

## **IN THE WAKE OF SCOTT & SHACKLETON**

**on board HERITAGE ADVENTURER**

**7 January - 3 February 2025**



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### **Day 1**

**Tuesday 7 January 2025**

#### **Queenstown**

Our In the Wake of Scott and Shackleton adventure began in Queenstown, New Zealand's world-famous alpine resort town, as we arrived from around the globe. We checked into our accommodations and met fellow guests and some of our expedition team in the lobby. Later that evening we gathered to enjoy dinner with strangers who will soon become friends – our fellow adventurers.

### **Day 2**

**Wednesday 8 January 2025**

#### **Queenstown to Bluff and departure**

At breakfast, we had the chance to reconnect with friends we met at dinner, or meet some new expeditioners, before heading out to explore this bustling adventure town. We could be seen all over the waterfront, gardens and mall - doing last-minute shopping or checking the birdlife along the lake shore.

After a satisfying lunch, we hopped on coaches for the transfer through the pastoral countryside of Southland to Bluff to board our beautiful new home for the upcoming adventure, *Heritage Adventurer*. We scattered to explore, then came together for the

lifeboat drill and introductory briefings. Hotel Director, Erik, introduced us to life aboard, and Expedition Leader, Christian, told us what to expect on our excursions and introduced the expedition team – more than 20 experts who will help us get the most out of our expedition.

We had our first chance to sample the delights provided by the galley and dining room staff. Due to tidal restrictions, it was during dinner that we cast off and entered the open ocean. Happily, the sea conditions were welcoming, and we stayed in the shelter of Stewart Island, which, due to the forecast at the Snares, was to be our first destination.



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### **Day 3**

**Thursday 9 January 2025**

#### **Rakiura/Stewart Island and Ulva Island**

As we rose for breakfast, the morning found us at anchor off Ulva Island – a predator-free natural reserve nestled in Paterson Inlet, Stewart Island. We had made our selection for long or short walks the previous evening, so some got away early while the rest enjoyed the views from the outer decks and the kayakers prepared for their first adventure.

The length of the walk mattered little, as we all enjoyed the old-growth native forest with luxuriant undergrowth of fungi, mosses, liverworts and ferns galore. As we walked we listened to the birdsong and spotted many species including New Zealand Pigeon/Kererū, New Zealand Robin/Toutouwai, Tomtit/Ngirungiru, Tui, Yellowhead/Mohua and Weka. A lucky few glimpsed Saddleback/Tieke. We were prepared for the New Zealand Sea Lions, and we enjoyed fabulous observations from a safe distance.

Our first lunch aboard proved that we would not starve on this voyage – far from it.

After refuelling, we headed out on a long walk along an old logging track or a paddle near the old whaling station. Most visited the cozy settlement of Oban for a bit of history in the museum, a souvenir or gift from the shops, a beverage at the South Sea Hotel – or all three.

Back on board, we freshened up before getting back together in the lounge for the Captain's Welcome Cocktails. Captain Jasek officially welcomed us and introduced the heads of all the departments of the ship's crew and hotel team – more capable people working hard to make this voyage special. The very special menu for the Captain's Welcome Dinner followed in the dining room. What a first day of our expedition!



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#### **Day 4**

**Friday 10 January 2025**

#### **Snares Islands**

We awoke to find gentle conditions in Ho Ho Bay on the eastern side of North East Island in the Snares Islands. It looked like our delay of a day had given us a superb morning here.

We headed out early with the kayakers off first, followed by the rest of us with 12 Zodiacs in the water! The kayakers had a great paddle from the heart of the bay, with a venture into a cave so deep that head torches were needed, up to the 'Penguin Slide'. The rest spread out and cruised the entire east coast of North East and Broughton Islands. It was such fun to watch the other Zodiacs while also drinking in the wildlife spectacle.

The endemic Snares Crested Penguins were in every cove and cranny, busy going to and coming from, their nests up in the forest. There were huge rafts of them in the water and many porpoising around us. Seeing them popping out of the water onto the rocks, or diving in, gave us plenty of laughs. As a treat, some also saw a possible vagrant Erect-crested Penguin and a Little Penguin (NB: it was determined from photos later in the voyage that the Erect-crested Penguin was not an Erect-crested. The actual species remains underdetermined). New Zealand Fur Seals and Sea Lions were posing on the rocks and swimming in the sea adding to the spectacle.

The air was full of birds, notably the Buller's Albatross, Sooty Shearwater/Titi, Cape Petrels, Antarctic Terns and Brown Skuas. The nests of the Buller's Albatross on the cliffs were easy to spot. We wove in and out of the caves and tunnels getting close to all the wildlife and the tree daisies, Hebe, megaherbs and other flora too. With conditions this good, our time on the water was extended - twice! Our Captain, at his welcome, had said



that they would handle everything else, but the weather was our responsibility. We were off to a fantastic start.

After lunch, we enjoyed a ship's cruise of the Western Chain before heading back into the open ocean on our way to Macquarie Island with time at sea, a start was made to the education programme. First up was Lou with her research into Subantarctic Marine Biosecurity - which featured several interruptions for Long Finned Pilot Whales and Bottlenose Dolphins observed off the port side. Dave's Introduction to Seabirds followed. On this expedition, there will be so much to learn and so much to do.

This was our first taste of what will become a normal evening routine of recap and briefing, with beverages, dinner, and into our beds to be rocked gently to sleep.



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## **Day 5**

**Saturday 11 January 2025**

**At Sea en route to Macquarie Island**

The sea state remained gentle through the night and into the morning, giving our bodies and minds a chance to adjust to the motion of the ocean.

We enjoyed a sleep-in, with the education programme starting at 0900 with Rachel's talk on Fascinating Facts about Penguins. We confirmed the sizing of our Muckboots, as we will need them on Macquarie Island before Cathy helped improve our photography with her Advice on Composition. If we could come close to matching the images that she puts on the screen near reception, we would be very happy.

The afternoon was taken by a very rigorous biosecurity exercise. We attended the mandatory briefing and cleaned our gear paying special attention to pockets, mesh and velcro. We took our gear to the mud rooms and main lounge where the expedition team checked our work. It was not uncommon to need extra work with the vacuum cleaner or the tweezers. We all passed and could be sure that we would not be spreading pests or diseases.

Chris, John and Dan gave us an Introduction to the Geology, History and Wildlife of Macquarie Island, before a varied recap and Christian's briefing to prepare us for the possible landings. After our leisurely day, we enjoyed dinner and made sure to be well-rested for an incredible day ahead at Macquarie Island.

## Day 6

**Sunday 12 January 2025**

### **Macquarie Island**

We awoke today to wind, so we waited hopefully while conditions were assessed. The decision was made that no paddling was possible, but the landing at the Isthmus would go ahead as scheduled.

To comply with the guiding regulations, we went ashore in true Subantarctic conditions in our 8 smaller groups. It was a good test of our newly cleaned gear and our mettle. We explored the area, walking along Razorback Ridge to the historic digesters, then to the research station and the wild west coast beach.

Our track took us past many Southern Elephant Seals – mostly moulting SAMs (Sub Adult Males). A few were inquisitive, so the local station staff helped manage our transits. We passed lively Gentoo and King Penguins and noted tussock grass, megaherbs, and unusual rocks as Macquarie Island is formed from oceanic crust. Walking along the beach, we admired the Black-backed Gulls, Antarctic Terns, Macquarie Shags, Brown Skua, and Giant Petrels were overhead.

During lunch *Heritage Adventurer* repositioned to Sandy Bay. Our fabulous crew helped us navigate the conditions, and we prepared for our next excursion - Sandy Bay.

Walking up the beach from the landing was like entering some strange new world and a complete sensory overload. We were surrounded by colour, life and noise and never knew where to look next. Turning to the right led past the rocky lagoon with jousting giant Elephant Seals and into the court of the King Penguins. We followed the flagged track to reach the colony with many birds having brood pouches over their feet, and a few chicks and eggs being glimpsed. Some birds were a bit scruffy due to moulting, but others were in full, colourful plumage with the raindrops beading on their feathers. They were truly living works of art.

Left from the landing led past the piles of Elephant Seals into the hustle and bustle of King and Royal Penguins on their landing beach. We carefully crossed the Royal Penguin highway admiring and laughing at the busy little birds as they went about their daily business. The culmination was reached with the climb onto the foreshore, through the megaherbs, past the Giant Petrel and Brown Skua chicks to the viewing platform for the colony. The noise there made talking difficult, but words would have failed to describe the scene in any case. The chicks in creches were surrounded by the adults squabbling or greeting mates in an absolute circus of action. Our time flew by.

We were all buzzing at dinner about this full expedition day when Christian came on the PA to announce that a Zodiac cruise and kayak outing would be offered at the huge King Penguin colony at Lusitania Bay. The cloud and steady light rain of the afternoon had lifted, and conditions were ideal, so we all jumped at the chance. We cruised or paddled along the rocks and Rockhopper Penguins through the sea full of swimming and

porpoising King Penguins. The mood was as enjoyable as the conditions with even the crew getting involved. It was an unforgettable finish to an unforgettable day.



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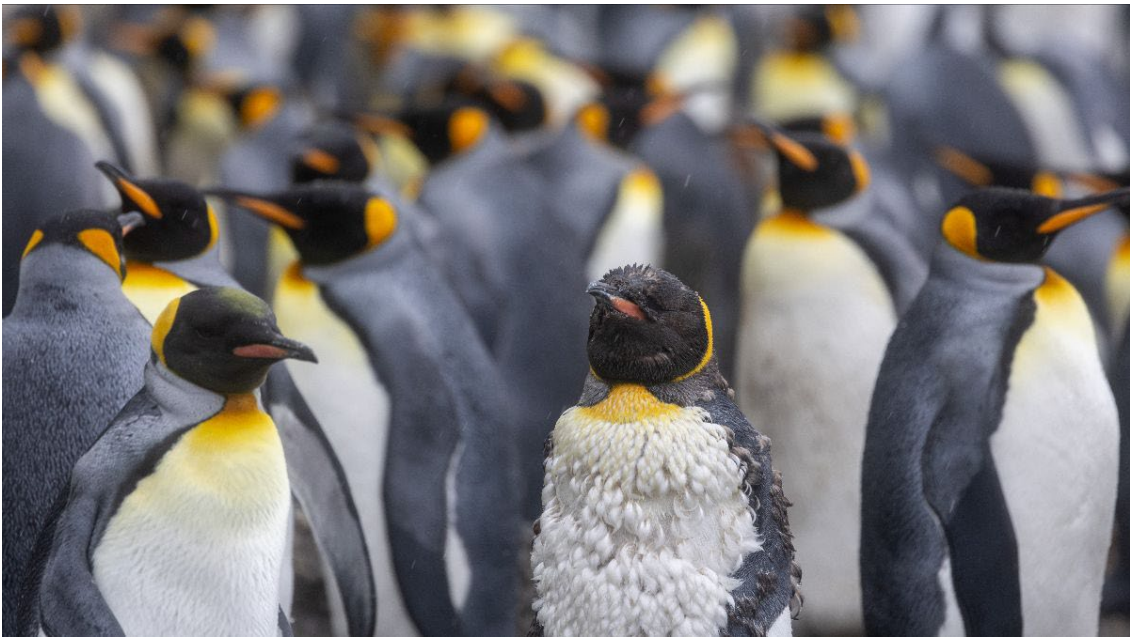
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## **Day 7**

**Monday 13 January**

**At Sea en route to the Ross Sea**

Most of us enjoyed a sleep-in and a full breakfast while still in the glow of our journey thus far. Still, the expedition moved on and, while there was time for photo sorting and sharing experiences, there was also a full education programme. Tamzin told the story of John Harrison and his part in solving the problem of Longitude. A completely different subject was explored with Andy Smith's presentation of his personal experiences in the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery.

After lunch, the variety continued with some joining the art workshop with Kathy to make a start at the production of their own personal voyage journal. We gathered in the lounge at afternoon tea time for Rachel's exposition on the ecology of pinnipeds, Seal or no Seal. John wrapped up the lecture series with his talk In the Wake of Scott: The Discovery Expedition and the Start of the Heroic Age.

The sea shop was open for supplies and souvenirs before the routine of recap, briefing, dinner and dessert. We gladly accepted the opportunity for an early night after an incredible start to our voyage.



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## **Day 8**

**Tuesday 14 January 2025**

**At Sea en route to the Ross Sea**

The moderate seas we have experienced so far in the Southern Ocean continued overnight and throughout the day. As a result, the education programme, and the mealtimes, were well attended – feeding both body and mind.

First up after breakfast was Nigel Marven sharing his history and showing clips of his adventures in *A Career in Wildlife Filmmaking*. John followed with the second part of the Heroic Age history, *In the Wake of Shackleton: The Nimrod Expedition*.

We had another step toward the Antarctic when we put on our underlayers and picked the correct size for the blue parkas that would be our outer layer. They were delivered to our cabins shortly afterwards. The deadline for entries in the first iceberg-sighting guessing game closed and we started watching the sea to hope that our guess was closest.

Neil's presentation *Amazing, Astounding, Astonishing Antarctica* kept the focus on the south. The theme continued with Christian's explanation of the formation and movement of the ice, and a primer on reading the ice charts that provide updated conditions, in *Sea Ice of the Ross Sea*. During this time, we passed through 60° South and a fog belt caused by the Antarctic Convergence, or Polar Front. We had now crossed the political and biological boundaries of the Antarctic.

After dinner, we watched Episode 1 of *The Forgotten Polar Hero*, a Norwegian documentary about Carsten Borchgrevink and the Southern Cross Expedition. Also featured were the conservation efforts of the Antarctic Heritage Trust (AHT) on the hut at

Cape Adare – including a younger version of our own Al Fastier. It was fun to learn more about this relatively unknown expedition as we neared the site where they had spent the first winter-over on the Antarctic continent.

The anticipation continued to build!



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## Day 9

**Wednesday 15 January 2025**

**At Sea en route to the Ross Sea**

Our good run with sea conditions continued, meaning that we had a fabulous viewing of the pair of Humpback Whales we passed at breakfast. The timing of the sighting was fortunate because Kate soon gave her presentation on Citizen Science, including instructions for submitting our photos to [happywhale.com](http://happywhale.com). Dan followed with Knowing Your Whales and Dolphins to help us identify future cetaceans.

We learned that the first iceberg had been sighted at 0300 with the winner to be revealed at recap.

After lunch, Cathy helped those with non-phone cameras in her hands-on workshop Getting your Camera off Automatic Mode – Part 1. The galley team offered more sweet treats with Swedish Pancakes and other delectables for high tea on the high seas, while the team of Inspiring Explorers from the Antarctic Heritage Trust introduced themselves. John then followed with his talk on the history of Scott's *Terra Nova* Expedition and Roald Amundsen's Norwegians in Race to The Pole: Part 1.

We had been briefed that the crossing of the Antarctic Circle would be in the early evening, so we convened on the Pool Deck to find hot chocolate with Baileys Irish Cream waiting for us, and the swimming pool full of icy seawater for a Pool Polar Plunge for those brave (or foolish) enough to give it a go. As the Circle was crossed, we took the pledge: "I have followed in the wake of the great explorers and crossed the Southern Ocean and

Antarctic Circle. By accepting the Mark of the Penguin, I hereby pledge that I will, until my last expedition, advocate to everybody, even those who will not listen, the importance of the Antarctic and its wildlife.” Having so promised, we were awarded the Mark of the Penguin.

At recap, we learned that Alice had won the first iceberg-sighting guessing game with her guess being exactly correct – to the minute – a historic Heritage Expeditions first.

*Forgotten Polar Hero* continued after dinner, and we were then tempted to stay awake longer by Christian with his announcement of whales and a large tabular iceberg at 12 O'clock from the *Heritage Adventurer*. It was an impressive sight, so much so that we did a circumnavigation. Magic.



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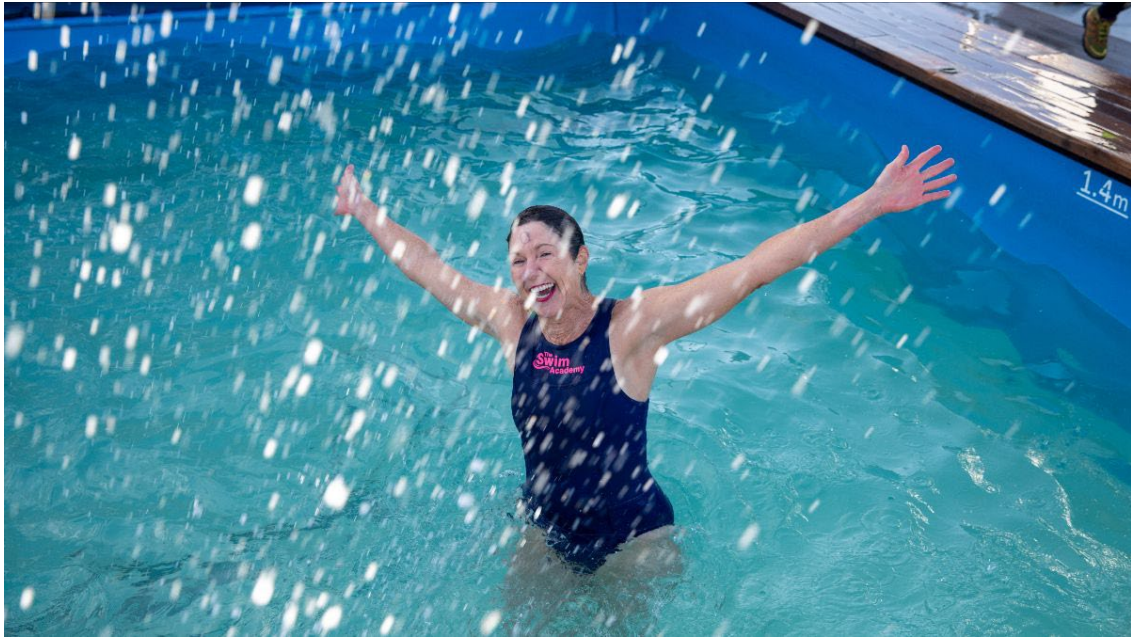




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**Day 10**  
**Thursday 16 January 2025**  
**At Sea en route to the Ross Sea**

The early risers might have seen it coming, but for most of us, entering the sea ice was announced by the sound of *Heritage Adventurer* boldly breaking through. A look out the window, or porthole, had us dressing quickly to view it. Conditions remained gentle and

mostly sunny, with large icebergs scattered throughout the sea ice, and Crabeater Seals on the floes. We soon filled more of our memory cards and our memories.

The first agenda item for another busy sea day was the briefing supplied by the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) on the expectations for our behaviour in Antarctica. This was followed by a round of biosecurity. We again cleaned our gear and had it inspected by the expedition team. It was another step towards our first landing. The morning finished with John completing his description of *The Race to The Pole* – telling the story of Amundsen's triumph and Scott's tragedy.

Cathy continued her camera workshop, and Kathy her art workshop, after lunch. The rest of us spread out on the decks (or perhaps grabbed a power nap). Just as Kate was getting ready to start her presentation, we got the call for Blue Whales off the port bow. There were a several pair of them, so we stayed with them for a while – watching their blows and getting a few closer views.

Kate shared her research in *Adélie Penguins: Past, Present and Future*. The evening talk from Al built on the histories from John and the evening documentary, as he also told a personal story in *Challenges of Conserving the First Building Constructed in Antarctica*.

At recap, Dan showed his photos and analysis revealing that at least one of the Blue Whales was a possible Flue Whale – that is, a Fin and Blue hybrid. The briefing was all about the restrictions of numbers in the Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA), the historic hut and cautions on the difficulties and rapidly changing conditions that are always present at Cape Adare. We knew that we would need to keep alert while ashore and that conditions didn't always allow a landing.

Episode 3 of *Forgotten Polar Hero* was screened after dinner. For a second night running our bedtime was delayed by the PA announcement of whales. This time it was a group of Humpbacks feeding while Antarctic and Snow Petrels wheeled overhead. More magic.



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**Day 11**  
**Friday 17 January 2025**  
**Cape Adare**

The resurgence of Blue Whales in the Southern Ocean continued to be apparent through the morning, with several close approaches to the feeding giants. They were amazing, but we kept glancing at the clouds ahead for the occasional sight of land. To help us get the best from our visits, Tamzin gave a tutorial on Wildlife Photography.

From there, over time, our anticipation turned into realisation. Every aspect of the rest of the day was exceptional. We pushed through a small band of sea ice while looking at the 'iceberg graveyard' and the dramatic cliffs of Cape Adare. As we approached Ridley Beach, the historic huts slowly came into view. We were out on deck trying to take in every detail of the scene, from the towering mountains of the Royal Society Range down to the little Adélie Penguins everywhere.

A couple of Zodiacs were launched, and a scouting party was sent to check for the possibility of a landing. It was clear that the rapid movement of the ice along the beach was going to present challenges. After a small delay, the decision was made to start going ashore.

We landed between chunks of 'push ice' on the shore and walked up the small rise to the edge of the largest Adélie Penguin colony on earth. The season was well underway with the downy chicks in creches and the adults in motion all around them and us. Every aspect of a huge penguin colony displayed – feeding chases and chick feeding, pebble stealing, mate greeting, birds on nests, patrolling skuas, a cacophony of sounds and a confronting miasma of smells.

We had a chance to see all of this as we walked along the beach edge to reach the huts built by the Southern Cross Expedition in 1899 and Scott's Northern Party in 1911. The Northern Party hut is just a ruin, but Borchgrevink's Hut is well preserved. The hut sent us a clear message about the difficulties and traumas of the men who spent 11 months living there, including the first Antarctic winter and the first death on the continent.

We toured the site taking all this in as we made our way back to the landing beach. There we found that the ice movement had increased, taking us on an enjoyable detour returning to *Heritage Adventurer*. Happily, we were all back aboard for dinner and no one was forced to overnight in the hut! Even after a great meal, we were energised, so the bar was open late with plenty of stories and laughter.

Since the start of this voyage, Christian has been saying "It doesn't get any better than this". Perhaps he was right this time. This day will take some topping.



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## **Day 12**

**Saturday 18 January 2025**

**In the sea ice en route to Terra Nova Bay**

Because the likely landing sites south of Cape Adare were iced in, Christian took us back into the Ross Sea and along the sea ice edge heading for Terra Nova Bay. This effectively meant a day 'at sea', albeit in much different conditions than our days at sea in the Southern Ocean.

We followed the eastern edge of the sea ice with occasional forays into the ice. The outside decks were an attraction with sea ice, icebergs, and wildlife to observe, while inside, Andy showed a documentary on the Australian Antarctic Division Blue Whale Tagging in the Ross Sea. We hadn't had time for a recap after Cape Adare, so we had a late morning re-visit to yesterday's adventures and a chance to have Al answer our questions about the hut and his work.

We were called onto the bow for a group photo, carefully posed in front of a jagged iceberg with a blizzard of Snow Petrels overhead. In the afternoon sun, with Coulman Island as a backdrop, we departed for a Zodiac cruise or a kayak paddle. This was amongst the drifting ice floes of the pack ice with many blue ice sculptures, porpoising penguins, a few Crabeater Seals and one Leopard Seal. Being down on the water in this scene gave us a new perspective. The early evening was again free to enjoy the mirror sea, drifting ice and spectacular conditions.

At dinner, we got the announcement that an Emperor Penguin had been spotted on the sea ice. We gathered at the windows and on deck for a distant glimpse. Then, during dessert, our Captain took *Heritage Adventurer* into the ice for a closer look. We saw the

juvenile bird in the packed floes. As we looked around the ice, a second Emperor Penguin was spotted. This one was an adult, so we saw the much more colourful plumage.



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### **Day 13**

**Sunday 19 January 2025**

#### **Terra Nova Bay**

The morning seas were ice-free, as expected, in Terra Nova Bay. Mount Melbourne stood guard to the north in the sunshine as we approached the site of the German Gondwana Station and landed on the black gravel beach.

The entire area was free of snow and ice, and we walked up the gentle slope inland. The terrain was rocky with occasional lichens. The rocks themselves were folded and sculpted by the forces of the earth, ice and wind. Along the coast were ice floes topped by resting Weddell Seals and Adélie Penguins. As we climbed, we kept a careful watch for the South Polar Skua chicks, with their parents guarding them. We wound our way upward with good views north of the South Korean Station, Jang Bogo. Most of us stopped at, or before, the weather station antennas, getting a nice view over the whole bay.

As we arrived back on board *Heritage Adventurer*, an announcement was made that the conditions were perfect for a Polar Plunge – not in the pool this time but in the 0°C water of the sea. The brave among us (and there were many) changed into their togs and jumped, dove or backflipped to make a big splash and a quick exit. The sensible among us watched and laughed from the decks. Lunch was well deserved for both hikers and plungers.

*Heritage Adventurer* continued south along the coast, past the Italian station, Mario Zucchelli, toward Inexpressible Island. Along the way, we deviated our course for a closer approach to a huge tabular iceberg. When I say huge, I mean a square 1.5 kilometres on a side – or about 1 square mile – and around 120 metres thick. We passed alongside for 15 minutes knowing that the part above water was only a small fraction of the total mass.



Shortly after leaving the iceberg, we experienced the katabatic wind. When we reached Inexpressible Island, it was gusting 45 knots. We were able to see the site of the snow cave occupied by Scott's Northern Party, who named the island, but no landing was possible. Also, on the island, we saw the shiny, modern Chinese station, Qinling.

In keeping with the afternoon's theme, Neil gave us a presentation on all aspects of frozen water in Ice, Ice Baby... which ended as we reached the Drygalski Ice Tongue. As we navigated along the southern edge of this enormous floating ice formation Christian announced that we would have an early dinner to give the opportunity for an evening Zodiac cruise or paddle.

Many of us signed up and the Zodiacs were launched just as a curtain of fog blew in and eventually engulfed us creating a haunting landscape. Undaunted, we persisted together and were rewarded with a mulled wine delivered on the water and a fogbow over *Heritage Adventurer* as we found her again.



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## Day 14

Monday 20 January 2025

### Cape Evans

Mount Erebus greeted us straight ahead as we awoke. We picked the clearest, most ice-free, course forward and watched as the mountains of Ross Island grew closer. In preparation for a visit to the heroic hut, Al described the project he led in Cape Evans: Conversation Case Study. It was inspiring to see all the hard work over many years that has gone into preserving this museum-on-the-ice that we hope to visit soon.

A recap to answer our many and varied questions from the Question Box was followed by a briefing on the possible scenarios for our landing at the ASPA (Antarctic Specially Protected Area), at Cape Evans. After lunch, we passed Cape Bird, and in the early afternoon, a pack of feeding Orca/Killer Whales drew us out to the bow and other outer decks.

The southern reaches of McMurdo Sound proved to be remarkably ice-free and we made better than expected time. Soon we were cruising past Cape Royds for a glimpse of Shackleton's Hut, and to check the ice conditions for the potential landing sites. Just around the corner, *Heritage Adventurer* dropped anchor offshore from Scott's Cape Evans Hut.

This is the hut built for Scott's ill-fated *Terra Nova* expedition, where he started the journey to the South Pole from which he and 4 others never returned. It has been the focus of the

intense conservation effort described by Al. Now we had the chance to experience it for ourselves.

As an ASPA, numbers are limited around and inside the hut. We split into groups to explore the vicinity and our turn inside. The impression made by the hut is powerful. Every corner is filled with history. The thousands of artefacts are placed to bring the story of these men, and their stay here, to life. Each of us had a particular favourite, from the Emperor Penguin on Scott's desk to the bicycle hanging on the stable wall - the privilege of our experience will never be forgotten.

While waiting we were not idle, as a Zodiac cruise or a kayak paddle was offered. These explored the sea ice edge to the south, with many Adélie Penguins, some Weddell Seals, and a close approach to Inaccessible Island.

It was Tuesday morning and the high wind clouds had shrouded Mount Erebus by the time the operation was finished, and another remarkable day had been added to this expedition.



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## **Day 15**

**Tuesday 21 January 2025**

### **McMurdo Sound**

We enjoyed a sleep-in to remember and reflect on our Cape Evans experience. When we arose, the weather change foretold by those high wind clouds had occurred overnight as predicted with cold winds and snow flurries.

To help us get context on yesterday's visit, John gave a presentation on Shackleton's Heroic Failure – The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917. He highlighted the expedition's Ross Sea Party – the men who were the last residents of Cape Evans Hut – and their struggle to lay depots across the Ross Ice Shelf after the loss of the *Aurora*.

Over lunch, we saw the USA icebreaker, *Polar Star*, at work clearing the channel allowing freight and fuel to be delivered to McMurdo and Scott Bases. As we cruised the breaking edge of the fast ice there were multiple sightings of Emperor Penguins, Orcas, Minke Whales and more. With the wind chill of around minus 20°C, we braved the outer decks briefly but retreated quickly to the Observation Lounge or Bridge. This cruising culminated in the late afternoon on the west side of McMurdo Sound with several groups of 5+ Emperors on the ice edge and 2 pods of dozens of Orca swimming and diving in close formation.



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**Day 16**  
**Wednesday 22 January 2025**  
**Cape Royds and McMurdo Sound**

When we checked Backdoor Bay, at Cape Royds on our way to Cape Evans, it was full of rotten ice. Arriving back this morning, the big winds of yesterday had cleared it out. As a result, we enjoyed a short walk over the flat fast ice.

We were soon formed into our groups – required because of the limits on numbers in the ASPA and the hut. As a bonus, there was space outside the ASPA to walk for a view of the sea and the world’s southernmost Adélie Penguin colony.

We were used to boot cleaning and timed visits, because Cape Royds was the same as Cape Evans. However, when we entered the hut, we discovered it was much different. Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds hut is much smaller and contains fewer artefacts. The whole space is mostly one big room with bunks, kitchens, food storage and everything in easy view. We were especially fascinated by the wide variety of tinned foods. We could almost see the activity as the original inhabitants prepared for their excursions to climb Mount Erebus or set out for attempts on the Magnetic or Geographic Pole.

Meanwhile, outside the hut, we explored the stables for the ponies, the garage for the motorcar and walked the shores of Pony Lake out to the viewpoint and the colony. Again, history has come alive for us thanks to the efforts of the Antarctic Heritage Trust.

Lunch was a barbeque served outside on Deck 6 in the sunshine, as the Antarctic conditions of the previous day had moderated. Given this, Christian decided to take *Heritage Adventurer* back to the fast ice edge in the southern section of McMurdo Sound where we had seen the Emperor Penguins and Orcas.

Even before we arrived at the ice edge the Orcas were in view. We cruised along watching them approach and pass as they patrolled. We were offered a chance to get out for a Zodiac cruise or a paddle. Many jumped at the chance, so off we went. As the Zodiacs drifted along the ice edge, we could again see the pods approaching. In an exhilarating experience, they passed very close by and sometimes under us.

Another thrilling adventure awaited us as we landed on the fast ice for a chance to walk around – this time with mulled wine to keep us warm and happy. The cruisers and kayakers were joined by those who had remained aboard *Heritage Adventurer*. The entertainment at the party was the Adélie Penguins who came by to check out the strange creatures on the ice.

Over dinner, our attention was drawn to the windows as the wildlife show never stopped. Then Christian called a meeting for 2100 hours at which a new option, and special delivery, were announced. Our AHT Inspiring Explorers had conserved a gifted copy of the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The book was found in the Discovery Hut in the 1960s, made it into private hands, and recently gifted to the Trust. Their goal was to return it to the hut. All we needed to do was get them there.

Due to incoming winds, the early hours of tomorrow presented the only opportunity, and the channel cleared by the *Polar Star* was our only route. We waited for *Polar Star* to finish

her operations for the day and entered the channel. Alas, our visit to Hut Point was not to be this time. The ice in the channel was still too thick.



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**Day 17**  
**Thursday 23 January 2025**  
**Ross Ice Shelf and Cape Bird**

While we slept, *Heritage Adventurer* made her way north, sometimes through drift ice, as the weather deteriorated as predicted. We reached the Ross Ice Shelf mid-morning in very limited visibility and blowing snow. The ice cliffs, only 100 metres to starboard, came and

went as we passed through clear and foggy conditions. In another example of the scale of this place, we could have kept going east for a full day and it would still be 100 metres to starboard.

We turned back and cruised as deep into the cracks or fissures in the ice shelf as possible, thanks to the incredible capabilities of *Heritage Adventurer*. These openings in the ice will eventually be the edges of the huge tabular icebergs that carve from the ice shelf. As we continued around the northern point of Ross Island, Burtie educated us on The Geography and Geology of the Antarctic – Part 1.

As we reached Cape Bird the winds dropped away almost entirely. The beach was clear, and we made the short shuttle to the Cape Bird Adélie Penguin colony. We enjoyed a good climb to stretch our legs and for a kayak paddle on the ice. The colony was full of activity, especially with South Polar Skua searching for chicks.

Dinner was pushed back to give us a chance for a longer walk. As dessert was served, Christian announced that we would make a second attempt to reach Hut Point in the morning – to a massive cheer. We hoped the strong winds had cleared away enough sea ice to allow *Heritage Adventurer* to squeeze through.

As it transpired, no squeezing was required. The bulk of the sea ice around Hut Point had blown north and we anchored very close to the landing beach for the historic hut. The AHT Inspiring Explorers would deliver *The Count of Monte Christo* after all.

The first shuttle left the ship at 2345 hours, but the bulk of the visit was indeed 'in the morning'.





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**Day 18**  
**Friday 24 January 2025**  
**Hut Point and Franklin Island**

The conditions were challenging with a temperature of minus 5°C and 25-30 knot winds, giving a wind chill of minus 15°C or colder. The expedition team sent us ashore in smaller groups to minimise the waiting time at the hut. While we waited, a few of the 1000+ residents of McMurdo Station came over to chat and welcome us. The view to the south included Observation Hill with the cross in memory of Bowers, Evans, Oates, Scott and Wilson.

Al and John gave us an introduction as we toured the hut. It was much different than Cape Royds and Cape Evans, as it had never been the full-time home for any expedition. Rather it had been used by all of them – as storage and theatre for *Discovery*, and as a sledging waystation for the others. The AHT group had gone first, so we spotted the newly-placed artefact near the blubber stove used by Shackleton's Ross Sea Party.

The wind was fierce for those who climbed the hill to Vince's Cross. Those who spent time ashore, got a small taste of the conditions faced during the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.

While at Hut Point, we had achieved our furthest south point of 77°50.73'S, 166°37.51'E. The morning and early afternoon were spent in the open Ross Sea en route to Franklin Island.

Our luck continued and conditions at Franklin Island allowed both a landing and a kayak paddle. We went ashore and skirted the edge of the large Adélie Penguin colony with many Weddell Seals hauled out on the rocky beach. This was our best chance to get a good look at the Weddells with their spotted fur and long whiskers. On two of the seals, we could see tags, and we later learned that one of these was among the oldest known of her kind at 28 years of age.

The cliffs and glacier behind the beach were colossal and dramatic, giving a true Antarctic feeling which was accentuated when gentle snow began to fall. The black and grey rock interspersed in the white and grey ice epitomised the harshness and strength of Antarctica. Just offshore, a single deep blue iceberg, topped with penguins, gave a counterpoint.



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**Day 19**  
**Saturday 25 January 2025**  
**Possession Islands**

*Heritage Adventurer* continued sailing north in calm seas, with the dramatic mountains and glaciers of the Victoria Land coast to port, occasionally passing through bands of drift ice. In the morning Al and Neil gave us an overview of the scientific stations and their

personal stories from Scott Base in their joint talk Living and Working in Antarctica. Before lunch, we caught up with several topics and personal histories in a varied recap and briefing.

As we approached the Possession Islands it was clear that a large patch of drift ice had enclosed the southern portion of the group – stretching all the way west to glorious views of the Admiralty Mountains on the coast. We slowed down and sailed through the drifting ice past Svend Foyn Island. The ice cleared as we approached the main Possession Island. A check was made for possible landing or cruising sites, but no suitable location was found. As we continued north, Christian let us know that for our last hurrah in Antarctica, we would check the access to Robertson Bay. If possible, we would cruise south past Cape Adare and deep into the bay toward Duke of York Island. It could be that some after-dinner activity would close out the Ross Sea portion of our voyage. Meanwhile, Burtie continued his description of the rocks we have seen in Geology – Part 2 – The Make-up of the Rocks of Antarctica.

We could quickly see at dinner that Robertson Bay was completely choked with the same sort of drift ice that we had seen at the Possession Islands. After checking it out, the decision was made to turn away. We watched as our last sighting of Antarctica, Cape Adare, slowly receded and remembered all the adventures and enjoyments of the days since we had seen it appear ahead of us.



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**Day 20**  
**Sunday 26 January 2025**  
**At Sea en route to the Balleny Islands**

A few whitecaps welcomed us back into the Southern Ocean as we left the Silent Seventies and hoped that the Sixties would not be too Screaming, the Fifties not too Furious, and the Forties not too Roaring. Time would tell.

Kate started our education for the sea days going north with her presentation on The Non-Penguin Seabirds of the Ross Sea. Later in the morning, Sair helped us learn about Women in Antarctica.

After lunch, we had free time to view the calm seas and foggy skies, or perhaps to join Kathy for her art workshop. John invited us into the lounge for A Taste of the Heroic Age. He showed a short clip of Scott and the polar party man hauling, and preparing dinner in their tent, before we had a chance to sample foods created from genuine Antarctic recipes – fruit cake, sledging biscuits, pate and hoosh. At the same time, we tried our strength by stepping into replica man hauling harnesses and dragging heavy weights 'to the pole' and returning.

The dinner and the evening routine capped another day of learning and fun.



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## **Day 21**

**Monday 27 January 2025**

### **Balleny Islands**

The early risers were up in time to see *Heritage Adventurer* approach and pass Sturge Island, the southernmost of the Balleny Islands group. Everyone was on hand as we passed Sabrina Island and The Monolith, anchored off the southwest corner of Buckle Island to board the Zodiacs and cruise back to Sabrina Island. Off the beach next to The Monolith we watched the Adélie and Chinstrap Penguins on the land and in the water, and, for one Zodiac, in the boat! For many, this was the first sighting of Chinstrap Penguins. For everyone, it was a thrill to be out in this rugged, wild and beautiful place. We knew that very few expeditions get conditions good enough here for a Zodiac cruise, let a long a paddle, around Sabrina, Chinstrap and Buckle Islands.

We returned to a most enjoyable lunch before Al continued his stories of Antarctic adventures in *Camping in the Freezer*. Then it was back onto the outer decks for the crossing of the Antarctic Circle and a cruise past Young Island at the northern end of the group. The light, ice, wind, waves and rocks combined to bid us farewell as we bore away to the northeast to set course for Campbell Island.

It wasn't long before we were called to the lounge for an auction in support of the Antarctic Heritage Trust and the Crew Welfare Fund. The bidding was sometimes fierce and always generous. In the end, 33 mementoes of our voyage found new homes, US\$6,500 was

raised for the AHT and US\$2,430 for crew welfare.

After dinner, the expedition team invited us into the Royal Terror Theatre (aka the Lounge) for an evening of theatre. They presented Ticket of Leave, a farce in one act which was the same play performed by Scott's *Discovery* expedition in the Discovery Hut in the winter of 1902. They had been busy as the staging, costumes and performances were all first-rate. They invited us to join in as the *Discovery* crew had done those many years ago. We readily agreed and the banter between the floor and the stage was hilarious. We laughed, and laughed.

We were obviously in a good mood, and even the first sunset since crossing the Circle going south could not diminish our excitement, because the music started, and the dancing continued into the small hours of the morning. It was a fabulous evening.



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**Day 22**  
**Tuesday 28 January 2025**  
**At Sea route to Campbell Island**

Some of us were a bit bleary-eyed when the call at 0900 hours came to visit the mud rooms and lounge for the round of bio-security inspections required before landing at Campbell Island. Nonetheless, the job got done.

The first lecture of the day was from Neil explaining the background, structure and workings of the Antarctic Treaty system in the Antarctic: A Lawless Frontier? After lunch, Kathy continued her art workshop before we joined Hotel Manager, Erik, and Executive Chef, Jorg, who supplied answers to our many questions about the behind-the-scenes supply and operations of the galley. Andy Smith and Tamzin gave the final talk of the day, describing regulated and unregulated Toothfish fishing in The Fishing Industry in Antarctica.

After briefing, recap and dinner we were again invited back into the lounge for a demonstration of the energy, enthusiasm and ability of the people on this vessel. This time it was for a sing-along featuring the talents of various members of the ship's crew, hotel team, expedition team and adventurers as a band, in harmony and in chorus. The selection of popular tunes kept going as *Heritage Adventurer* crossed the rollers and the sunlight dimmed.

### **Day 23**

**Wednesday 29 January 2025**

**At Sea en route to Campbell Island**

Our journey to Campbell Island was met with the motion of the ocean, and we were reminded that 'one hand for yourself and one hand for the ship', plus secured cabins, would be the order of the day. Despite this, the education programme continued with Moshe on From Frozen Antarctica to the Equator: Why Do We Have Different Climatic Zones?

After lunch, we had another reminder of the change of focus for the voyage when our trusty blue Antarctic parkas were returned.

The lounge was quite full for Rachael's Delving Deeper into the Mysterious World of Whales and Dolphins. It was soon followed by a special world premiere of the documentary film *The Right Whale* by fellow adventurers Cheryl and Nick Dean, telling the story of the conservation success of Southern Right Whales and the challenges for their northern cousins.

In a developing theme for our voyage, we again gathered in the lounge after dinner for a bit of fun. This time it was a quiz to test our attention at lectures and our knowledge of the expedition team members, Quizmaster Andy G. kept us entertained throughout before the Bra Strap Penguins took a 1-point victory.

### **Day 24**

**Thursday 30 January 2025**

**At Sea en route to Campbell Island**

We started our day at sea with presentations in the lounge. First up after breakfast was Dan with his overview of Seabird Ecology Life in the (L)edge. Continuing the natural theme,

and with our move to the Subantarctic, was Chris with his overview of pinnipeds with Life and Times of Hookers (NZ) Sea Lions. The outer decks were open but the inclement conditions meant watching from the Bridge or the Observation Lounge was best.

In the afternoon Kathy continued her art workshop before Julia moved our focus to the plants with her talk on The Remarkable Subantarctic Megaherbs. The weather cleared a bit as the day went on, and then John, Andy G. and Chris gave us some useful background for the day to come with The History, Geology and Fauna of Campbell Island. At the briefing, Christian outlined our choices for our day at Campbell, two long walks, options for the ascent of the boardwalk, a Zodiac cruise and a kayak paddle.

The series of evening entertainments continued with Nigel covering a wide variety of topics and experiences in his Cruising with Whales. So, another busy, but still refreshing, sea day concluded our transition to the Subantarctic.



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**Day 25**  
**Friday 31 January 2025**  
**Campbell Island**

This morning found *Heritage Adventurer* in perfect conditions for the cruise up Perseverance Harbour to our anchoring position with Captain Mary in control. From then, it was a flurry of activity with breakfast, a collection of packed lunches (and poo kits), and

departures for the Northwest Bay Walk, the Mount Honey Walk, a kayak paddle or a Zodiac cruise.

The Zodiac cruisers and kayakers had a relaxed tour of the historic and geographic sites in Tucker, Camp, Garden and Venus Coves. An assortment of wildlife was observed including playful New Zealand Sea Lions, the flightless Campbell Island Teal, Giant Petrels, Antarctic Terns, Black-backed and Silver Gulls, plus a solitary King Penguin.

The Mount Honey group ascended the cloud-free summit for lunchtime views and enjoyed the company of Snipe and Southern Royal Albatross along the way. The Northwest Bay walkers arrived at the bay for their lunch, eaten overlooking the rambunctious Sea Lions along the coast. They also found Snipe and Southern Royal Albatross. Those who went up to Col Lyall also had a stunning day for a walk with many albatrosses very close to the boardwalk and expansive views from the top. The Southern Royals became more active during the afternoon across the island with some gamming and soaring overhead.

For the transit out of the harbour, we had Captain Elijah at the helm of *Heritage Adventurer*. He took us up to Bull Rock where Captain Jasek took over and sailed near the Campbell Albatross colony on the cliffs. The water, land and air were full of birds of many species, including Grey-headed Albatross. They came gliding past us as we gathered on the decks and the bow to admire them.

The day gave us plenty of memories to share as *Heritage Adventurer* headed west toward the Auckland Islands.



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**Day 26**  
**Saturday 1 February**  
**Auckland Islands/Enderby Island**

Enjoying calmer seas, we arrived at Enderby Island in the Auckland Islands group. We had already picked our activity, so the all-day walkers picked up their lunches and landed first. Next away were the kayakers, followed by the Zodiac cruisers.

The cruise was along the basaltic columned cliffs of Enderby Island with excellent sightings of Yellow-eyed Penguins, Auckland Island Shags, Auckland Island Teal, Rockhopper Penguins, New Zealand Sea Lions and Fur Seals, Tomtits, Pipits and more. The kayakers went a bit further afield to the shores of Rose Island exploring the coast there. The Enderby Circuit walkers headed across the boardwalk to the Northern Cliffs. They continued around the coast for fabulous encounters with Auckland Island Teals, Yellow-eyed Penguins, New Zealand Sea Lions, and more. The rest of us eventually followed them along the boardwalk while the Southern Royal Albatross soared overhead. At the cliffs, there was the opportunity for a rest on the bench overlooking the flyway with Albatross, Shags, Skuas, Terns and more, or to visit the nesting Light-mantled Sooty Albatross with a possible glimpse of a chick. The superb flowering of the Southern Rātā was a captivating feature of all the walks. While in this forest, some had the chance to get a very close look at a New Zealand Falcon.

*Heritage Adventurer* relocated further south into Port Ross over dinner before we had a chance for one more landing. We visited the site occupied by the village of Hardwicke in the 1850s to walk through the Rātā to the cemetery and Victoria Tree. So much history in such an evocative place.

And still, the day was not done. While we enjoyed a beverage or just got to bed, the Bing Bong announced an Aurora Australis. After a couple of false alarms earlier in the voyage, this time the display was colourful and dynamic.



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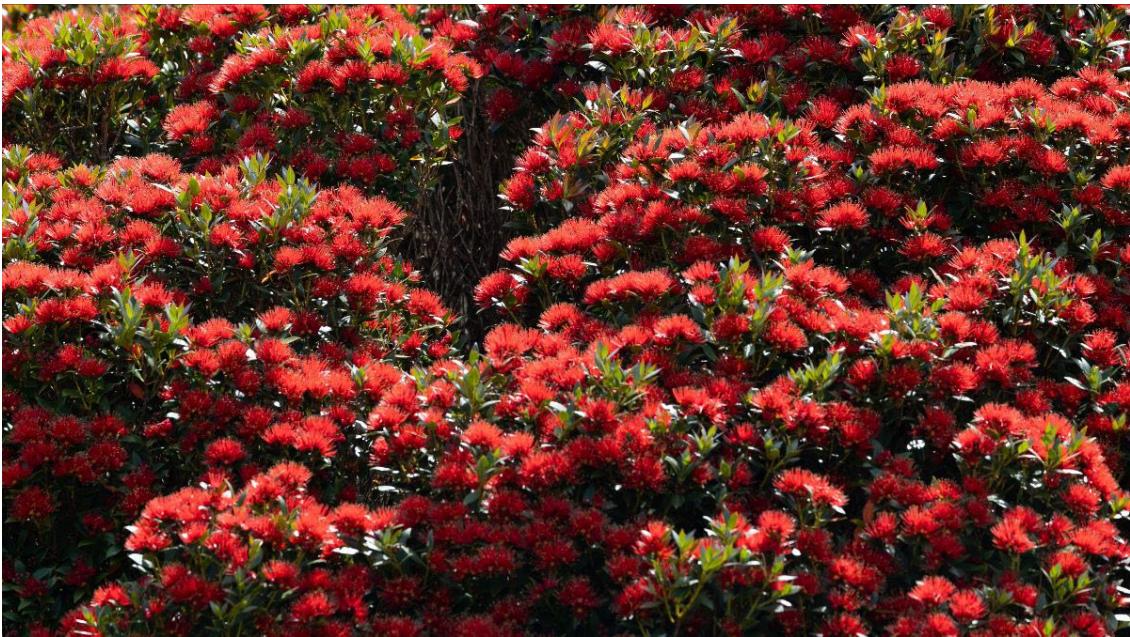
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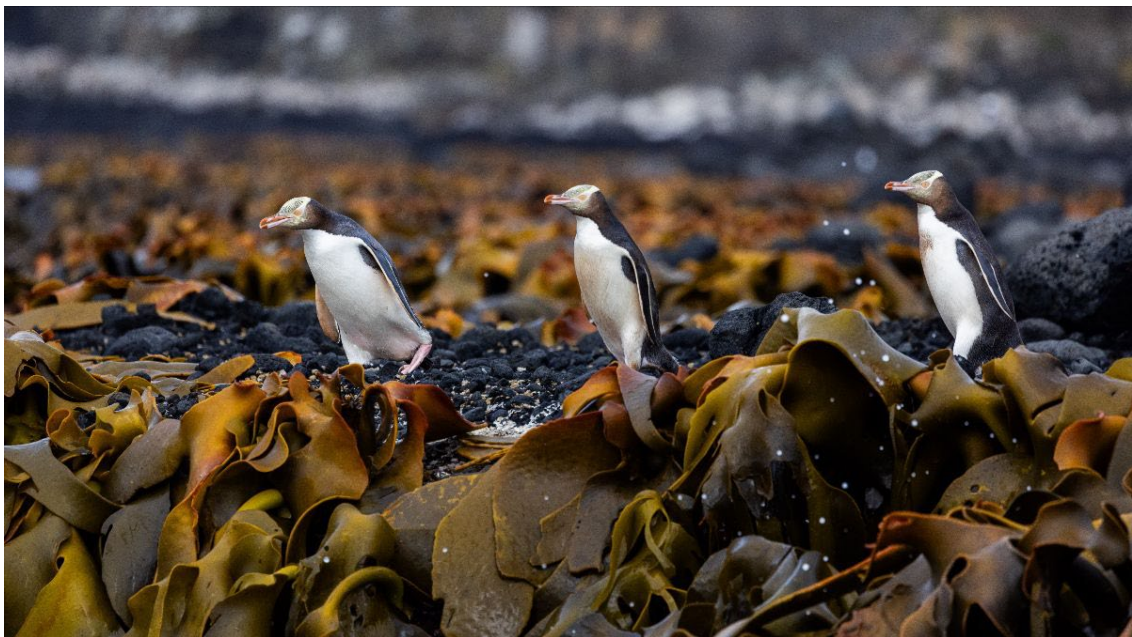
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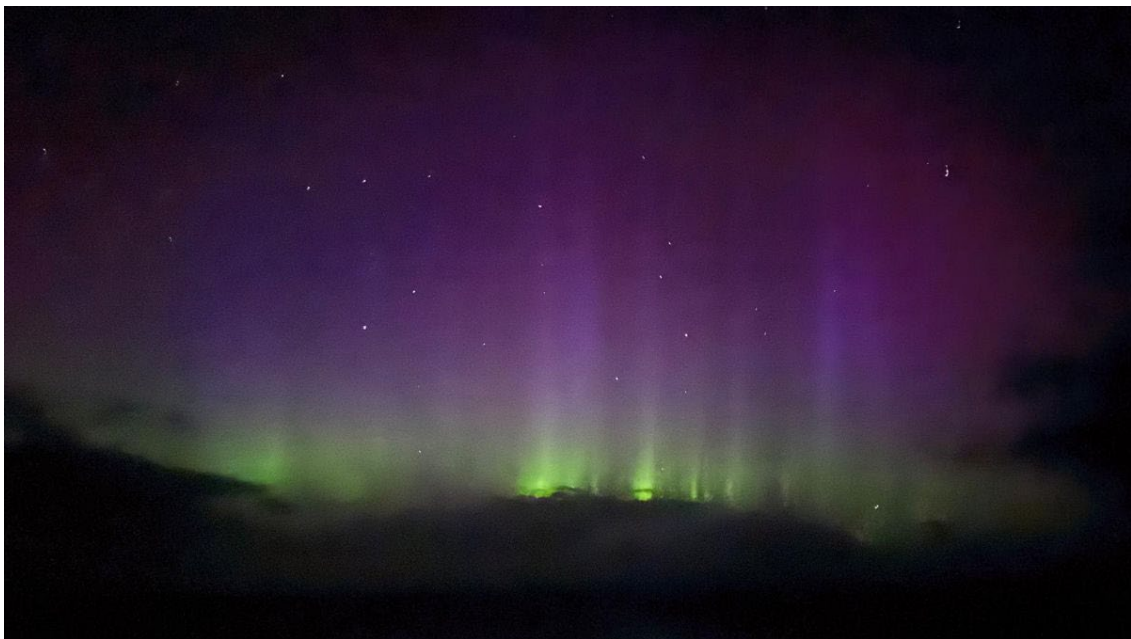


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**Day 27**  
**Sunday 2 February 2025**  
**At Sea en route to Bluff**

As ever on this voyage, every day is full of activity, and the final sea day was no exception. Chris filled in some history and the backstory of Hardwicke in his talk Guns, Pigs and Potatoes. Jorg called us downstairs for the Darwin Theatre for his Virtual Gally Tour. An

extended recap, featuring an aurora physics lesson from Christian, wrapped up the morning.

In the afternoon, our transition back to the 'real world' continued as we were required to clean our muddy gear for the final time and return our Zodiac life jackets. Dan continued his series about birds by sharing some of their characteristics and behaviours in Winged Wonders.

The evening entertainment was started by the Captain's Farewell Cocktails with a chance to see, and express our real appreciation to, all the teams that have served us so well. The blinds were pulled, and the lights dimmed, for Cathy's wonderful Expedition Slideshow. How did she capture all the events and people of this expedition so well? Marvellous!

The special Captain's Farewell Dinner was followed by one final gathering in the lounge before the inevitable need to retire to pack and sleep.

## **Day 28**

**Monday 3 February 2025**

### **Bluff**

To steal a line from Ernest Shackleton: We have shot our bolt, and the tale is: 28 day; 14 landings; 8 Zodiac cruises; 10 kayak paddles; 9 ship cruises; the furthest south of 77°50.73'S; 4 historic huts visited; a walk on the sea ice, superb weather, sea and ice conditions; exceptional companionship; a vast array of wildlife species visited; and uncountable smiles, laughs, and gasps of amazement.

Today was the day to farewell staff, crew and fellow travellers after a marvellous journey, exploring these remote southerly islands. Sailing out of Bluff felt like a lifetime ago, with so many experiences and so much wildlife and wilderness, between then and now. We of the Heritage Expeditions team have loved sharing our passion and knowledge with you.

Thank you for travelling with Heritage Expeditions. We wish you safe onward travels and joyful homecomings. Stay safe and may we see you on the high seas again someday.



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