

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

**on board HERITAGE ADVENTURER**

**5 February - 4 March 2026**



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### **Day 1**

**Thursday 5th February 2026**

#### **Queenstown**

A warm, sunny day welcomed us as we flew into Queenstown, the launch point for our In the Wake of Scott and Shackleton adventure. Queenstown has the atmosphere of a ski town that's also packed with summer adventures. It looked wonderful, surrounded by craggy mountain ranges. We'd come from around the world, so there was a festive atmosphere in the Holiday Inn Remarkables as we gathered for drinks and dinner and met our fellow guests and some of our expedition team in the lobby.

### **Day 2**

**Friday 6th February 2026**

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

A tasty breakfast at the Holiday Inn Remarkables, our accommodation, set us up

for our first full day of adventure. In the morning, about half of us set off on a winery excursion that included a visit to historic Arrowtown. We later rejoined the rest of the group, who had spent the morning exploring the scenic sites Queenstown on their own. . We enjoyed lunch before boarding a coach for a picturesque journey through Southland to Invercargill, and then on to the port of Bluff, where we boarded our home for the next month, *Heritage Adventurer*.

The next few hours were a flurry of activity: finding our rooms, unpacking, attending the lifeboat briefing and drill, and gathering for welcome drinks. There we met our affable captain, Jacek; the informative Hotel Manager, Greg; and the hospitable Executive Chef, Guenter. Our Expedition Leader, Cheli, introduced herself and then the 21 members of the expedition team who would guide and inform us throughout the voyage. *Heritage Adventurer* proved extremely comfortable, dinner was excellent, and the impressive credentials of the expedition staff suggested this would be a voyage rich in learning and discovery.

At 1800 hours, we set sail for the Snares Islands. Dinner in the spacious dining room and signing up for our Zodiac groups (Mawson, Bowers, Evans and Crean) were the final activities of the day.



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### **Day 3**

**Saturday 7th February 2026**

#### **Snares Islands**

The Snares Islands are so special that visitors are not allowed to land on any of them. As we approached, the swell was large enough to make any excursion look doubtful. However, our skilful captain positioned *Heritage Adventurer* in the lee on the eastern side of Northeast Island, where conditions were calm enough for us to launch the Zodiacs for our first cruise.

We soon found ourselves in a wildlife paradise set against a beautiful backdrop. Bright yellow-green Bull Kelp created swirling patterns on the water, and the endemic Snares Crested Penguins were everywhere—in every cove and cranny and gathered in colonies above the rocks. Rafts of them were preening in the water around us, and we watched with great amusement as they performed their comical slides and tumbles into the sea from the rocks. New Zealand Fur Seals and New Zealand Sea Lions posed on the rocks or swam gracefully beneath the Zodiacs.

As we approached the island on our Zodiacs, we saw more Buller's Albatross and

Salvin's Albatross and, up close, it was easy to spot Buller's Albatross nesting along the cliff faces. The air was full of birds: not only the Buller's Albatross, but Sooty Shearwater/Titi, Cape Petrels, Antarctic Terns, and Brown Skuas. The Zodiac ride itself was great fun as we passed through caves and nosed into tiny notches in the rocks searching for Tomtits, Fernbirds and the elusive Snipe (which sadly stayed elusive). The islands also supported rich vegetation where birds could hide, including Tree Daisies, Hebe, Megaherbs and other hardy flora. It was a very happy group of explorers that piled into lunch upon our return.

The afternoon's activity was a bit less entertaining but just as important: cleaning all our outerwear in preparation for a landing at Enderby Island tomorrow. The staff were diligent in hunting down every seed, burr and bit of fluff hiding in velcro or the bottom of our daypacks.

The evening's highlight was the Captain's Welcome Cocktails. Captain Jacek introduced the heads of departments of *Heritage Adventurer's* crew and hotel departments – more capable people working hard to make this voyage special. His toast was “to the weather”, which he said was our responsibility, while they would look after everything else. So far, we had done okay. A special menu followed for the Captain's Welcome Dinner in the dining room.



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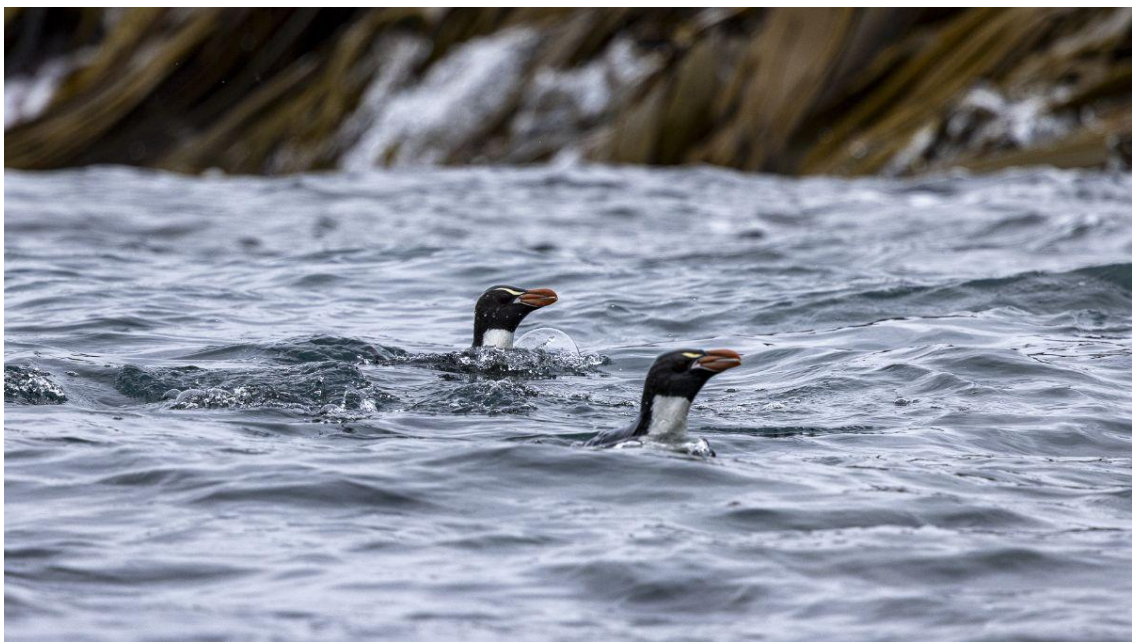
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**Day 4**  
**Sunday 8th February 2026**  
**Enderby Island**

Morning found us in a sheltered lee south of Sandy Bay on Enderby Island, part of the Auckland Islands group. At the briefing the previous evening, we had been presented with three options for the day.

The all-day circumnavigation walkers collected their lunches and were the first ashore. Next came the kayakers, followed by another all-day walking group who headed for the Northern Cliffs on the far side of the island in the hope of seeing nesting Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. Finally, the largest group set out on a morning Zodiac cruise, with plans to land on the island after lunch.

Everyone who landed encountered New Zealand Sea Lions. A group of them had moved up from the beach and across the path we needed to take inland. These were mainly females and young males. Fortunately, our fearless guides ensured they kept their distance, and we followed safety instructions to not disturb them.

The Enderby Circuit walkers crossed the boardwalk towards the Northern Cliffs, continuing around the coast for excellent encounters with Auckland Island Teal, Hoiho/Yellow-eyed Penguins, New Zealand Sea Lions and more. Those heading directly for the cliffs found Yellow-eyed Penguins near the boardwalk who were reluctant to move aside, so we enjoyed watching them until they went on their way. Further along, above the tree line, many tussocks held nesting Southern Royal Albatross while others soared effortlessly overhead. The cliffs were alive with Auckland Island Shags in flight, and one lucky group even saw a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross with chicks on the nest.

The Zodiac cruise followed the basaltic columned cliffs of Enderby Island and crossed the narrow gap to Rose Island. Along the way, we enjoyed excellent sightings of Hoiho/Yellow-eyed Penguins, Auckland Island Shags, flightless Auckland Island Teals, Antarctic Terns, Titi/Sooty Shearwaters, Kākāriki/Parakeets, and Pipits seemingly everywhere. The kayakers had a memorable first outing on the water, spending about 90 minutes on the water, weaving through kelp forests along the fringing reef. They even paddled deep into a sea cave to discover a sinkhole and a hidden fern garden before turning for home with the wind behind them, making for a swift run down the coast.

In the afternoon, the morning cruisers went ashore and followed the boardwalk to the Northern Cliffs. The superb Southern Rātā was a captivating feature of every walk across the island. Back at the beach, we saw more New Zealand Sea Lions, taking care to stay out of their path, while their playful pups provided plenty of entertainment. There was even a weaner Elephant Seal lounging in one of the sea

lion wallows. Above the beach, many people ventured into the forest to see tiny Stella Hut, where provisions were once stored for shipwrecked sailors. Although Auckland Island Teal had been seen during the Zodiac cruises, a few of us were lucky enough to glimpse Kākāriki/Parakeets in the forest as well. Everyone saw the healthy population of Pipits feeding among the kelp alongside the gulls.

Back on board, a bonus landing was announced. *Heritage Adventurer* relocated to Port Ross, which allowed us to visit the site of Hardwicke, an ambitious but short-lived settlement from the 1850s. Today it is an evocative walk beneath a canopy of Southern Rātā forest leading to the cemetery and the Victoria Tree—reminders of an era when shipwrecks in these waters were common. At dinner, the dining room was buzzing with excitement. Our first day of landings on the voyage had revealed history, culture and nature in abundance.



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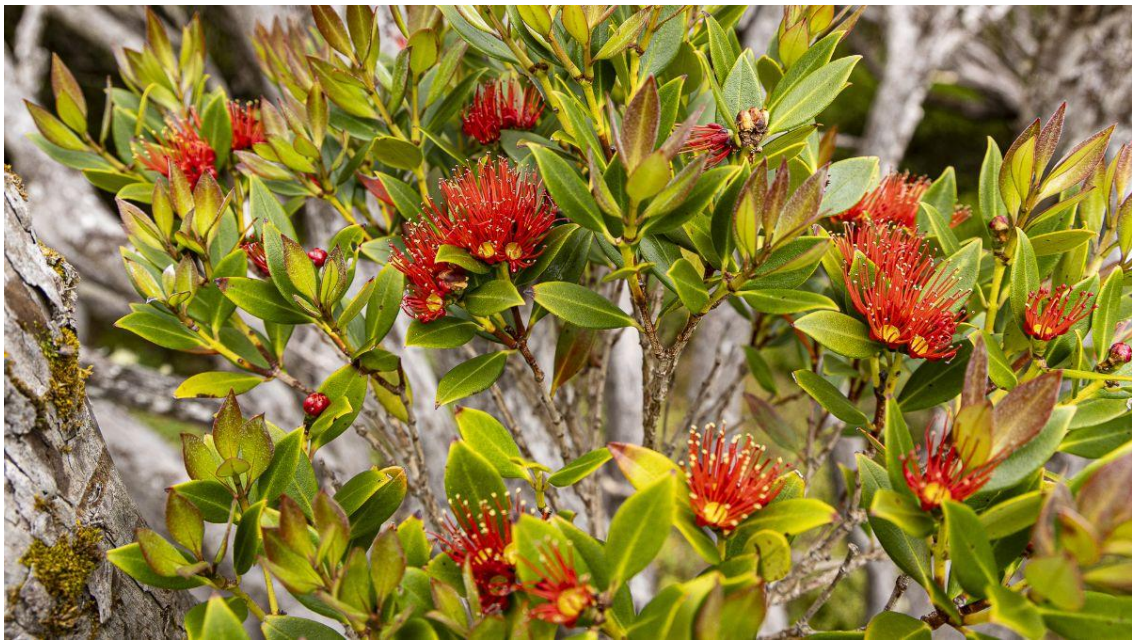
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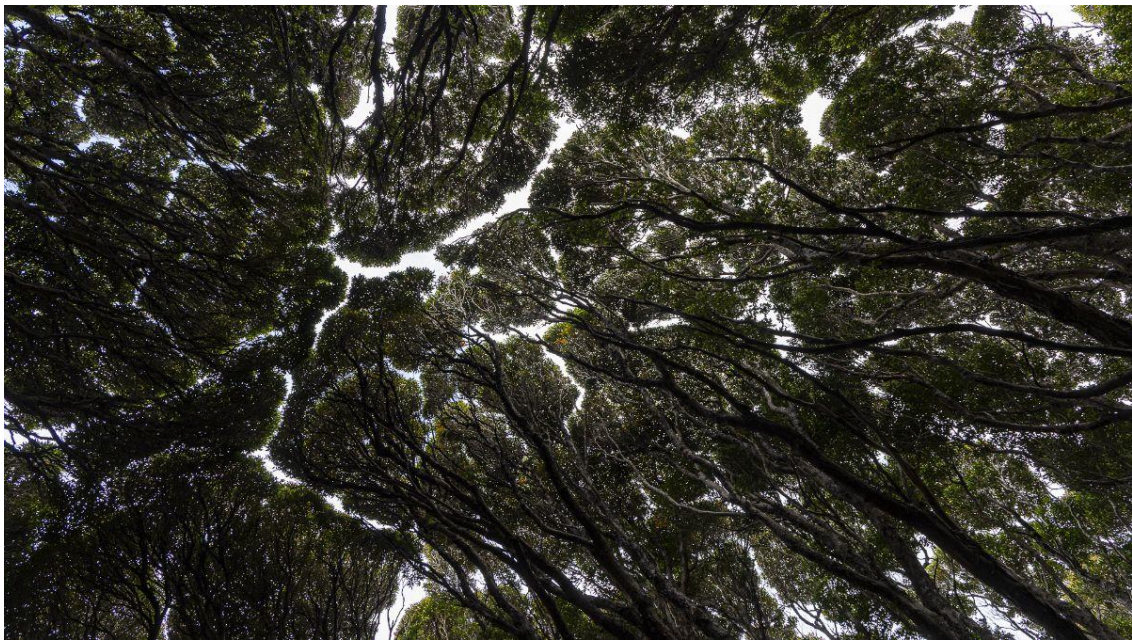
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**Day 5**

**Monday 9th February 2026**

**At Sea en route to Macquarie Island**

Our first full sea day was packed with information. It began with Chris speaking

on *Guns, Pigs and Potatoes* – the story of how Māori and Moriori settled the Auckland Islands in 1842. We then moved on to Bryan’s talk on *Geology of the Subantarctic Islands*, where we learned that when we set foot on Macquarie Island, we would actually be walking on a rare slice of exposed oceanic crust. As we were moving into a new area, it was time for biosecurity again. This time, we all knew the drill, so the process went much faster, though the same attention to detail ensured that no seed went undiscovered.

Later in the afternoon, Kate introduced us to the world of seabirds, giving us a better understanding of the birds we were seeing around *Heritage Adventurer*, on the water, and on our upcoming landings.

Before dinner, the shop opened, and then it was time for our first proper recap session. Casey spoke about Elephant Seals, while David explained the extensive work that has resulted in Macquarie Island now being free of introduced species. Cheli then outlined our ambitious plans for the two days we would spend at Macquarie Island.

We were also introduced to the two film crews on board – one producing a television documentary centred on a love story around Captain Scott’s expedition, and the other working on the first feature film to be shot on location on the Antarctic ice. After dinner, most of us opted for an early night in preparation for a big day on ‘Macca’ tomorrow.



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## Day 6

**Tuesday 10th February 2026**

### **Macquarie Island**

Overnight, *Heritage Adventurer* rocked gently as we ventured further into the Southern Ocean. By morning, we were greeted by patches of blue sky and the sheltered lee of the Tasmanian National Park and World Heritage Area of Macquarie Island. We went ashore in groups under good conditions—some wind, scattered clouds, and occasional sunshine. On landing, Anne, the station manager, welcomed us as we set off to explore the Isthmus area. While the station itself and areas beyond were closed to visitors, we passed nearby and soon encountered a massive Elephant Seal who was flattening the tussocks. Scattered along the route to the west coast beach, other Elephant Seals snoozed as they moulted, indifferent to our presence.

The prevailing westerly wind tore across the exposed beach, highlighting the benefits of our sheltered landing site. From here, we could see a small offshore crag crowded with nesting shags, while King Penguins strolled along the shoreline.

On the way back to the landing beach, we detoured to the historic ‘digesters’ —

large pressure cookers once used to render penguins and Elephant Seals for their oil. When Sir Douglas Mawson witnessed this practice, he protested strongly, and the industry was eventually halted. Today, only rusting digesters remain, with more to be seen later at Lusitania Bay.

A path from the landing site led south to a set of stairs climbing Razorback Ridge. The short but rewarding climb brought us to a viewing platform with panoramic vistas of the station, Wireless Hill, our landing beach, and the stark western shore—essentially, much of the island’s northern end. Returning along the beach, we passed more Elephant Seals and even some Subantarctic Fur Seals — a hopeful sign that fur seals are gradually recolonising Macquarie Island after being hunted to extinction in the early 1820s and absent for the following 135 years.

During lunch, *Heritage Adventurer* repositioned to Sandy Bay, where we were immediately greeted by abundant wildlife. Hundreds of King Penguins swam around our expedition vessel as we prepared to go ashore. Once on the sheltered beach, we could turn south to the Royal Penguin colony, or north to visit the King Penguins.

The beach itself was alive with activity. Elephant Seals sprawled just above our landing site among resting Giant Petrels, while Brown Skuas patrolled the upper beach. At the waterline hundreds of King Penguins came and went in a steady procession. Approaching the creek towards the Royal Penguin colony, lines of Royal Penguins marched back and forth, creating endless photographic opportunities.

The boardwalk to the Royal Penguin colony was partially rebuilt after a storm had washed away the lower stairs, now replaced with a sturdy ladder. Beyond that, the path climbed gently through tussock and lush megafloa—including the distinctive Macquarie Island Cabbage (*Stilbocarpa Polaris*)—before reaching the colony itself. The scene was unforgettable: some 40,000 penguins crowded the hillside, most busy moulting, while skuas circled overhead. The noise, movement, and smell of the colony created a full sensory experience that was hard to tear ourselves from.

At the northern end of Sandy Bay, the King Penguin colony occupied a stunning setting, with kelp beds along the shore and nests stretching up into the tussock. The dense patterns of birds with their striking orange and yellow markings were a delight for photographers, but it was the individuals and small groups nearby that proved most memorable. The King Penguins seemed both stately and curious. Watching them interact was endlessly fascinating—occasional dignified

squabbles, elegant pair-bonding displays, or simply birds stretching skyward in their exuberant calls, as if proudly declaring, ‘I’m a penguin, look at me’.

Meanwhile, the kayakers launched from the shelter of Sandy Bay and paddled north towards the King Penguin colony, weaving through rock gardens fringed with Bull Kelp flowing with the swell. From there, they turned south past rocky slopes dotted with Eastern Rockhopper Penguins.

The afternoon proved so rewarding that the Captain and Cheli decided we would remain at anchor and return ashore again the following morning. So, after another delicious dinner, we retired for the night to prepare for tomorrow’s return.



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**Day 7**  
**Wednesday 11th February 2026**  
**Macquarie Island**

We had an hour and a half ashore at Sandy Beach again this morning, and it was a

delight. The sky was overcast, but by now we knew the scene well and already had plenty of photographs. This gave us the chance to slow down and simply appreciate the remarkable setting that we were in: a rugged island in the middle of the ocean, teeming with wildlife and subject to some of the most extreme weather on Earth.

Some explorers returned to the Royal Penguins, others wandered back to the Kings, but everyone found that the extra time added another dimension to the Sandy Beach experience. It is a unique place, and we were grateful that both the weather and our sail plan allowed us to spend enough time there to truly appreciate it.

At lunchtime, *Heritage Adventurer* was relocating to Lusitania Bay when several Orca appeared close to the starboard side. Some of us continued eating while enjoying the spectacle through the windows, while others grabbed binoculars and cameras and hurried out into the outer decks. The Orca obligingly followed us towards our anchorage, and more soon joined the show.

Lusitania Bay holds around 80% of Macquarie Island's King Penguin population—and it shows. We are not permitted to land here, probably because there is hardly any space between the birds. Instead, we explored by Zodiac, cruising alongside the densely populated shoreline. Penguins filled the water around us, porpoising past the Zodiacs and clustering in every direction. It was a wild, wet and windy excursion, but immensely rewarding. Later, the Captain demonstrated his skills by manoeuvring *Heritage Adventurer* alongside the shore, which gave us a final sweeping view of the immense colony.

At recap, the Captain Jacek told us he would remain at anchor during dinner because of a significant low-pressure system to the south. As evening fell, our expedition vessel rounded Hurd Point, the southernmost tip of Macquarie Island. In the twilight, we could just make out the island's largest colony of Royal Penguins through the gathering gloom, offering great views from the deck of *Heritage Adventurer*.

Soon after, we sailed towards the Southern Ocean, Antarctica and the Ross Sea. While there was some trepidation about the crossing ahead, there was a palpable sense of excitement. Our next destination lay on the remote, history-laden side of the most remote continent of Earth. Antarctica, here we come!



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**Day 8**

**Thursday 12 February 2026**

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

Today was filled with a series of fascinating talks. The morning began

with *Rewilding Auckland Island- the Maukahuka Project*, presented by Cornelia from the Department of Conservation, who was travelling with us as an official observer. Next, Andy delivered a photography introduction and wildlife-photography session and shared helpful tips on capturing wildlife and making the most of photographic opportunities during the voyage. After lunch, Bryan presented *Antarctica, a Frozen Continent*, an engaging overview of the geography, climate, and unique environment of the Antarctic.

Following dinner, we gathered in the lounge to watch the first of four 40-minute episodes of *Forgotten Polar Hero*, a Norwegian documentary about Carsten Borchgrevink and the Southern Cross Expedition. The film also highlighted the conservation work of the Antarctic Heritage Trust (AHT), featuring our own Al discussing Borchgrevink's historic hut at Cape Adare.



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**Day 9**  
**Friday 13th February 2026**  
**At Sea en route to the Ross Sea**

Many of us woke to the exciting news that the iceberg spotting competition was

officially over—our first iceberg had been sighted, and another appeared on the horizon.

The morning talks began with David, who outlined how Antarctica existed as a concept long before it was discovered and recounted some of the harrowing experiences of the early explorers. This was followed by Paige’s fascinating session on *Deep Sea Evolution and Biodiversity*, complete with stunning footage of the incredible life hidden beneath the waves.

Before lunch, we were treated to a spectacular whale encounter. A group of Long-finned Pilot Whales appeared alongside *Heritage Adventurer*, and our Captain carefully turned to give an extended view along the port side. They were soon joined by Hourglass Dolphins, which energetically vaulted from the waves as they raced alongside us.

In the afternoon, Andy and Casey led a workshop on *How to Make the Most Out of Your Smartphone for Photography* and offered tips and tricks for capturing wildlife and landscapes. After dinner, most of us returned to the lounge to watch the second part of *Forgotten Polar Hero*, continuing the story of Carsten Borchgrevink and the Southern Cross Expedition.



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## **Day 10**

**Saturday 14th February 2026**

### **Antarctic Circle**

There was a definite chill in the air this morning as we gathered by the pool for the historic moment—we were about to cross the Antarctic Circle. From the Bridge, Cheli led the countdown, and soon we entered a part of the world few have ever visited. Our Captain sounded the *Heritage Adventurer's* horn, and the festivities began.

In a playful twist, many of the staff had transformed into krill, lifesavers and other fanciful characters. Special mention must go to Steve in his mankini. John guided us through a pledge to speak out for the protection of Antarctica and its creatures and received the 'Mark of the Penguin' in return. King Neptune appeared with a striking resemblance to Al, accompanied by his trusty sidekick, possibly Bertie's piratical twin. Captain Jacek was among the first into the pool, while others braved a ceremonial 'fish kiss' followed by a warming chaser of hot chocolate. It was a joyous, albeit chilly, celebration.

Overnight, *Heritage Adventurer* picked up some longline fishing gear, so we slowed

and deployed a couple of Zodiacs to clear it. During the pause, Steve presented a detailed overview of the early part of the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration, followed by Scott's expedition aboard the *Discovery*. Afterwards, we attended the mandatory International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) briefing. We learnt the best ways to minimise our impact while ashore in Antarctica, followed by our third biosecurity check for the gear we'd be taking onto the continent. Once cruising speed resumed, lunch was interrupted by a delightful surprise: a pod of six humpback whale appeared, and we slowed to spend time watching these magnificent creatures.

The day was very much focused on Antarctica itself. Upon returning to the lounge, we found Heritage Antarctic jackets laid out in all sizes for use over the coming days. We all allowed extra room for layering, which proved wise, as a very decadent afternoon tea soon followed. Kate gave an introduction to the Adélie Penguins we hoped to see tomorrow, and we continued our journey through a foggy, ethereal world towards Cape Adare.



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## **Day 11**

**Sunday 15th February 2026**

**Cape Adare/Colbeck Bay**

The following seas pushed us along smoothly, and by morning, we were approaching Cape Adare. Along the way, Humpback Whales kept us company, and an iceberg hosted over a thousand Antarctic Petrels, while elegant Snow Petrels floated around us. Cheli soon launched Steve and the other staff in a Zodiac to assess the shoreline, but even from the bridge, we could see numerous bergy bits and a swell crashing onto the rocks. It simply wasn't workable, so we left, promising to return. Our captain then navigated *Heritage Adventurer* closer to shore, giving us excellent views of the first huts constructed in Antarctica and the Adélie Penguins that surrounded them.

In true expedition nature, we had a Plan B: *Heritage Adventurer* proceeded deep into Robertson Bay and turned into Colbeck Bay, named after one of Borchgrevink's party. The conditions here were ideal—blue skies, virtually no wind—and we cruised ashore. The scouting party had found a route stretching over a kilometre across the moraine, with Al set up as a beacon to those stepping onto the continent.

The walk wasn't quick, as there was so much to see. From the first rise above the beach, it was a seal primer: an Elephant Seal on the far side, several Weddell

Seals, and our first Crabeater Seal, its fur dried to an attractive silver sheen. Moulting Adélie Penguins perched above us, and in the middle distance, we could see a young Emperor Penguin. The trail to the summit offered panoramic views of the valley below and *Heritage Adventurer* beyond, making the scramble worthwhile. Along the way, Bryan shared geological insight: the wavy bands of rocks were sedimentary, composed of sand and mud; the black rock was volcanic basalt; and a line of dirt running through the glacier likely came from a volcanic eruption or a period of strong windblown dirt.

Meanwhile, the kayakers navigated through brash like tiny ice breakers, encountering a Leopard Seal on an ice floe and later, sleeping Weddell Seals, before finally landing on the Antarctic continent by kayak.

It was a perfect first Antarctic landing. We had space to explore, balmy weather (windless and around 6°C), and new species to observe. Spirits were high during the evening briefing and dinner, especially as rare Arnoux's Beaked Whales appeared nearby. After dinner, many of us gathered in the lounge to watch the final episode of *Forgotten Polar Hero*. When the show ended, and the blinds were raised, we were treated to a world of icebergs glowing in the golden rays of the low sun—a magical close to an extraordinary day.



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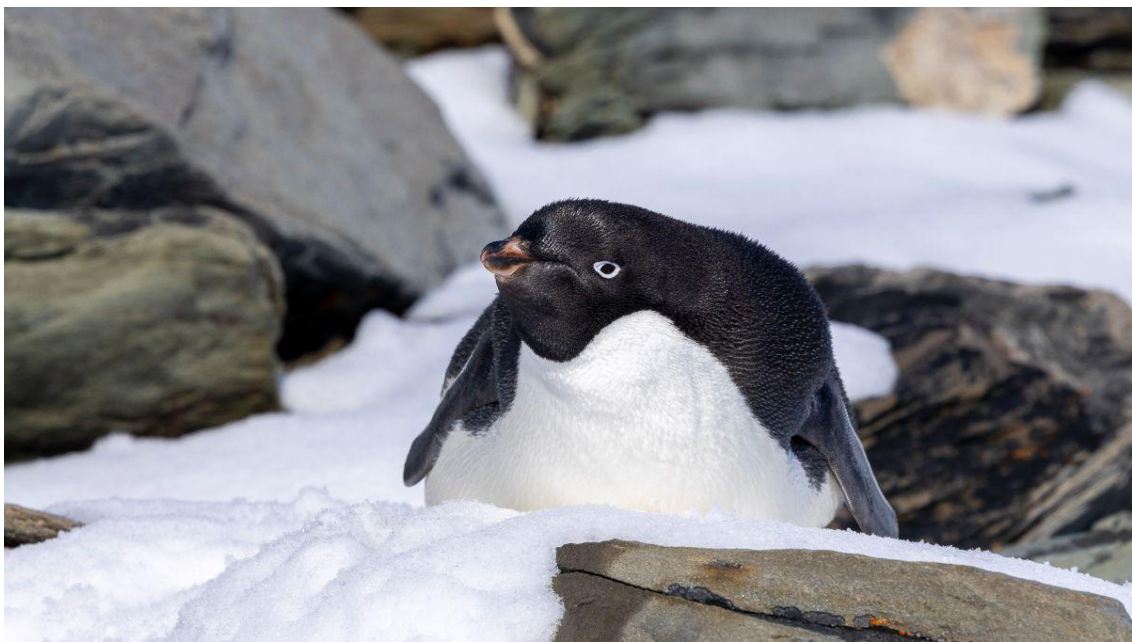
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## Day 12

**Monday 16th February 2026**

### **Cape Hallett**

Early this morning, *Heritage Adventurer* arrived at Cape Hallett, the former site of a combined New Zealand/United States base that operated from 1956 to 1973. All remnants of the base had been removed, much to the delight of the resident Adélie Penguins—some 50,000 breeding pairs occupy the low spit of Seabee Hook. A small Korean hut, erected in 2017, remains for researchers.

While the landing areas along the beach were off-limits due to ice conditions, the weather provided perfect conditions for Zodiac cruising and kayaking. We entered a world of ice, penguins and seals. Most of the penguins were Adélies, as expected given their large colony at Cape Hallett, while Weddell Seals, with their distinctive spots and cat-like faces, lounged on the ice. The ice formations ranged from flat sea ice to icebergs with arches, making for a spectacular cruise. The kayakers paddled to a remote area, enjoying the surreal silence of glassy water surrounded by ice-capped mountains, glacial cliffs, and massive icebergs.

In the afternoon, we relocated to Possession Island to the north. This is where, in 1841, James Clark Ross—reputedly ‘the handsomest man in the British navy’—landed aboard *HMS Erebus* and claimed the area for the British Crown.

Unfortunately, the swell on the beach made landing not possible. We fared better

than an American team in 1950 during the International Geophysical Year surveys, whose boat broached in heavy seas, forcing them to spend a night on the island; they later decided that Cape Hallett would be a better place for a base. The wreckage of their vessel is still visible today. Our Captain took us near the beach before navigating past dramatic basaltic sea stacks off the coast, a breathtaking sight. After a full day of exploration and wildlife encounters, we enjoyed a well-earned dinner before retiring for the night.



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### **Day 13**

**Tuesday 17th February 2026**

#### **Coulman Island**

Many of us woke early this morning—some as early as 0300 hours—as we pushed south into the Ross Sea under a sky that never fully darkened. Over the next few hours, we navigated through several bands of heavy sea ice, the golden sun glistening on the snow. A lone Emperor Penguin standing on an ice floe became the star of countless immortalised photographs. The views across to the crags of Coulman Island were exceptional.

We later learned a bit of history: after planting the Union Jack at Possession Island, James Clark Ross named the island in an effort to woo the woman of his dreams—honouring her father with the southern end named Anne, and the northern end after his family estate, Wadworth House. Today, the island is home to a large population of breeding Emperor Penguins, which explains the many we observed throughout the day.

The western side of the island was heavily blocked with ice, so our Captain navigated east to find a clear passage south. As we sailed, John completed his

talks on the Race for the Pole, sharing the dramatic conclusion for both Amundsen and Scott.

After lunch, we found an area open enough for a Zodiac cruise, and we ventured into a stunning landscape with Snow Petrels overhead. The kayakers enjoyed weaving through bands of slushy frazil ice, a perfect blend of challenge and serenity.

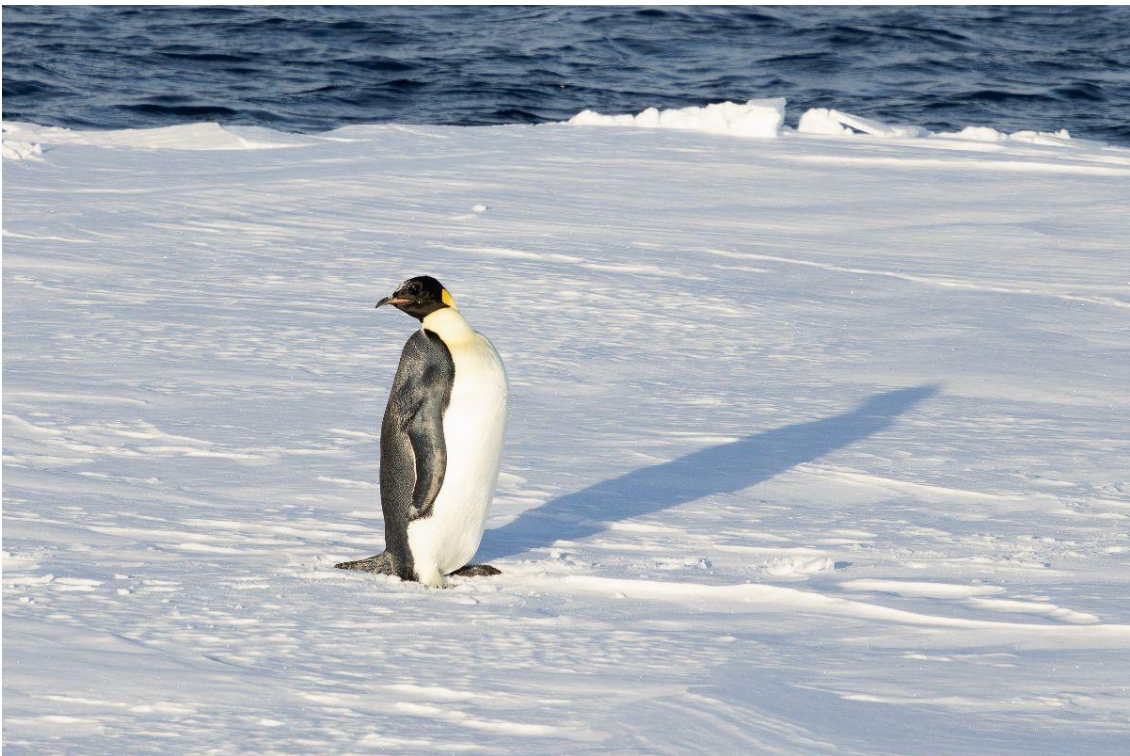
Chilled but exhilarated, we returned to *Heritage Adventurer* for the evening recap. Our plan is to continue south as quickly as we can, with our next stop at Cape Evans, home to Captain Scott's Terra Nova Hut and the heartland of the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration. After dinner, Captain Jacek presented the film *Selma—Furthest South*, which recounted the small Polish yacht that holds the record for sailing further south than anyone else.



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## **Day 14**

**Wednesday 18th February 2026**

**Cape Evans, Ross Island**

What a day! The morning began with Bryan presenting the *Geological Past Life of Antarctica*, followed by Al sharing his remarkable conservation work with the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust on Scott's Historic Hut at Cape Evans. At lunchtime, we passed Beaufort Island and caught a glimpse of Shackleton's Cape Royds Hut before arriving at Cape Evans, where we would spend the rest of the day.

The hut lies within an ASPA—an Antarctic Specially Protected Area—so visits are carefully managed. Guests split into small groups and spent quality time exploring the hut and the remainder of the ASPA, before continuing to areas with fewer restrictions.

Entry required that pebbles and moisture be kept out, so we thoroughly cleaned our boots and stepped onto a mat—a process that became amusing, as we had to lift our feet like horses being shod for the final pre-entry inspection. Inside, the hut was extraordinary. It is the most complete of the historic huts, with some 12,000

recovered items, offering a true time warp back to 1911. We first passed the galley and sailors' quarters before entering the officers' and scientists' rooms. Herbert Ponting's darkroom remained intact, a testament to early photography, and reindeer skin sleeping bags were still on the remarkably small bunks. Some clothing was clearly repaired or handmade—the garments of men from Shackleton's Ross Sea Party, who faced hardships almost as extreme as Shackleton himself on the *Endurance*.

The most special place is Scott's desk, where a mummified Emperor penguin lay next to a copy of the Illustrated London News. To the left of the desk is Scott's bunk, and to the right is Wilson's. There were treasures everywhere, but we were advised to reserve just under a third of our time for the stables. The stables running alongside the hut contained gems such as a dog skeleton and the bicycle Griffith Taylor used to ride in the area. Entry was past a great mound of seal blubber—a stark reminder of the harsh conditions.

Emerging into the sunlight, a guide led us on a short walk up Wind Vane Hill to the cross at the summit. Along the way, we passed one of Scott's scientific stations, now covered with a safer white box, and a snow-carved freezer, ironically buried in fresh snow. At the summit, the cross commemorates the three men of the Ross Sea Party who perished: Rev. Spencer-Smith from scurvy while laying depots, and Captain MacIntosh and Hayward, who died attempting to cross the sea ice too early. From this vantage, we enjoyed stunning views back to the hut and glimpsed whales, including Orca, in the surrounding waters.

The descent brought unexpected treats: bags of nails arranged to hold back snow, and the dog tie-down chain, some still with collars attached. Passing the far side of the hut, we saw the row of latrines and could only imagine the challenges of a midnight visit during a blizzard. Close to the shore lay the anchor of the *Aurora*, still embedded in the black sand after more than 100 years, following the ship's separation from the pack ice. The path to the end of the ASPA exit led past the rudimentary stone hut built by a 24-year-old Apsley Cherry Garrard, who later wrote *The Worst Journey in the World*. The operation continued well into the local night—or what would have been night anywhere else—before the sun dipped below the horizon in the early hours, the first time it had done so here in many days.



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## **Day 15**

**Thursday 19th February 2026**

**Cape Royds / McMurdo Sound**

How could yesterday be improved upon? By visiting Shackleton's Cape Royds Hut from the *Nimrod* Expedition. Smaller than Cape Evans, it feels more intimate, tucked high in a sheltered hollow—the only point of access that Shackleton could find when the Bay of Whales was impossible. For us, landing in Backdoor Bay was easy, followed by a short walk of about one kilometre to the hut. Being in an ASPA, our entry was limited to groups, but there were excellent vantage points outside, and the world's southernmost Adélie Penguin colony kept everyone happily occupied.

In the morning briefing, David provided a brief history of the *Nimrod* Expedition's remarkable achievements: the first ascent of Mount Erebus, which loomed above us 20 km away; the first party to reach the Magnetic South Pole; and the first to get within 100 miles of the Geographic South Pole. Stepping inside the hut, with its bunks arranged around a single room and only Shackleton enjoying privacy, it was astonishing to see what they accomplished. The hut radiated a warm, collegial atmosphere. Highlights included the ham still hanging in the galley, dog paw prints on a wooden panel, and Shackleton's signature on a panel from a box. Supplies of kippered herrings and pickled cabbage must have been daunting for the men living in such close quarters, but cocoa would have been a comforting staple.

The basaltic rocks of the island formed several crags that we would climb, offering stunning views. From the summits, we watched a container ship departing McMurdo for the season and saw *USCGC Polar Star*, the United States icebreaker in the distance.

Lunch stretched into a leisurely affair, thanks to the dining staff's patience. Once everyone was back on board *Heritage Adventurer*, we sailed deeper into McMurdo Sound, passing the giant McMurdo Station with over 1,000 summer residents and the smaller, more appealingly green-painted Scott Base. Bertie provided a running commentary and even contacted Scott Base, where he had recently been working. As we continued along the ice, we saw scientific operations everywhere, Emperor Penguins on the ice, and several pods of Orcas alongside our expedition vessel.

At our furthest, everyone gathered on the bow as the Captain pushed the nose of *Heritage Adventurer* into McMurdo Glacier. During our evening recap, Al answered all our questions about the huts we had visited—his encyclopaedic knowledge unmatched—until the Captain pointed out six Emperor Penguins ahead. The sunlight lingered into the evening, making it difficult to go to bed. We sailed through a mix of frazil and grease ice, with small pancakes of ice surrounding the plates of sea ice we were pushing aside. Wildlife was abundant: Emperors and Adélies, Crabeater Seals, and Orca.

The captain took *Heritage Adventurer* to the southernmost point of our voyage – an impressive 77°56.974'S and 164°34.077E, just off Cape Chocolate. The lack of sea ice this season allowed our expedition vessel to reach farther south than ever before. Many of us paused our photography in the early hours as the sun dipped below the horizon, while a hardy few stayed up to capture the sunrise not long afterwards.



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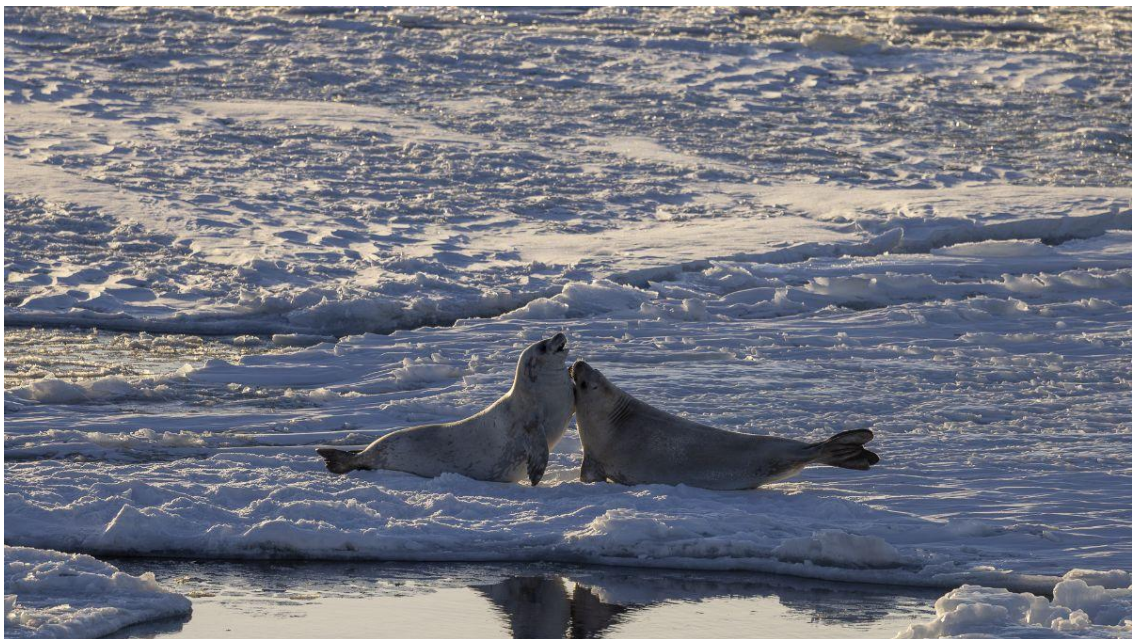
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## Day 16

Friday 20th February 2026

### Scott Base/Hillary Hut

For the many Kiwis on board, this morning was particularly special as we visited one of the first buildings of Scott Base, constructed by Sir Edmund Hillary in 1957 for the New Zealand Antarctic program. Hillary used the hut as his base for the overland drive to the South Pole in 1958 as part of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (TAE).

The walk from the landing took us past the Scott Base sign and the Pouwhenua, Te Kaiwhakaterere o te Raki (Navigator of the Heavens), a striking link between Polynesian navigation and Antarctic exploration.

While Scott's and Shackleton's huts evoke the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration, Hillary's Hut felt distinctly more modern. The kitchen, in particular, reminded many of us of our parents' and grandparents' kitchens. Part museum, part living space, it was evocative of its era. Signed photographs of Sir Ed and Robert Falcon Scott were on display, and in the radio room, we saw an anemometer used by Vivian 'Bunny' Fuchs on the transcontinental expedition. It was easy to imagine this room functioning as the mess room for Scott Base until quite recent times. Being there offered a tangible connection to an important moment in both Antarctic and New Zealand history.

Several of our expedition team renewed friendships with Scott Base staff, some of whom joined us on board for lunch. Over the next few hours, we crossed in front of McMurdo Station between Hut Point and Scott Base several times. At Hut Point, the site of Scott's Discovery Hut and the beginnings of the Heroic Age, conditions were challenging—too much swell on one side and heavy ice on the other—so landing was not possible.

Visiting three of the five historic huts was a great achievement, one that even some operations never manage, but two remained on our goal list. Ever resourceful, *Heritage Adventurer* headed east along the ice edge toward Salmon Bay and Cape Chocolate, where our expedition vessel had cruised late last night to reach our furthest south – a new record for Captain Jacek and the vessel. Ice surrounded us, but there was enough open water for Zodiac operations.

After dinner, we launched our Zodiacs to explore. The first discovery was solid plates of sea ice, suitable for landing and walking. For one group, an obliging

Emperor Penguin hopped onto the ice to investigate the unusual visitors. Several other Emperors also emerged, giving both the Zodiac and kayaking groups incredible encounters. Everyone returned to *Heritage Adventurer* thrilled, though Cheli reminded us that tomorrow might begin with an early start.



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## Day 17

**Saturday 21st February 2026**

### **Hut Point/Discovery Hut/Cape Bird**

So it came to pass – just after 0500 hours, when Cheli’s cheery voice woke us to announce that conditions were perfect for a pre-breakfast landing at Hut Point. With no wind and a temperature of 0°C, we had a brief Zodiac transfer—thanks to the captain—and stepped onto an icy beach before walking a short distance up to the hut. This was the last of Ross Island’s three Historic Huts, and it felt remarkable to have visited them all.

As usual, strict cleaning protocols were followed, with Al, John and David briefing us as we prepared to enter. Normally, Discovery Hut is the darkest and coldest of the huts, set on the windiest point of the island. Not today – the rising sun bathed the hut in light, and with no wind, it felt positively warm outside. Inside, torches were still needed, particularly at the entrance, where a lip led to a large collection of ancient seal blubber left by Shackleton’s Ross Sea Party.

Inside the hut, Scott’s meticulous organisation was evident: boxes were well labelled for the voyage and sledging journeys. The Ross Sea Party had improvised with hessian bags and boxes around the stove to retain heat, a clear reminder of the harsh conditions. Man-hauling harnesses hung from the walls, a bag of long-spoiled onions, and dog biscuits—the survival staples—were all visible. Before leaving, we visited a small latrine room, where a couple of mummified New Zealand sheep carcasses were preserved.

Back on board for a late breakfast, the captain navigated north along Ross Island toward Cape Bird and its Adélie Penguins. A final glimpse of Cape Royds Hut gave way to a fairyland of pancake ice, with *Heritage Adventurer* carving a passage through ice cliffs tumbling down from Mount Bird. Fascinatingly, Mount Bird is five million years old, while nearby Mount Erebus is just one million years old.

This afternoon we landed on the low spit of Cape Bird, beneath the volcano’s ice cap and within an ASPA protecting the nestling Adélie Penguins. At this late stage of summer, the birds were focused on moulting before heading out to sea. Kayakers enjoyed the perfect glassy water and blue skies, with stunning reflections of the mountains and their craft.

By 2100 hours, *Heritage Adventurer* was off Cape Crozier, named by Ross after the Captain of the *Terror*, with the imposing mountain rising behind. This was the site

of the Scott Expedition party's famous penguin egg mission, immortalised in *The Worst Journey in the World*, widely regarded as one of the greatest travel books ever written.

Stretching 600km to the east lay the single wall of ice Ross had named 'The Barrier', now known as the Ross Ice Shelf, one of the world's largest, roughly the size of France. Initially, we had looked down on this endless plain of floating ice from the bridge, but soon the ice rose above the top deck, reaching over 30 metres in places. And that's just the top 10 per cent – the rest is submerged under the water.

With the sun behind Mount Terror and light clouds above, the view was spectacular. The captain steered *Heritage Adventurer* into a wide cleft in the ice known as 'Captain's Crack', where the interplay of light constantly shifted, eventually illuminating the edge of The Barrier in a golden band of light. Around midnight, the clouds dulled the light, and we retired for the night, content after a truly full day of Antarctic wonder.



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**Day 18**  
**Sunday 22nd February 2026**  
**Drygalski Ice Tongue**

Today, we resumed normal transmission - Antarctic style. The Captain chose a

route around the pack ice towards the Drygalski Ice Tongue. Initially, we navigated through a veritable soup of grease ice, which soon gave way to spectacular pancake ice – perfect for photographs and surprisingly easy to move through. As the morning progressed, we encountered numerous bands of drifting pack ice, including large flat floes dotted with penguins. Both Adélie and Emperor Penguins were observed, sometimes sharing the same floe. Fog occasionally descended, creating an ethereal world in which it seemed as if the rest of the planet had vanished – an Antarctic realm all our own.

When the Drygalski Ice Tongue finally came into clear view, we saw plates of ice scattered around *Heritage Adventurer*, with penguins and a few Weddell Seals. Fed by the David Glacier – named after Edgeworth David of the 1908 Nimrod Expedition - which moved at roughly 1000 metres per year, the Ice Tongue itself extends about 700 metres annually. The entire system even generates its own weather: while we experienced a gentle five-knot breeze, katabatic winds seaward often exceed 40 knots.

Eventually, we rounded the end of the Ice Tongue and continued north into Terra Nova Bay, which was comparatively warmer than Ross Island, still chilled by the nearby Ross Ice Shelf. The bay hosts several research bases, including Chinese, Italian, South Korean and German stations, giving a glimpse of international Antarctic collaboration.



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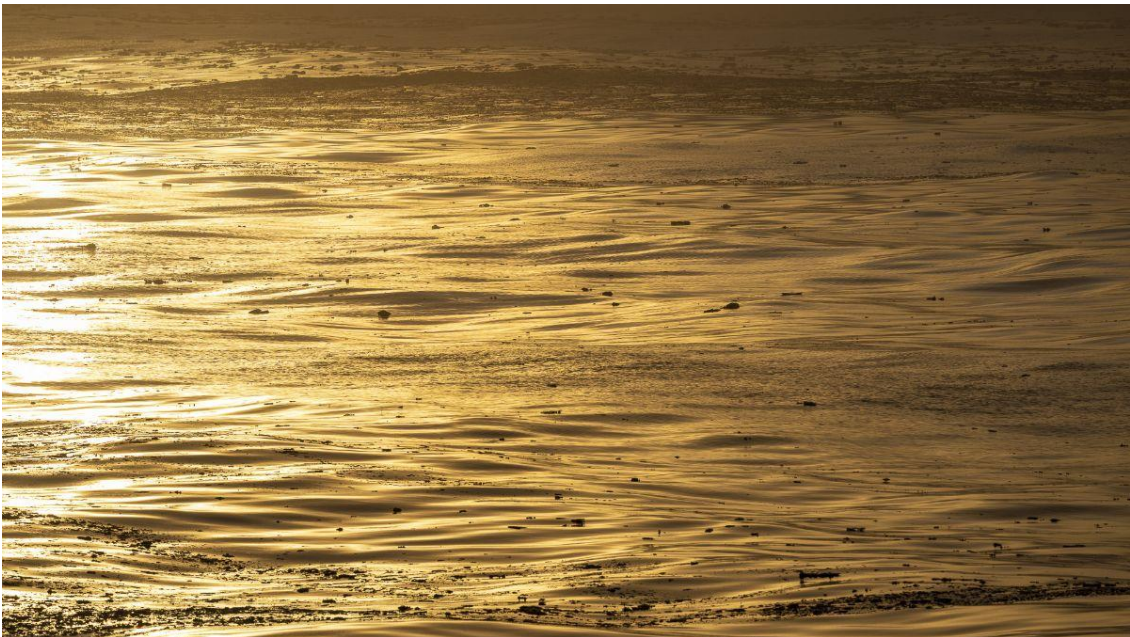
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**Day 19**

**Monday 23rd February 2026**

**Terra Nova Bay/Gondwana Station**

A perfect salmon-pink dawn revealed another day of excellent weather, and at 0730 hours, Cheli announced it was 6°C outside – a remarkable contrast to the frost of the previous days. As *Heritage Adventurer* came into position, we caught glimpses of the permanent South Korean station, Jang Bogo, to the north.

Our landing groups were adjusted for the day, with options for a long walk, a moderate walk, or simply staying near the landing area. The longest-walk group, led by Chris, departed first for an approximately 2.5-hour trek. Next came the moderate group with Bertie, and finally, those who preferred to explore around the landing site.

The highlight of the landing was the German summer station, Gondwana, occupied this season. The distinctive orange pod at the top of the base provides accommodation, while nearby stone rings show that most researchers stay in tents before heading out to field camps. This is a geological base only. Wildlife greeted us immediately: Weddell Seals lounged near the landing site, and chubby Adélie Penguins were moulting on the rocks. Bryan explained the geology – 800-million-year-old metamorphic gneiss interspersed with 500-million-year-old granite, the wavy patterns of the gneiss strikingly visible.

Back on board, it was time for the polar plunge. About a third of the group suited up in swimmers and robes, plunging into -1.5°C water. All claimed they felt thoroughly invigorated afterwards. The Captain then turned our trusty expedition vessel south towards the Italian summer station, Mario Zucchelli. From *Heritage Adventurer*, we could see it was about the same size as Scott Base and is renowned for its excellent food and coffee.

We then proceeded towards the Chinese Qinling Base, enjoying fair weather—until the katabatic winds arrived. The sea turned white with spindrift, and our expedition vessel heeled as the waves whipped all around us. Wind speeds reached nearly 74 knots as Captain Jacek steered us past the aptly named Inexpressible Island, site of the Northern Party's snow-cave shelter during the Terra Nova expedition (1910-13).

After dinner, Al and John delivered a fascinating talk about Al's discovery of Shackleton's whisky under Cape Royds Hut. Attendance was likely boosted by the promise of a whisky tasting afterwards, culminating in a toast "to The Boss". Yet the evening itself was unforgettable. Calm and warm, the low sun illuminated pancake ice, drifting floes, and distant icebergs. The scene recalled Coleridge's

‘painted ship upon a painted ocean’ as we glided through the gathering gloom and revelled in the scene the sun’s last rays had painted for us. Just 48 hours ago, we had been on the Ross Ice Shelf, and now, this magical sunset offered a final, lasting memory of Antarctica – an evening to savour forever.



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**Day 20**

**Tuesday 24 February 2026**

***En route to Cape Adare***

No wakeup call disturbed our slumbers – only our stomachs reminding us that

breakfast finished at 0900 hours. The first talk of the day was given by Allegra from our smaller film crew, who explained how many of the places we have visited got their names. She was followed by Casey, who spoke about the Cetaceans of the Southern Ocean – some we've already seen and others we're still hoping to encounter.

The afternoon's main event was the auction. Much of it was held to raise funds for the Antarctic Heritage Trust, though some items were auctioned to support the welfare of the seafarers looking after us. With Cheli acting as ringmaster, the whole affair became a riotous and highly entertaining spectacle. There were many items on offer, and the bidding continued right through to dinnertime. Some lots sparked fierce competition, but even those that didn't still fetched very respectable sums.

The two standout items of the afternoon were David's 608-page opus *Antarctica – the Complete Story* and a NZ \$5 note signed by Sir Edmund Hillary. Unsurprisingly, the banknote ultimately won out – as anything connected with the legendary New Zealander probably should. It was also gratifying to see the three crew-related items sell for strong prices, including the opportunity to take the helm of *Heritage Adventurer* tomorrow under the close supervision of Captain Jacek.

In the evening, we anchored at Cape Adare, where we had been unable to land nine days earlier. This time, even in the gathering gloom, conditions looked much more favourable – particularly as the ice along the shore had been blown out. Cheli announced that 0500 hours start to operations tomorrow now looked likely.



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**Day 21**  
**Wednesday 25 February 2026**  
**Cape Adare**

It was an early start to the day, but well worth it. The first group landed on the stony plain of Ridley Beach soon after 0500 hours, making their way through patches of snow and ice—and a scattering of Adélie Penguins—towards the huts. Snow fell lightly as the distant grunts of Elephant Seals echoed across the beach, while Wilson’s Storm Petrels wheeled overhead.

In effect, there were three huts at the site. The most modern is a converted water tank installed in 2018, now used by the Antarctic Heritage Trust during the restoration of Borchgrevink’s Hut. Nearby lay roof trestles and replacement Norwegian timber awaiting use in the project.

The most significant structure in this ASPA is the living quarters hut of the British Antarctic Expedition of 1898-1900 aboard *Southern Cross*, led by Norwegian-Australian explorer Carsten Borchgrevink. This small hut is not only the first permanent structure erected in Antarctica but also the first habitation on any continent that still survives. Inside, the men’s bunks remain in place. Above one of them is a remarkable pencil drawing, though many of the original artefacts have been removed for restoration. The adjoining storeroom hut is roofless, as Borchgrevink had intended to move it to Coulman Island. A small dinghy now lies upturned inside.

As we exited the hut and looked across to the towering ridge rising to Hanson Peak, we thought of 28-year-old Nicolai Hanson, the first person to be buried in Antarctica. Earlier on board, we had watched a moving film showing one of his descendants visiting the lonely grave. Nearby lay the remains of the hut built by Scott’s Northern Party of the Terra Nova Expedition. It is not in good shape – the scattered timber is a stark reminder of the savage climate here – and it highlights the remarkable durability of the nearby Norwegian structures.

Several moulting Adélie Penguins lingered around the huts, but there was still space to wander, which was welcome given that we would soon be sailing home. Once outside the ASPA, it was an easy walk along the beach, and the Zodiac ride back to *Heritage Adventurer*—and breakfast—took us past impressive icebergs dotted with Adélie Penguins and Weddell Seals. A patrolling Leopard Seal kept a watchful eye on our shore activities, and even a lone Chinstrap Penguin briefly appeared on the beach, perhaps a backpacker from the Balleny Islands.

Later in the morning Chris gave a talk titled *A Time to Krill – from little things big things grow*. After lunch—and perhaps an afternoon nap—John presented *A Taste*

of the *Heroic Age*. He began with a short clip showing Scott and the polar party manhauling and preparing dinner in their tent. We then had the chance to sample foods based on genuine Antarctic expedition recipes: sledging biscuits, pemmican and hoosh.

The experience confirmed the clear superiority of modern cuisine – especially that served aboard *Heritage Adventurer*. At the same time, we tested our strength by stepping into replica manhauling harnesses and dragging heavy weights ‘to the pole’ and back again. The exercise offered a small but memorable glimpse of the immense physical effort required of the explorers of the Heroic Age.



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## **Day 22**

**Thursday 26th February 2026**

### **Balleney Islands**

A gentle swell carried us towards today's destination—the Balleney Islands—and we arrived around 1000 hours. These mist-shrouded volcanic peaks rise sheer from the ocean, home to Adélie and Chinstrap Penguins, and they seem to exert a powerful attraction on the many icebergs drifting nearby. The landscape felt surreal and otherworldly.

Unfortunately, the swell that had propelled us there now worked against us. Zodiacs were launched, and the gangway lowered, but the movement of the sea proved too great to allow safe operations. Even so, *Heritage Adventurer* provided an excellent viewing platform as Captain Jacek brought us near the shoreline, giving us superb views of the beaches, cliffs and penguin colonies. While he manoeuvred our trusty expedition vessel into position, Tamsin delivered a presentation on 'Women in Antarctica' and the roles women play in the south today.

Throughout the morning and afternoon, we experienced many different moods of the Balleney Islands. Whales surfaced nearby, and penguins darted through the water. Our captain carefully edged the bow of our expedition vessel almost up to an iceberg so a photograph could be taken of all the staff gathered on the bow.

Almost immediately afterwards, a Humpback Whale and her calf appeared. We followed them for a time, watching the calf roll and display its enormous pectoral fins.

Not long before the evening recap was due to begin, the Captain took us close to the northernmost of the Balleny Islands. The wind suddenly swept the clouds away – everywhere except over the island’s crown, where they formed a dramatic ‘tablecloth’ spilling down the slopes and trailing off into rotor clouds, a sign of extreme wind speeds aloft. The sun illuminated the many icebergs around us like a moving spotlight. One particularly striking berg even had a hole right through it. The scene was so spectacular that the captain turned *Heritage Adventurer* around and brought us back for another look. As if shifting wind, waves and light were not enough, Orcas appeared, first individually then in packs of up to a dozen, following our expedition vessel through the water. We finally cleared the northern end of the island and entered open water just before dinner, still buzzing from the unforgettable display.



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**Day 23**

**Friday 27 February 2026**

**At Sea en route to Campbell Island**

Today was a full day of presentations—and more. It began with Bryan outlining the science of climate change, the formation of the hole in the ozone layer, and what the future may hold for Antarctica in particular. He was followed by David, who described the trials and tribulations of Sir Ernest Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition. His talk was filled with lots of drama and remarkable stories of endurance on both sides of the continent, especially the desperate circumstances faced by the Ross Sea Party.

In the early afternoon, we completed our final biosecurity checks. As this was our fourth time through, it was carried out quickly and efficiently. With that done, we were ready for Campbell Island. Later, Allegra spoke about the many ways early expeditions entertained themselves during the long Antarctic winters, from readings and music to amateur theatrics.

After dinner, we were likewise entertained in much the same spirit with a performance of *Ticket of Leave*, in which many of the staff revealed an entirely new side to their talents. The lounge had been transformed into The Royal Terror Theatre – not a reference to a horror play, but a nod to *HMS Terror* under Captain Crozier, which sailed south with James Clark Ross aboard *HMS Erebus*.

A maître d' greeted us at the door while ushers showed us to our seats, adding to the theatrical atmosphere. The theatre was packed when the performance began. Even with a narrator explaining the action and a prompter helping to keep things on track, the inevitable chaos became part of the hilarity. The villain was enthusiastically booed, the 'ladies' warmly applauded, and the various escapades cheered along to a suitably triumphant conclusion. The show ended with a standing ovation, revealing a very different side to many members of the expedition team—and more than a few surprisingly well-developed acting skills hidden behind the pratfalls.



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## **Day 24**

**Saturday 28 February 2026**

**At Sea en route to Campbell Island**

The first talk of the day was given by Robert, who described what life was like at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, where he lived for 10 years. The first presentation focused on the summer season at the South Pole, leaving us looking forward to Part Two, where he will tell us about winter life there. He was followed by Paige and Tim, who spoke about their underwater work, along with the history of undersea exploration and technologies that made it possible.

By lunchtime, we could definitely feel *Heritage Adventurer* moving more – ‘coming alive’, as seafarers with little concern for sensitive stomachs might say. Cheli was considerate, however, and rather than insisting that we all move around our expedition vessel to return our trusty warm blue Antarctic parkas, the staff came floor by floor and room by room to collect them.

Later in the afternoon, our True Young Explorers spoke about their research projects and what they hope to do with what they have learned during the voyage.

Before recap, we were treated to half an hour of underwater photography captured by Paige and Tim during the expedition. The scenes they recorded were beautiful, revealing the bright colours and surprising diversity of life beneath the Antarctic

waters. Dinner involved a fair bit of rocking and rolling, and afterwards we returned to the lounge where Ali Middleton presented her beautiful Antarctic artwork in a talk titled *Painting the Silence*.

## **Day 25**

**Sunday 1st March 2026**

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

We were closing in on Campbell Island, pushed along by seven-metre swells, as the day's talks continued. Robert returned for Part Two of his account of life at the South Pole, where he has spent more winters than anyone else. This time, he described the Antarctic winter—a season of close camaraderie and spectacular auroras. Everyone was impressed by his ability to handle such extreme temperatures, though he casually dismissed  $-80^{\circ}\text{C}$  as “okay”, claiming it was much better than  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  with wind chill.

Meanwhile, entries for the photo competition were displayed on the screen on Deck 5, revealing both the incredible talent on board and the remarkable journey we've shared. Mid-morning, we entered New Zealand waters, having already had our passports returned and completed entry formalities online. Tamzin, fresh from organising the photo competition entries with Andy, presented on the threat of illegal fishing, including the longest sea chase in history to apprehend an offender.

An extensive afternoon tea flowed seamlessly into a pre-landing briefing for Campbell Island. John outlined the island's history, from whaling and sheep farming to the establishment of a meteorological station, while Cornelia described the resounding success of efforts to remove all introduced mammals. Cheli then presented the many activity options available: a couple of all-day walks of varying difficulty, kayaking, or the popular all-inclusive Zodiac cruise in the morning, followed by lunch on board and a boardwalk hike to view the Southern Royal Albatross in the afternoon.

At the recap, Bertie discussed the challenges of regulating krill fishing in Antarctic waters, Yulia highlighted the animals we might encounter, and Kate introduced the island's birdlife. After dinner, a quiz in the lounge brought the day to a lively close, with our in-house entertainers—Al, Bertie and John—keeping everyone amused and proving that we absorbed more than a few facts over the past few weeks.

## Day 26

Monday 2nd March 2026

### Campbell Island

Cheli woke us at 0700 hours to announce that *Heritage Adventurer* was just off North Cape and Bull Rock at the northern tip of Campbell Island, waiting for a bit more daylight. Over the next 45 minutes, we enjoyed a spectacular ship's cruise along the eastern shore, past sea stacks, wavy rock strata and countless birds—mainly Campbell Albatross and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. The largest waves created vortexes of spray, while above, the Campbell Albatross nested in noisy profusion on impossibly steep cliffs. The sun even emerged, spotlighting the scene with perfect light. The entrance to Perseverance Harbour was initially rough, but soon *Heritage Adventurer* was safely deep inside, surrounded by calm waters.

Morning excursions then got underway. The all-day walkers set off in various directions first, followed by the kayakers, then the first wave of Zodiac cruisers, with the second wave soon after. Sunlight touched the mountains, flocks of Sooty Shearwaters circled our expedition vessel, and the wind dropped throughout the morning. Despite Campbell Island's soggy reputation, the sun swept across the island in broad swathes, making walking surprisingly warm—especially for those recently acclimatised to Antarctica.

Most of us had opted for the Zodiac cruise in the morning. Highlights included flocks of Sooty Shearwaters on the water and a visit to the 'loneliest tree in the world', at least according to the Guinness Book of Records. The long walk offered its own rewards: a dramatic cave towards the end, breathtaking summit views from Mount Honey on a rare dry day, and several close overflights by Southern Royal Albatross.

The descent through dense *Dracophyllum* back to the beach was challenging but exhilarating, ending with a pick-up by the Zodiacs for the return to *Heritage Adventurer*. After lunch, many landed near the boatsheds and made their way past the meteorological base, following the narrow boardwalk that wound upwards through lush forest and open hillsides dotted with flowers—some long past bloom, others still in full glory. At last, we reached the nesting Southern Royal Albatross. A bench at the top offered a perfect vantage point to take in the scene, and a short circular path beyond revealed the rugged grandeur of the windward side of the island, including a courting pair of albatross.



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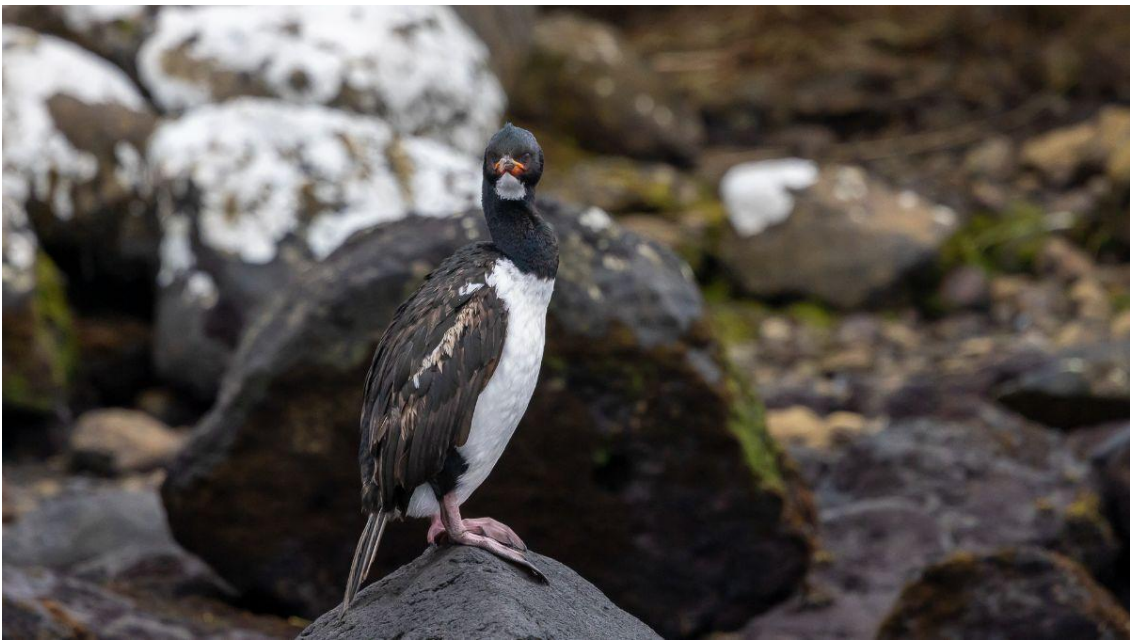
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## **Day 27**

**Tuesday 3 March 2026**

**At Sea en route to Bluff**

“Hello luggage my old friend—it’s time to talk with you again”. Indeed, it was the day to begin packing for the journey home, but there was still plenty happening on board. Kay outlined our arrival procedures and the various destinations for disembarkation. Tim and Paige then shared the technological complexity of diving the deepest reaches of the world’s oceans. Soon after, the finalists of the photographic competition were revealed, with the Captain announcing his personal favourite to much acclaim. Kate followed with an engrossing talk on the value of citizen science and her work in water and air sampling. After lunch, we were privileged to have Robert Connolly introduce his film *Blueback* (2022), which explores environmental themes similar to those in *Shiver*, the film that he has been directing on *Heritage Adventurer*.

The Captain’s farewell cocktails were a joyous occasion, marked with a few tears. Cheli introduced the Captain, who then had *Heritage Adventurer*’s entire crew parade past, carrying their instruments of trade. Cheli followed, bringing the full expedition team on stage to rousing applause. Steve Moir took the microphone to speak on behalf of everyone, thanking Cheli for her remarkable leadership every step of the way. As this was (she says) her last voyage as Expedition Leader, her team had prepared something special: an adaptation of “Ain’t No Sunshine When

She's Gone", led by the Captain in the opening verse, while Elijah and Chris followed in subsequent verses.

Dinner was equally memorable, featuring lobster and beef in abundance, after which many returned to celebrate into the evening. The sun set to port as the moon rose starboard, offering a celestial encore. And the treats were not finished yet—Robert announced that a total lunar eclipse would occur at midnight.

## **Day 28**

**Wednesday 4th March 2026**

### **Bluff**

As Sir Ernest Shackleton wrote, "In memories we were rich"—and indeed, we are. Over our 28-day journey, *Heritage Adventurer* covered 4,942.3 nautical miles (5,687 statute miles or 9,153 kilometres), reaching as far south as 77°56.974'S at Cape Chocolate. Our coldest temperature was -11.2°C (12.2°F), with the highest wind speed—measured in Terra Nova Bay—reaching 73.4 knots, and the largest wave topping around eight metres.

During the voyage, we visited five historic huts, made a total of 14 landings (three on the continent), enjoyed one ice landing, seven Zodiac cruises and 10 kayak paddles. We spent an unforgettable evening along the Ross Ice Shelf. Wildlife encounters included 10 penguin species, 53 other species of birds (22 of them tubenose), eight Cetacean species, seven pinniped species, and 11 albatross species.

Academically, we experienced 35 lectures, countless recaps, and one unforgettable stage play. When the call came, 53 of us braved the polar plunge into sub-zero waters. Over the month, 13,440 meals were served, totaling 50,856 dishes plated up and subsequently washed; 7,363 drinks were served (excluding cocktails), and 3,146 beds were made. Beyond the numbers, the laughs, smiles and moments of sheer joy were countless, and many new friendships were formed.

We were exceptionally fortunate: with the weather, the ice, Cheli, our Expedition Leader and her incredible team, Captain Jacek and his crew, and most of all, with the fellow adventurers who set out with us a month ago on our *In the Wake of Scott and Shackleton* adventure.

The Heritage Expeditions' team has loved sharing our passion and knowledge with

you. Thank you for travelling with us. We wish you safe onward travels, joyful homecomings, and hope to see you on the high seas again someday soon.



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