

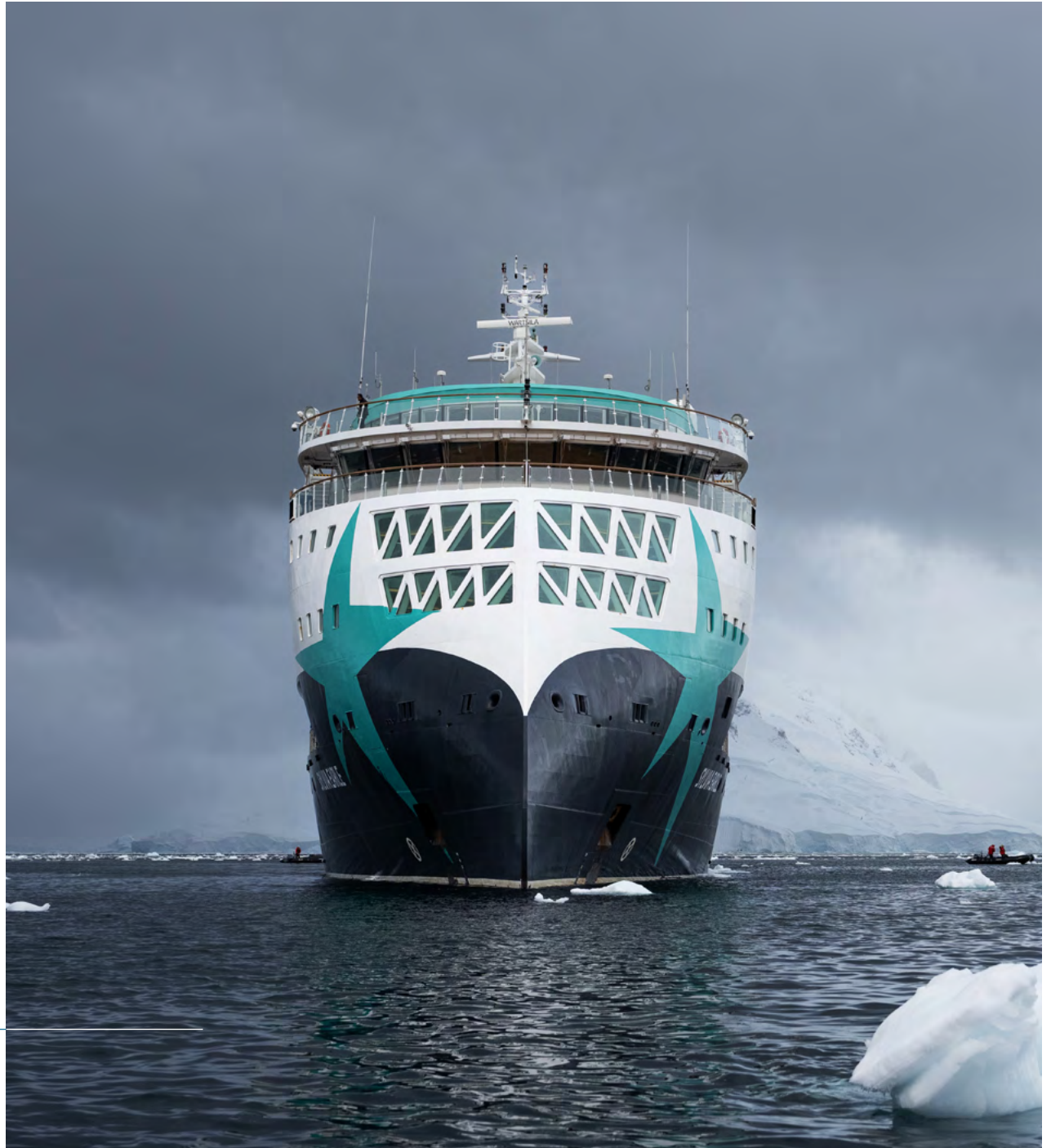
Wild Antarctica featuring the Weddell Sea

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 18 February – 1 March 2026



Wild Antarctica featuring the Weddell Sea

18 February – 1 March 2026



King George Island | Embarkation day

DAY 1 | Tuesday 17 February 2026

Latitude:
62°13' S

Longitude:
58°50' W

Course:
Anchored

Speed:
0 knots

Wind Speed:
0 knots

Barometer:
987 hPa

Air Temp:
2°C

Welcome to your Antarctic expedition. So, you get the idea, plans can change quickly. Despite modern technology, nature still dictates everything we do. The only thing we can guarantee here is that our team will give 100% to make this a trip of a lifetime.

It was a relief to touch down on the gravel airstrip at Frei Station. We snuck in through the only reliable weather window in the next few days (landing at Frei Station is highly dependent on the cloud base). There was only one final leg of the epic journey to go – the Zodiac ride from shore to ship. Luckily, the weather was kind to us, and we arrived dry onboard the *Sylvia Earle*.

After getting our photos taken, our hotel crew awaited us with drinks and a welcome dinner buffet. We could finally relax and look forward to exploring Antarctica.

After dinner, we gathered in the lecture theatre to meet Mark (Expedition Leader) and Rosie (onboard Expedition Manager), who gave us a brief introduction to the ship and the voyage.

The sound of seven-short-one-long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes, bulky orange

lifejackets, and gather at the muster station to sample our safety gear.

Our safety officers and crew guided us up to the lifeboats to get us familiar with their whereabouts.

There are 22 Expedition Team members in total, with various specialties including photography, conservation, oceanography, ornithology, marine biology, cetaceans, geology, glaciology, history, and medicine. In addition to our Expedition Team, we have 87 wonderful ship's crew from all corners of the world, here to look after everything from your cocktail order to keeping the engines running.

We total 116 Expeditioners: 38 Australians, 30 Americans, 21 Chinese, 9 British, 6 Canadians, 2 from Hong Kong, 2 Malaysians, 2 Spanish, 2 Swiss, 1 Swedish, 1 from Singapore, 1 from Germany, and 1 from Guernsey. That includes our four whale researchers from the University of California.

Cruising into the night, we were met by a gentle swell in the Bransfield Strait. The South Shetland Islands disappeared behind us as we made our way towards 'Antarctica Proper'.

At Sea | Fridtjof Fjord

DAY 2 | Wednesday 18 February 2026

Latitude:
62°59' S

Longitude:
58°23' W

Course:
143°

Speed:
5.1 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots WNW

Barometer:
986 hPa

Air Temp:
0°C

We woke up to the movement of the ship lightly rolling on the gentle waves of the Southern Ocean – our first morning in Antarctica. As the *Sylvia Earle* was slowly making her way towards the Antarctic Sound and the Weddell Sea, we enjoyed breakfast just above the silver reflection of the ocean surface.

The welcome briefing by the Expedition Leadership Team, Mark and Elena, provided us with all the necessary information about the ship and the practicalities of our voyage ahead. The Expedition Team introduction gave us a first impression of the team that will be leading us through the ice, oceans, and rocks during the coming days. From experienced kayak and snorkelling guides to glacier and penguin experts, historians, and Zodiac managers, the range of expertise and experience left us in no doubt that we will be in good hands during our adventure.

We then went through a thorough biosecurity session to prepare for our first physical contact with Antarctica. With the help of the Expedition Team, we inspected all our polar clothes for potential traces of seeds or other hazards to the pristine Antarctic ecosystem. We then checked and sanitised our Muck Boots, poles, and tripods in the mudroom, and had a detailed fitting of our jackets. We are ready for Antarctica.

After lunch, the kayakers, paddlers, and snorkellers had their activity briefings, where they were introduced to all operational details and safety requirements. Excitement kept rising while listening and going through all the preparations – we can't wait to get out onto and into the icy waters.

Our entrance from the Antarctic Sound into the Weddell Sea took us through challenging waters full of ice and currents.



At Sea | Fridtjof Fjord

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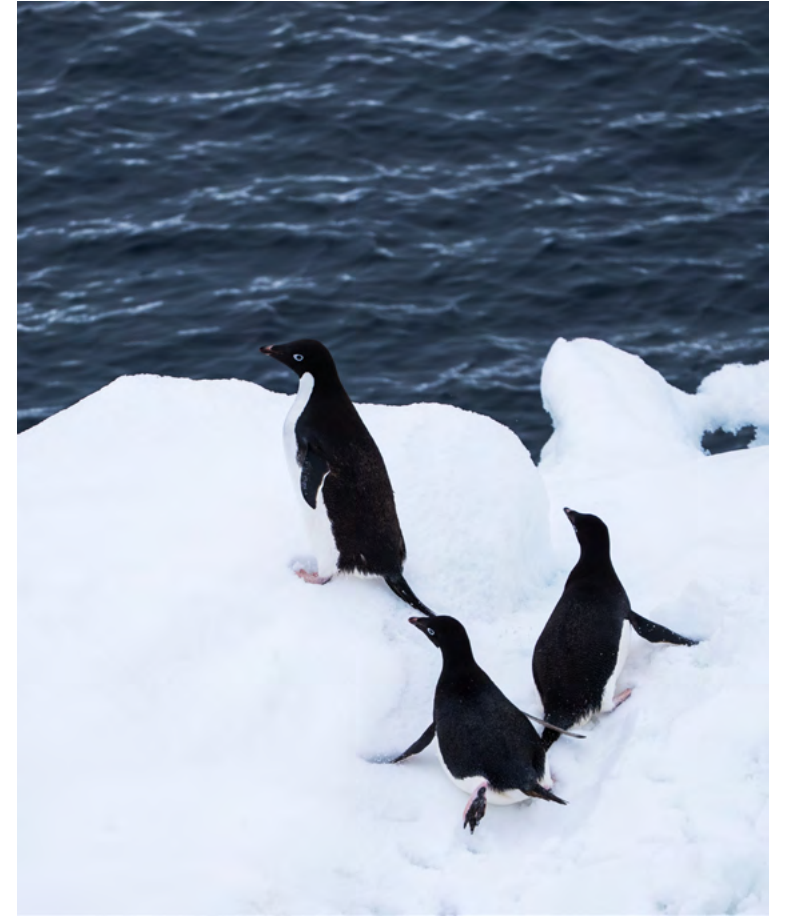
A masterpiece of navigation by the captain, flanked by impressive mountains and glaciers on both sides.

The next step was the Zodiac briefing by our Zodiac Manager, Nacho, who explained everything from technical foundations to how to step safely into and out of a Zodiac. Fully briefed for our first landing the next day, we relaxed with a cocktail or wine and got to know our fellow travellers a bit better. The Captain's Welcome reception provided us with more delicious drinks and canapés, and Captain Andrey and his team welcomed us officially onboard the *Sylvia Earle*. As we finished the day with inspiring conversations and breathtaking views of Weddell Sea ice and landscapes over dinner, anticipation built for our upcoming adventures the next day.











Nordenskjöld's Hut | Cockburn Island

DAY 3 | Thursday 19 February 2026

Latitude:
64°19' S

Longitude:
57°02' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
0 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots E

Barometer:
993 hPa

Air Temp:
-3°C

We woke up to a calm, icy stretch of the Weddell Sea. The dark spires of the mountains on Snow Hill Island towered before us as we approached the shore, which had temporarily opened for us. For many of the Expedition Team, it was a first. Even for those with years of visiting this site, it is common to only see it from a distance or from a Zodiac.

But suddenly, we were standing at the front door of Nordenskjöld's cabin from his Antarctic winters in 1902–1903. The inside of the cabin was small but cosy and well maintained by the Argentine government. Outside in the garden were remains from the magnetic observatory and an impressive pile of fossils found in the area. Our geologist, Sydney, was excited, poking around in the riverbed and proclaiming the age of her findings, which were tens of millions of years old and therefore quite 'young'.

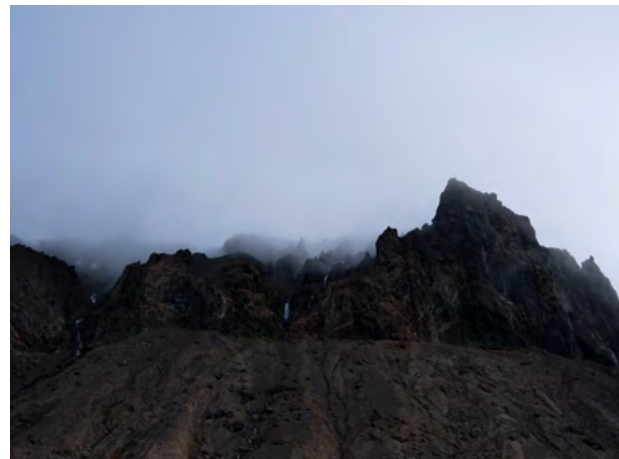
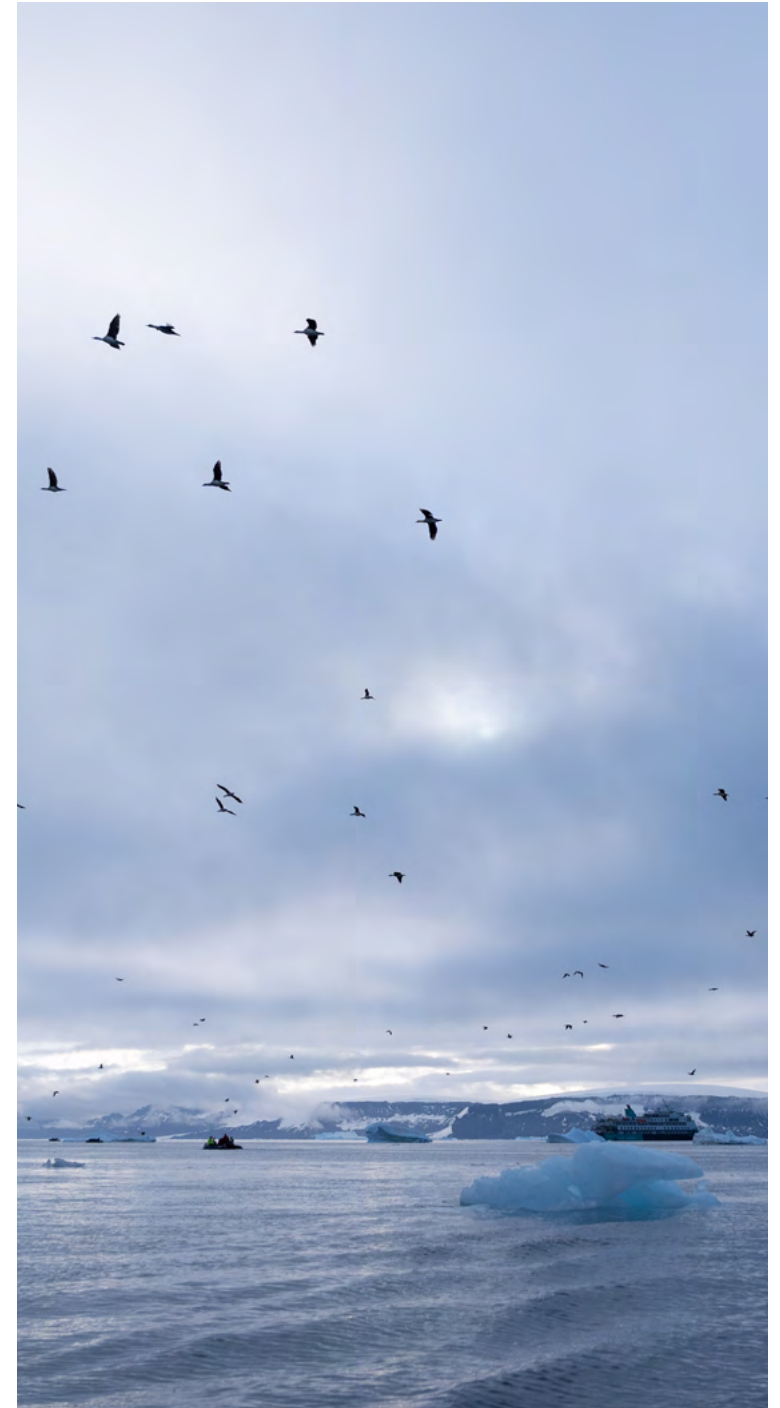
Many of us walked along the shore, watching a sea that stretched to infinity, large ice floes dotting the horizon. We walked up to a viewpoint behind the hut, where our alpine specialist, Mike, stood at the summit and kept watch over our landing site.

Once back on the ship, our captain navigated south through the ice, which got denser by the minute. It felt like the world was closing in. Large panes of ice floated by, and we could watch the bow of ship pushing through the jagged floes. Eventually, the sea told us it was time to turn back, and so we headed north.

Our destination was Cockburn Island, where we went on a Zodiac cruise in the evening light. Shags and Adélie penguins surrounded us, and flocks of shags flew back to their colony in the evening-lit sky. We drove around mighty icebergs and sea ice, a stunning introduction to Antarctica.













View Point | Devil Island

DAY 4 | Friday 20 February 2026

Latitude:
63°32' S

Longitude:
57°17' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
4.3 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots SW

Barometer:
994 hPa

Air Temp:
-1°C

Overnight the wind had dropped and by morning the world beyond our cabin windows had turned into a soft blur of white. When a few of us pulled back the curtains, we were surprised to find an unexpected visitor perched nearby, a snow petrel. The heavy snowfall had grounded several birds during the night, and while we slept the Expedition Team had been out in the cold, carefully gathering and releasing them.

With the birds safely back where they belonged, it was time for us to step into our own adventure. We headed ashore for our first landing of the day at View Point in Duse Bay, our first continental landing.

There is something special about setting foot on the Antarctic continent for the first time. The air was sharp and stung any exposed skin, but it did nothing to dull the beauty around us.

Snowflakes drifted steadily as we crunched towards a small bright orange refuge hut that stood out against the black-and-white landscape.

Just out from the hut, we found crabeater seal bones scattered nearby, stark reminders of the sealing days and the human stories etched into this remote place.

A steady climb up the hill behind the hut soon warmed us. From the top, we looked back over ice-filled bays and the tiny splash of orange below, feeling wonderfully small in such a vast place.

Back on board, just as lunch was wrapping up, our Expedition Leader Mark came over the PA system urging us outside. Orca had been spotted. At first they were distant fins among the ice, but with patient navigation from our captain



View Point | Devil Island

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Longitude:
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Course:
Variable

Speed:
4.3 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots SW

Barometer:
994 hPa

Air Temp:
-1°C

they came closer. Then came the moment: twelve of them in a line, gliding effortlessly beneath our bow, a moment many of us will not forget. In the deep blue water we could see every detail, from their bold white markings to their huge, plate-sized pectoral fins steering them with slow, effortless power just beneath the surface.

Reluctantly we left them to make our landing at Devil Island. The island is known for its series of low-lying hills, two of which rise side by side in shapes that have often been said to resemble devil's horns, a likeness that inspired its dramatic name among early sailors navigating these stark and sometimes foreboding waters.

Adélie penguins covered the shore. Chicks at every stage of moulting shuffled about in patchy coats, some still fluffy and

grey, others nearly in sleek adult plumage. Many chased any adult they could for a hopeful feed, while skuas patrolled the edges, occasionally taking a weaker chick, a raw glimpse of life here. Some of us climbed the peak behind the colony for one last sweeping view, a fitting end to an extraordinary day in the Weddell Sea.

















At Sea towards Western Antarctic Peninsula

DAY 5 | Saturday 21 February 2026

Latitude:
63°32' S

Longitude:
57°17' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
4.3 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots SW

Barometer:
994 hPa

Air Temp:
-1°C

While the Weddell Sea had a few more secrets to share, the unpredictable Antarctic weather had other plans. To steer clear of an incoming storm, we made the call to head towards the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula a little earlier than expected. The 'silver lining'? A much-needed sleep-in after our whirlwind of activity over the last few days.

The morning kicked off with the resolution to a true Antarctic cliffhanger. Our historian, Kelsey, finished the harrowing tale of the Nordenskjöld expedition. After seeing the remarkably preserved hut on Snow Hill and gazing at 'Cape Well Met' from Devil Island just yesterday, hearing about those serendipitous encounters and their unbelievable luck felt incredibly real. It is hard to fathom how they survived, but it certainly made us appreciate our warm ship even more.

Before lunch, the ship's laboratory was buzzing. Eddie led our FjordPhyto workshops, diving into the world of the 'invisible forest'. We examined phytoplankton samples collected yesterday by our snorkellers at Devil Island. These tiny organisms are the unsung heroes of the Antarctic; as the base of the entire food web, they turn sunlight into energy that eventually fuels the krill, which in turn feeds the giants we came here to see. Without this microscopic green engine, there would be no 'happy whales'.

Speaking of food, lunch featured a sea-day classic: shrimp fried rice, which fuelled us for a big afternoon in the lecture theatre. We were joined by 'the whalers', our resident research team from the University of Santa Cruz (including Drs Logan Pallin and Ryan Jones, George Colaco, and TR). They shared insights into their work with the Friedlaender Lab, using state-



At Sea towards Western Antarctic Peninsula

DAY 5 | Saturday 21 February 2026

Latitude:
63°32' S

Longitude:
57°17' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
4.3 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots SW

Barometer:
994 hPa

Air Temp:
-1°C

of-the-art tools like remote biopsy sampling and drones to study whale physiology and behaviour. The highlight was the drone footage of a massive pod of orcas that approached our ship yesterday. They also gave us a masterclass on identifying the most iconic marine mammals of Antarctica, from humpbacks with their unique fluke patterns to the various ecotypes of Antarctic killer whales.

Of course, no sea day is complete without the chefs spoiling us. Afternoon tea was a decadent spread of hummingbird and red velvet cakes, pecan tarts, and key lime cheesecake. The sweet potato scones with whipped cream and the ice cream with burnt caramel banana sauce were so tempting that a few Expeditioners whispered about skipping dinner entirely.

Our Chief Engineer, Victor, received the ultimate birthday gift: spotting a breaching humpback whale right in front of the ship. It was a spectacular reminder to always keep an eye on the big blue.

As evening fell, Fiona, our Expedition Photographer, helped us sharpen our skills during her smartphone photography workshop. She also introduced the final voyage slideshow – we cannot wait to see everyone's best shots on the big screen.

Finally, our Expedition Leader, Mark, laid out the roadmap for tomorrow. We are officially moving to the Western Peninsula, aiming for the famous Wilhelmina Bay in the morning. Known as a premier feeding ground, we hope to find plenty of humpbacks feeding on krill before they begin their long migration north for the winter.



Wilhelmina Bay | Useful Island

DAY 6 | Sunday 22 February 2026

Latitude:
64°37' S

Longitude:
62°12' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
4.3 knots

Wind Speed:
0 knots

Barometer:
981 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

This morning we arrived in Wilhelmina Bay to an extraordinary scene – whales were everywhere. In every direction we could see blows, dark backs rolling through the water, and flukes lifting before deep dives. It felt like being inside a living marine sanctuary. Kayakers launched early, paddling quietly among the whales, while snorkellers also prepared and entered the water, hoping for a close encounter beneath the surface.

The weather was overcast, creating a moody and dramatic atmosphere. At one point, small hail began to fall, briefly sprinkling the sea and our jackets before stopping as suddenly as it had started. Even with the shifting weather, the landscape was breathtaking – glaciers, steep mountains, and floating ice under soft grey light, a truly classic Antarctic scene.

During the reposition, we sailed through the Gerlache Strait, and the wildlife spectacle continued. Whales passed close to the ship, making the transit as exciting as any landing. Many of us stayed out on deck 8, not wanting to miss a single moment.

In the afternoon, we planned a landing at Useful Island. However, expedition travel always requires flexibility, and conditions led to a change of plans. Instead of landing, we enjoyed a Zodiac cruise around the area – a decision that turned out to be incredibly rewarding. We observed humpback whales feeding and travelling, numerous penguins porpoising through the water, Antarctic fur seals resting on the rocks, and several calm Weddell seals hauled out nearby.

All activity groups were out exploring, spread across the bay in different directions, creating a lively yet peaceful scene on



Wilhelmina Bay | Useful Island

DAY 6 | Sunday 22 February 2026

Latitude:
64°37' S

Longitude:
62°12' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
4.3 knots

Wind Speed:
0 knots

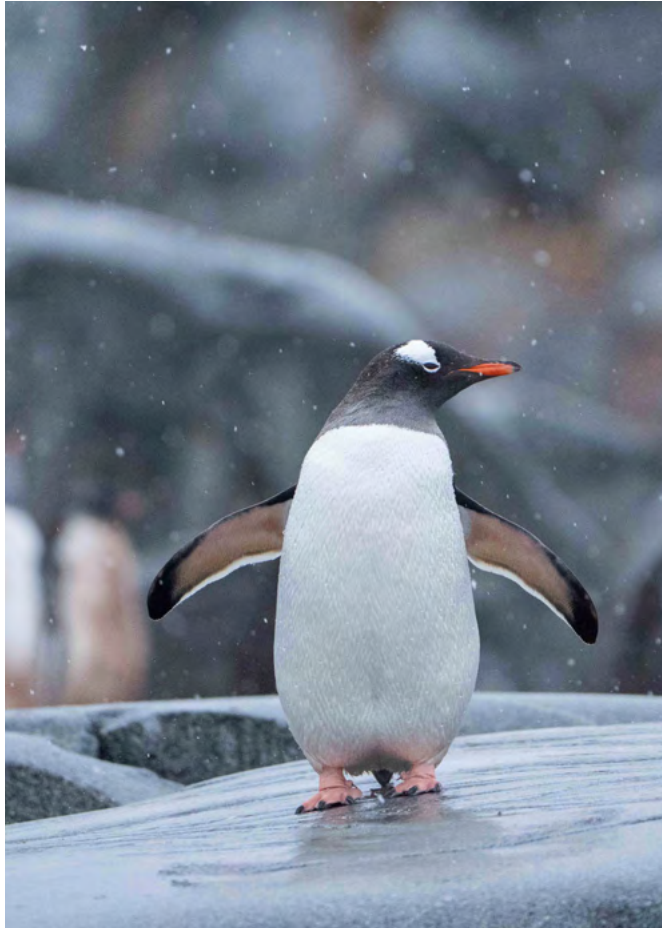
Barometer:
981 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

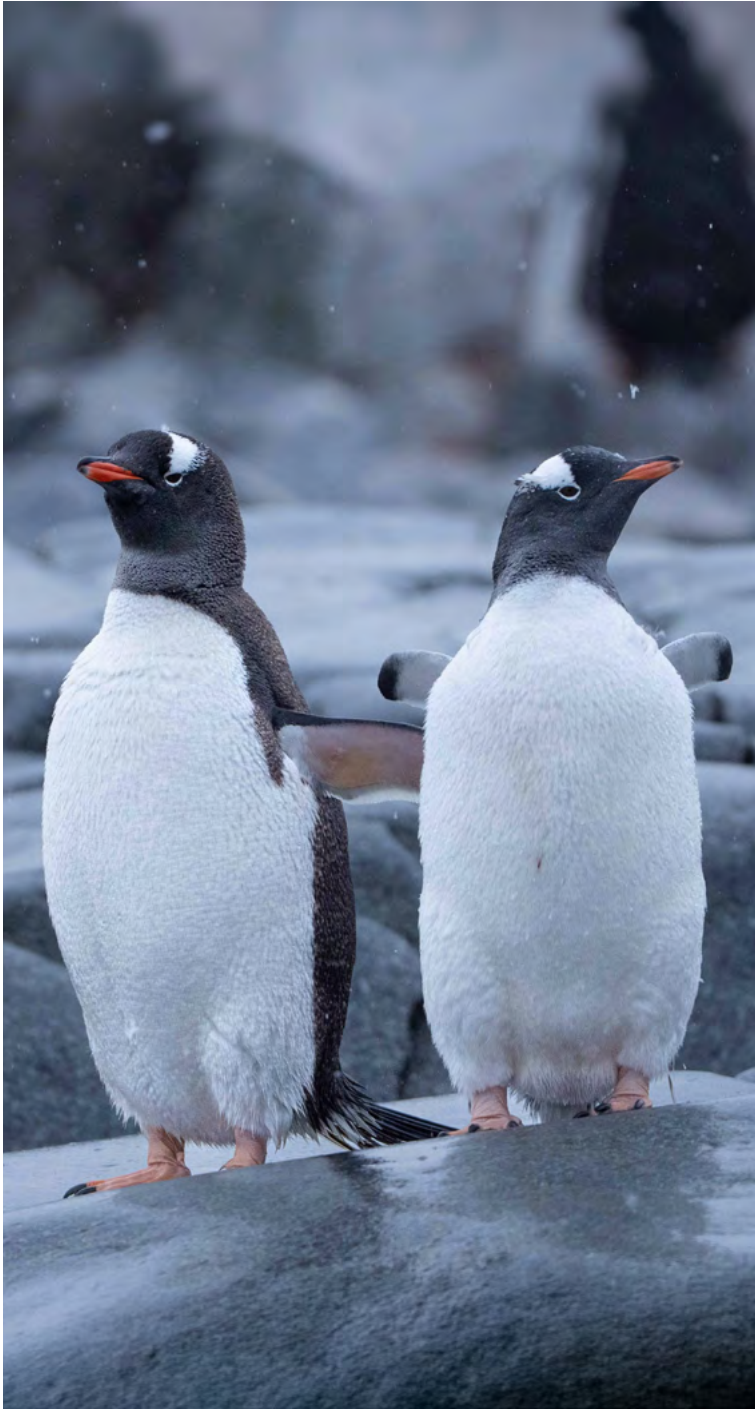
the water. Rain fell at the beginning of the outing, adding to the wild Antarctic feeling, but toward the end the sky began to open. Light broke through the clouds, illuminating the ice and mountains, and a beautiful rainbow appeared across the bay.

During dinner, our captain surprised us with a ship cruise through the Neumayer Channel. Many of us left the dining room to go outside, not wanting to miss this special passage. The channel was calm and narrow, with towering mountains and glaciers rising on both sides, reflected softly in the water. The evening light and low clouds created a peaceful, almost dreamlike atmosphere – a perfect and unforgettable ending to a day full of wildlife, changing weather, and Antarctic magic.















Port Lockroy | Jougla Point | Moreaux Islands

DAY 7 | Monday 23 February 2026

Latitude:
64°49' S

Longitude:
63°30' W

Course:
Variable
Speed:
Variable

Wind Speed:
2 knots NW

Barometer:
998 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

We awoke from our slumber to the soothing sound of Expedition Leader Mark's voice. Calm conditions and sunshine, two qualities that the resident Port Lockroy crew would not describe as common in this corner of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Breakfast was had and the invitation was extended to the Port Lockroy crew as well before we were briefed by them on the history of the British Antarctic Survey Base A and Operation Tabarin, which occurred during the Second World War. Our morning operation was split into two landings where we either visited Jougla Island or Port Lockroy and then vice versa. In addition, the kayakers, paddlers, and snorkellers were out and about in the morning's activities.

The morning highlight was a toss-up – whether it was buying postcards and goods from the post office or watching a

leopard seal devour some unfortunate gentoo penguins. Memories were made by all. Upon the conclusion of our operation we had a team photo on deck 8, where the Seven Sisters peaks were glistening in the background as the sun shone on our smiling faces.

In the afternoon we visited the Moreaux Islands as part of the Flandres Bay region. We participated in a Zodiac cruise, snorkel, or kayaking session which lasted two hours. There were several whales that surfaced, and some were even fortunate to see leopard and Weddell seals on the ice. Some of the icebergs were gigantic in the foreground, which is very impressive given that the vast majority of the ice is underwater (approximately 85–90%). There was also a massive archway which looked like a portal into a new dimension.



Port Lockroy | Jougla Point | Moreaux Islands

DAY 7 | Monday 23 February 2026

Latitude:
64°49' S

Longitude:
63°30' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
Variable

Wind Speed:
2 knots NW

Barometer:
998 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

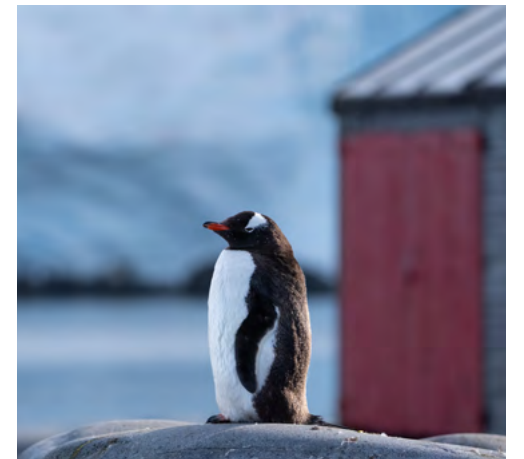
After our afternoon operation we had a briefing and BBQ on deck 8, which was enjoyed with a wide array of silly hats. The hotel team put out a wide spread of food which was very tasty indeed. As we proceeded out of Flandres Bay in the evening there were many humpbacks to spot, some of which were lunge feeding and displaying 'whaley' behaviours which had a direct correlation to our happiness. All in all, I would give the day two thumbs up, which is the highest score one can give.











Spert Island | Palaver Point

DAY 8 | Tuesday 24 February 2026

Latitude:
63°85' S

Longitude:
60°95' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
Variable

Wind Speed:
2 knots NW

Barometer:
992 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

Tuesday dawned fine and bright with patches of blue sky and sun as the *Sylvia Earle* rolled gently in the swell on the approach to the dramatic cliffs, gulches, and icebergs of Spert Island. The sea conditions were quite a contrast to yesterday, with a sizeable swell from the northwest creating a chaotic sea on the exposed side of the island.

The swells hitting the cliffs and bouncing back to collide with the incoming waves were quite a sight, but not so conducive to extended cruising on the seaward side of the island. In pairs, the fleet of Zodiacs poked their bows carefully into the bouncy seas before returning to the lee of the island for a lovely cruise along the southern coastline. For a short time, a dark sky and snow flurries threatened, but no sooner were jackets zipped and hoods raised than it was all over and the day resumed bright and windless.

There were numerous fur seals playing in the surging waves and even more lolling about on the rocks and beaches above the waterline. On one rocky beach, a flock of swooping Antarctic terns caught our attention; they must have had young chicks nearby as they were dive-bombing the fur seals. As we progressed along the shore, a wide gulch formed by towering cliffs beckoned and it was calm enough to explore. Sadly, the morning's adventures had to come to an end and it was time to return to a warming cup of hot chocolate in the mudroom and the comforts of the *Sylvia Earle*.

Over lunch the anchor was raised and the *Sylvia Earle* set course for Palaver Point on Two Hummock Island, providing a couple of hours of downtime before the afternoon activities.



Spert Island | Palaver Point

DAY 8 | Tuesday 24 February 2026

Latitude:
63°85' S

Longitude:
60°95' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
Variable

Wind Speed:
2 knots NW

Barometer:
992 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

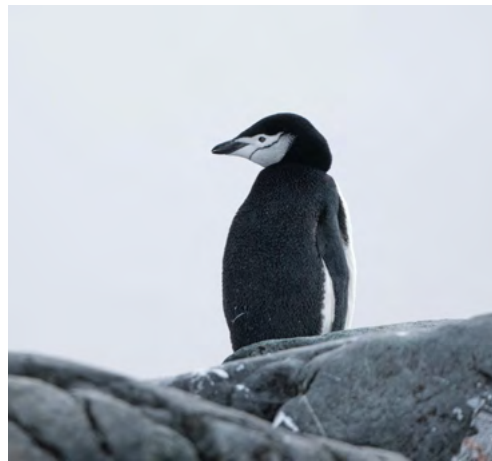
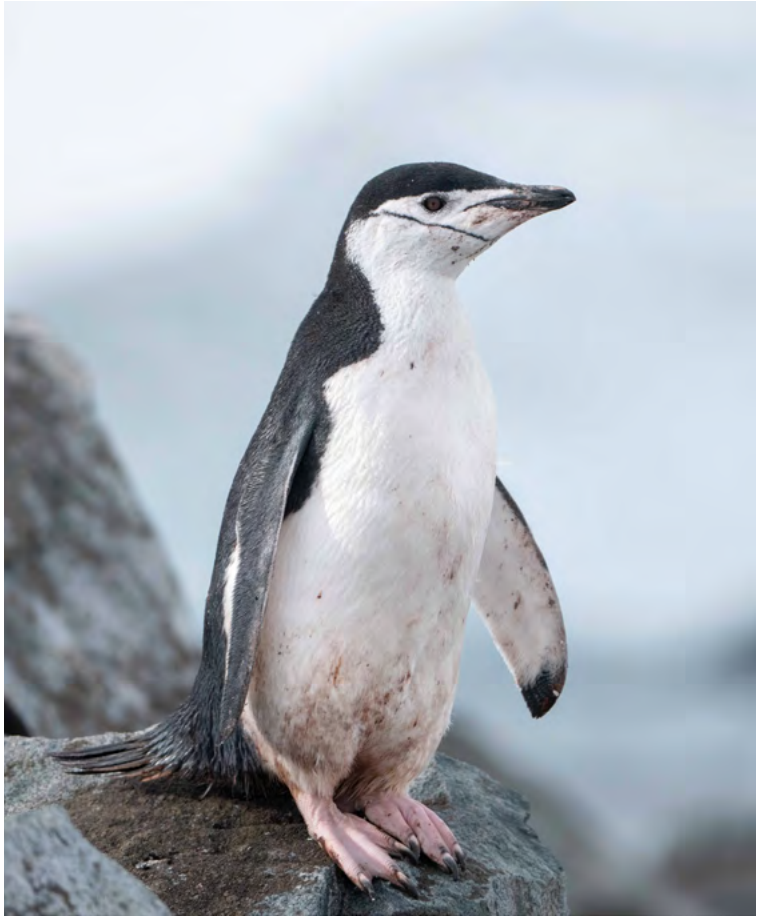
On arrival at Palaver Point, despite being ready and raring to go, fourteen enthusiastic kayakers were disappointed when the wind was determined to be just too strong for safe kayaking, so a quick change saw them join the shore parties to check out the chinstrap penguin colony and climb to the high point for panoramic views over the Gerlache Strait and southwest towards Brabant Island. Eight snorkellers were some of the first off the ship for about half an hour in the water before returning to the *Sylvia Earle* to change for their trip ashore.

So another adventure-filled day on the *Sylvia Earle* comes to an end. Photos were taken, lifetime memories made, and we are all set to do it again tomorrow.















Recess Cove | Brialmont Cove

DAY 9 | Wednesday 25 February 2026

Latitude:
64°30' S

Longitude:
61°32' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
3.2 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots W

Barometer:
1000 hPa

Air Temp:
2°C

The morning began quietly at Recess Cove, though the stillness did not last long. A soft rain fell over the water, turning the surrounding glaciers into muted silhouettes of blue and white. From the decks, we could watch low clouds drift lazily across the peaks while the crew prepared the Zodiacs. The air felt sharp and clean, and every breath carried the faint scent of brine and ice.

Once we boarded the Zodiacs, the rain intensified slightly, dimpling the steel-grey surface of the cove, but it only added to the atmosphere. The small inflatable boats manoeuvred quietly among scattered brash ice, weaving between floating shards that knocked gently against the hull. It was not long before the first whale surfaced. A dark back arched smoothly through the water, followed by the unmistakable plume of a

blow rising into the misty air. Then another appeared, and another. After cruising for some time, we made a continental landing on the west side of the Peninsula. We hiked up the glacier to the high point, with a fantastic view of the cove. We could still see whales surfacing, as well as the little dots floating on the water's surface – the snorkellers, kayakers, and paddlers enjoying the place from a very different perspective.

By afternoon, the mood shifted to anticipation and excitement as we approached Sprightly Point. The ship pushed through a dense stretch of brash ice to reach clearer waters for the polar plunge. Gradually, a patch of open water emerged, and again whales appeared, blows erupting in the distance. A gentle swell rolled through the bay as the Expedition Team assessed the conditions. It was a go.



Recess Cove | Brialmont Cove

DAY 9 | Wednesday 25 February 2026

Latitude:
64°30' S

Longitude:
61°32' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
3.2 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots W

Barometer:
1000 hPa

Air Temp:
2°C

After preparation of the Zodiacs, the platform, and the safety team, all the courageous plungers gathered in the mudroom. Music was playing, people were laughing and dancing in anticipation of a very cold dip. For all 35 brave people, the shock was no doubt immediate and overwhelming, but it resulted in more smiles and excitement once back onboard the warm ship.

We rolled into recap and briefing, followed by dinner and a movie night about Ernest Shackleton's legendary Antarctic expedition, with another great day behind us.







Deception Island

DAY 10 | Thursday 26 February 2026

Latitude:
62°58' S

Longitude:
60°36' W

Course:
334°

Speed:
3.5 knots

Wind Speed:
7 knots W

Barometer:
994 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

We awoke to a still, grey morning as our ship approached Deception Island, one of Antarctica's most dramatic and storied destinations. Ahead of us lay Neptune's Bellows, the narrow, jagged gateway into the flooded caldera. Steep cliffs rose on either side as we threaded our way through the passage, the swell surging against dark volcanic rock. It felt like entering another world, and in many ways, we were. Inside lay the vast sheltered harbour formed by a collapsed volcano.

Our plan had been to land at Telefon Bay, a striking landscape shaped by more recent eruptions. However, Antarctica had other ideas. Powerful winds swept down from the heights, whipping the water into whitecaps and making a landing unsafe. Instead, we gathered in the lounge where Kelsey and Sydney delivered an engaging lecture on the island's extraordinary history and volatile geology. We learned how

successive eruptions reshaped the coastline, how the caldera was formed, and how this natural harbour once became a hub of human industry in an otherwise wild place.

By afternoon, conditions had eased, allowing us to make a landing at Whalers Bay. The black volcanic sand crunched under our boots as we stepped ashore. Rusting boilers, oil tanks, and the skeletal remains of old wooden buildings stood as stark reminders of the early 20th-century whaling era. The island later served as a research base, and abandoned structures from those chapters remained scattered across the beach, haunting, fascinating, and slowly being reclaimed by the elements.

Many guests hiked up Ronald Hill, rewarded with sweeping views across the caldera and out towards the Bransfield Strait.



Deception Island

DAY 10 | Thursday 26 February 2026

Latitude:
62°58' S

Longitude:
60°36' W

Course:
334°

Speed:
3.5 knots

Wind Speed:
7 knots W

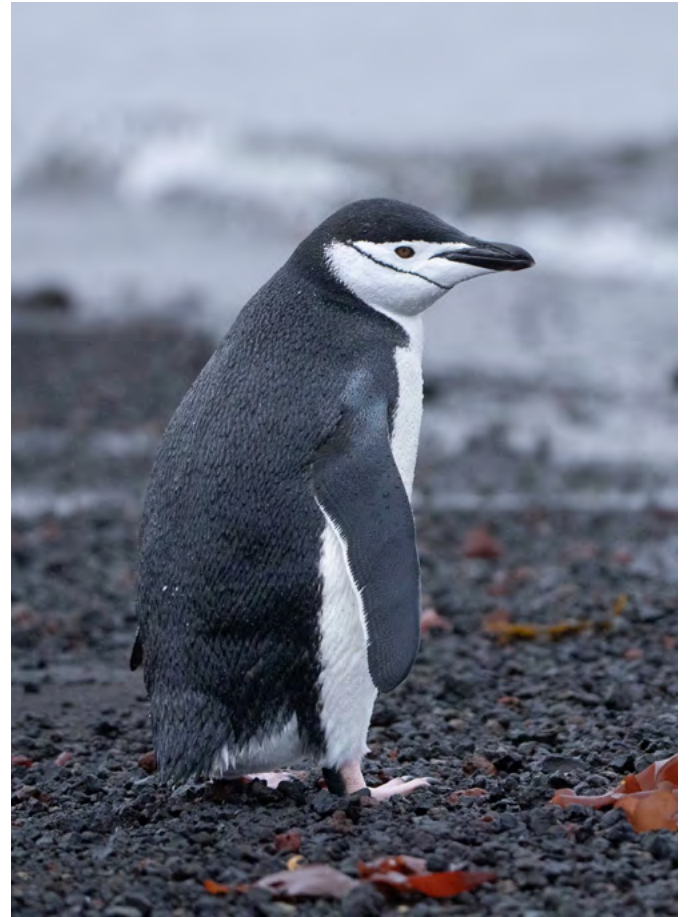
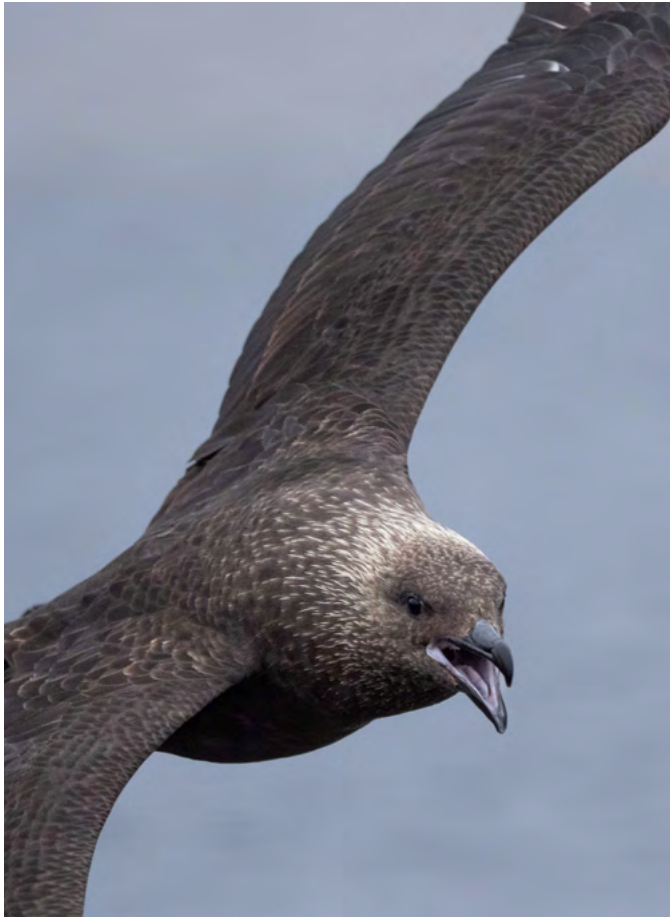
Barometer:
994 hPa

Air Temp:
3°C

Others wandered to Neptune's Window, a natural rock arch framing the restless Southern Ocean beyond.

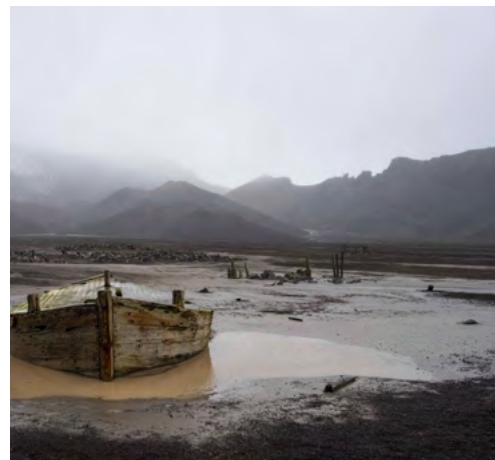
Wildlife added life to this historic landscape. Gentoo penguins shuffled along the shoreline, while Antarctic fur seals rested along the beach, occasionally lifting their heads to survey the scene. It had been a day shaped by wind, fire, history, and resilience, a powerful reminder of Antarctica's ever-changing spirit.













Drake Passage Towards Ushuaia

DAY 11 | Friday 27 February 2026

Latitude:
61°57' S

Longitude:
62°32' W

Course:
338°

Speed:
9.6 knots

Wind Speed:
5 knots NW

Barometer:
998 hPa

Air Temp:
2°C

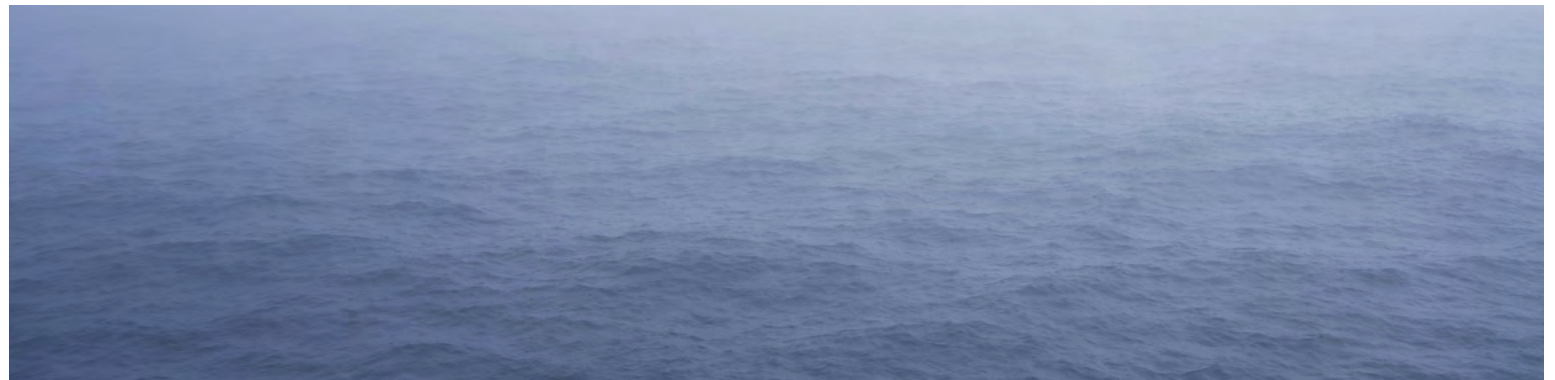
The day began with a sense of quiet accomplishment aboard the expedition ship *Sylvia Earle* as we headed north after a wonderful voyage. We continued our journey back to Ushuaia and got to experience the Drake Passage. No quick flights this time. We managed to find a weather gap so the Drake was not glassy, not furious, but just right. The ship rolled with intention, enough to remind us where we were, gentle enough to let us rest.

After enjoying breakfast, the day began with Ed's lecture, 'Wind, Waves, and Wings'. It was a thoughtful weaving of meteorology, ocean dynamics, and avian flight. Armed with this new understanding, we headed out to contribute to an eBird Citizen Science survey. For a while, it felt like the ocean was holding its breath – grey water, grey sky, and no wings in sight. Just as optimism began to thin, Mike, the mountain guide, broke the spell. He spotted it first – a single soft-

plumaged petrel skimming gracefully over the waves. One bird, one data point, and a small victory.

The afternoon carried us through Sydney's lecture, 'Antarctica's Past Lives', and the ship transformed into a floating cinema for a screening of *Mission Blue*. It was a wonderful and engaging story of the ship's namesake, *Sylvia Earle*, and her lifelong mission to protect the world's oceans and shed light on what is really happening and how it could impact everyone. We enjoyed recap as usual and 'the whale guys' shared some of their breathtaking drone footage of the whales they have been studying.

Dinner followed for those whose stomachs allowed, and as night closed in, we retreated to our cabins. Tomorrow, one more day at sea awaits, carrying us steadily towards Ushuaia, with dreams of what we all witnessed and experienced together.





At Sea Towards Ushuaia

DAY 12 | Saturday 28 February 2026

Latitude:
57°54' S

Longitude:
62°25' W

Course:
338°

Speed:
9.6 knots

Wind Speed:
3 knots NW

Barometer:
998 hPa

Air Temp:
4°C

The Drake Passage, renowned as one of the world's most treacherous sea crossings, gave us a break today, with swell in the 2–3 metre range – an almost lulling motion for those who took advantage of a sea day to sleep in.

As well as sharing photos, clips, and memories of an action-packed voyage on the Antarctic Peninsula, there were plenty of interesting presentations and activities to keep people occupied.

Annette delivered a well-attended lecture on the impact of climate change on penguins. A key takeaway was that observed sea ice decline in the last decade, and further projected declines, is a major threat to emperor penguins, impacting critical habitat for chick fledging and moulting. Increasing marine habitat preservation is key.

This segued into the interactive workshop 'Keeping the Magic Alive', hosted by Sydney, which discussed how we as individuals can contribute to keeping Antarctica pristine and wild when we return home. People shared poignant memories from the icy south and how to inspire preservation through storytelling, photos, art, poetry, and educational programmes.

As people packed and confirmed onward travel arrangements, Rosie gave a timely disembarkation brief.

For those taking a breath of fresh air on deck, black-browed albatross could be seen dynamically soaring near the ocean surface, always an amazing sight.

Mid-afternoon, Elena, along with Captain Andrey and Chief Engineer Ennes, gave a presentation about the MV *Sylvia Earle*. Interest was high in learning about this modern polar expedition vessel, with its distinct X-BOW for smoother sailing, rated for navigating ice. Elena described her early years working for Aurora Expeditions from the ship Polar Pioneer. It was an honour to have Captain Andrey give a virtual bridge tour, describing the controls and daily operations. Chief Engineer Ennes described the inner workings of 'the ship's bowels', from diesel-electric propulsion motors, steering gear, desalination, reverse osmosis, and fin stabilisers, which act like 'wing flaps' on an aeroplane.

The sea kayakers, paddlers, and snorkellers had farewell gatherings and toasted to friends made and the rare opportunity to paddle and snorkel in Antarctic waters.

After the Captain's Farewell, we viewed a presentation of Fiona's fabulous photos.

Our final dinner was a 'land ahoy' moment, cameras clicked at a stunning sunset over Cape Horn in the far distance, followed by evening revelry at the bar.

A great day at sea.



Ushuaia | Disembarkation

DAY 13 | Sunday 1 March 2026

Latitude:
54°48.62' S

Longitude:
68°17.52' W

Course:
Variable

Speed:
0 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots SW

Barometer:
1000 hPa

Air Temp:
11°C

Aurora Expeditions sends out a big thank you to you all for your great humour, infectious enthusiasm, and smiling faces. It was a pleasure having you all onboard and being able to share some of the pleasures that the icy south has to offer. May your memories live long and bright.

BBQ







Polar Plunge

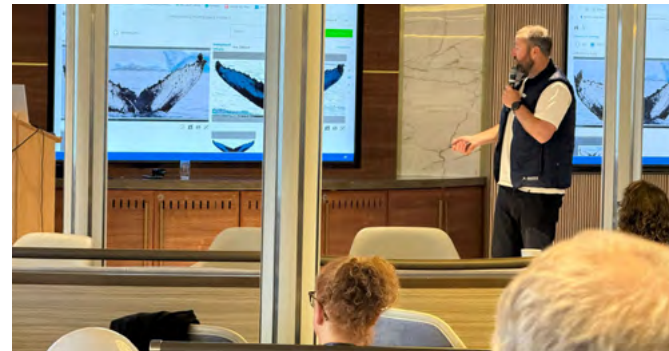
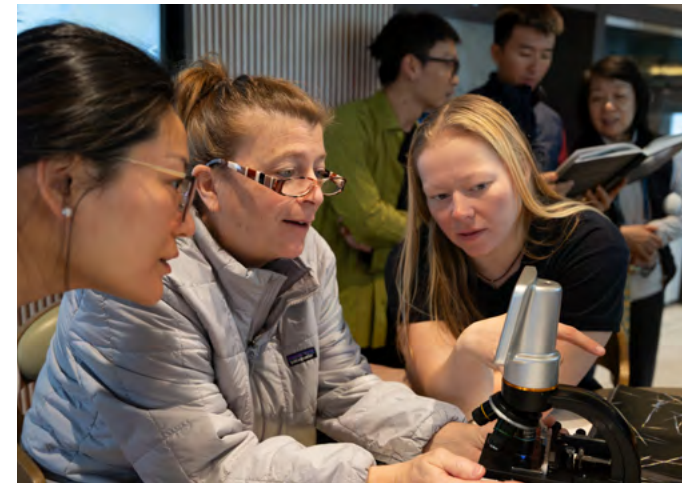


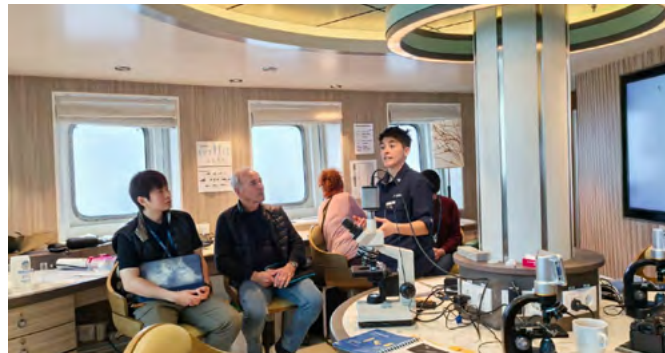


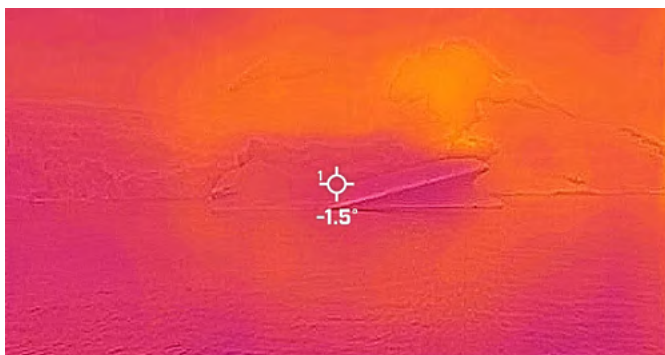
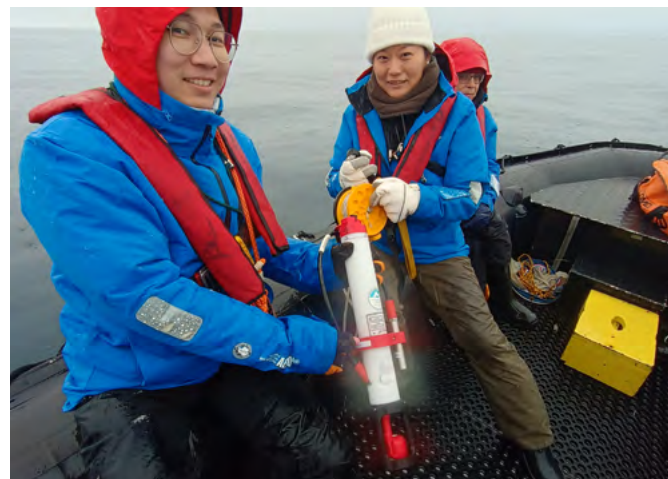
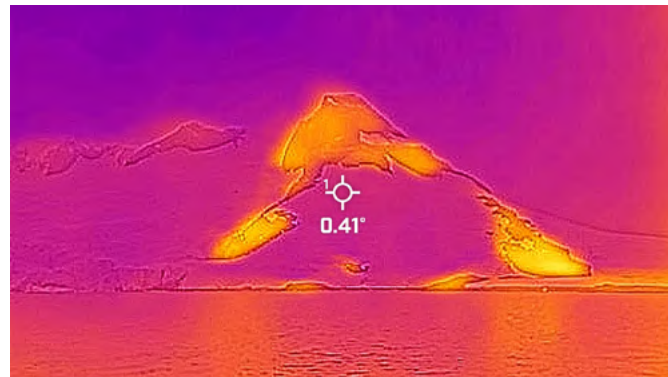
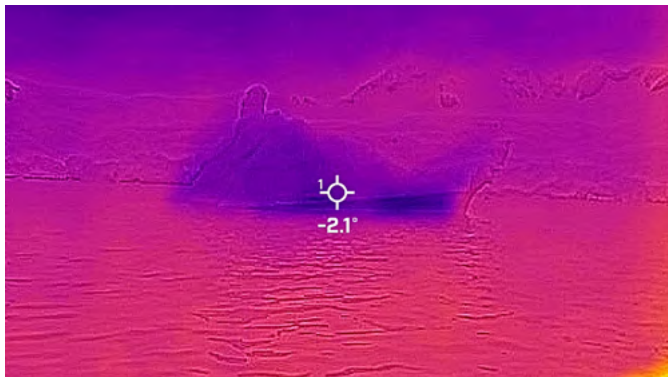




Citizen Science









Kayaking Log

Guides: Eamon Larkin, Edu Larrañaga, Kris Ronning, Tim Stredwick, Anula Jochym

20 February 2026, AM: View Point – 2.85 km

Normally we like our first kayak outing to be super calm water, sunny, and relaxed. Well, it was relaxed, but we battled sleet and wind to find a calm spot to begin. We found it, and a cute Weddell seal had found it also and observed us cautiously from the shore. We covered some on-water safety briefs and let the wind assist us along the shoreline. The more we paddled, the warmer we got; occasionally we had to dodge small icy growlers. The rock formations at the end were amazing. So many veins of quartz in the sharp basalt walls. A great spot to finish out of the wind.

20 February 2026, PM: Devil Island – 4.7 km

It's an imposing island that juts up out of the sea with two pointy peaks, or horns. A lot of small bergs had gathered beside the island, and this looked like a great, calm place to launch. We weaved our way through the ice sculptures and soon we were at the rear of the island. A fur seal swam ahead of us as if showing us the way. On one of the high peaks we could see the walkers slowly reaching the summit. Thick ice made progress around the island impossible, so we enjoyed the solitude and headed to land from there via Zodiac.

Number of Kayakers: 19

Total Paddle Outings: 7

Total Distance Paddled: 30.45 km

Kayakers:

Keith Kelly

Robyn Young

Nola Cruickshank

Lisa Churchward

Philip Churchward

Glenn Roberts

Yiduo Chen

Wei Zhu

Dan Zhu

Feng Jin

Andrea Johnson

Rebecca Sharpless

Andrew Stanton

Douglas Robertson

Stephanie Robertson

Joan Robertson

Yulia Pomazkina

Xiaowen Xuan

Zirun Zhang

22 February 2026, AM: Wilhelmina Bay – 3.8 km

The second day on the water for our kayakers was an astonishing morning of kayaking and whale watching. There were humpback whales to be seen in every direction from the *Sylvia Earle*, three even so close to the stern that Zodiac launching operations had to be suspended for a short time until they moved away. As usual, we set out from the *Sylvia Earle* in our Zodiac with the kayakers snaking behind before launching and setting off to paddle steadily through the ice. Our route was a large loop, spotting and photographing individual and groups of humpback whales, both close and in the distance. Gentoo and chinstrap penguins torpedoed through the water around us, and inquisitive fur seals popped their heads up to watch us gently pass their ice floe haul-outs. The bright sunshine in the distance, glistening off the surrounding mountains, contrasted starkly with the overcast sky that showered us with soft hail showers.

22 February 2026, PM: Useful Island – 3.5 km

The *Sylvia Earle* relocated to Useful Island in the Gerlache Strait for the afternoon's kayaking adventure. Despite the small swell rocking both the Zodiac and our kayakers, we all launched smoothly. There were a few humpback whales in the waters close to the island, so we whale watched for a short time before turning to explore the granite coastline of Useful Island. Many fur seals lounged around on the rocks at the northern end of the island, and chinstrap and Gentoo penguins dotted the rocks above, many looking quite forlorn in their moulting state. We closed in a little to check out a couple of beautiful Weddell seals before continuing our circumnavigation of the island. More humpback whales were spotted as we manoeuvred around some icebergs, then it was time for the Zodiac to pick us up and return to the *Sylvia Earle*.

23 February 2026, AM: Port Lockroy – 4.8 km

We went kayaking in Port Lockroy on a day that began perfectly calm and quiet. At first, the water was smooth, and the sky seemed peaceful, creating ideal conditions for paddling. As we moved along the shoreline, we spotted several Weddell seals resting on the rocks, completely relaxed and undisturbed by our presence. Suddenly, we witnessed an intense moment of Antarctic wildlife: a leopard seal hunting and eating a penguin in the water nearby. It was a powerful and unforgettable scene, showing the raw reality of nature. We continued paddling toward the Neumayer Channel, enjoying the dramatic icy scenery around us. However, the wind began to rise steadily, turning the water rougher and making paddling more challenging. As the gusts grew stronger, we decided to return for safety. We headed toward the protection of a small islet, where we found calmer waters and safely ended our remarkable kayaking adventure.

23 February 2026, PM: Moureaux Islands – 5.9 km

We experienced a spectacular kayak outing in the Moureaux Islands, surrounded by some of the most breathtaking scenery imaginable. The conditions were absolutely perfect. The sea was so calm that it looked like a mirror, reflecting the sky, the towering mountains, and the enormous icebergs around us with stunning clarity. As we paddled quietly through the icy landscape, the silence felt profound and peaceful. Massive ice formations drifted nearby, glowing in shades of white and blue, while snow-covered peaks rose dramatically in the distance. During our journey, we were lucky enough to spot leopard seals resting on ice floes, completely at ease in their frozen world. They watched us curiously as we passed by at a respectful distance. It was an unforgettable experience, combining perfect weather, extraordinary wildlife, and the pure magic of Antarctica's wild beauty.



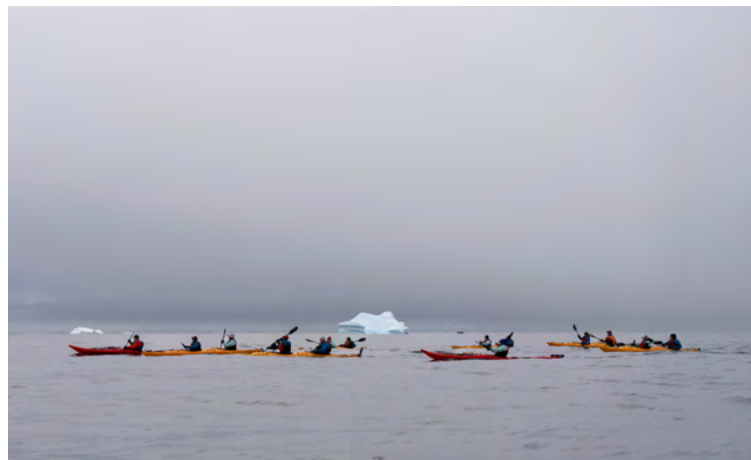
25 February 2026, AM: Recess Cove – 4.9 km

Recess Cove started off hot despite the cooling rain which trickled from above. There was a small island that we hand-railed and spotted a few fur seals, some of which were very curious, following us in the water. Before being on the water for 10 minutes we saw our first humpback fluke in the vicinity. We decided to continue around the island where we saw three more whales surfacing between the island and the glacier off Recess Cove. We (Kris and Eamon) later paddled farther north in Charlotte Bay where we saw even more whales. There were two distinct encounters which I appreciated; the first was a humpback that was checking us out and encircled us, surfacing three times, and the second was the lunge-feeding humpbacks, which also displayed a pectoral slap on the water surface. It was a splendid outing!













Paddling Log

Guides: Eamon Larkin, Edu Larrañaga, Kris Ronning, Tim Stredwick, Anula Jochym

20 February 2026, PM: Viewpoint – 4 km

In the afternoon we set off for a sporty paddle! The swell around Horseshoe Island was impossible to hide from, but we decided to take on the challenge. We set off just around the corner from the landing spot and enjoyed a little solitude and excitement in the conditions around us. We cruised along the cliffy coastline admiring the streaks of brilliant greens and blues of the malachite permeating through the cracks in the rock. We managed to dodge every single shallow and breaking wave and, with no doubt a sense of relief, we entered the calm bay of the island. The birds we spotted on the outcrops were hard to identify: was it a penguin or just a cormorant? While circling the bay we did find a few pockets of Adélie penguins in the middle of their catastrophic moult, with an occasional Weddell seal camouflaging with the surrounding rock.

20 February 2026, PM: Devil Island – 3.5 km

We paddled around Devil Island in the Weddell Sea in our kayaks, surrounded by one of the most remote and breathtaking landscapes on Earth. The experience felt almost unreal as we moved quietly across the calm water. The sea was incredibly still, with no wind at all, allowing us to glide smoothly and effortlessly. There was sea ice floating around us, scattered across the surface, with smaller pieces drifting gently and adding to the beauty of the scene without blocking our path. The geology of the island was truly impressive, with dramatic rock formations rising sharply from the icy surroundings. Layers of ancient stone told a silent story of Earth's history, contrasting beautifully with the pale ice and dark waters. The peaceful conditions made the moment even more special, as the silence was broken only by the soft sound of our paddles touching the water. It was an unforgettable and serene Antarctic adventure.



Number of Paddlers: 8

Total Paddle Outings: 7

Total Distance Paddled: 26.5 km

Paddlers:

Michael Benstead

Zachary Benstead

Laury Dowd

Raulene du Toit

Jill Jacobson

Elke Willner

Victor Robinson Smith

Glenn Holt

22 February 2026, AM: Wilhelmina Bay – 4.6 km

The old saying “there is something in the water” or “whale soup” reigns true as we encountered a pod of humpback whales that extended throughout the entire bay. I have never seen Wilhelmina Bay brimming with wildlife in the same capacity that I witnessed during our paddle with Michael, Zachary, Laury, Raulene and Elke on the water. We had to gauge which cluster of whales to move towards as there were several to choose from. We initially paddled towards a fur seal in the vicinity of the Snorkel Zodiac where we came across our first whales for the outing. We paddled against the wind and moved towards 2–3 sleeping humpback whales that were stationary and whilst we witnessed their majestic bobbing in the water we were blindsided by more whales crossing our vision plane from right to left. We spotted heaps of gentoo penguins on an iceberg and headed in

that direction to get a better look when another humpback whale startled us as it surfaced very close to us. The cherry on top for the operation was that there was a breaching humpback whale in the distance as we wrapped up and headed back towards the ship.

22 February 2026, PM: Useful Island – 3.5 km

The *Sylvia Earle* relocated to Useful Island in the Gerlache Strait for the afternoon’s kayaking adventure. Despite the small swell rocking both the Zodiac and our kayaks we all launched smoothly. There were a few humpback whales in the waters close to the island so we whale watched for a short time before turning to explore the granite coastline of Useful Island. Many fur seals lounged around on the rocks at the northern end of the island and chinstrap and gentoo penguins dotted the rocks above, many looking quite forlorn in their moulting state. We closed in a little to check out a couple

of beautiful Weddell seals before continuing our circumnavigation of the island. More humpback whales were spotted as we manoeuvred around some icebergs, then it was time for the Zodiac to pick us up and return to the *Sylvia Earle*.

23 February 2026, AM: Port Lockroy – 2.2 km

The weather at Port Lockroy usually leaves a lot to wish for, but not today! The beautiful sunrise at the start of the day was a clear promise of what we would get on the water. We set off in a Zodiac and zoomed over to the entrance of the Peltier Channel. As we trailed the rocky coastline we found a small cove, which in human terms resembled a penguin beach resort, with dozens of them just splashing in the water. That seemingly peaceful scene was interrupted by a leopard seal curiously checking out our kayaks. Since a small inflatable boat and sharp seal teeth don’t mix well together,

we called for our Uber – Kris – just to have him on standby. We continued towards Jougla Point where the same seal decided to predate on a penguin – what a unique experience, being able to observe from a kayak! We paddled around Goudier Island where we found both Weddell and fur seals, lounging in the sun. The outing was topped off with a visit to Port Lockroy, a former British base, today a museum and the most southern post office.

23 February 2026, PM: Moureaux Islands – 5.9 km

We experienced a spectacular outing in the Moureaux Islands, surrounded by some of the most breathtaking scenery imaginable. The conditions were absolutely perfect from the very beginning. The sea was so calm that it looked like a mirror, reflecting the sky, the towering mountains and the enormous icebergs around us with stunning clarity. As we paddled quietly through the icy landscape, the silence



felt profound and peaceful, broken only by the gentle dip of our paddles in the water. Massive ice formations drifted nearby, glowing in shades of white and blue, while snow-covered peaks rose dramatically in the distance. During our journey, we were lucky enough to spot leopard seals resting on ice floes, completely at ease in their frozen world. They watched us curiously as we passed by at a respectful distance. It was an unforgettable experience, combining perfect weather, extraordinary wildlife and the pure magic of Antarctica's wild beauty.

25 February 2026, AM: Recess Cove – 2.8 km

Our bridge mentioned to me that there were a lot of whales around all morning as the ship nosed into Recess Cove. I was hoping they would still be there when we slipped into the kayaks. I

was not disappointed. They were in all directions. First, we explored a small rocky island busy with cormorants and penguins. On one corner bay of the island a group of about five juvenile fur seals were play fighting and swimming happily together. One leaped out of the water a few times in front of my kayak. On the other side of the small island there was a much bigger mammal, a humpback whale moving slowly and breathing deeply. It was a joy to watch from our kayaks. We continued past some icebergs into a rocky channel, the water was so clear we could see each rock on the bottom. Emerging from the channel we spotted more whales; we bunched together and in all directions flukes and humps appeared. A couple of whales came closer to us. It was a breathtaking moment and a great end to our outing and our time together.





Snorkelling Log

Guides: Thomas Gov(lead), Eddie Hauzer, Ania

19 February 2026, AM: Nordenskjöld's Hut, Snow Hill Island

A momentous start to our underwater journey as we executed our first check-out snorkel of the voyage. We have a keen group of 13 snorkellers onboard, 10 of whom geared up for this inaugural outing into the frigid depths of the Weddell Sea. With Thomas leading the way and Ania and Eddie assisting as guides, we hit the water to test both gear and grit.

Approaching Snow Hill Island on our Zodiacs, we were greeted by dramatic rock formations, basalt dykes, and a barren, almost lunar landscape where flora is virtually absent. Wildlife was sparse, save for a few lone, stranded penguins watching our bulky dry-suited figures with curiosity.

Upon landing, the team first paid a visit to the historic Nordenskjöld's Hut. This wooden structure, built in February 1902, served as the base for the Swedish South Polar Expedition. The story is one of

incredible Antarctic survival; after their ship, Antarctic, was crushed by ice and sank, the crew was forced to winter for two years before a miraculous rescue. Standing before this museum offered a sobering reminder of the raw power of the environment we were about to enter.

The snorkel itself was all about the 'firsts'. Water visibility was acceptable, but the primary goal was calibration: testing equipment seals, finding buoyancy in thick undergarments, and acclimating the body to the sudden Antarctic exposure. Despite the extreme conditions, the group showed impressive stamina, lasting about 20 minutes in the freezing water, exceeding all expectations for a first dip. While the seabed offered little today, the real reward was the milestone itself. Not many can claim to have snorkelled in Antarctica, and even fewer can say they have braved the remote and wild Weddell Sea. Bragging rights officially earned.



Number of Snorkellers: 13
Total Snorkel Outings: 8

Snorkellers:
Sonja Leon
Kaiwen Zhang
Pablo Sanchez Martinez
Merche Llobera Rodriguez
Vivian Tsang
Andrew Grieve

Tom Tew
Ziyun Liu
Xuehui Sun
Ping Zhu
Howard Valentine
Lisa Woo
Christine Markham

19 February 2026, PM: Cockburn Island

The afternoon began with a determined push toward the southern tip of Snow Hill Island. Our captain gave a stellar effort, navigating the vessel through dense sea ice in a bid to reach an emperor penguin colony. While the raw power of the ship carving through the ice was an incredible sight, the pack ice ultimately proved impassable.

Ever ready with a backup, our EL, Mark, quickly pivoted to Plan B. Following a short briefing, we launched Zodiacs for a pre-dinner cruise at nearby Cockburn Island. With one dedicated snorkel Zodiac, we made the most of our limited window. Despite the short duration, the water visibility was superb, allowing for a quick, high-quality snorkel along the island's rocky cliffs.

Above us, hundreds of Antarctic shags occupied this designated Important Bird Area nesting site, while on the water, the mood was equally special.

As the low clouds lifted, the evening sun bathed the ship and surrounding icebergs in a dramatic, glittering glow. We even spotted a pair of Adélie penguins perched on a floating iceberg; their stance was so poised they looked like they were in the middle of a proposal, a uniquely romantic moment in this wild landscape.

It is heartening to see how quickly the group has adapted. By the end of this first day, the struggle of suiting up had already turned into a streamlined routine. The eagerness to hit the water was palpable, and everyone was already looking forward to tomorrow's encounters.

20 February 2026, AM: View Point

At View Point in the Weddell Sea, our second day of outings in this remote region began with a powerful milestone. We stepped ashore on the Antarctic continent, but for some among us, this

landing carried even deeper meaning. It marked the visit to their seventh and final continent. What an achievement, to stand there surrounded by snow and silence, knowing they had now set foot on every continent on Earth.

We spent time on land soaking in the stark beauty of the Weddell Sea. The scenery felt vast and pristine, a sweeping landscape of white stretching toward distant ice-covered peaks that we can only imagine. Old huts stood quietly against the elements, weathered reminders of past human presence in an otherwise wild and isolated place. The stillness was striking.

After our time ashore, we prepared for our snorkel. The water that day was some of the clearest we had experienced so far. As we submerged, it immediately felt different. The visibility was exceptional, allowing us to see far into the blue.

Much like the landscape above the surface, the underwater world felt

barren and open. Life was sparse and scattered, with only occasional signs of movement among the rocks. Yet there was a certain beauty in that simplicity. The seafloor stretched out in muted tones, shaped by ice and time.

We were fortunate enough to come across a fish attempting to hide beneath a rock, its subtle movements betraying its presence. Even such a small encounter felt significant in this quiet underwater environment.

Small growlers drifted nearby, and seeing the ice from below was a highlight. From underwater, the ice revealed soft curves, delicate textures, and luminous shades of blue that cannot be appreciated from above. It was a surprisingly beautiful moment, floating beneath the surface in such clarity.

Despite the limited wildlife, the experience was deeply rewarding. Clear water, sculpted ice, and the shared sense of exploration made it a memorable outing in the wild Weddell Sea.



22 February 2026, AM: Wilhelmina Bay

We started the morning with whale watching, which already felt like cheating before even getting in the water. They were everywhere. Blows in the distance, backs rolling through the surface, the occasional deeper dive. It set the tone immediately. Before even putting on our drysuits, we had front-row seats to one of Antarctica's greatest spectacles.

Then it was time to gear up.

We floated quietly, adjusting to the cold and the rhythm of the swell, scanning the water around us. The ice above cast soft blue light below, and penguins occasionally porpoised nearby, though mostly they stayed perched, watching.

And then it happened.

A whale surfaced roughly twenty metres away.

Close enough to hear the breath clearly. Close enough to feel very small in the best possible way. The energy in the group shifted instantly. Hearts racing, minds trying to stay calm, we floated in place, half expecting it to disappear as quickly as it had appeared.

For about ten minutes we remained there, drifting, watching, hardly daring to move. Then the whale cruised calmly past in front of us. No sudden movements, no dramatic splash. Just a massive, steady presence gliding through the water like a slow underwater bus. Effortless. Unbothered. Completely at home.

Seeing such a giant move with that level of grace, while we hovered quietly at the surface, was pure Antarctic magic. No rush, no drama, just one of those rare moments where everything aligns and you realise how privileged you are to be exactly where you are.

22 February 2026, PM: Useful Island

The afternoon began with a Zodiac cruise absolutely packed with wildlife. Whales were blowing in the distance, their tall spouts catching the light before their dark backs rolled through the surface. Penguins zipped past like torpedoes, porpoising in tight arcs through the swell. Fur seals posed confidently on the rocks, while more Weddell seals than we could count lounged along the shoreline or drifted at the surface. Everywhere we looked, something was happening.

After taking in the abundance from the boats, we made our way toward a quiet little cove for our snorkel. Compared to the lively open water, the cove felt sheltered and calm, a perfect pocket to slip beneath the surface.

We entered quietly and spread out, scanning the blue around us. Before long, some of us spotted penguins darting underwater, their movements

fast and precise, flashing past in quick bursts before disappearing again. Even brief glimpses were enough to feel the energy they bring into the water.

Others were treated to a much closer encounter. A very curious Weddell seal approached, unhurried and completely at ease. It circled slowly, observing us with large, calm eyes. There was a sense of quiet confidence in the way it moved, as if it clearly owned the place and was simply checking on a group of unusual visitors. For several minutes it remained nearby, hovering and looping back again, close enough to feel the shared presence.

The water was cold, the setting wild, and the atmosphere electric. Floating there among penguins, seals, and the distant memory of whales in the bay, we could not help but feel fully immersed in the Antarctic world.

Cold, wild, and ridiculously fun, it was the perfect way to end another unforgettable Antarctic day.



23 February 2026, AM: Moureaux Point, Flandres Bay

Reaching the southernmost point of our voyage, we entered the vast, deep waters of Flandres Bay. The setting felt like a masterpiece. Around us rose a labyrinth of ice mountains and frozen castles, sculpted into improbable shapes. One enormous iceberg stood out in particular, carved into a perfect arch, massive and elegant, as if designed rather than formed by nature. The afternoon light was soft, and the stillness of the bay was mesmerising.

Wildlife soon added to the atmosphere. We were treated to a second encounter with a leopard seal. This one was peacefully asleep atop an ice floe, its long body stretched out in complete relaxation. Even in slumber it looked majestic and slightly intimidating, a true apex presence of these waters. In the distance, several humpback whales passed through the bay. Their blows rose clearly against the horizon, but

they remained too far away for any safe snorkel encounter.

Not wanting to miss the opportunity to get in the water, we decided to create our own highlight. We suited up and slipped into the sea beside a beautiful, smaller iceberg. The water was calm and clear, allowing us to fully appreciate what lay beneath the surface. From below, the iceberg transformed into a cathedral of ice. Crystalline structures extended deep underwater, glowing in shades of blue and turquoise. The textures were intricate and delicate, shaped by melt and time.

We spent the session exploring every angle, drifting slowly around the ice. Floating bergy bits added a playful touch to the experience. We nudged them gently, balanced near them, and captured some fun photos, laughter echoing across the quiet bay.

By the time we climbed back into the Zodiac, spirits were high. What had begun as a calm and almost

contemplative afternoon had turned into one of those simple but powerful Antarctic moments. Surrounded by sculpted ice and vast silence, we had made our own magic and turned a quiet stretch of the voyage into a true highlight of the trip.

24 February 2026, PM: Palaver Point

This time we began the outing directly with the snorkelling session. We geared up onboard, layering carefully before stepping into our drysuits, masks ready and fins in hand. The plan was simple: start in the water, then head ashore for a hike afterward.

Conditions, however, were not ideal. The wind had picked up and the surface was choppy, small waves slapping against the Zodiac. Visibility underwater was limited once again, the water carrying suspended particles that reduced the clarity. Still, Antarctica rarely offers perfection, and that has never stopped us before.

We slipped in.

Despite the poor visibility, the seafloor revealed its quiet beauty as we hovered close to the bottom. Rocks of different sizes were scattered across the slope, shaped by ice and time. Even in muted light, the textures were fascinating. There is something special about committing to the experience regardless of the conditions, accepting what the environment gives on that particular day.

Chinstrap penguins occupied the shoreline around us. From the surface we could see them entering the water and swimming in our direction. Their presence added excitement and anticipation. Yet once submerged, the limited visibility made it nearly impossible to properly observe them underwater. We sensed their movement more than we truly saw it, dark shapes passing somewhere in the haze.

After the snorkel, we returned to the ship, fingers slightly chilled but spirits



high. We changed quickly into hiking gear and soon found ourselves back ashore, this time heading uphill above the chinstrap penguin rookery.

The climb was the perfect way to warm up. Step by step, the view expanded behind us. From the viewpoint at the top, we could look down over the colony, the shoreline, and the restless sea beyond. Wind in our faces, penguins below, and the vast Antarctic landscape stretching outward, it was a powerful contrast to the underwater world we had just left.

A dynamic outing, shaped by conditions, wildlife, and effort, and a rewarding way to experience Palaver Point both below and above the surface.

25 February 2026, AM: Recess Cove

At Recess Cove, we were finally back in clear water, and the difference was immediate. The bay stretched wide and calm beneath a bright sky, the surrounding peaks reflected in the surface. From the Zodiacs, visibility into the water was remarkable, adding an extra dimension to everything unfolding around us.

Whales were scattered throughout the bay. Blows rose in multiple directions, followed by the smooth curves of backs rolling through the surface. Some were feeding, creating subtle surface activity before disappearing into deeper water. Others were logging peacefully, resting between dives, while a few swam steadily across the bay with quiet determination. For nearly an hour, we cruised slowly among them, engines low, fully absorbed in the spectacle.

It was one of those rare moments when wildlife seemed present in every direction.

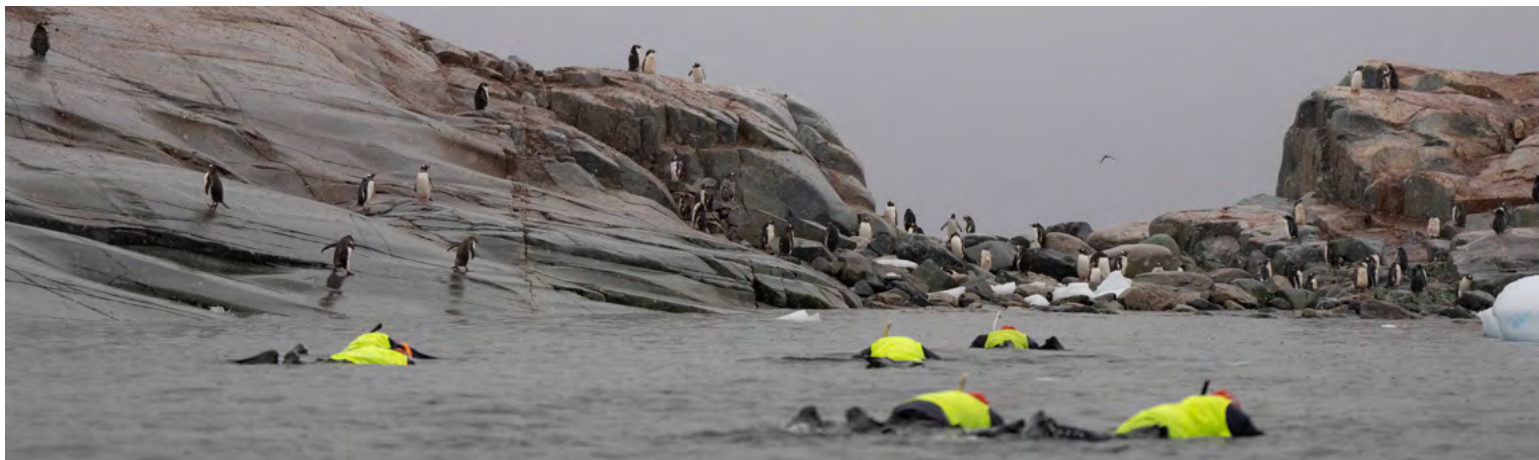
After this incredible whale watching session, we made a spontaneous decision to enter the water in the shallow area near a small island. A group of fur seals had chosen the spot to spend their day. At first glance, they appeared to be resting, but it quickly became clear they were far from inactive. They were interacting constantly, playful and animated, at times passing around what looked like a fish.

Focused on their own activity, they barely noticed us slipping quietly into the water at a respectful distance. For a few minutes, we simply floated, observing from afar. Then curiosity took over.

One seal approached. Then another. And suddenly, the water around us was alive with movement.

They circled us effortlessly, twisting and darting with astonishing agility. Their large eyes watched us closely as they swam past, sometimes just metres away. They seemed genuinely curious, playful, and completely at ease. At times they even followed alongside us as we slowly made our way back toward the Zodiac, as if escorting us out of their territory.

It was an unforgettable encounter. Dynamic, interactive, and filled with energy. Without a doubt, it was the best experience we had in the water on this voyage.





Map

1. Fridtjof Sound (SC)
2. Nordenskjöld's Hut (L)
3. Cockburn Island (ZC)
4. View Point (L)
5. Devil Island (L)
6. Wilhelmina Bay (ZC)
7. Useful Island (ZC)
8. Port Lockroy (L)
9. Flandres Bay (ZC)
10. Spert Island (ZC)
11. Palaver Point (L)
12. Recess Cove (L)
13. Sprightly Island (PP)
14. Deception Island (L)

L=Landing
ZC=Zodiac Cruise
SC=Ship Cruise
PP=Polar Plunge

Wild Antarctica featuring the Weddell Sea

18 February – 1 March 2026





Our Expeditioners

Helen Allen	Liam Flattery	Jill Jacobson	Barry Mowszowski	Rebecca Sharpless	Richard Williams
Rosemary Armstrong	Colette Gedye	Feng Jin	Faye Norris	Kevin Simpson	Elke Willner
Mike Benstead	Lin Gilfillan	Mark Job	Genito Orbon	Robert Sinnett	Lisa Woo
Zach Benstead	Dan Gonzalez-Kreisberg	Andrea Johnson	PINGLAU Pang	Andy Stanton	Xiaowen Xuan
Anita Burgermeister	Gayle Goodman	Cheryl Kelley	Nancy Petersen	Jennifer Storti	Robyn Young
Betty Burleigh	Andrew Grieve	Keith Kelley	Julia Pomazkina	Xuehui Sun	Mian Yuan
Jianhua Cai	George Gulczynski	Nancy Kennedy	Colette Rémont	Julie-Anne Sweetnam	Edwin Zhang
Yiduo Chen	Guijiao Guo	John Kennedy	Rhonda Rhodes	Stu Swords	Kaiwen Zhang
Lisa Churchward	Elsbeth Halliday	Mike Latham	Jillian Roberts	Mark Swords	Guangming Zhou
Philip Churchward	John Halliday	Sonja Leon	Glenn Roberts	Cole Tan	Ping Zhu
Lee Crisp	Kathleen Heithorn-Althoff	Marcelo Leon Escobar	Steffie Robertson	Thomas Tew	Dan Zhu
Nola Cruickshank	Greg Hill	Isabel Leon-Escobar	Joan Robertson	Tom Tew	Wei Zhu
Chris Daly	Diane Hodgson	Zhenyu Li	Douglas Robertson	Vivian Tsang	Kongzheng Zhu
John Daly	Thomas Hollander	Ziyun Liu	Vic Robinson Smith	Jacqueline Turner	Shiming Zhu
Alison Dhlamini	Glenn Holt	Merche Llobera Rodriguez	Gail Rosin	Howard Valentine III	Fengliang Zou
Laury Dowd	Jeff Hoover	Marcus Low	Neil Rosin	Loye-Anne Wallace	
Naiying Du	Carol Hornsby	Mirian Luna-Rodriguez	Pablo Sanchez Martinez	Teresa Wallace	
Chuanye Du	JIANRONG Huang	Christine Markham	Schulz Schulz	Luocheng Wang	
Paulene du Toit	Pei Huang	George Melcer	Hans Schulz	Yao Wang	
Ferraris Ferraris			Susan Scott	Yuning Wang	

Expedition Team

Expedition Leader: Mark Brophy

Assistant Expedition Leader: Elena Wimberger

Onboard Expedition Manager: Rosie Leaney

Shop Manager: Flor March

Marine Biologist: Annette Scheffer

Geologist/Glaciologist: Sydney Carste

Naturalist/Ornithologist: Ed Nolan

Historian: Kelsey Camacho

Photography Guide: Fiona Wardle

Expedition First Responder: Laura Boenish

Expedition Guide/Mandarin Translator: Rose Luan

Expedition Guide/Mandarin Translator: Qing Qu

Lead Senior Kayak Guide: Eamon Larkin

Senior Kayak Guide: Eduardo Larranga

Senior Kayak Guide: Anula Jochym

Kayak Guide: Tim Stredwick

Kayak Guide: Kris Ronning

Lead Snorkel Guide: Thomas Gov

Snorkel Guide: Eddie Hauzer

Senior Alpine Guide: Mike Roberts

Zodiac Manager: Nacho Marino

Whale Researcher: Logan Pallin

Whale Researcher: George Colaco

Whale Researcher: Ryan Jones

Whale Researcher: Michael "TR" Tepper-Rasmussen

Senior Officers & Heads of Department

Master: Andrey Gilevskiy

Chief Officer: Viktor Koshelets

Second Officer: JP Sibug

Safety Officer: Bryan Salem

Bosun: Leo Marzan

Ship Doctor: Maria Zambrano Ruales

Chief Engineer: Enes Candic

First Engineer: Sergeii Luba

IT Officer: Rene Reyes

Hotel Director: Vill Ignacio

F&B Service Manager: Narendra Seeram

Head Bartender: Sheenie Landauz

Chief Purser: Peter Diaz

Executive Chef: Indra Wicaksono

Sous Chef: Priteviraj Dakona

Hotel Controller: Orlando Costa

Receptionist: Angela Manuel

Receptionist: Jaica Puyod

Head Stateroom Attendant: Florante Lusong

Deck Cadet: Constantin Turmacu

Able Seaman: Eduardo Aloyan

Able Seaman: Ferdy Diaz Roque

Able Seaman: Prasad Pallikara Vilayan

Able Seaman: Anthony Brosas

Able Seaman: Dan Danico


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Fiona Wardle





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