



OCEANWIDE

EXPEDITIONS



DIVE LOG

8th - 19th MARCH 2018

DIVE TEAM

Dive Team Leader: Catherine Buckland

Dive Guides: Chris Booker, Henrik Enckell & Danny Copeland

For more information, contact us via:

info@oceanwide-expeditions.com



The Antarctic Peninsula
& Polar Circle

DIVE LOG

8th – 19th MARCH 2018

MV Plancius – The Antarctic Peninsula & Polar Circle



ANTARCTICA

11th March 2018

DIVE #1 – NEKO HARBOUR

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 50.799, W 062° 31.749

DIVE TIME: 09:34 – 10:25

AVERAGE DEPTH: 12.0m

VISIBILITY: 5m in shallows, 10m at depth

WATER TEMP: 0°C

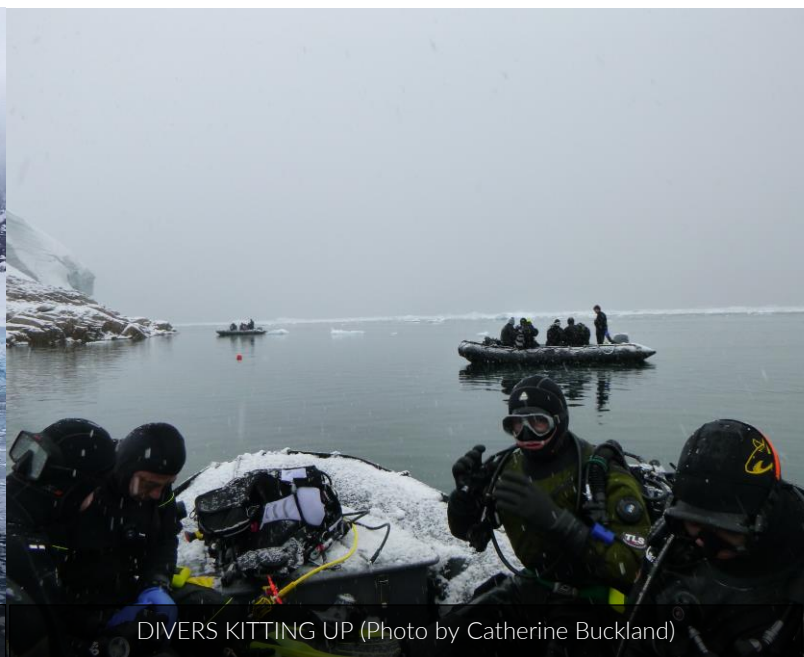
HIGH TIDE: 13:00 (1.05m)

For the first stop on our polar voyage we visited a site in Neko Harbour, where we were greeted with snowy conditions and sea water that was visibly freezing at the surface. 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.

Divers were treated to flat calm water, decent visibility, and an extremely indifferent crab-eater seal that happily swam at the surface close to the Zodiac. Post-dive, humpback whales could be seen raising their flukes and spy-hopping in the ice-field beyond the dive site – an awesome introduction to Antarctica!



ICY CONDITIONS AT DIVE SITE (Photo by Danny Copeland)



DIVERS KITTING UP (Photo by Catherine Buckland)

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DIVE #2 – WALL DIVE NEAR BASE BROWN

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

VISIBILITY: 10.0m

DIVE TIME: 15:30 – 16:30

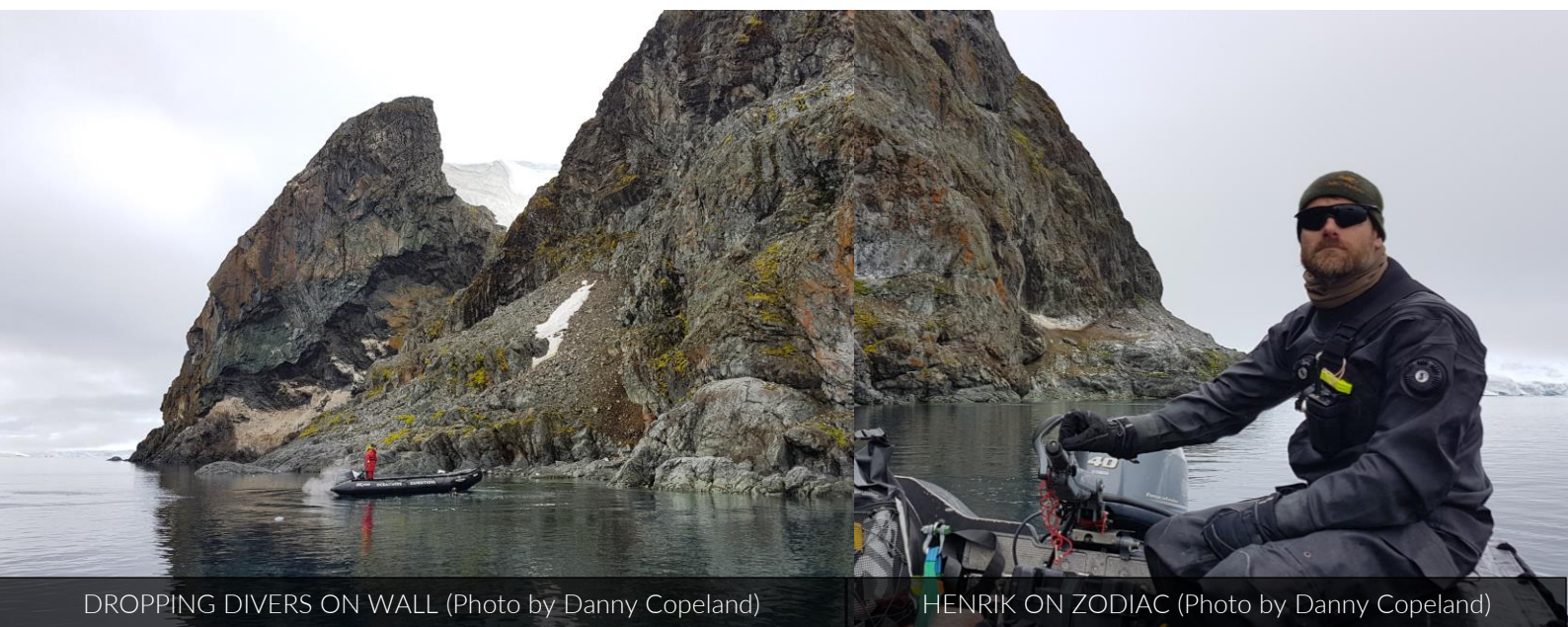
WATER TEMP: 0-1°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 18.0m

HIGH TIDE: 00:00 (1.81m) (2nd HT of day)

Our second dive saw us jump in along a very scenic wall that lies a short distance from an Argentinian research station called Almirante Brown (or 'Base Brown'). Despite spending 15 minutes navigating a field of sea ice between the ship and the site, a small current created a weird natural barrier that prevented the ice from blocking-up the area around the wall.

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. Divers also found an incredibly preserved penguin skeleton, and a large sea gooseberry drifting in the water column. Post-dive, the team watched three crab-eaters swim between the Zodiacs, before we began our long journey back through a maze of ice drifting on pond-like water, with incredible light bouncing off its surface.



DROPPING DIVERS ON WALL (Photo by Danny Copeland)

HENRIK ON ZODIAC (Photo by Danny Copeland)

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ANTARCTICA

12th March 2018

DIVE #3 – PETERMANN ISLAND

LOCATION (GPS): S 65° 10.212, W 064° 08.139

VISIBILITY: <5.0m

DIVE TIME: 09:44 – 10:50

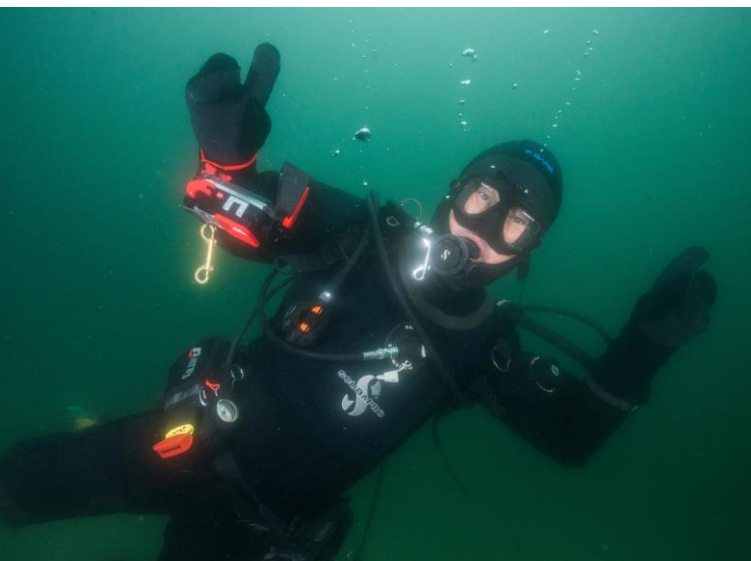
WATER TEMP: 0°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 20.0m

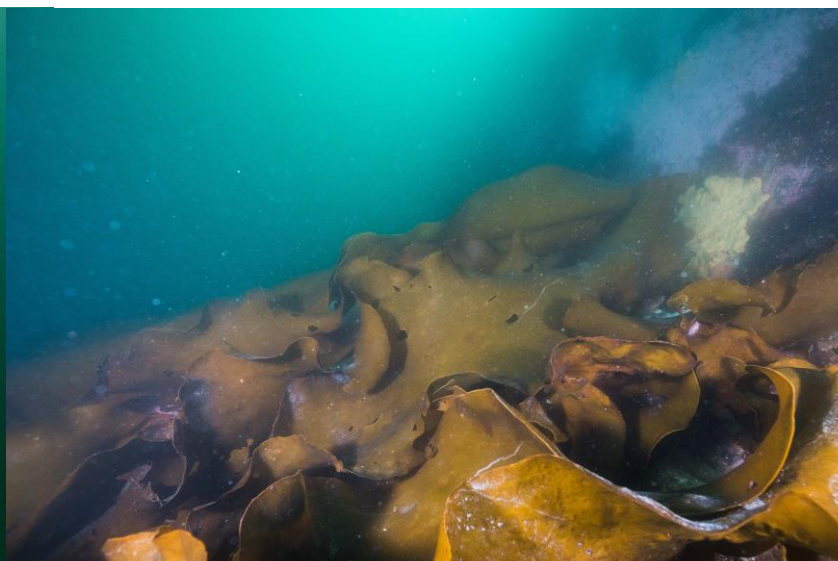
HIGH TIDE: 00:00 (1.62m)

For our third dive in Antarctica, we stopped off at Petermann Island after a brief cruise through the Lemaire Channel. The team split into two, with one group going to snorkel in the shallows in the hope of swimming with penguins, whilst the other group went around the corner for a dive.

The divers rolled in at a U-shaped gully right around the furthest corner of the island, where the rock brushes against a mountain of ice. There was a mini iceberg just inside the gully, so divers started off with a quick circuit around this mini berg, before swimming alongside a wall travelling into the gully and towards the shallows. Visibility was a bit murky, possibly owing to all the penguin poo entering the water from the colony sitting at the surface! Nonetheless, divers found piles of large kelp and sea stars, and were treated to a rare view of penguins looking down at them from the rocks as the divers surfaced.



JACK UP CLOSE! (Photo by Danny Copeland)



KELPY CONDITIONS AT 10 METRES (Photo by Danny Copeland)

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ANTARCTICA

14th March 2018

DIVE #4 – ICEBERG IN PORT CHARCOT

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 54.412, W 062° 56.553

VISIBILITY: 5.0m

DIVE TIME: 09:53 – 10:25

WATER TEMP: 0°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 19.0m

HIGH TIDE: 00:00 (1.61m)

After a day-off from diving due to windy weather below the polar circle, the team set out for a morning dive around one of the many icebergs drifting throughout Port Charcot. This was a landmark and novel dive for many, so spirits were high despite a slightly bumpy transit in the Zodiacs. Our chosen iceberg was short in stature and fairly long, making it the safest iceberg for us to dive in the area.

Divers were stoked with how weird and novel this dive was, remarking on the golfball-sized indentations that are found across the surface of the portion of the iceberg that sits underwater.



OUR CHOSEN ICEBERG (Photo by Daniel Nolthenius)



DIVER AGAINST THE ICEBERG (Photo by Daniel Nolthenius)

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ANTARCTICA

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DIVE #5 – CASABLANCA ISLAND, DORIAN BAY

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 48.618, W 063° 30.660

DIVE TIME: 16:24 – 17:15

AVERAGE DEPTH: 18.0m

VISIBILITY: 10-15m (best vis of trip)

WATER TEMP: 0°C

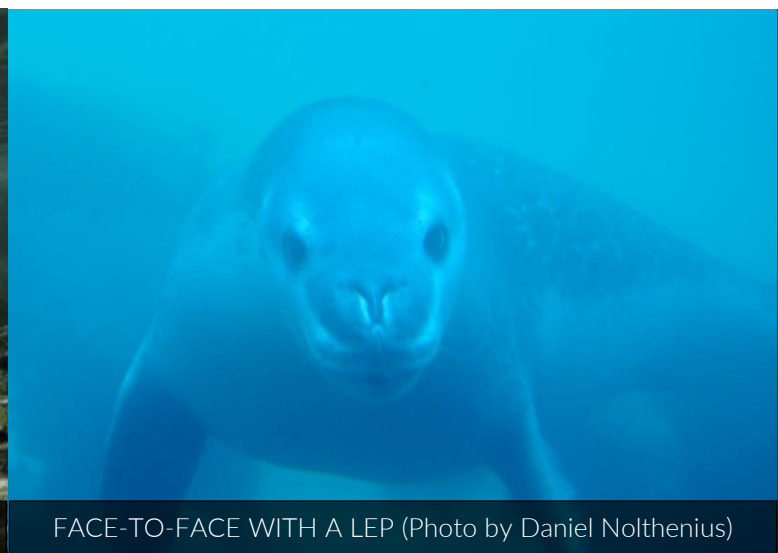
HIGH TIDE: 22:00 (1.27m)

For our fifth dive, the team once again split in two – some opting to go diving around Casablanca Island, whilst the others went snorkelling in search of penguins underwater.

For the snorkelers, their persistence and patience paid off. After calmly sitting in the water in the shallows for 20-minutes, the local Gentoo penguins decided they were all happy to pile into the water to swim around and wash their feathers. They were totally indifferent to the snorkelers, resulting in incredible photos of penguins swimming underwater. Meanwhile at Casablanca Island, the divers surfaced from an incredible dive dominated by exceptional visibility, sun stars, sponges, and various critters. However the fun was just beginning – as divers surfaced, a local leopard seal came over and began interacting with the divers. Fortunately she was a curious individual, and spent the next 15 minutes rolling around at the surface, inspecting everyone's fins and cameras - a once in a lifetime encounter with one of Antarctica's most famed and charismatic predators.



PENGUINS UNDERWATER (Photo by Akiko Kojima)



FACE-TO-FACE WITH A LEP (Photo by Daniel Nolthenius)

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ANTARCTICA

15th March 2018

DIVE #6 – WALL DIVE AT CUVERVILLE ISLAND

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 40.974, W 062° 36.811

DIVE TIME: 09:18 – 10:30

AVERAGE DEPTH: 19.0m

VISIBILITY: 10m along wall's edge/drop-off

WATER TEMP: 0°C

HIGH TIDE: 06:00 (1.5m)

For our morning at Cuverville, our team once again split in two – one opting to do a wall dive, and the other heading closer to shore for another snorkelling session. The Cuverville wall drops down extremely quickly to >80m, so divers swam alongside it and over the deep water below, before rounding a corner onto a shallower shelf-like area. As was becoming typical for our trip, conditions at the surface consisted of fluffy snowfall and glass calm water, thanks to a total lack of any wind. The great conditions extended beneath the waves, with another dive with >10m of visibility on the wall's edge.

Meanwhile, the snorkelers were in for a treat – our second leopard seal of the trip entered the shallows. She was uninterested in the snorkelers, due to the dead penguin sitting in her mouth! Chris recalled the group to the Zodiac, where they proceeded to spend the next 20-minutes watching the seal predate and flay another Gentoo penguin only metres away from the Zodiac!



SNORKELERS WITH PENGUINS (Photo by Chris Booker)



LEOPARD SEAL PREDATION (Photo by Atsushi Nagano)

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15th March 2018

DIVE #7 – GVERNØREN WRECK, FOYN HARBOUR

LOCATION (GPS): S 64° 33, W 062° 1

VISIBILITY: 5-10m

DIVE TIME: 15:50 – 16:40

WATER TEMP: 0°C

AVERAGE DEPTH: 19.0m

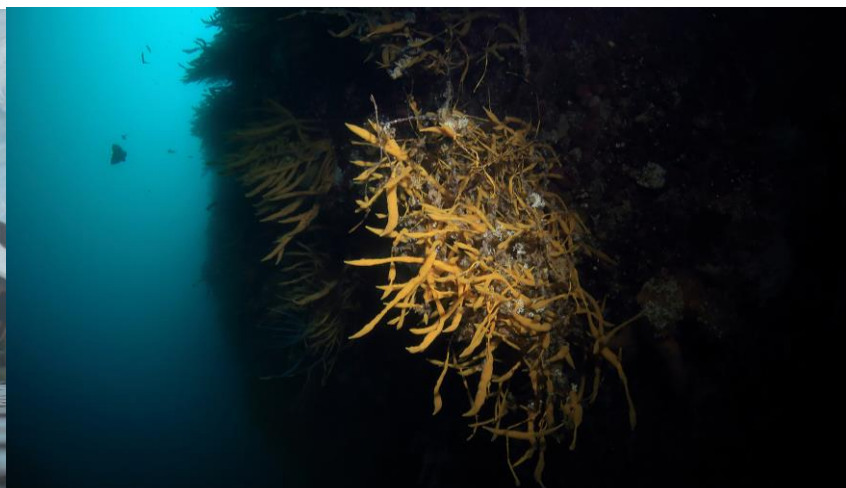
HIGH TIDE: 19:30 (1.84m)

Our seventh dive saw us visit another must-see dive site when down in Antarctica – the Gvernøren wreck of Foyn Harbour. At the time she sank, the Gvernøren was transporting whale oil when she accidentally caught fire. In order to save the valuable cargo, the captain ran her aground in shallow water, where she remains to this day over 103 years later. The bow of the wreck sits above the waterline, whilst the majority of her body sits underwater, with the stern and prop sitting at about 19-22m.

Conditions were calm, quiet, and atmospheric at the surface. Divers jumped in and proceeded to swim down the starboard side of the wreck towards the stern, checking out the marine life that has found a home on the metallic remains. Across her body, divers found large patches of yellow finger-like sponges which grow incredibly slowly in these polar waters. One diver even found a young notothenid fish finding shelter in the wreckage.



WRECK ABOVE WATERLINE (Photo by Daniel Nolthenius)



YELLOW FINGER SPONGES (Photo by Atsushi Nagano)

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16th March 2018

DIVE #8 – WHALER'S BAY, DECEPTION ISLAND

LOCATION (GPS): S 62° 59.325, W 060° 33.443

VISIBILITY: <5m in shallows, 5-7m at depth

DIVE TIME: 08:30 – 09:17

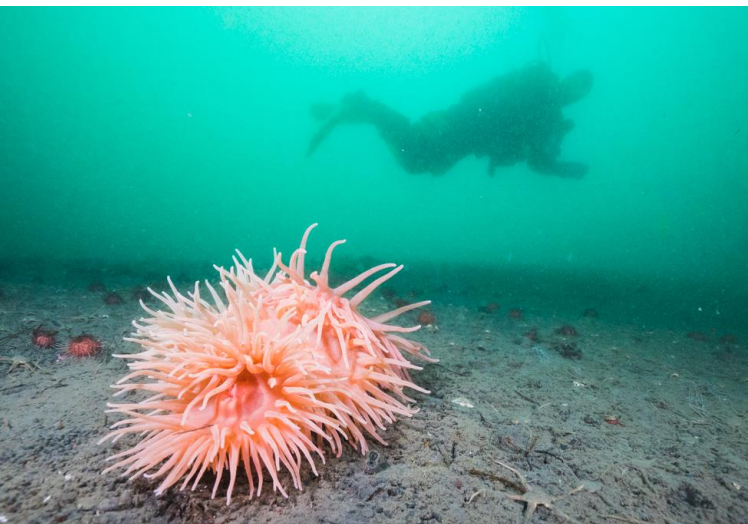
WATER TEMP: 1°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 17.0m

HIGH TIDE: 06:00 (1.82m)

The final day of our trip saw us diving on the edge of the Antarctic Peninsula, with Whaler's Bay, a famous site along Deception Island, was the location for our penultimate dive. Divers rolled in slightly earlier than usual, so the combination of limited morning light, dark volcanic sand, and the promise of whale bones resulted in an extremely eerie and atmospheric dive – one that is quite different from any other location in Antarctica.

The site itself consists of a sloping seabed made of dark, mud-like volcanic sand, which dropped down at a steep 70° gradient into the abyss. At first glance there didn't seem to be much benthic life, but closer inspection revealed a seabed that seems to be half substrate and half made up of wriggling brittle stars! Sitting on top of them were herds of small, red sea urchins, and the occasional sea star and giant trio of anemones. In the shallows, divers found a pile of whale ribs and vertebrae, signalling the history of this eerie site.



ANEMONES ON SLOPE (Photo by Danny Copeland)



DIVERS & WHALE BONES (Photo by Danny Copeland)

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ANTARCTICA

16th March 2018

DIVE #9 – HALF MOON ISLAND, SOUTH SHETLANDS

LOCATION (GPS): S 62° 35.881, W 059° 53.804

VISIBILITY: 10m

DIVE TIME: 15:12 – 16:00

WATER TEMP: 0°C

AVERAGE DEPTH OF DIVE: 17.0m

HIGH TIDE: 19:30 (1.75m)

Our final afternoon of diving saw us rock up to Half Moon Island – a small, crescent-shaped island that sits in the south-west corner of the McFarlane Straits as part of the South Shetlands archipelago.

Conditions had brightened up significantly since the morning in Whaler's Bay, with the sun shining through sporadic clouds. Those that went diving rolled in along the edge of the island facing out of the bay, where they found a slopy site covered in limpets and typical Antarctic fauna. One group of divers found another large salp, whilst a lucky few dived with Gentoo penguins underwater! Unlike many interactions, these penguins stuck around, seemingly playing with the bubbles from their SCUBA units – an incredible way to bid farewell to an epic week of polar diving!



DIVERS DESCEND FOR THEIR FINAL DIVE (Photo by Chris Booker)



THANK YOU & SAFE TRAVELS

Thank you to all the divers for making this trip to the Antarctic Peninsula & Polar Circle 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, Henrik, Danny

For more information, contact us via:
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