

DIVE LOG

17th FEBRUARY – 8th MARCH 2018

MV Plancius - Falkland Islands, South Georgia & Antarctica



FALKLAND ISLANDS

19th February 2018

DIVE #1 - WEST POINT, WEST FALKLAND

LOCATION (GPS): S 51° 21.128, W 060° 40.781

VISIBILITY: 5.0m

DIVE TIME: 09:35 – 10:45

WATER TEMP: 11°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 10.5m

HIGH TIDE: 12:30 (3.4m)

For the first stop on our polar voyage we visited West Point in West Falkland, where we were greeted with an overcast sky and some pretty windy conditions. Our inaugural plunge beneath the waves was used as a 'check-out' dive, so that everyone could get reacquainted with their drysuits, and ensure their equipment and weighting was all set for the rest of the trip.

Despite the weather above the surface, divers were treated to towering kelp rising 5-10m from the seabed, and an abundance of spider crabs crawling amongst the fronds.



GUIDES AFTER DROPPING DIVERS (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



LOCATION OF OUR FIRST DIVE (Photo by Catherine Buckland)

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FALKLAND ISLANDS

19th February 2018

DIVE #2 – GRAVES BAY, WEST FALKLAND

LOCATION (GPS): S 51° 21.529, W 060° 38.224

VISIBILITY: 5.0m

DIVE TIME: 14:45 – 15:50

WATER TEMP: 11°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 10.5m

HIGH TIDE: 12:30 (3.4m)

Our second dive saw us jump into Graves Bay to check out another of West Falkland's abundant and productive kelp forests. Divers found stalked jellyfish (*Haliclystis antarcticus*), mussel beds, and chitins amongst the kelp, as well as some sea cucumbers clinging onto the kelp fronds – a pretty unusual thing to see for a species that spends its time crawling on the seafloor sucking-up substrate!

An extra bonus during this afternoon were a pod of 4-5 Commerson's dolphins, who hung around the Plancius for two hours playing around the guides and their Zodiacs. At one point, a single dolphin swam over a diver's bubbles, but it didn't stick around long enough for anyone to look up and catch the mini-cetacean staring back at them!



DIVERS KITTING UP (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



HAPPY GUIDE ON ZODIAC (Photo by Catherine Buckland)

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SOUTH GEORGIA

23rd February 2018

DIVE #3 – TERN ISLAND, SALISBURY PLAINS

LOCATION (GPS): S 54° 02.674, W 037° 19.839

VISIBILITY: <5.0m

DIVE TIME: 08:53 – 09:30

WATER TEMP: 5°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 16.0m

HIGH TIDE: 13:00 (0.97m)

Our arrival to South Georgia saw us rock up to a colony of king penguins, as well as groups of elephant and Antarctic fur seals chilling out in the morning sun. As a result, many divers decided to skip the first dive to understandably surround themselves with the local fauna. But a treat was in store for the divers that braved the chillier waters around Tern Island.

Moments after divers descended, a fully-grown 4-metre leopard seal emerged from between the fronds, and made a b-line for the diver's bubbles to check them out. What followed was a 30-minute encounter – with arguably the most intimidating yet charismatic species that you can swim with in Antarctica. This was an exhilarating, once-in-a-lifetime experience for everyone involved – even the dive guides on the surface had a few close-encounters with the curious predator, as it periodically popped its head above the surface to check out our Zodiacs.



CURIOUS LEOPARD SEAL (Photo by Danny Copeland)



ALONGSIDE THE ZODIAC (Photo by Danny Copeland)

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SOUTH GEORGIA

23rd February 2018

DIVE #4 – SKUA ISLAND NEAR PRION ISLAND

LOCATION (GPS): S 54° 01.221, W 037° 14.577

VISIBILITY: <5.0m

DIVE TIME: 14:33 – 15:52

WATER TEMP: 3°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 20.0m

HIGH TIDE: 13:00 (0.97m)

For our second dive of the day, three Zodiacs full of divers dropped down at Skua Island. The site was against a wall covered in thick kelp fronds, which dropped down to >40m. There was a bit of swell along parts of the wall, and visibility was rather poor (<3m), but a lucky few divers caught glimpses of fur seals swimming around near the surface. After ascending, we quickly checked out a large sea cave / cavern to take some photos, before navigating our Zodiacs through a maze of kelp and bouncy seas to return to the Plancius.



SKUA ISLAND FROM ABOVE (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



DIVER WITH THE FUR SEALS (Photo by Catherine Buckland)

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SOUTH GEORGIA

24th February 2018

DIVE #5 – WALL DIVE AT GODTHUL

LOCATION (GPS): S 54° 17.441, W 036° 18.104

VISIBILITY: <5.0m

DIVE TIME: 09:52 – 11:15

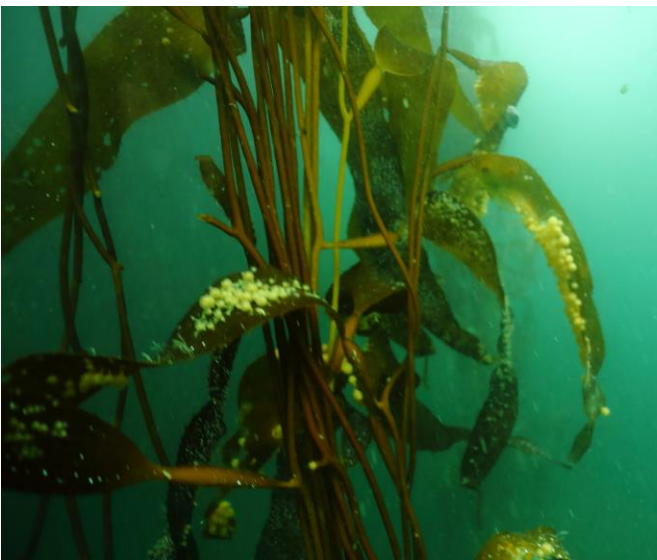
WATER TEMP: 3°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 16.0m

HIGH TIDE: 13:00 (0.5m)

Our morning dive took place at an unnamed dive site in Godthul – a bay situated roughly in the middle of South Georgia’s northern coastline. Surface waters at the site were calm, and sunny conditions illuminated the surrounding landscape to make for a beautiful start to the day.

The dive site itself was along a wall, which dropped down in stages to 17m, then to 25m, before making a steep vertical plunge to >60m. Divers navigated through extremely dense kelp floating at the surface before making it to the wall, and whilst visibility was super-clear in the top few metres, the same could not be said for those that went deeper. Fortunately there were a few playful fur seal pups bouncing around the surface waters, and those who missed them weren’t jealous for long. After the dive, we dropped in on the opposite side of the bay to snorkel with dozens of seal pups, who literally dog-piled some of the snorkelers in the shallows!



KELP UP CLOSE (Photo by Peter Thorausch)



KELP FOREST FROM BELOW (Photo by Peter Thorausch)

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SOUTH GEORGIA

25th February 2018

DIVE #6 – ILLUSION POINT, FORTUNA BAY

LOCATION (GPS): S 54° 06.615, W 036° 48.329

VISIBILITY: 3m in shallows, 6-7m deeper.

DIVE TIME: 09:22 – 10:11

WATER TEMP: 3°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 16.0m

HIGH TIDE: 13:00 (0.97m)

Our third day in South Georgia saw us venture into Fortuna Bay whilst accompanied by beautiful sunny weather. Fortuna is home to a large glacier whose melt-water makes most of the bay quite milky and cloudy. Fortunately there was a very distinct boundary marking the edge of the glacial water's influence, so we headed to Illusion Point that lies near the entrance to the bay where we found better visibility.

Whilst the first 5m of water was still a little milky, visibility significantly improved once you left the shallows. Visibility began pushing 6-7m at a depth of 10-15m, and divers were treated to a kelpy-area filled with numerous critters and macro subjects. Divers found a sea spider (*Decalopoda australis*) the size of their hand, several giant isopods (*Glyptonotus arcticus*), and never-ending numbers of Antarctic limpets sliding around the seabed.



ILLUSION POINT (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



SEA SPIDER (Photo by Peter Thorausch)

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SOUTH GEORGIA

25th February 2018

DIVE #7 – STROMNESS

LOCATION (GPS): S 54° 09.287, W 036° 42.099

VISIBILITY: <5.0m

DIVE TIME: 14:51 – 15:30

WATER TEMP: 3°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 17.0m

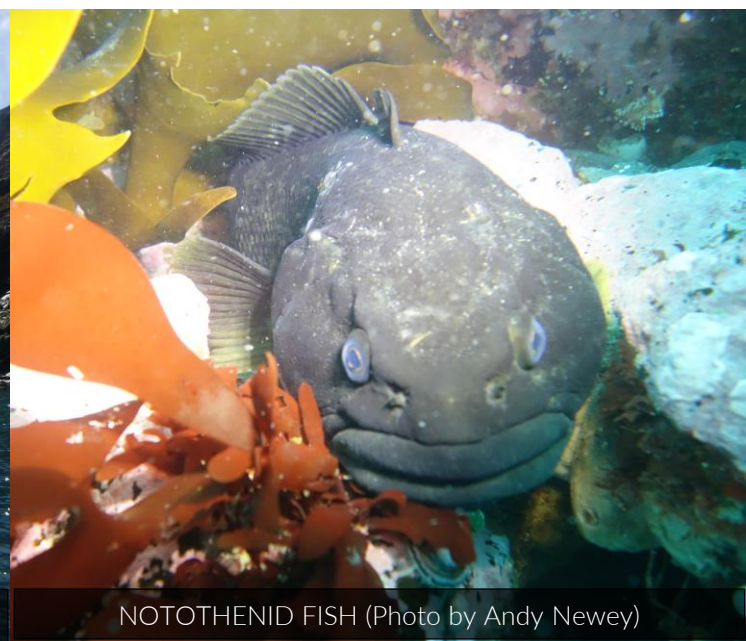
HIGH TIDE: 16:00 (1.36m)

To the delight of many, the sunny weather held out for our afternoon dive in Stromness. Whilst the site featured an abundance of kelp much like many sites across South Georgia, it differed in the type of substrate on the seabed. Rather than rocks and boulders, divers found a sandy benthos, as well as several other subtle differences. For example, Antarctic limpets typical of the rocky environments were few and far between, whereas the various species of sea stars and echinoderms, including the sun stars (*Labidiaster radiosus*) were in far greater abundance.

Divers were split in the focus of their dive. Some stuck to the shallows to photograph Antarctic fur seal pups, whilst others dived between 10-20m in search of more critters and weird polar marine life. Some divers found a fairly chunky notothenid fish (*Notothenia rossi*) amongst some rocks.



DIVE SITE AT STROMNESS (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



NOTOTHENID FISH (Photo by Andy Newey)

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SOUTH GEORGIA

26th February 2018

DIVE #8 – RANKIN POINT, COOPER BAY

LOCATION (GPS): S 54° 47.622, W 035° 48.751

VISIBILITY: <5.0m

DIVE TIME: 09:17 – 10:35

WATER TEMP: 3°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVES: 17.0m

HIGH TIDE: 04:00 (0.65m)

Our last day and our last dive in South Georgia saw us visiting Cooper Bay towards the south-eastern corner of the island. Overcast clouds and light rain made for a rugged conditions at Rankin Point, where we dived on the inside edge to avoid the rougher swell around the corner.

The site itself was fairly shallow and pretty kelpy, with several fur seal pups hugging the rocks and occasionally swooping around over our divers. Highlights included divers finding another notothenid fish, and some lucky few caught a glimpse of several king penguins jetting past underwater as they headed towards the shore! Shortly after our dive, we took advantage of some spare time and began cruising around the various inlets and gullies, and ended up finding almost every large marine animal one can hope for. Particular highlights included finding macaroni penguins, and another leopard seal cruising amongst the kelp – an epic way to finish out South Georgia adventure!



KING PENGUIN UNDERWATER (Photo by Peter Thorausch)



POST DIVE SMILES (Photo by Catherine Buckland)

DIVE LOG

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ANTARCTICA

28th February 2018

DIVE #9 – ORCADAS STATION, SOUTH ORKNEYS

LOCATION (GPS): S 60° 44.567, W 044° 43.931

VISIBILITY: 5-7m

DIVE TIME: 09:30 – 10:27

WATER TEMP: 1°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVES: 15.0m

HIGH TIDE: 18:00 (1.89m)

Whilst en-route to the Antarctic Peninsula and the next phase of our trip, we stopped off for a morning landing and dive at the Orcadas Argentinian research station in the South Orkney Islands. This dive felt quite different to the kelp-dominated dives of South Georgia, with the water temperature dropping further to 1°C, and snow-covered mountains and ice creating for an incredible Antarctic vista at the surface.

Perhaps the biggest difference was the visibility. Whilst it was only a few metres greater, the water colour was noticeably bluer compared to the greener waters we were accustomed to in South Georgia. The conditions made for some great photo opportunities with the station's local fur seal pups, with images looking akin to those taken in more tropical climes like Baja, Mexico.



DIVERS DESCENDING (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



FUR SEAL UNDERWATER (Photo by Peter Thorausch)

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ANTARCTICA

2nd March 2018

DIVE #10 – ICEBERG AT BROWN BLUFF

LOCATION (GPS): S 63° 31.016, W 056° 52.141

VISIBILITY: 7-10m (best vis of trip)

DIVE TIME: 15:30 - 16:15

WATER TEMP: -1°C to 2°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVES: 15.0m

HIGH TIDE: 19:45 (2.9m)

Upon arriving at the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, we were greeted to the Weddell Sea with rugged weather, and an abundance of shifting sea ice. Sadly this meant we had to cancel our initial dive and landing, but we happily spent the morning cruising the Plancius through a maze of ice, spotting minke whales, Adelie penguins, and our first Weddell seals.

In the afternoon we arrived at Brown Bluff, where conditions remained rugged, but good enough for a dive on an iceberg. This was a landmark and novel dive for many, so spirits were high despite horizontal snow and a bumpy transit in the Zodiacs. Our chosen 'berg was short and long, and in stark contrast to the world above the waves the divers reported the best visibility of the trip so far! Another highlight included little fish sitting in gaps across the iceberg's surface, seemingly grazing on the small patches of algae growing on the ice.



MORNING CRUISE (Photo by Danny Copeland)



HAPPY DIVERS POST-BERG (Photo by Catherine Buckland)

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ANTARCTICA

3rd March 2018

DIVE #11 – ICE BERG & WALL DIVES IN CIERVA COVE

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 12.433, W 060° 93.043

DIVE TIME: 09:55 – 10:50

AVERAGE DEPTH: 18.0m

VISIBILITY: roughly 5m (wall dive & iceberg)

WATER TEMP: 0-1°C

HIGH TIDE: 08:00 (1.85m)

The dive at Brown Bluff left many divers hungry for more time amongst the ice – so on our third morning in Antarctica, we set out in search of a new 'berg in Cierva Cove. Conditions were a lot calmer and flatter than the previous day, but it took us some time to find an iceberg that was suitably safe to dive around. After navigating through brash ice, and spotting a young leopard seal along the way, we settled on a berg fairly close to the shoreline. Divers rolled in with a moody sky and a towering glacier behind them, creating an incredible vista for another memorable polar dive.

But the fun didn't end with our dive. After surfacing, we had some time to cruise around in search of whales. Despite seeing a few humpbacks lounging around at the surface, the truly magical moment came at the gangway, where our divers were blocked from jumping off the Zodiac by two humpback whales sandwiching us as they swam past only several metres away.



OUR SECOND ICEBERG (Photo by Danny Copeland)



HUMPBACK POST-DIVE (Photo by Catherine Buckland)

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ANTARCTICA

3rd March 2018

DIVE #12 – PORTAL POINT

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 30.174, W 061° 45.463

VISIBILITY: roughly 5m

DIVE TIME: 16:30 – 17:45

WATER TEMP: 0°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 17.0m

HIGH TIDE: 21:00 (1.95m)

For our afternoon dive, a small group headed out to a site on the southern side of Portal Point. This was a location that Oceanwide had never dived before. Furthermore, the nautical charts used on the bridge had next to no depth-data for this area – so a truly exploratory, expedition dive!

Divers were greeted with a rocky bottom covered in large red algae / kelp fronds, which gradually sloped downwards at a 45° angle. Overall it was a pretty cool site, with quite a typical Antarctic benthic environment. A particular highlight for one trio included separately spotting three large notothenid fish (*Notothenia rossi*) hiding under the algae and seaweed.



DIVERS AT SURFACE (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



ANDRE & NOTOTHENID FISH (Photo by Danny Copeland)

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ANTARCTICA

4th March 2018

DIVE #13 – BASE BROWN WALL DIVE

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 53.907, W 062° 52.415

DIVE TIME: 09:19 – 10:05

AVERAGE DEPTH: 19.0m

VISIBILITY: 7m (in shallows), less below 5m

WATER TEMP: 0°C

HIGH TIDE: 09:00 (1.82m)

Our thirteenth dive was set to be a real treat! We set out to dive a very scenic wall that lies a short distance from an Argentinian research station called Almirante Brown (or 'Base Brown'). Whilst skies were overcast once again, sea conditions were pretty calm, and surface visibility at the wall was very clear.

Upon arrival, divers were briefly met with three crab-eater seals in the water near the foot of the cliff above. The wall itself plunges down to 40-50m, and was extremely colourful relative to typical Antarctic dives thanks to patches of several kinds of cold-water sponge. This site is a favourite amongst dive guides in Antarctica, and today's conditions helped it become a favourite amongst many of our divers.



BASE BROWN WALL (Photo by Catherine Buckland)



GUIDES IN THE SNOW (Photo by Danny Copeland)

DIVE LOG

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ANTARCTICA

4th March 2018

DIVE #14 – ICEBERG & WALL DIVE IN CUVERVILLE

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 40.913, W 062° 37.640

VISIBILITY: 7-8m

DIVE TIME: 16:30 - 17:12

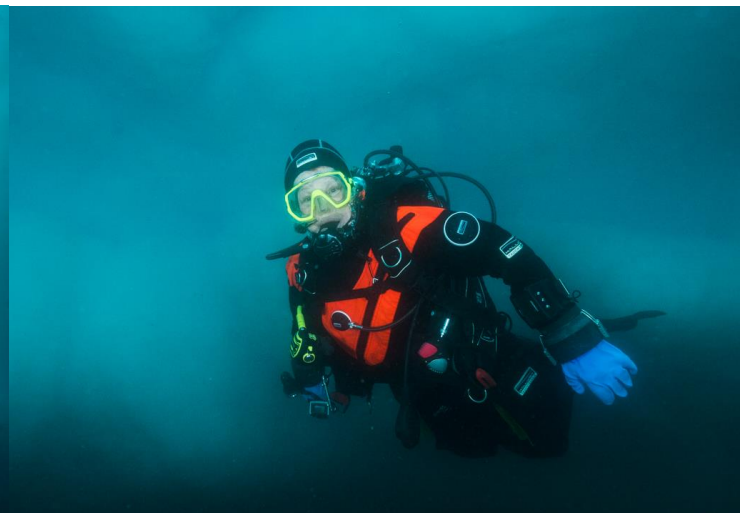
WATER TEMP: 0°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 15.0m

HIGH TIDE: 21:15 (1.71m)

For our final afternoon in Antarctica, our team split into two groups once again. A few divers went to experience another local wall dive, whilst the majority had truly caught the ice-bug, opting for one last dive on a local iceberg.

Our chosen 'berg sat relatively close to shore and was grounded in shallow water. This meant that divers could leisurely swim around it with reduced concerns about depth and how the melt-water would affect their buoyancy. The differing dive conditions relative to our previous icebergs allowed for even greater photo opportunities too, including photographing critters like giant isopods crawling over the seabed with a huge boulder of ice looming in the background. At the end of the dive, some lucky divers were joined by a curious pair of crab-eater seals, who periodically swam up closer to check them out, before slinking through the gaps between the iceberg and seafloor – a truly unforgettable and exhilarating moment for those involved!



DIVING AN ICE BERG (Photo by Danny Copeland)



DIVER WITH THE ICE (Photo by Danny Copeland)



DIVE LOG

17th FEBRUARY – 8th MARCH 2018

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ANTARCTICA

5th March 2018

DIVE #15 – Telefon Bay, Deception Island

LOCATION (GPS): S 62° 55.480, W 060° 38.031

VISIBILITY: 5-7m

DIVE TIME: 08:02 – 08:25

WATER TEMP: 0°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 19.0m

HIGH TIDE: 09:00 (1.98m)

Our final morning in Antarctica saw us rocking up to Telefon Bay in Deception Island, for a dive in a restless volcano! The dive required the team to wake up even earlier than usual – at 05:30am – primarily because a large weather system was due to come through later that morning. We needed to begin our long journey back to Ushuaia before the worst of the weather settled in, but we didn't want to miss out on such an interesting dive if we could still squeeze it in.

Divers descended under a dark, eery sky, surrounded by hills fringed by black volcanic sand. Underwater the seabed dropped quickly, falling from 5m, to 12m, to 25m and beyond over a very short distance. Sadly our dive was cut short after 15 minutes, as weather conditions above the water deteriorated faster than expected – wind speeds had picked up to 30 knots constant and 35 knot gusts! However before being recalled to the Zodiacs, divers hovered over a steep seabed covered in brittle stars and sun stars – akin to a polar version of the famous 'muck dives' that you'd experience in tropical parts of the world.



NEPTUNE'S BELLOWS & TELEFON BAY (Photos by Bruce Robinson)



THANK YOU & SAFE TRAVELS

Thank you to all the divers for making this trip to the Falklands, South Georgia, and the Antarctic Peninsula so entertaining and exciting for everyone involved. Thank you for exploring these polar waters with us, and we wish you safe and awesome diving wherever your travels take you next.

- Catherine, Chris, Andre, Danny

For more information, contact us via:
info@oceanwide-expeditions.com



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