



Classic Antarctica

On board "USHUAIA"

Expedition Log

November 28th to December 8th 2006
South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula

MASTER of the VESSEL

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EXPEDITION LEADER

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CHEF

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LECTURERS/GUIDES

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Agustín Ullmann

Shoshanah Jacobs

Ximena Senatore

Christian Savigny

PHYSICIAN

Dr. Konstantin Petrosyan

Our Itinerary

November 28: Ushuaia, Argentina, Beagle Channel.
November 29: Drake Passage.
November 30: Drake Passage. Aitcho Is, South Shetland Is.
December 01: Antarctic Sound. Paulet Island, Weddell Sea.
December 02: Mar Island, Cierva Cove. Cuverville Island.
December 03: Port Lockroy & Jougla Point. Petermann Island.
December 04: Brown Station, Paradise Bay. Danco Island.
December 05: Whalers' Bay, Deception Island. Half Moon Island.
December 06: Drake Passage.
December 07: Drake Passage. Mouth of Beagle Channel.
December 08: Ushuaia, Argentina.

Daily Log of Our Voyage

Tuesday, November 28th

Ushuaia, Argentina - Lat. 54° 48' S, Long. 68° 18' W

Antarctic Facts

Antarctica is a continent capped by an inland ice sheet up to 4.8km thick, containing about 90% of the world's fresh water.

The ice sheet is so heavy that it has pushed the land below sea level in places.

Because of the thickness of the ice sheet, Antarctica has the highest average altitude of all of the continents.



Our voyage to the frozen land of the Antarctic started at 6.30pm from the Ushuaia pier. Prior to our departure, most of us had spent some time getting to know the quaint little town.

Once onboard, we settled into our cabins and right after setting sail, we gathered in the pub for a Welcome Cocktail, with chances to meet our fellow passengers and the staff of the *Ushuaia*.

During our first briefing, the expedition staff and officers were introduced to us. The Expedition Leader of the *Ushuaia*, Sebastián Arrebola presented the staff who would accompany us during the landings and help us to understand how sensitive the ecosystem in Antarctica is. Berenice Charpin, Ximena Senatore, Shoshanah Jacobs, Agustín Ullmann, and Christian Savigny would teach us a lot of interesting details about the wildlife, history and conservation, and would guide us safely through the landscapes of this wild part of the world. All of them have long been bitten by the polar bug and could not help but love the White Continent. We felt that we were in good hands with this enthusiastic team. Our hotel manager, Ludwin Zavala, would take care of all our needs and Doctor Konstantin Petrosyan would care for our health as the case may be.

Sebastian also introduced us to part of our bridge crew; the Chief Officer Martin Ventancu and Third Mate Guido Grandi. Our captain, Jorge Aldegheri was on the bridge at that time, as the *Ushuaia* sailed through the Beagle Channel on our way to the Drake Passage.

Later on we had our mandatory lifeboat drill. Donning our lifejackets, we made our way to the lifeboats on the outer deck and hoped that we would never all meet there again.

We ate dinner, our first meal onboard, as we left the Beagle Channel towards open water. It was a perfect way to start our adventure.

Wednesday, November 29th Drake Passage

Antarctic Facts

The South Pole is 1235 km from the closest coastline, and is situated high on the polar plateau (height 2800 m).

Here it may be as cold as -75°C, but the world record lowest temperature is from an even more remote Antarctic station, Vostok, which logged -89°C.

During the night, we encountered rough seas and as we awoke, the movement continued. Many of us had very few hours of sleep. Breakfast was an adventure and so was lunch but the chef made it easy by preparing a simple breakfast and some sandwiches for lunch. The skill of the dining room staff was evident as they navigated through the passengers and other moving objects! After breakfast, some of us were able to attend Berenice's presentation on Antarctic wildlife.

There were very few of us around during the morning and more faces appeared around lunch time. In the afternoon, as the seas calmed a bit, Christian gave a lecture on Birding in the Southern Ocean. Despite the conditions, we were impressed with how many birds were flying around the ship and Christian's lecture gave us the tools that we needed to identify them.

By dinner time, the ship's movement was barely noticeable and we were thankful for the relief.

Thursday, November 30th Drake Passage

Aitcho Islands, South Shetland Islands - Lat 62° 24' S, Long 59° 47' W

Antarctic Facts

Antarctica is a cold desert, with snowfall equivalent to only 150 mm of water each year.

This snow builds up gradually, and ice flows towards the coast as huge glaciers. In many places, these extend out over the sea as massive ice shelves.



Just as we awoke, at 0730, we crossed the convergence. This is a very rich area, biologically, hosting many birds and whales. In the morning, we attended our IAATO briefing, learning about the sensitivity of the Antarctic ecosystem and how we are to conduct landings to ensure a minimum impact. We also reviewed the Zodiac operations; how to safely enter and leave our 'taxi of the Antarctic'.

The seas were rather calm and many of us ventured out on the decks to watch birds and our approach to the frozen continent. We saw prions, Antarctic Petrels and Wilson's Storm Petrels. At 1430, we spotted our 1st iceberg, awarding the person to see it first with a bottle of wine.

In the afternoon, we attended a lecture by Christian on the Penguins of the Peninsula, in preparation for our landings. He answered many of our questions before we even asked them!

Since we had made excellent progress it was possible to make our first landing took place at Aitcho Islands where we could see, some of us for the very first time, Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguin. Most of them were nesting; evidence of the upcoming summer season. We also saw Kelp Gulls, Skuas and Giant Petrels flying over the island. We also spotted three Weddell Seals. When we were all safely aboard, the ship headed for Bismark Strait.

In the evening, after a delicious dinner, we gathered in the bar for a presentation of the documentary film "Le Peuple Migrateur" ("Winged Migration").

Friday, December 1st

Antarctic Sound

Paulet Island – Lat. 63° 35' S, Long. 56° 47' W

Antarctic Facts

Paulet island was discovered by Ross's British expedition (1839-1843), and named by Ross after a captain of the Royal Navy. There are remains of a stone hut built in February 1903 by C.A. Larsen, Norwegian captain of the wrecked vessel *Antarctic* of the Swedish Antarctic Expedition, led by Otto Nordenskjöld, were these explorers wintered over. To the East of the landing beach is a memorial cross marking the grave of one of the members of the Nordenskjöld's expedition who died there. Paulet consists of a distinct volcanic cone, 1158 feet high. The landing beach on the North side contains rounded, mainly spherical boulders and pebbles of basalt and scoriae. Beyond and above the hut is a substantial ovoid-shape lake, which appears to be a crater of the volcano.

In the morning we awoke early to have a quick breakfast and to make our second landing of our adventure. We experienced true Antarctic weather, with cold temperatures and high winds. We started our landing early in the morning in this fantastic volcanic place, Paulet Island. A circular island, about 1 mile in diameter, west of the Weddell Sea off the northeast end of the Antarctic Peninsula. The beaches and hills were packed with over 60,000 breeding pairs. The penguins were almost unaware of our presence and we all took beautiful pictures of these hardy birds. Though we were cold from the strong wind, the Penguins appeared to be unaffected. We also visited the colony of Blue-eyed Shags and, as the tide was low, we had the chance to walk to the other side of the island. We also saw a Weddell Seal swimming in the water along the beach.



During lunch, we made our way to Esperanza Station in Hope Bay. Though we had planned a landing to visit the Argentine research station, the wind was gusting up to 60 knots, making zodiac operations very dangerous. Instead, the Captain maneuvered the ship as close to the station as possible,

allowing us to get a great view through our binoculars. During the summer there are approximately 80 people living at this station and there is even a small school for young children.

Then, and suddenly, as we were leaving the waters surrounding the station, we spotted two Orcas swimming in our direction. We all rushed outside or to the bridge to get a better view. The ship slowed its course and we saw the whales (actually the largest member of the Dolphin family) approach the ship and then swim away after getting a good look at us.

In the afternoon, we attended Ximena's presentation on Antarctic Discovery and early exploration.

Saturday, December 2nd

Mar Island, Cierva Cove - Lat. 64° 08' S, Long. 61° 00' W

Cuerverville Island – Lat. 64° 41' S, Long. 62° 38' W

Antarctic Facts

Only about 0.4% of the surface of Antarctica is free of snow and ice. The tops of mountain chains stick up through the ice - the highest is Mount Vinson, 4900 m above sea level.

The Southern Ocean is a continuous belt of sea surrounding Antarctica. In winter, over half of the Southern Ocean freezes over. Although this seawater ice is only about 1 m thick, it has a significant effect on ocean and atmospheric circulation. Nearly all of the sea ice melts in summer.



We awoke to full sunshine and almost blue skies just off of Mar Island. This is the first time that the Ushuaia has visited this Island and therefore we were all very excited to do a little exploring. Generally, this region is protected and tourists are not permitted. However, Mar Island is an exception as it's outside the ASPA (Antarctic Special Protected Area). We first had to negotiate dense pancake ice in the zodiacs to get to the landing site. Once we landed, we climbed up to the plateau of the island and got our first view of the area. The glaciers across the cove were spilling over into the water, sparkling blue. Penguins were porpoising towards the colony, and skuas were circling in search of a meal. We spent about one hour with the colony of Chinstrap Penguins sitting on their eggs. Some of them were carrying small stones to add to their nest and all very calling to each other very noisily. Then we descended back to the landing site and boarded the zodiacs for a short cruise before returning to the ship. We circled small icebergs, bringing the zodiacs into small alcoves of the ice, and we marveled at the colours; bright blue and green.

Back onboard, we warmed up over a cup of coffee as the ship navigated through the Gerlache Strait. The sky darkened and soon we were surrounded by a dense fog. After lunch, and a movie, we arrived at Cuerverville Island, a Gentoo Penguin colony. The zodiacs were quickly launched and we were brought ashore to explore the Island. The rookeries were spread out along a narrow beach and up the hills. Some of us ventured to the top of one of these hills to be a better view of our surroundings. A gentle snowfall began, and the wind died down. A leopard seal was spotted patrolling the waters along the beach in search of penguin-snacks. Before returning to the ship, we took a short zodiac cruise around some of the beautiful icebergs that congregated in the bay. The snowfall became heavier once we were all onboard, warm, and ready for dinner. We sailed the Neumayer Channel and anchored at Port Lockroy, ready for the landing in the morning.

Sunday, December 3rd

Port Lockroy – Lat. 64° 49' S, Long. 63° 30' W

Petermann Island - Lat. 65° 10' S, Long. 64° 10' W

Antarctic Facts

Britain has played a major role in the exploration and study of Antarctica. Captain James Cook was the first person to circumnavigate the continent in the 1770s. Later expeditions were searching for

This morning we visited Port Lockroy and Jougla Island. This place was discovered and named by the French explorer Jean-Baptiste Charcot and later used as a mooring place by whalers. Here we saw the British "A" Station, built during the Tabarin Operation in 1943-44. This Antarctic Historic Site was restored by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust in 1996. Nowadays, it's a museum and an Antarctic post office. We visited the museum and the rookery of Gentoo Penguins around the base, where a research of human impact on penguins is being carried out. We also had the chance to send postcards, get our passports stamped and get some souvenirs in the gift shop.

commercial opportunities, usually hunting for seals or whales. At the start of the present century, Scott and Shackleton undertook purely scientific expeditions, a tradition which continues to the present.

In the afternoon, we sailed through Peltier and Lemaire Channel on our way to Petermann Island. The Channels were dense with sea ice and small icebergs and the Captain maneuvered masterfully through the maze. Once on Petermann Island, we climbed a gentle slope to the Adelie Penguin rookeries. We were enthusiastically received by one of the scientists staying for the summer at the Base. She answered our questions and told us about her activities. We also visited a Blue-eyed Cormorant colony; a special treat because many of them are off-limits to tourists. Heading back to the ship was a bit tricky as the wind has picked up considerably. But, we made it back in good spirits and warmed up over hot coffee and cake as the ship turned around and sailed through the Lemaire Channel once again.

Monday, December 4th

Almirante Brown St., Paradise Bay – Lat. 64° 53' S, Long. 62° 52' W
Danco Island – Lat. 64°44' S, Long. 62° 37' W

Antarctic Facts

Paradise Bay was named by early 20th century whalers not only for the beauty of the glaciers and the surrounding mountains, but also for the calm waters.

The station was partially destroyed in 1984 by a fire set by the station's physician/leader, who didn't want to spend another winter there!



In the morning, we finally stepped on the continent at Argentine Station "Almirante Brown" in Paradise Bay. Some of us climbed up the hill from where we had a panoramic view of the bay and took the fast way down; sliding down. Our zodiac drivers took us for a cruise along a Blue-Eyed Shag colony settled on the nearby cliff and also we came closer to the glacier.... Some of us witnessed quite a dramatic site when a large part of the glacier collapsed into the water. The collapse began with a large piece of ice floating to the surface of the water. It created quite a wave and we moved further from the area. Then, only a few minutes later, the glacier began to shed ice into the water from above.

As we approached the ship in the zodiacs, we could smell the delicious perfume of Argentine Asado. We quickly made our way on board and prepared our stomachs for BBQ.

Shortly after lunch, the zodiacs whisked us ashore to Danco Island, a 1- mile-long island lying in the Southern part of the Errera Channel, off the West coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. It was first charted by Gerlache's Belgian Antarctic Expedition (1897-9), and named for the Belgian geophysicist who died on board the *Belgica* while they got trapped in the ice in the winter of 1898.

Many Gentoo Penguin were nesting there and we saw many of them leaping out of the water around us. Some of us made it to the summit of the island and built a memorial snow man. We also walked along the coast through hundreds of small pieces of ice and watched as a Leopard seal patrolled the beach, looking for a snack. As we were leaving, the wind picked up and we were thankful to get to the ship to warm up. The ship left the Antarctic Peninsula behind as we headed towards the South Shetland Islands in the direction of a beautiful rainbow.

Tuesday, December 5th

Whalers Bay, Deception Island – Lat. 62° 59' S, Long. 60° 34' W

Half Moon Island – Lat. 62° 36' S, Long. 59° 55' W

Antarctic Facts

In Whalers Bay lay the remains of the Norwegian “Hektor” Whaling Station (1911-1931).

The remains of the abandoned Biscoe House (Base “B” of the Operation Tabarin) and the BAS (British Antarctic Survey) base can also be seen.

The old barrels, equipment, whalebones, and other debris are partially buried by black and reddish volcanic pyroclastic sediments of various sizes related to the eruption of 1969 which forced the BAS to abandon this scientific station. In 1995 the whaling station was designated as Historic Site under the Antarctic Treaty.

This morning, Saint Nicholas Day for the Dutch, we found a small treat in the shoes that we had placed outside our cabin doors last night. It seems as though Saint Nicholas can travel to even the most remote places on earth!!!

After breakfast, we visited Deception Island. We started our crossing through the Neptune’s Bellows, the narrow entrance to this horseshoe-shaped island. The scene was breathtaking as we turned to starboard side and navigated next to the northeastern cliff. After crossing the Bellows the captain sailed inside Port Foster, the 9.2 miles diameter flooded caldera, resulting from the collapse of the volcano. Port Foster is 5.8 miles long from the northwest to southeast and more than 3.5 miles wide being the most protected anchorage site on the South Shetlands.

Right after breakfast we landed at Whalers Bay. We climbed to the Neptune’s Window a panoramic view point from which we could see the bay and also the sea surrounding the island. Later, some of us decided to have a bath in the warm waters of this mystic volcano. The water was hot and cold at the same time and it was funny to see our fellow travelers laying down on the beach, just like elephant seals.

Our first landing in the morning and last one of our trip took us to Half Moon Island. This 1.25 mile (2 kilometer) long, crescent-shaped island lies in the entrance of Moon Bay between Greenwich and Livingston Islands. The island was known to sealers as early as 1821. There are some excellent hiking opportunities and some truly glorious scenery. The remains of a Norwegian water boat that was stranded during a storm can still be found on the beach. A short climb uphill and over the cobble was required to reach the first of the breeding chinstraps. Kelp Gulls, Antarctic Terns and skuas were also abundant. We also spotted one Weddell Seal resting on the snow. A nice walking to the other end of the island took us to the Argentine station “Teniente Camara”.

Around noon it was time to say goodbye to Antarctica, we all returned to the ship with a feeling of melancholy, in anticipation of a difficult Drake Passage.



Wednesday, December 6th
Drake Passage

We awoke to calmer seas than last night, relieved and hungry. After breakfast, some of us felt well enough to attend a lecture on the debate about climate change by Shoshanah. Throughout the morning, we saw several whales from the ship, most likely Minke Whales and a couple of dolphins. In the afternoon we watched a movie and attended a lecture by Ximena on the history of whaling. In the evening we watched another movie and retired early to bed.

Thursday, December 7th
Drake Passage
Beagle Channel

Gradually we started to leave the Drake Passage behind. In the morning Agustín gave us a lecture on Ozone Layer.

In the afternoon, we all gathered in the conference room to watch the presentation of our final log. Our Expedition Staff had prepared a CD with detailed maps, a wildlife checklist, the lectures summaries, this daily log and a presentation of the hole trip.

We joined the Captain for the "Captain's Dinner" to thank him for his skillful navigation that took us to all the wonderful places we visited in Antarctica. Later, we celebrated the end of this wonderful trip with a toast at the bar.

Friday, December 8th
Ushuaia, Argentina - Lat. 54° 48' S, Long. 68° 18' W

The light in the morning marked the end of our trip as we were at the Ushuaia Pier. It was a memorable expedition with many highlights, including spotting Orca Whales, a collapsing glacier, and an erupting volcano (just kidding!).

The Captain, Officers, Expedition Staff, Hotel Staff and Crew of the Ushuaia were very happy to have you on board. We hope to see you again soon and wish you all a safe trip home!

Thank you!!!

