

# GALAPAGOS OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

## on board HERITAGE ADVENTURER

30 December 2023 - 10 January 2024



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### Day 1

**Saturday, December 30, 2023**

#### Queenstown

We arrived in glorious sunshine at New Zealand's famous alpine resort destination, Queenstown. After settling into our accommodation, we enjoyed a delicious dinner and connected with fellow guests on our Galapagos of the Southern Ocean adventure. Following a briefing of what to expect on the voyage ahead, we settled in for the night, excited to board *Heritage Adventurer* tomorrow.

### Day 2

**Sunday, December 31, 2023**

#### Queenstown to Bluff

The weather in Queenstown didn't match the glorious sunshine of our arrival day. Perhaps the intermittent showers were to prepare us for the Subantarctic? Certainly, they didn't stop us. At breakfast, we had the chance to reconnect with our fellow adventurers before exploring the 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 quick lunch, we hopped on coaches for the transfer through the pastoral countryside of Southland to Bluff Harbour to board our beautiful new home away from home, *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 Cheli told us what to expect on our excursions, and introduced the Expedition Team – more than 20 experts who would help us get the most out of this experience. It was then our first chance to sample the delights provided by the kitchen and dining room staff with a special New Year's Eve menu.

The Captain's Welcome Cocktails allowed us to meet the management team for the departments that will look after us during the voyage. Due to the special occasion, the bubbles kept flowing and delicious canapés were provided. As the magic hour approached, some of us took to the dance floor, while others took to an early bed.

We had left the shelter of Stewart Island and into the swells of the Southern Ocean. The 'motion of the ocean' was a challenge to some, but we had secured our cabins, and *Heritage Adventurer* rode comfortably enough for most. Besides, what better start to 2024 than to voyage into some of the most remarkable wild places on Earth?



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### **Day 3**

**Monday, January 1, 2024**

#### **Snares Islands**

After a bumpy journey from Bluff overnight, we arrived at the Snares Islands, our first island destination of the expedition. In windy conditions, our Captain expertly positioned *Heritage Adventurer* allowing Zodiacs full of excited adventurers to start exploring the eastern coastline of North East Island.

Hoho Bay lived up to expectations with incredible observations of Snares Crested Penguins (the stars of the show today) as well as New Zealand Fur Seals and Sea Lions. Closer inspection of the Tree Daisy forests rewarded with sightings of Snares Island Fernbird and Tomtit. The Penguin Slide was full of action with hundreds of determined penguins navigating the steep, rocky slope in a constant stream while rafts of more birds gathered on the water.

Out in more open water huge numbers of seabirds were encountered. The abundance and diversity of these flocks were truly outstanding – with every type of bird from large Albatrosses to tiny Diving Petrels included.

After our sensational Zodiac cruise, we returned to *Heritage Adventurer* awed by the wildlife able to make these inhospitable rocky outposts home. A delicious lunch was enjoyed as we sailed past the Western Chain with Dave on the PA pointing out the various nesting Albatross species.

Our first biosecurity session meant intense cleaning and gear scrutiny in preparation for our landing at Enderby Island tomorrow. Before dinner, Steve Pilkington, from the Department of Conservation, gave a talk on his work and experiences on the Snares Islands group. Expedition Leader Cheli then outlined the planned activities at Enderby Island which led to our now usual routine, a delicious dinner and sharing the day's experiences with our fellow adventurers.

All in all, it was a superb day on the Southern Ocean and excellent start to the New Year!



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#### **Day 4**

**Tuesday, January 2, 2024**

**Auckland Islands, Enderby Island**

We awoke to find *Heritage Adventurer* in the sheltered water of Port Ross and in the lee of Enderby Island. In yesterday's briefing Expedition Leader Cheli explained our three options, a full-day circuit of the Island, a full day ashore at the Northern Cliffs and along the boardwalk that bisects the island from Sandy Bay, or a morning Zodiac cruise with the afternoon ashore. There were no bad options!

After a hearty breakfast, we collected packed lunches before getting started. The long walkers departed and were the first to see the New Zealand/Hooker's Sea Lion colony on the beach with beachmasters, harems and pups. They continued around the coast encountering the captivating wildlife and the wild places on offer. Following lunch, the long walkers came to the boardwalk to meet the all-day boardwalkers, who had taken the option to spend the full day in the vicinity of the beach and walking through the superb megaherb plateau of *Bulbinella Rossii*, *Anisotome Latifolia*, *Gentians* and so much more, with nesting Southern Royal Albatross for company.

The Zodiac cruisers had the morning along the basaltic columns of the shoreline observing Yellow-eyed Penguin/Hoiho, Auckland Island Shags, and flightless Auckland Island Teal. Some made the open water crossing to Rose Island and spotted a New Zealand Falcon and a Rockhopper Penguin. After lunch aboard *Heritage Adventurer*, they went ashore to join the other groups.

The afternoon sunshine along the central boardwalk and Sandy Bay beach provided a wildlife spectacle no matter which direction you turned.

We returned to the comforts of our home away from home tired, but with a satisfied smile of accomplishment. The hot showers, cool beverages, and warm service of the *Heritage Adventurer* team made the smiles bigger and we excitedly shared our tales of the day over dinner and in the lounge.



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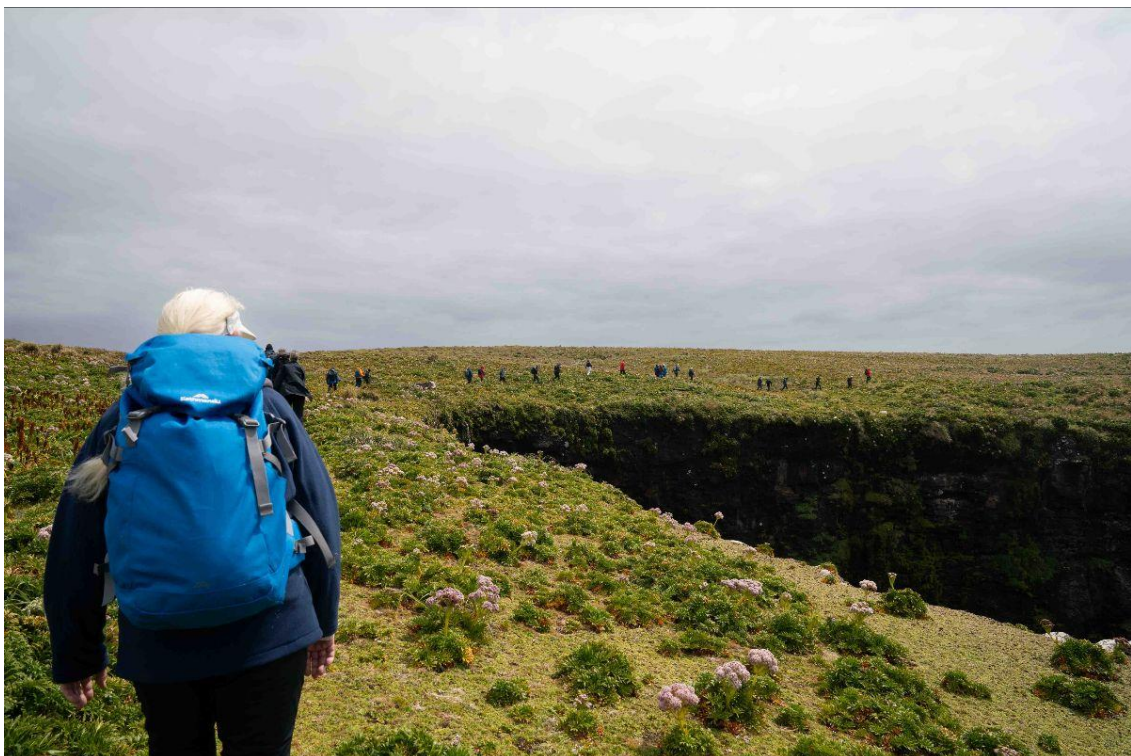
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**Day 5**  
**Wednesday, January 3, 2024**



## Auckland Islands, Musgrave Inlet and Carnley Harbour

After spending the night anchored off Enderby Island, *Heritage Adventurer* set sail to continue our exploration of the Auckland Islands. We soon arrived in Musgrave Inlet to find that the wind was strong, with frequent gusts of more than 30 knots. In true intrepid adventurer style, we safely boarded the Zodiacs with the expert assistance of the crew and drivers.

Cruising down the northern side of the Inlet we enjoyed great views of Eastern Rockhopper Penguins. They were very active along the rocky shore, climbing to the nesting areas in the megaherbs above. We then cruised over to the south side of the Inlet and explored the unbelievable sea caves.

Over lunch, *Heritage Adventurer* weighed anchor and continued south, entering Carnley Harbour in the early afternoon. The second Zodiac cruise of the day began soon after and included an exploration of the northern shore of the harbour (the southern end of Auckland Island) before heading over to the predator-free Adams Island coastline on the south side. During the cruise, we saw a diversity of flora and fauna including Yellow-eyed Penguins/Hoiho, a New Zealand Falcon, Auckland Island Teal and lush megaherbs. For those choosing to stay on board, John gave a talk on the history of the area including the incredible stories of the *Grafton* and the *Invercauld* shipwrecks.

A great day in the Auckland Islands finished with some excellent opportunities to spot seabirds as we set our course south for Macquarie Island.



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## **Day 6**

**Thursday, January 4, 2024**

**At Sea en route to Macquarie Island**

Our first sea day of the voyage gave most of us a chance for a sleep-in. But not all, as the keen birders were out on the decks of *Heritage Adventurer* early and were rewarded with a spectacular variety of sightings.

The first activity of the day was Chris giving his lecture on Guns, Pigs and Potatoes describing the Māori occupants of the Auckland Islands. Dave followed with Southern Soarers and other Seabirds of the Southern Ocean, an introductory talk for the non-birders among us. Around lunchtime we crossed into Australian waters, giving the experienced birders a thrill as new species soared overhead.

After our activities at the Auckland Islands, a round of biosecurity and inspection was required. We went to the lounge and mud rooms to ensure we were clean and had been checked off to prove it and were happily rewarded by the kitchen staff with a High Tea on the High Seas.

Our on board photographer Fi, whose work has kept us checking the display screen outside Reception, helped us to improve with her presentation on Smart Phone Photography. In between all this, we spent time on the Bridge, in the Observation Lounge or on deck watching the gentle and mesmerising swells of the vast ocean.

Before we knew it, the evening had arrived with a recap and briefing before dinner and drinks and heading to bed with the enticing prospect of Macquarie Island filling our dreams.

## **Day 7**

**Friday, January 5, 2024**

## Macquarie Island – Sandy Bay and Lusitania Bay

We were excited to explore Australia's iconic Subantarctic Island, Macquarie Island, justifiably famous among adventurers. We had all seen the photos and heard stories and couldn't wait to get ashore. During a brief rain delay, we heard an epic tale from Murray about his 200km trek on Macquarie while working here.

The wait was worth it as the rain cleared during the morning. We landed at Sandy Bay in the strong winds that have been our constant companion on this voyage and immediately saw the incredible activity on the beach and in the penguin colonies. Where to start? The King Penguin parade on the beach was a thing of true beauty. The busy little Royal Penguins crossed our path going to and from the sea and up to feed their chicks. The piles of Elephant Seals wore many faces and occasionally burst into battle. The noise, colour, aroma and chicks of the Royal Penguin colony took our breath away. The boardwalk featured the Megaherb *Pleurophyllum* in abundance and Giant Petrel and Brown Skua chicks. The King Penguin colony overflowed onto the beach with many moulting birds showcasing their melodious trumpeting call.

Mother Nature must have decided the party on the beach wasn't enough because she threw in flocks of Prions buzzing alongside the Zodiac ride and Orca seen from the back decks of *Heritage Adventurer* upon our return. It was an incredible experience from start to finish.

Our fantastic day of exploration wasn't over yet! Expedition Leader Cheli announced that an after-dinner Zodiac cruise would be offered at the huge King Penguin colony at Lusitania Bay. We observed hundreds of thousands of Kings Penguins. Kings in the water. Kings on the beach. Best of all, Kings surrounded the oil digesters that had rendered down so many birds during the oiling era. This was topped off by Rockhopper Penguins nearby and a pod of Orca showing off heading south.

The many first-time visitors among us learned that no matter how much you expect from Macquarie Island, based on stories and pictures, reality always blows your expectations away.



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## **Day 8**

**Saturday, January 6, 2024**

### **Macquarie Island, Sandy Bay and The Isthmus**

We awoke to *Heritage Adventurer* sailing north from our overnight spot near Lusitania Bay. The morning provided another opportunity for us to spend time at Sandy Bay, observing the King and Royal Penguins, Elephant Seals, Skuas and Giant Petrels. Once again, the rain held off and we had a great time exploring the beach and heading up the boardwalk to the Royal Penguin breeding colony. The wind was strong and the gusts made the Zodiac journey to and from *Heritage Adventurer* challenging, but everyone got the chance to spend a bit more time at this wonderful location after a great visit the day before.

During a sumptuous lunch on board, *Heritage Adventurer* relocated to a spot just off Buckles Bay at the northern tip of the Island. We went ashore and were divided into smaller groups with a guide to explore the area around the Isthmus, where the Australian Base ANARE is located. We headed up to the lookout on Razorback Hill and were rewarded with great views of the base and Wireless Hill, where Douglas Mawson had established his communication link to Antarctica. The journey included the chance to walk the beach on the western side of the Isthmus – which featured piles of Elephant Seals along the way. On the beaches we spotted Gentoo Penguins, our sixth Penguin Species of the Expedition.

Returning to *Heritage Adventurer*, we began the journey north to Campbell Island and reflected on an incredible two days on this amazing Subantarctic island. It was a privilege to spend time in such a remote location and see wildlife thriving.



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### **Day 9**

**Sunday, January 7, 2024**

#### **At Sea en route to Campbell Island**

Our second sea day offered a well-deserved sleep-in and a time to come together to learn, socialise and dine, or a time to seek solitude for reflection or review.

We awoke to find *Heritage Adventurer* crossing back into New Zealand water as Ian gave his presentation on Cetaceans of the Southern Ocean and John informed us with *The History of Campbell Island*.

We had our final bio-security briefing – to ensure that nothing picked up at Macquarie Island was transferred to Campbell Island. As a reward, the Hotel Team gave us another delicious High Tea on the High Seas. After a bit of shopping in the Boutique, we gathered for head scratching and laughs in the lounge as Andy hosted Let's Get Quizzical. Our knowledge of the wildlife, history and *Heritage Adventurer* were all tested, as well as our ability to guess truth from fiction about the exploits of the Expedition Team.

Stella gave us a preview of the botany for tomorrow, and Cheli outlined the four choices for activities on Campbell Island. After enjoying a delicious dinner, we settled in for a good sleep to prepare for tomorrow's adventure.

### **Day 10**

**Monday, January 8, 2024**

#### **Campbell Island**

We awoke as our Captain brought *Heritage Adventurer* around to the north of Campbell Island and down the east coast, allowing a scenic early morning cruise at North Cape and Bull Rock. The mist lifted to



showcase the incredible sight of thousands of nesting Campbell and Grey-headed Albatross in tiers on the cliffside and flying around *Heritage Adventurer*.

After this delightful start to the day we entered Perseverance Harbour to explore the wildlife haven of Campbell Island. The Northwest Bay circuit walkers left first, followed by the Mount Honey walkers, then the all-day Col Lyall Boardwalk group, and finally, those who had chosen the morning Zodiac cruise followed by the afternoon on the Boardwalk.

The morning provided some squally showers, but the afternoon cleared for a typical Subantarctic day. The conditions were sometimes testing, a testament to the remote wilderness of this isolated paradise.

Although the winds were strong, we had plenty to see. Each group had memorable experiences with the Southern Royal Albatross - some nesting, some gamming and some appearing out of the mist overhead. The lush megaherbs were spectacular, and the variety and abundance of the flowers and the sheer size of the areas were outstanding. We may have missed out on the views from the top of the Island, but the views of the flora more than compensated.

We all returned to *Heritage Adventurer* tired after a challenging day, but also proud of our achievements and thrilled to have experienced all that Campbell Island had to offer.

The lack of a briefing was a sad indication that this voyage was nearing completion. Still, we had plenty to discuss and heroic stories to share over dinner. As a special treat to end the day, James, a True Young Explorer, screened a video of our adventures as seen through his quirky perspective.





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### **Day 11**

**Tuesday, January 9, 2024**

**At Sea en route to Bluff**

It was likely a good thing that the final full day of our expedition was a sea day. This gave us time to collect ourselves from the exhilarating activity of the last 10 days and prepare to transition to the non-expeditionary world.

We enjoyed a wide range of presentations – starting with Christian’s talk on Whale Identification. He shared his experiences with Humpback and Killer Whales and encouraged us to assist in citizen science through the use of [www.happywhale.com](http://www.happywhale.com). Blake followed with his research on Fiordland Crested Penguins in Tales, Tramps and Triumphs of Tawaki.

After lunch, one of our own had a chance at the podium as Mimi told us about her life as an explorer and anthropologist in the Antarctic and Pacific and showed a short documentary from her time in the Solomon Islands. To finish, Andy described bird navigation in Migration, Flight and Dispersal.

We had the chance to thank the hardworking Crew, Hotel Team and Expedition Team as they crossed the stage during the Captain’s Farewell Cocktails. Photographer Fi then showed her slideshow and we realised just how much we have done and how far we have come on this expedition with big smiles all around.

Our final dinner was even more special than all the other meals we have enjoyed, and the last time in the lounge full of shared memories.

### **Day 12**

**Wednesday, January 10, 2024**

## Bluff

It was a sad farewell as the luggage was moved to the passageway, one final breakfast together enjoyed, customs cleared, and contact information exchanged. Time then for a final walk down the gangway and one last wave to the Expedition Team as we headed off on new adventures, secure in the knowledge that this expedition, and our time together aboard *Heritage Adventurer*, will linger in our memories for a very long time.



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