

ANTARCTICA - ELEPHANT ISLAND - WEDDELL SEA- POLAR CIRCLE

PLANCIUS 31 -MARCH 8TH-23RD

MARCH 14TH CIERVA COVE

064° 09.180'S 060° 52.523'W

Cierva Cove...always a beautiful place to explore by kayak. This being our first excursion in kayaks the paddlers were eager to explore. We set off towards the red huts scattered across the small headland of Primavera station. Finding open water we carefully disembarked and fully embraced our appetites for adventure. And away! We glided through calm waters towards the rocky coastline of the south side of the bay mouth eager to explore these protected lands. Greeted by towering

icebergs momentarily suspended in time before eventually rolling, splitting, carving and exploding, we were granted safe passage.



Taking in the green cliffs once weighted with glaciated giants now host to mosses, lichens and Antarctic hair grass, we discussed the story of dying glaciers, depositing rich nutritious sediments into the heavy blue waters upon which we were floating. A precursor perhaps of a future Antarctic landscape.

Meandering inquisitively amongst swell washed icebergs we traversed further along the beautiful coastline. Visited by the graceful storm petrels as they danced around us. We concluded our paddle with a moments silence and drank in the air around us, tuning into the sounds of terns chirping and glacier ice calving thunderously into the

sea projecting it's echo of destruction across the bay.

MARCH 14TH - PALAVER ISLAND

064° 09.264'S 061° 45.494'W

As we dropped anchor off the western headland of Two Hummock Island we were dwarfed by towering blue glaciers cascading into the shallow sea. Red patches across old snow instantly giving away the presence of penguins along with that unforgettable scent of guano.

We set out into a moody mist that slowly crept across the ridges of glaciers falling into the sea. The topography of Palaver offered us some protection from slight offshore winds as we explored the rocky coastline littered with young male fur seals, practicing play and showing off their fighting skills. With the odd group of porpoising chinstraps and occasional gentoos, we were never short of



company. Continuing around the small headland and landing sight we stopped to enjoy the sculpted ice that held ground on the shallow shore. The mist grew thicker and hung heavy in the air blanketing the water diminishing our visibility. With a discomfort to continue further with the presence of glacier faces veiled by a curtain of thick cold air we decided to retreat back to where we came.

MARCH 15TH - FOYN HARBOUR
064° 32.480'S 061°59.653'W

The air heavy with fog and snow smothered the mountains tops and

creeping down the slopes keeping the views a secret. Upon arrival we were immediately overwhelmed by the presence of many whales, breaching and playing around the bay of Foyn. Embarking our kayaks around Thor Island with protection from the oncoming northerly wind and swell we explored the rocks and reefs occupied by many of young male fur seals...jousting and fighting, wrestling their way into adulthood. It was not long until we saw our first humpbacks. We grasped the opportunity to paddle with them, kayaking along the bay towards Governoren wreck. Two whales became three, became four, became six. We were overwhelmed by the numbers of these incredible creatures. We sat patiently in the hope they might show us some interest and come to investigate. Eventually our time came as the zodiacs disappeared, we were left to enjoy the company of these giants as they gracefully surrounded us inspecting from below. The white of their fins visible from our kayaks. A moment not to be forgotten.

Now frozen and covered in settling snow we pushed on and parted ways from the whales and headed towards the Governoren wreckage. Having enjoyed some history about the whaling era and the ship wreck that lay silent ahead guarded by ice we finally headed out of the bay and back to the ship in search of tea and hot showers.



MARCH 15th - DANCO ISLAND

064° 43.462'S 062° 35.216W

With strong winds forecasted I was uncertain that we would have the conditions to paddle. However, with NE winds we managed to find shelter and protection on the east side of the island. Calm glassy waters reflecting the moody grey purple of the sky and crystal blue icebergs. Like paintings clinging to the surface of the water. Giant icebergs towered around us as we enjoyed yet



more fur seals, tussling and whistling on the shores of Danco. As the afternoon continued the heavy waters stilled, only broken by the undeniable sound of explosive air as humpbacks gracefully moved through the brash ice. We paddled closer in silence through the slushy ice to see if they might come and visit but unlike Foyn these humpbacks had places to be.

Retreating back to open waters, we took in our surroundings as the paddlers

prepared themselves for the trips polar plunge.

MARCH 16TH PLENEAU ISLAND—

065°06.707S 064°03.874'W

After a beautiful morning passage through the Lemaire channel we popped out into the Penola Strait. With Weddell peak towering to our starboard side we found some lee from the North Easterly wind that was delivering less than ideal winds. Mindful of a changing forecast we looked for shelter between Pleneau and Hovgaard. With protection found we paddled into the surrounding rock gardens. Enjoying the abstraction of red and green snow algae blooming between layers of melting glacier we planned our route accordingly as top not be subject to the oncoming winds. As we paddled quietly through the meandering channels of shallow water we noticed the currents and wind driven swell that begun to wrap itself around us. Hopping between the shelter of rocks we found company with lounging fur seals and sleepy weddells. As the wind picked up our choices for exploration became limited and it seemed our window was closing. When suddenly that undeniable snout and hollow black eyes peered up above the waters surface, gracefully gliding around us with a somewhat unnerving air of curiosity. Having enjoyed our explorative morning of paddling it



felt with wind, current and now curious wild life on the cards, perhaps the universe was telling us something. Not wanting to entertain our friend's curiosities we rafted up and unloaded back into the zodiac. Confronted with strong wind and steel heading back to the ship we were satisfied with our life choices.

MARCH 18TH - DAMOY POINT-

64°48.648S 63°29.841'W

An excellent afternoon paddle at Damoy Point with plenty of icebergs, glacial faces and gentoos to satiate our appetites we enjoyed a somewhat sporty paddle. With onshore winds of 14-16 knots we started our adventure in the protected Dorian Bay. Surrounded by gentoos speeding underneath our kayaks we watched them dart around whilst this years chicks, coming to the end of their moult, played in the shallows away from the danger of peckish leopard seals. As we hand railed the coastline, we continued our gentoo drive by and weaved our way around the ground bergy bits some meeting their end as they melted and crumbled away in the oncoming swell. Further off shore much bigger ice poised on the shallows awaiting higher tides to continue their journey. Dorian bay told a story of ice...with long stretching glacier faces falling into the water, we could see remnants of recent calvings, along with calvings to come as blocks of ice hung suspended in air almost.

As we journeyed towards the headland of Dorian Bay we challenged ourselves to paddle across to Casabianca Island where we met with strong winds with a lack of shelter and a downwind ride we turned around and headed back to the shelter of Dorian. With a quick detour to play in a little surf. I explained that we were now in sport mode which seemed to excite some of the paddlers. To conclude our sporty afternoon we took on the amazing views of the glacier on the west coast of Wiencke Island and took a moment to enjoy the palette of blues, jagged edges of broken ice

contrast with linear melted layers of historical snow creating drawings across the giant wall.



MARCH 19TH - PATAGONIA BAY

064° 27.920' S 063° 11.719'W

We weren't to know that this was our last and final paddle of the trip but what a special outing it was. Patagonia bay was a new location for the team having not explored here before. So ready to head out into the glassy waters undulating under a lazy swell we turned on our expedition mode. We didn't drive far away for the ship, eager to embark our own vessels, we set off into the sleepy

light of the morning. Mist shrouding the wall of glaciers that protected the bay from not-so-distant winds we breathed in our surroundings and tuned into the silence. Our silence and frugal exchange of words gave way to the sounds of rumbling glaciers and calving ice, the social chitter chatter of terns dancing in the air as they hunt for breakfast. Like Foyn the bay was filled with humpbacks, so we decided our mission. We would paddle through the brash ice further into the bay in search of our own cetaceous companions. It did not take long. As we floated amongst the ice, we watched a sleepy humpback and before long we were joined by a mother and calf as they came to within a

couple of feet of the kayaks. In silence we watched as the blows filled the air around us. Overwhelmed by the comfort and trust these creatures displayed by our presence we revelled in their company. Once satisfied they continued with their journey. As we paddled back towards the ship we disembarked for the last time we shared the joy of our encounter and the privilege it had brought us.

