

# Trip Log Camping

Your Lead Camping Guides were: Saskia van der Meij, Clara Iachette

**23 FEBRUARY 2023. DAMOY POINT / NEUMAYER CHANNEL**

**GPS POSITION: 64°48.4' S / 63°29.5' W**

Our first camping night of the expedition took place at Damoy Point. The landing site is just next to the two historic Damoy huts, one Argentinean, one British. A sailboat anchored at the little bay in front of the landing site meant a slight delay in our itinerary. Nevertheless, we swapped to an alternative landing site (even closer to the camping site!) and arrived at the rocky shore where Anthonie and Saskia were waiting for us. Some metres away Clara showed us where to leave our personal belongings/life jackets and,



after a short briefing, we head up towards the snowy slope where we could dig our own pits for the night.

Night was almost upon us; at this time of year it already gets dark during the night in these high latitudes. As dark advanced some of

us needed to use our head torches to finish digging but within 45 minutes, we were all ready to go to bed. The night was quiet - there was no wind - so we could listen to all the Gentoo Penguins around us. At 2 AM it started snowing, we zipped up our bivvy bags and tried to sleep until the wakeup call at 4:15 AM. Our camping adventure was sadly over but it was a cool night! The snow had frozen a little so filling up the pits was harder than when we started the evening before. Some hadn't sleep that much but it was still a 'once in a live time' experience.

Heading back to the ship we took our sleeping bags to dry on deck 8. After a quick snack and juice in the lounge, some went to bed whilst others prepared for the morning landing and zodiac cruise activities.

## 24 FEBRUARY 2023. HOVGAARD / PENOLA STRAIT

**GPS POSITION: 65°08.7' S / 64°04.6' W**

Around 8:45PM Pippa made the final announcement that we can board the zodiacs for our adventurous night out. We were all excited! We left the Hondius around sunset, the sun covering the surrounding mountains with a soft pinkish light. We arrived at our beautiful camping spot on Hovgaard Island where Saskia greeted us enthusiastically. She



directed us up to Keiron to leave our lifejackets and personal belongings on the tarpaulin, before meeting with Clara. She explained in detail how to dig our snow pits professionally. After that everybody was keen to find their own perfect spot on this spacious snow plateau. We had a

great view over Penola Strait, looking back at the west coast of Graham Island of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Two Weddell Seals kept us company during the night. Some of us heard them sing from time to time - their sound is almost unreal. During the night it started snowing just a little, around 1:00 AM, but nothing that our waterproof bivvy bags couldn't stop us from getting cold or wet. The rest of the night was dry. Unfortunately, the clouds rolled in just after we all settled in our new 'bedrooms' so we did not see any stars, which we had all hoped for. Nevertheless, it was an amazing night and an experience which none of us will ever forget. Three of us even built a snow bench, sitting on their dry bags and enjoyed the evening.



Even though many of us didn't think we could sleep that well, some snoring campers proved us wrong 😊. In the morning we are woken up at around 4:30 AM to be ready for our pickup to head back to the ship at 5:15 AM. Even though it was a little cold for some, everybody loved their expedition in the snow.

On board we went to deck 8 where we unpacked our camping bags and hung the sleeping bags to dry for the next group. After a small pastry snack and a glass of well-earned juice in the lounge most of us went to bed, to be ready again in a few hours to go out on the morning activities at Damoy Point.

## **25 FEBRUARY 2023. LEITH COVE / PARADISE BAY.**

**GPS POSITION: 64°51.8' S / 62°49.5' W**

Wow.....already our third night of camping and just like the previous nights it was an epic!

We found a perfect location on a little island called Leith Cove in Paradise Bay, next to Argentinean Brown Station - a really great location surrounded by glaciers. The night was calm and the sun was just falling when Pippa made the announcement: we were going camping!!



Saskia and Jakub were there at the rocky shore waiting for us. A tricky disembarkation place but worth all the effort to hike up to this amazing camping spot. Elizabeth was kindly waiting to get our personal belongings and lift jackets halfway up the hill and it was time to get our hands on the shovels because our camping pits weren't going to dig themselves. Clara gave some good tips to get us started, but her super helpful-self could not leave the shovel untouched and got round to give help where needed. As usual we saw a lot of creativity - some built castles and mansions, whilst others dug minimalistic body shaped holes that fitted perfectly. However, it had been a busy day, so it was soon time to go to sleep. The chatter faded away to be replaced by some man-made snoring sounds!! We were also treated by the thundering sounds of calving glaciers almost the whole night through. What a unique experience!



It would have been nice to sleep in a little bit since the sleeping bags were so warm and snug, but at 4:45 AM it was time for our pickup and return to our beautiful vessel, Hondius. Pastry chef Melroy had prepared some delicious Danish treats and juices were available to replenish ourselves. Soon after, some of us went to bed to enjoy the comfort of a soft mattress and warm cabin, whereas others clearly decided that sleep was for the

weak. They stayed awake to continue soaking up the breathtaking landscapes and Humpback Whales all around the ship. Another active day awaited, but what a wonderful experience has this been!