

ANTARCTICA - PONANT: CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR IN SOUTHERN LANDS



INTRODUCTION

This 17-day voyage makes for an unforgettable Christmas and New Year as you cruise to the world's final frontier, a polar wilderness of stark yet incredible beauty. Setting sail from Argentina's southernmost city of Ushuaia, discover the wild panoramas and rich wildlife of the Falkland Islands before heading for South Georgia, with its stunning landscapes, amazing array of wildlife, relics of former whaling stations and the grave of Sir Ernest Shackleton. As you cross the Weddell Sea, you will be surrounded by vast tabular icebergs and accompanied by wandering albatrosses, penguins and Weddell seals. Next stop - the Antarctic Peninsula where the scenery is breathtaking and the wildlife mesmerising. This magical trip ends with a crossing of the Drake Passage that returns you to Ushuaia.

ITINERARY

TRIP CODE

ACTSCNY

DEPARTURE

18/12/2021

DURATION

17 Days

LOCATIONS

Antarctic Peninsula, Falkland Islands, South Georgia



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DAY 1: Embarkation in Ushuaia (Argentina)

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.



NO IMAGE
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DAY 2: At sea

As the ship heads towards the Falkland Islands, watch 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: Saunders - New Island (Falklands)

Saunders Island is the fourth largest of the Falkland Islands, lying to the north west of West Falkland. It is rich in birdlife including Falkland steamer ducks, ruddy-headed geese, black-browed albatrosses and white-bridled finches as well as king, gentoo, southern rockhopper and macaroni penguins. 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.



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DAY 4: At Sea - Days 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. Majestic snow-covered mountains greet us on the island of South Georgia - the most rugged island in this region.



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DAY 6: Stromness / Salisbury Plain / Fortuna Bay

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. We 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. 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.



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DAY 7: Grytviken - St Andrews Bay (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 albatrosses, 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.



DAY 9: At Sea - Days 9 & 10

The next two days are spent crossing the Scotia Sea towards the Antarctic Peninsula offering opportunities to 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 the last days on South Georgia.



DAY 11: Weddell / Brown Bluff (Antarctica)

The ship continues sailing into the Weddell Sea, a rarely visited, heavily iced and beautiful area of Antarctica on the south-east side of the Antarctic Peninsula. A lengthy sail in the Weddell Sea will allow you to experience true silence, an extraordinary and enchanting atmosphere and unrivalled calm. You will discover fur seals, penguin colonies, wandering albatross and other giant petrels. Here the huge icebergs and the endless ice cap sculpt a landscape that words cannot describe. The lord of the manor is known as the Weddell seal. It is a record breaker, able to remain submerged for more than an hour. Its pelage is dark grey and it has a spotted belly. To maintain its access to the sea and be able to fish, the Weddell seal has special teeth allowing it to make a hole in the thick ice. We also hope to visit Brown Bluff volcano with its long cobble and ash beach. It supports a breeding colony of about 20,000 pairs of Adélie penguins and a smaller colony of gentoo penguins. Other birds that nest there include Cape petrels, Wilson's storm petrels and kelp gulls. Weddell seals regularly haul out and leopard seals can often be seen hunting offshore.



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DAY 12: Neko / Paradise (Antarctica)

Deep in Andvord Bay, we find this little corner of paradise at the foot of an immense glacier. Neko Bay 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 our 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. Paradise Bay (or Paradise Harbour as it is also known) is surrounded and protected by glaciated mountains and ice cliffs. It is a stunningly beautiful wide bay and natural harbour, home to a colony of gentoo penguins, with Argentina's "Almirante Brown Antarctic Base" standing on its coast.



DAY 13: Pleneau/ Port Charcot/ Gerlache Strait/ Enterprise

Lying at the southern end of the beautiful Lemaire Channel, we hope to visit Pleneau Island and then the 3km wide bay of Port Charcot that was charted by the 3rd French Antarctic expedition under Jean-Baptiste Charcot. Charcot established the expedition's winter base at Port Charcot in 1904. Named after the Belgian Adrien de Gerlache, who explored the Strait in 1898, Gerlache Strait is a channel separating the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula. We also hope to visit Enterprise Island.



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DAY 14: Deception Island/ Whalers/ Baily Head (Antarctica)

Weather permitting, we will sail into the flooded volcanic caldera of Deception Island for its rugged scenery, great sites of geological interest and the remains of an old whaling station. Deception Island is the largest of three recent volcanic centres in the South Shetlands and sailing through the narrow passage into the flooded caldera of Deception Island is truly amazing. Nestled at the heart of the South Shetland Islands, in the north of the Antarctic Peninsula, Deception Island is easy to recognise for its horseshoe shape. On the black sand of the volcanic beaches, there are remains of abandoned huts that have been overrun by the extraordinary wildlife that is found here. It is on these ash beaches that the largest colony of chinstrap penguins in the Antarctic Peninsula has taken up residence. Excursions aboard our Zodiacs will allow you to set foot on this expanse of land where more than 100,000 pairs of penguins, elephant seals and fur seals live side by side. At Whalers Bay you can see bleached whalebones, wooden barrels and other artefacts from whale hunters alongside the derelict buildings of a British scientific station that was evacuated after the 1969 eruption. Bailey Head is a prominent headland on Deception Island where chinstrap penguins breed.



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DAY 15: At sea - Drake passage - Days 15 & 16

We leave Antarctica and head north across the Drake Passage, searching for seabirds and whales as we sail. The Drake Passage bears the name of the 16th century English explorer Sir Francis Drake. At some point on the Drake Passage, we cross the Antarctic Convergence, a meeting of cold polar water flowing north and warmer equatorial water moving in the opposite direction. This mixing pushes nutrient rich waters to the surface attracting a variety of seabirds, whales and other species.



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DAY 17: Ushuaia (Argentina) - Disembarkation

Disembarkation takes place after an early breakfast. 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

Inclusions

All accommodation on board Le Soleal
All meals whilst on board including snacks
All scheduled landings and excursions
Guiding and lectures by English-speaking expedition leader and team
Expedition jacket provided (yours to keep)
A pair of expedition boots for use during your voyage
Flight from Buenos Aires to Ushuaia on embarkation day
Flight from Ushuaia to Buenos Aires on disembarkation day
Group transfer to/from pier
Open Bar (excluding premium brands)
Room Service
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](#)

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