

ANTARCTICA - PONANT: BEYOND THE POLAR CIRCLE



INTRODUCTION

EARLY BIRDS ON SALE - Book and save up to 20% OFF* Antarctic 2020-21 voyages with PONANT

The goal of this 17-day cruise aboard *Le Soleal* is to cross the fabled and mythical Antarctic Circle. Set sail from Ushuaia to the wild yet enchanting Falklands Islands to explore New Island and Grave Cove. Continue east to set foot on the beautiful sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia with its vast colonies of king penguins, elephant seals and humpback whales. Then south to the Antarctic Peninsula - a vast icy wilderness of unparalleled beauty, with the opportunity to encounter extraordinary wildlife, often close-up. Follow in the wake of Captain James Cook as the ship attempts to cross the most southerly point reached by Antarctic cruises - the Antarctic Polar Circle, latitude 66° 33' south. This remarkable voyage ends with a crossing of the infamous Drake Passage that takes you back into the fascinating town of Ushuaia.

ITINERARY

TRIP CODE

ACTSBPC

DURATION

17 Days

LOCATIONS

Antarctic Peninsula, Falkland Islands, South Georgia



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DAY 1: Ushuaia - Embarkation

Despite its small size, the city of Ushuaia is the world's southernmost city, the capital of Tierra del Fuego and the main starting point for voyages to Antarctica. On arrival into Ushuaia, you will be met and transferred either directly to the port for embarkation, buffet lunch and access to the main lounge, or to Arakur Resort, located inside Cerro Alarken Natural Reserve. Here you can relax at the resort, join a guided walk through the Reserve, or take an optional excursion to Tierra del Fuego National Park. (Please note that this excursion must be booked at the time of cruise booking. The excursion is accompanied by a French speaking guide). Embarkation begins in the afternoon at the port in Ushuaia. Embarkation time is between 4:30pm and 5.30pm, at which time cabins and suites will be ready to check in to. The ship sets sail this evening towards the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), known for their rugged beauty and wealth of seabirds and waterfowl.



DAY 2: At Sea

As the ship heads towards the Falkland Islands, look out for marine life and enjoy the views of the open ocean. These waters are home to an interesting group of seabirds, including albatrosses and petrels that often ride the currents created in the wake of the ship. The Falkland Islands, a British Overseas Territory, is an archipelago that lies 490kms east of Patagonia in the South Atlantic Ocean. Surrounded by decades of controversy, the Falkland Islands (or Islas Malvinas as they are known in Argentina) have been settled and claimed by France, Spain, Britain and Argentina. The islands have much to offer with a wide variety of spectacular wildlife, beautiful rugged scenery as well as an interesting history. Five species of penguin breed on the islands (gentoo, king, macaroni, magellanic and rockhopper).



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DAY 3: Grave Cove / New Island (Falklands)

Grave Cove boasts spectacular scenery and is home to a large colony of gentoo penguins and other interesting birds including ruddy-headed geese, speckled teal and crested ducks. Sea lions are often observed here. A former whaling station, New Island is now a Nature Reserve and one of the most beautiful islands in the Falklands archipelago, with sheer sea cliffs and white sand beaches that lead into crystal clear waters teeming with marine life. The island boasts a diverse range of wildlife including rockhopper penguins, black-browed albatrosses, magellanic penguins, gentoo penguins, oystercatchers, prions and numerous other bird species. Peale's porpoises, Falkland fur seals and southern sea lions and whales are also found in the area.



DAY 4: At Sea - Day 4 & 5

Leaving the Falkland Islands, the ship charts a southeast course bound for the island of South Georgia. Time can be spent scanning the horizon in search of whales and other marine mammals as well as seabirds that join us in the Southern Ocean.



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DAY 6: Stromness / Fortuna Bay / Salisbury Plain

Majestic snow-covered mountains greet us on the island of South Georgia - the most rugged island in this region. South Georgia has been a British Overseas Territory since 1775. It is the largest island in the territory and one of the wildest and most remote places on earth with dramatic scenery of snow-capped mountains and huge glaciers. In the 19th century South Georgia was a prominent whaling base, but whaling ceased in the 1960's and the only remnants are museums and well-preserved buildings. South Georgia teems with wildlife due to the currents that bring nutrients to the island from the Atlantic. Huge numbers of penguins and seals breed here. The former whaling station of Stromness lies on the northern coast of South Georgia Island, and was the destination of Ernest Shackleton's epic rescue journey in 1916 after his ship "The Endurance" sank in the Weddell Sea. Whaling activities began at Stromness in 1907 when the bay was used as an anchorage for a floating factory ship. Some remnants of the whaling station that was built in 1912 can still be seen. King penguins and seals inhabit the beaches of Fortuna Bay, named after the Fortuna, one of the Norwegian-Argentine whaling expedition ships under Larsen that participated in establishing the first permanent whaling station at Grytviken. We also plan to visit the wildlife haven of Salisbury Plain, home to tens of thousands of king penguins, as well as elephant and fur seals, southern giant petrels and the occasional gentoo penguin, complete with large glaciers that add a stunning backdrop.



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DAY 7: Grytviken / St Andrews (South Georgia)

Grytviken is the largest of South Georgia's whaling stations, situated at the head of Cumberland Bay. It is here where the grave of Sir Ernest Shackleton can be found in the whaler's cemetery. There is an excellent museum at Grytviken, maintained by the South Georgia Heritage Trust, and the restored church, built by the original Norwegian whalers, provides a fascinating glimpse into the past. St Andrews Bay hosts the largest colony of king penguins on South Georgia and early in the season, the beach is also carpeted with fur and elephant seals.



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DAY 8: Cooper Bay / Gold Harbour (South Georgia)

Cooper Bay is home to one of South Georgia's most accessible macaroni penguin colonies. The island is covered in tussock grass and is home to snow petrels, Antarctic prions, black-browed albatross, chinstrap penguins and fur seals. Gold Harbour has not only spectacular scenery but also a vast range of wildlife. It is a breeding ground for king and gentoo penguins as well as sooty albatrosses. Elephant seals also breed here, in particular at the western end of the beach where a glacial stream runs into the sea.



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

DAY 9: At Sea

Leaving South Georgia, we cross the Scotia Sea heading towards the Antarctic Peninsula. Watch for wildlife from the deck, catch up on some reading, check through and edit your photos, or simply to reflect on the magical experiences of your time on South Georgia.



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

DAY 10: Elephant Island

We plan to visit the enigmatic, historic and desolate Elephant Island. In 1916 Sir Ernest Shackleton was forced to leave 22 of his men stranded on these shores for months, while he and five others embarked on an unbelievable rescue attempt. What followed is one of the greatest rescue and survival stories of all time.



NO IMAGE
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DAY 11: Astrolabe Island (Antarctica)

Astrolabe Island lies in the Bransfield Strait. It was discovered by the 1837-40 French expedition, under Captain Jules Dumont d'Urville, and named after his chief expedition ship, the Astrolabe. This 5km-long island is home to several thousand pairs of chinstrap penguins. A small group of huge rocks, known as the Dragon's Teeth, lie off the northeast coast of the island.



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DAY 12: Petermann Island / Neko Harbour (Antarctica)

Petermann Island was discovered by the 1873-74 German expedition who named the island after August Petermann. The island supports the southernmost colony of gentoo penguins with Adélie penguins, imperial shags, Wilson's storm petrels and south polar skuas also nesting here. An Argentine refuge hut built in 1955 can still be seen along with a cross commemorating three members of the British Antarctic Survey who died in 1982 attempting to cross the sea ice from Faraday Station to Petermann. Deep in Andvord Bay, this little corner of paradise sits at the foot of an immense glacier. Neko Harbour is without doubt one of the most beautiful sights of the Antarctic Peninsula. Wildlife is as abundant as it is exceptional with sea birds such as gulls, Cape petrels and cormorants, as well as marine mammals such as seals, orcas and whales. Excursions aboard the Zodiacs allow you to sail close to blue-tinged icebergs or disembark near colonies of penguins, observe leopard seals basking on the shore or watch the Antarctic terns flying overhead.



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DAY 13: Crossing the Polar Circle (Antarctica)

Our goal is to cross the Antarctic Circle at 66° 33' S. This is a part of the world visited by few people. As you toast the first explorers who ventured this far south, you can take pride in knowing that you've made it as far as the Polar Circle. The area is home to Weddell seals and beautifully sculptured ice formations.



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

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DAY 14: At Sea - Drake Passage - Day 14 & 15

We leave Antarctica and head north back towards the Drake Passage, searching for seabirds and whales as we sail and reflecting on our time spent not only on the Antarctic Peninsula, but also on the beautiful islands of South Georgia and the Falklands, with their fascinating histories and prolific wildlife. The notorious Drake Passage was named after the famous explorer, Sir Frances Drake, who sailed in these waters back in 1578. En-route the ship traverses the Polar Front which marks the area where waters from the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans meet. The Antarctic Convergence is a biological barrier where cold polar water sinks beneath the warmer northern waters.



DAY 16: Ushuaia (Argentina)

The final leg of the journey sees us sailing along the Beagle Channel and into the port of Ushuaia. The Beagle Channel separates the larger main island of Tierra del Fuego from various smaller islands and links the Southern Pacific Ocean with the Southern Atlantic Ocean. It was named after the ship HMS Beagle.



DAY 17: Ushuaia - Disembarkation

Disembarkation is scheduled for 8am. Transfer to the airport in time for the flight from Ushuaia to Buenos Aires.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin on board ship
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Inclusions	Cabin accommodation on board Le Boreal All meals whilst on-board including snacks All scheduled landings and excursions Guiding and lectures by English speaking expedition team and leader Free Wi-Fi internet access All shore excursions Guiding and lectures by expedition team Free use of rubber boots for shore excursions Expedition jacket provided (yours to keep) All port taxes EXCLUSIONS Airfares to/from embarkation and disembarkation city Visa fees (if applicable) Travel Insurance Personal expenses such as laundry, on-board communication (telephone calls, faxes) Gratuities for the crew (recommend US\$15 per person per day) Optional Activities whilst on-board
Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request, contact us for more details.
Notes	Please note that itinerary is subject to change depending on weather and ice conditions.
Price Dependent upon	Departure date, season and availability

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SUSTAINABILITY

As a member of IAATO we follow guidelines appointed by the Antarctic Treaty System to go above and beyond in support of minimizing negative impacts on this pristine landscape. We also encourage clients to look to book pre-and post- accommodation with us, where local businesses will be supported. Our clients also receive restaurant recommendations which support locally owned restaurants

We carefully select all ships we work with and choose smaller sized vessels to create less impact. We use a highly regulated, licensed vessel which is well equipped to operate in the Antarctic's delicate ecosystem. We view the voyage to the Antarctic as an expedition, not a sightseeing trip. Smaller boats such as ours can navigate narrow waterways and are far less polluting than the larger ships in Antarctic waters. By carrying less passengers, we have far less waste. The waste is carried back to the home port to allow for environmentally conscious waste management and disposal.

For more information on our sustainability policies, including how we are striving towards being a paperless organisation, click [HERE](#)