Our Itinerary

January 7: Ushuaia, Argentina, Beagle Channel.
January 8: Day at sea, Drake Passage.
January 9: Day at sea, Drake Passage.
January 10: Hanna Point, Livingston Is.; Whalers Bay, Deception Is.
January 11: Port Lockroy, Goudier Is.; Palmer Station, Anvers Is.
January 12: Vernadsky Station, Galindez Is.; Lemaire Channel; Paradise Bay.
January 13: Neko Harbour, Andvoord Bay; Cuverville Is., Errera Channel.
January 14: Half Moon Is.
January 15: Day at sea, Drake Passage.
January 16: Day at sea, Drake Passage. Mouth of Beagle Channel
January 17: Ushuaia, Argentina.

Daily Log of Our Voyage:

Saturday, January 7th:
Ushuaia, Argentina - Lat. 54º 48' S, Long. 68º 18' W

Our voyage to the frozen land of the Antarctic started at around 6pm from the Ushuaia pier. Prior to our departure most of us had spent some time in the quaint little town. It was time to retire to our cabins before the introductory briefing and the mandatory lifeboat drill. The expedition staff and officers were introduced to us. Our Expedition Leader, Gustavo Papazian, presented the lecturers and guides, who would accompany us during the landings and help us to understand how sensitive the ecosystem in Antarctica is. Berenice Charpin, Mariano Curiel, 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 continent. All of them have long been bitten by the polar bug and could not help but just love the White Continent. We felt that we were in good hands with this enthusiastic team. Our hotel manager Fernando Bustamante would take care of all our needs, and then, there was of course a man, who we hoped not to have to visit (or at least only in a social way). This was our doctor Konstantin Petrosyan. Gustavo also introduced very briefly part of our bridge crew. The ice-captain, Juan Carlos Ianuzzo, the Chief Officer Gustavo Doldan and Third Mate Martin Ventancu. Our captain, Jorge Aldegheri and his Second Mate Adrian Agrelo, were at that moment at the bridge, preparing the *Ushuaia* to sail through the Beagle Channel on our way to the infamous waters of the Drake Passage.

Agustín kicked off our lecture program with his introduction to Antarctica: "Discovering Terra Incognita".

Sunday, January 8th :
Drake Passage

Although the Drake Passage was gentle to us, only some could enjoy breakfast.
Right after breakfast Berenice lectured on “Antarctic Wildlife”. Later we attended the lecture of Christian about “Antarctic Seabirds and at sea birdwatching”.
After a short nap, we attended Christian’s lecture on “Marine Mammals” and Mariano introduced us to Antarctic History with his “Early Exploration” presentation. Our afternoon finished with a Birdwatching session.
During the day we were accompanied by the magnificent Wandering Albatrosses, the largest flying birds in the world. Furthermore we observed Black-browed Albatross, Giant Petrels, White Chinned Petrels and Cape Petrels among other birds.

Monday, January 9th:
Drake Passage

At 8:00 am the bridge contacted our engineers who reported that the water temperature was now 2.2 degrees Celsius. The drop in water temperature officially announced our arrival in Antarctica, as we had finally crossed the Antarctic Convergence!
In the morning our lecture program continued with Marian o lecturing on Antarctic History “Heroic Age” and Christian with his lecture called “The Two-World Life of Penguins”.
In the afternoon the first tabular iceberg was spotted from the bridge marking the end of our “Iceberg Spotting Contest”. The lucky winner got a bottle of the best Argentine red wine!
Afterwards Gustavo, our Expedition Leader, explained the IAATO (International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators) Guidelines for Visitors to Antarctica and Zodiac safety procedures, which made us aware of the way we have to behave while visiting Antarctica. After that, we received our life-vests and also looked for the proper boots for landings, provided by Antarpply Expedition s.

In the evening, we crossed the Nelson Strait and finally arrived at the South Shetland Islands. There, we spotted the first whale of the trip! Then, we continued our navigation across the Bransfield Strait on our way to the Hannah Point.

The Antarctic Convergence marks the true ecological margin of Antarctica, being formed by the meeting between warmer water masses flowing southward from the

tropics and colder waters flowing northward from Antarctica. At this point, the cold and dense Antarctic Water dives beneath the warmer water.
Further south, the upwelling of a deeper water mass is pushed apart by the opposing West and East Wind Drift systems to bring nutrients to the surface, which feed the vast sea of plankton in the area. These microscopic creatures, in turn, are food for the krill upon which the Antarctic food web is so dependent.

Tuesday, January 10th :
Hannah Point, Livingston Island – Lat 62°39' S, Long 60°37' W
Whalers Bay, Deception Island – Lat 62°59' S, Long 60°34' W

Our first landing in the morning took us to Hannah Point on Livingston Island. This point forms the eastern side of the entrance to Walker Bay on the South coast of Livingston Island. It is named after the sealing vessel Hannah of Liverpool, which wrecked here in 1820. This beach was a microcosm of Antarctic Peninsula fauna, with Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguins, Kelp Gulls, Blue-eyed Shags, Southern Giant Petrels, and Snowy Sheathbills nesting in close proximity.
Excitement grew when we spotted a couple of Macaroni Penguins amongst the Chinstrap Penguin rookery. These penguins usually nest in South Georgia, but some individuals had decided to change vicinity and to breed instead in Antarctica. We felt quite privileged to be able to see them. This was certainly a bonus!
There were also many Southern Elephant Seals hauling out.
On our way to a viewpoint, we found a group of about 40 to 60 Gentoo chicks in creché. It was nice to see this cute group under the watchful eye of their parents nursing them.
Moreover we spotted patches of Antarctic Hairgrass and Antarctic Pearlwort, the only two species of flowering plants in all Antarctica!!
Our last stop on Walker Bay took us to a rock where anonymous hands had placed a number of fossils from a nearby moraine, mainly remains of ferns and *Notophagus* tress, inhabitants of the forest that once covered this part of the sub Antarctic Islands, and indication of a prevalent warmer climate.
An elephant seal pup saw us as we were leaving the beach happily riding the waves after seeing so many wonders in this small jewel of the South Shetlands.

In the afternoon we visited Deception Island. We started our crossing through the Neptune's Bellows (the tight opening of this volcanic island), which not only was very narrow, but also extremely shallow. The scene was breathtaking when we saw the Captain turning to starboard side to get us safely into the ring-shaped island.
The whole island is a collapsed crater, 9.2 miles (14,8 kilometres) in diameter, enclosing the large harbour of Port Foster, which is 5.8 miles (9.3 kilometres) long from the north-west to southeast and more than 3.5 miles (5.6 kilometres) wide. Port Foster is the most protected anchorage on the South Shetlands. After crossing the Bellows we entered Whaler's Bay. This

was the small bay on our starboard. The remains of the abandoned British Antarctic Survey base were located between the hangar and the crumbling boilers from the Norwegian whaling operation. The beach was strewn with volcanic ash and cinders of various sizes, which covered the old barrels, equipment, whalebones, and other debris from the whaling and research groups that once operated here.
Later, most 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 everyone laying down on the beach, just like elephant seals.

We left this mysterious volcanic island behind and started our navigation through the Bransfield strait towards the Gerlache strait when we had the chance to witness an unusual event: a numerous group of humpback whales feeding on the surface with their jaws wide open and their mouths full. What a feast of krill for them!

Wednesday, January 11th:
Port Lockroy – Lat. 64°49' S, Long. 63°30' W
American "Palmer" Scientific Station - Lat 64° 46' S, Long 64° 03' W.

In the morning we reached Port Lockroy. 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.
We invited the personnel of Port Lockroy for dinner on board.

In the afternoon we were greeted in the American "Palmer" Station. Our hosts came on board and gave us a complete pre-landing briefing about the station and all the scientific research that USA is carrying out in Antarctica. Afterward we visited the different buildings and they invited us a hot coffee with brownies (the best brownies in Antarctica). Furthermore we landed at Torgerson Island where we had the opportunity to see Adelie Penguins with their chicks. Some of us bought some souvenirs at the station's gift shop. At the end of the day, happy, we returned back to the *Ushuaia*.
Later before dinner we navigate trough the Lemaire channel were we were astonished by it's natural beauty. This narrow gap is a 7-mile (11 kilometres) long, one-mile (1.6 kilometre) wide passage running in a northeast-to-southwest-and-west direction from Splitwind Island and False Cape Renard (called "Una's tits") to Roullin Point and Cape Cloos. It separates Booth Island from the Antarctic Peninsula.

As we were leaving the Lemaire Channel behind and entering into the Penola Strait we had the incredible opportunity to admire one of those rare and magical moments in Antarctica when the whole sea, sky and ice were set on fire during a magnificent sunset.
We also spotted our first leopard seal resting on an ice float!

De Gerlache's Belgica Expedition (1897-1899) *Adrien Victor Joseph De Gerlache, a Lieutenant of the Royal Belgian Navy, led the first Belgium scientific expedition to Antarctica, financed by the Brussels Geographical Society. Officers and scientist from several countries joined the expedition. The party was composed by Roald Amundsen and Frederick A. Cook among others. By January 1898 the "Belgica" was off the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula and discovered the Belgica Strait, later named De Gerlache Strait. They also gave the name Palmer Archipelago to a group of four large islands forming the western boundary of the Strait. By March 1898 the ship was completely trapped by ice at 71°30'S forcing the crew to winter-over and becoming the first to winter south of the Antarctic Circle. The expedition underwent great hardships.*
After 377 days, the ship came out safely from the ice to sail home. The primary achievement of the party surviving the Antarctic winter proved that bases could be set up on the continent itself, enabling a full-time program of exploration. That knowledge was crucial for the next phase of Antarctic discovery.

Thursday, January 12th:
Vernadsky Station - Lat. 65 °15' S, Long. 64°16' W
Paradise Bay – Lat. 64°53' S , Long. 62 °52' W

The sun shone very early: it was time for our southernmost landing site, the Ukrainian Vernadsky Station, at the Argentine Islands. The personnel of the station welcomed us cheerfully. They showed us the facilities and told us about the interesting research work on High Atmosphere and Ozone Layer they have been carrying out for the last decade.
Our zodiac drivers also took us for a small cruise through the channels of the Argentine Islands to a historical hut, Wordie House, at Winter Island. Part of this hut was established in the early 30's by Sir James Wordie, who was the geologist on Shackleton's Endurance Expedition. During the Second World War, it became part of the Operation Tabarin.
We also enjoyed the best Antarctic Bar and its unique tradition, a bra for a drink.
It was hard to leave this fantastic station and the marvellous views surrounding it, but the Ushuaia had still a long way to go.

After crossing the Lemaire Channel the *Ushuaia* sailed through the Gerlache strait.

In the afternoon, our ship was already in Paradise Bay (named by early-20th-century whalers not only for the extreme beauty of the glaciers, icebergs and the surrounding mountains, but for the calm water it is placed

in), we made our first continental landing at the Argentine Station "Almirante Brown". The station was partially destroyed on April 12th, 1984 by a fire set by the station's physician/leader, who didn't want to spend another winter there!
We were divided in two groups, the seals and the penguins, to make a zodiac cruise and a landing at Paradise Bay.
We all climbed a hill to contemplate the fantastic view of the surrounding glaciers and walked around the buildings of the Almirante Brown Station.
Our zodiac drivers took us for a cruise along a wonderful Blue-Eyed Shag colony.

On our way back to the ship an extraordinary event took place. We had a close encounter of the third type with a Minke whale! This happy creature started to swim around our ship and pe rformed a show of flips, flops puffs and other acrobatics for us. Was he/she trying to perform a mating ritual mistaking the “Ushuaia” for a bigger whale? We really don’t know. What we know is that many of us couldn’t sleep that night out of excitement! And scientist regard Minkes as being shy!

After dinner, Berenice and Agustín showed us their dancing skills and gave us some tango lessons. We all had good fun.

Friday, January 13th:
Neko Harbor – Lat. 64°50' S, Long. 62°33' W
Cuverville Island – Lat. 64° 41’ S, Long. 62° 38’ W

In the morning we made our second continental landing at Neko Harbor, a small bay indenting the East shore of Andvoord Bay, along the West coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. Discovered by De Gerlache’s Belgian Antarctic expedition, 1897-1899, and named after a Norwegian floating factory ship, the Neko, which operated in the South Shetlands and Antarctic Peninsula in 1911-1912 and 1923-1924. The Gentoo Penguins, Weddell Seal and the stunning view of the giant glacie rs and icebergs around us were breathtaking. We also walked along the beach to the Argentine Refuge “Felipe Fliess” (who was an officer of the Argentine vessel Uruguay on the rescue operation for the Otto Nordensk jöld’s Swedish Expedition in 1903).

Back on the ship, a delicious argentine barbecue was ready to delight us on deck!!

After lunch we landed at Cuverville Is land, at the north mouth of Errera Channel. Everyone was happy with this calm and sunny day.
The island itself was very rocky with considerable mosses covering the high elevations. A raised beach formed a nesting site for many Gentoo Penguins. The higher slopes were off limits for us. The skuas nesting upslope vigorously defend their nests, and we didn’t want to get dive bombed of course!

We visited the Gentoo Penguins rookeries nesting with their chicks along the coast. We also saw a group of about 40 skuas peacefully resting on the beach.
On the way back to the vessel our Zodiac drivers took us for a cruise among beautifully sculptured blue icebergs!
On our way to our next destination the *Ushuaia* sailed across the astonishing Errera Channel.

Saturday, January 14th:
Half Moon Island – Lat. 62° 36' S, Long. 59° 55' W

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" where the personnel of the station warmly welcome us.
Around noon it was time to say goodbye to Antarctica, we all returned to the ship with a feeling of melancholy.
We had to use our imagination on the "Mythycal Antarctic Creature Creation" Contest.

These days, Antarctica had gifted us wi th a precious experience, a unique opportunity to get into its frozen heart. Something that we will surely never forget.
In the evening, we started our return to civilization preparing ourselves for another cross of the Drake Passage

Sunday, January 15th:
Drake Passage

It seems that Neptune wanted to show us his mercy and provide for a smooth crossing.
In the morning Mariano started the lectur es program with "History of Whaling in the Southern ocean". Berenice followed with a lecture on "Antarctic Ice".
Later Berenice lectured about "Antarctic Wildlife Conservation" and Christian talked about "Seabirds and fisheries".
We ended the evening with dinner and a good movie.

Monday, January 16th:
Drake Passage and Mouth of Beagle Channel

Gradually we started to leave the Drake Passage behind preparing ourselves for returning to civilization.
Agustín lectured on "Ozone".
In the afternoon, we all gathered in the conference room to watch the presentation of our final log.
In the evening we celebrated the end of this wonderful trip with a toast at the bar and delivered the "Antarctic certificates" of this expedition.
We joined the Captain at "Captain's Dinner" to thank him for his skillful navigation that took us to all the wonderful places we visited in Antarctica. Thank you Captain !

Tuesday, January 17th:
Ushuaia, Argentina - Lat. 54º 48' S, Long. 68º 18' W

We arrived in the early morning and after breakfast it was time to say good bye to our fellow travellers.

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!!!