



ANTARCTIC PENINSULA (PLA29)
Kayaking Log
28th FEBRUARY - 11th MARCH 2019

Kayak Guide – Alexis Bellezze (AR)



Participants:

Claus	Stefanie	Heeten	Nicholas
Oleg	Todd	Jennifer	Peter
Katie	Danielle	Michael	Brittany
Melanie	Paul		

ORNE ISLAND

03 MARCH 2019 (AM)

The kayakers' first opportunity to get onto the water came about during the expedition's first landing on the Antarctic Peninsula at Orne Island. It was a full zodiac of all 12 kayakers plus Alexis Bellezze (guide) and Ferdinand (zodiac crew driver).

We had the best weather conditions, and we were able to do a nice trip around the bay and had a nice contact with a group of four beautiful Humpback Whales. They were swimming around us, moving away and coming again to interact with us. We followed them from a very close distance, we enjoyed the views of the fluke and the fin and we felt the energy of these peaceful sea mammals. We paddled more than an hour and a half in a complete silence having fun with the icebergs and learning how it is to do kayaking in this environment.





DANCO ISLAND

03 February 2019 (PM)

Beautiful Antarctic weather conditions. Second chance to appreciate the beautiful landscape of one of the most visited places, Danco Island. Hundreds of gentoo penguins around the landing area.

We paddled in a complete quiet bay, looking for icebergs. Everything was in motion. A lot of brash ice, growlers, and bergy bits. Many different ice shapes around us. We were cruising through the ice garden till we finally got to an iceberg with a group of crabeater seals. We were very close to them. They didn't realize our presence and so it was a special moment to take beautiful pictures and see the seals from different spots. Kayakers started to feel more comfortable with the paddling techniques, the gear, and the physical situation of being inside the cockpit.



PETERMANN ISLAND

04 February 2019 (AM)

Definitely the group had a fantastic kayaking experience this morning. We were paddling for 45 minutes till we managed to be close to a tabular iceberg. Was a technical paddle, dealing with a lot of ice, penguins jumping around as, ice floes moving with different speeds, currents around big icebergs, and all with the ship far away from us drifting. Beautiful.

The weather was cold and windy. We faced that and we did it well. We felt the cold and finally we decided to come back to the ship.

Wonderful.



ANTARCTIC POLAR CIRCLE

05 March 2019 (AM)

First time for all of us on the extreme south - the Antarctic Polar Circle. Foggy morning. No wind. Tabular icebergs and a lot of growler icebergs around. The place was quiet and we experienced the vacuum sensation to be far away from the land of the southern continent. Everything was calm. The ocean let us paddle very easy, no waves, just a breeze that was increasing after 40 minutes of paddling. We saw a lot of crabeater seals over the ice and finally we headed to a big castle iceberg which to our surprise was full of snow petrels that came to fly over us in circles.

Our turning back to the ship was just in time. The fog was dense and we almost couldn't see the ship from 150 meters of distance.





VERNADSKY BASE

06 March 2019 (PM)

Cold afternoon. We decided to head to Vernadsky Base through a dense drift of ice that almost closed the entrance of the channel that connects with the base buildings. It was a wonderful experience. Different. We managed to open a path just paddling between many of the ice bits; we were all together in a row and it was fun to do it.

Vernadsky Base from a kayak looks fantastic. And we felt proud that we did it. We continued our trip till Wordie Hut by kayak and it was a surprise for the people who were visiting the place by zodiac to see us there.

After the kayak trip we came back to the ship, changed our clothes, and were able to visit the base by zodiac. This time we realized the size of our adventure—it was difficult for the zodiac to make it because of the ice.





DAMOY POINT

07 March 2019 (AM)

Everybody was ready that morning. Was cold. But all of us were looking for a whale. Everybody was checking the ocean for that. We decided to start our trip at Port Lockroy but a young leopard seal came to us and she was super curious about us. She was close to the zodiacs and to the kayaks, jumping around, from both sides... so we decided to change the area for safety. We moved away to Damoy Point.



When we were ready, and in kayaks on the ocean to start our trip, our crew zodiac driver Gaby alerted us about an adult leopard seal on the area swimming fast in our direction, so



Alexis called all kayakers to move away from the area paddling in a different direction, looking for open ocean. Gaby intercepted the leopard seal and provided excellent distraction with the zodiac until the seal got bored and stopped chasing us.

A tense situation but we managed very well. We continued our trip till we were in front of Damoy Point and we visited the gentoo penguin colony in the area close to the historical hut. After this we visited Neko Harbour (no kayaking in favor of a continental landing!) and then we tried to do some kayaking at Half Moon Island, one of the

South Shetland Islands. But the wind conditions were extremely dangerous to continue so we went ashore instead to enjoy the last landing of the expedition.



I hope you have enjoyed this trip and remember, you are Antarctic Ambassadors now. And more important, you know now that it's our major responsibility be eco-friendly with our planet. It depends on us.

Thank you to let me share this amazing experience with all of you. Keep in touch!

Best wishes,

Alexis (OEX Kayak guide)





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