ANTARCTIC PENINSULA - REMOTE WEDDELL SEA EXPLORER | ORTELIUS



TRIP CODE
ACOWRWSE
DEPARTURE
07/02/2027
DURATION
28 Days
LOCATIONS
Antarctica, South Georgia and Weddell Sea

INTRODUCTION

This adventurous expedition explores one of the least-visited areas on Earth, Antarctica's amazing Weddell Sea. After visiting some of the same sites legendary explorer Ernest Shackleton's charted in South Georgia, we'll enjoy the Weddell's exotic wildlife and colossal tabular icebergs.

Your Weddell Sea expedition starts in South Georgia after leaving Ushuaia, where we'll be on the trail of famed polar explorer Ernest Shackleton and his ship Endurance, experiencing the Weddell Sea's amazing wildlife and tabular icebergs before returning via Elephant Island.

The continental borders of the Weddell Sea are formed by huge floating sheets of ice. These ice shelves produce the massive tabular icebergs that are so abundant in the Weddell Sea. Incredibly, scientists have declared the waters of the Weddell Sea to be the clearest water of any sea on Earth, creating unbelievable photography opportunities.

The east side of the Weddell, with its epic tabular icebergs, is particularly great for photos, especially since the chance of landings can be limited due to these ice formations. Zodiac cruises and possible ice landings are wonderful alternatives, if conditions allow.

The Weddell Sea is home to a large number of orcas, humpbacks, and minke whales as well as leopard, Weddell, and crabeater seals. Several penguin species can be seen there too.

On the ship, our structured educational program will complement other activities. You will have the chance to learn all about the area's wildlife, landscape, history, political status, and more. We actively participate in citizen science projects, and you can also participate in such projects.

Helicopter transfers:
During these voyages, we transfer our passengers to shore using Zodiacs and operate helicopters in areas where Zodiacs cannot be used. If conditions allow for helicopter transfers, we will attempt landings on both land and sea ice.

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Our plan is to make helicopter landings when possible, though we cannot guarantee a specific amount of helicopter time in advance. Helicopters provide a great advantage in reaching certain landing sites that are otherwise almost inaccessible, but local conditions (weather, ice, and other forces of nature) determine the final itinerary. These conditions may change rapidly, impacting our ability to use helicopters. Please understand and accept this. Safety is our greatest concern, and no compromises can be made.

The vessel is equipped with three helicopters. One helicopter always needs to be supported by a second functioning helicopter. No guarantees can be given, and in no event will claims be accepted.

Please note: Due to increased fuel costs, a surcharge of USD$29 per passenger, per night, will be applied to voyages departing between 15 November and 31 December 2026. Later departures will be assessed and updated as further information is made available. If you have any questions please Contact Us.

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ITINERARY

DAY 1: Depart Ushuaia to South Georgia - Days 1 to 3



Your voyage begins where the world drops off. Ushuaia, Argentina, reputed to be the southernmost city on the planet, is located on the far southern tip of South America. Starting in the afternoon, you embark from this small resort town on Tierra del Fuego, nicknamed “The End of the World,” and sail the mountain-fringed Beagle Channel for the remainder of the evening. Enroute to South Georgia, you now cross the Antarctic Convergence. The temperature cools considerably within the space of a few hours, and nutritious water rises to the surface of the sea due to colliding water columns. This phenomenon attracts a multitude of seabirds near the ship, including several species of albatross, shearwaters, petrels, prions, and skuas.

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DAY 4: South Georgia - Days 4 to 6

Entering the South Georgia Maritime Zone, one of the largest protected waters in the world, we sail past the Shag Rocks. These impressive rocks lay 240km (150 miles) west of South Georgia and are home to several thousand South Georgia shags. The area around the rocks is known for its abundance of larger marine mammals, which feed on this comparatively shallow area of the South Georgia Ridge. After reaching South Georgia, you will have the chance to visit some of the following sites: Prion Island – This location is closed during the early part of the wandering albatross breeding season (November 20 – January 7). From January on, the breeding adults have found their partners and are sitting on eggs or nursing their chicks. Enjoy witnessing the gentle nature of these animals, which possess the largest wingspan of any birds in the world. Fortuna Bay – A beautiful outwash plain from Fortuna Glacier is home to a large number of king penguins and seals. Here you may also have the chance to follow the final leg of Shackleton's route to the abandoned whaling village of Stromness. This path cuts across the mountain pass beyond Shackleton's Waterfall, and as the terrain is partly swampy, be prepared to cross a few small streams. Salisbury Plain, St. Andrews Bay, Gold Harbour – These sites not only house the three largest king penguin colonies in South Georgia, they're also three of the world's largest breeding beaches for Antarctic fur seals. Literarily millions breed on South Georgia during December and January. By February the young fur seals are curious and playful and fill the surf with life and fun and large elephant seals come to the beaches to moult. Grytviken – In this abandoned whaling station, king penguins walk the streets and elephant seals lie around like they own the place – because they basically do. Here you might be able to see the South Georgia Museum as well as Shackleton's grave. In the afternoon of day 6 and depending on the conditions, we will start sailing southwards in the direction of the South Sandwich Islands.



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DAY 7: At Sea - Days 7 & 8

Like Shackleton in December 1914 on the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, also known as the Endurance Expedition, we leave South Georgia and aim for the South Sandwich Islands and the Weddell Sea. There may be sea ice on this route, and at the edge of the ice some south polar skuas and snow petrels could join the other seabirds trailing the vessel south.



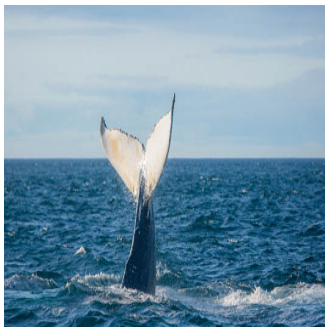
DAY 9: South Sandwich Islands

While we are unable to land here, we may be able to make a Zodiac cruise among the amazing scenery of this active volcanic area. Passing between Thule and Cook Islands will be one of the trip's many highlights and will make an everlasting impression. There is a good chance we'll encounter humpback and minke whales in this area. On and around the islands, we also have the chance to spot brown skuas, chinstrap or Adélie penguins, and several species of albatross: grey-headed, black-browed, and wandering.



DAY 10: At Sea - Days 10 to 12

We next sail toward the Antarctic continent in the direction of Queen Maud Land and Neuschwabenland (New Swabia) on the northeast side of the Weddell Sea.



DAY 13: Neuschwabenland/New Swabia - Days 13 & 14

Our first destination in Antarctica is New Swabia, between 20°E and 10°W in Queen Maud Land. This area was explored by Germany during the third German Antarctic Expedition of 1938 – 1939, led by Alfred Ritscher. The purpose was to find an area in Antarctica for a German whaling station and scout a possible location for a naval base. In an attempt to claim the region, Nazi flags were placed on the sea ice along the coast locations. Survey flights also airdropped aluminium arrows with swastikas.



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DAY 15: Deep inside the Weddell Sea - Days 15 to 23

Sailing deep into the Weddell Sea, chances are we can spot crabeater, leopard, or Weddell seals. If we are lucky, we might even see emperor penguins. Humpback, orca, and minke whales are also present in this area, along with various birdlife. Ice conditions in the Weddell Sea vary seasonally. We will encounter a vast nautical wilderness of sea, and while heading to high latitudes (far south) will enjoy the raw beauty and power that makes Antarctica so special. It will become apparent why it took so long to discover the Great White Continent and how tough it must have been for Shackleton's expedition. We'll make a circular route toward the Brunt Ice Shelf and along the Luitpold Coast, discovered and named during the second German Antarctic expedition (1911 – 1912) of Wilhelm Filchner. If conditions allow, we will have opportunities for a Zodiac cruise and possibly an ice floe landing. We now head west toward the Filchner–Ronne Ice Shelf before changing course north, following the coast along the eastern side of the Antarctic Peninsula and Larsen Ice Shelf. This brings us close to the spot where Shackleton's vessel Endurance was trapped in pack ice during his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914-17), drifting toward the Antarctic Peninsula before ultimately sinking. In an exciting conclusion to this story, the wreck was discovered on March 5, 2022, the 100th anniversary of Shackleton's burial, after 107 years below the Weddell Sea waves. While we can't get close to the discovery site due to pack ice, we will be in the area where the ship was trapped and abandoned. There are colonies of 6,500 emperor penguins nearby, so we hope to see one or more in this area. As we reach the northern section of the Antarctic Peninsula, we enter the area of Erebus and Terror Gulf. Far-wandering emperor penguins often perch on Snow Hill Island's numerous ice floes, possibly offering you another opportunity to spot these emblematic creatures. If conditions allow, we may attempt a landing on James Ross Island.



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DAY 24: Brown Bluff & Kinnes Cove

This morning we hope to land at one of the most scenic locations in the northern Antarctic Continent, with a large Adélie penguin rookery, gentoo penguins, and nesting snow petrels also to be found. Sheer canyon walls, fallen boulders, and beautiful volcanic creations capped with ice make Brown Bluff a truly unforgettable location. Across the Antarctic Sound is Kinnes Cove, where you can see the nearby Madder Cliffs with their subtle red coloration as well as possible gentoo penguins.



DAY 25: Elephant Island

This is the starting point from which Shackleton left to find help for his stranded crew. Using only a small lifeboat, the James Caird, he and five of his men sailed to South Georgia, then walked 36 hours to Stromness. It's hard not to marvel at how they accomplished that herculean feat. Twenty-two members of his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, also known as the Endurance Expedition, were stranded on Elephant Island after their vessel Endurance sank in the Weddell Sea. It took four and a half months to complete the legendary rescue. Conditions on Elephant Island are severe. The coastline is mostly made up of vertical rock and ice cliffs highly exposed to the elements. If possible, you will take the Zodiacs to Point Wild, where the marooned members of Shackleton's expedition miraculously managed to survive.



DAY 26: At Sea - Days 26 & 27

Your return voyage is far from lonely. While crossing the Drake, you might see some of the same wildlife encountered at the start of your voyage: albatrosses, petrels, maybe even a minke whale spouting up sea spray.



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DAY 28: Disembark in Ushuaia

Every adventure, no matter how grand, must eventually come to an end. It's now time to disembark in Ushuaia, but with memories that will accompany you wherever your next adventure lies.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Cabin on board a ship
Inclusions	**INCLUSIONS** Cabin Accommodation on board MV Ortelius All meals throughout the voyage aboard the ship including snacks, coffee and tea All shore excursions and activities throughout the voyage by Zodiac Program of lectures by noted naturalists and leadership by experienced expedition staff Free use of rubber boots and snowshoes Group departure transfers in Ushuaia (directly after disembarkation) All miscellaneous service taxes and port charges throughout the programme Comprehensive pre-departure material Helicopter transfers if weather and conditions permit Access to 1.5 GB of free internet connectivity per person, which resets every 24 hours. Supplementary vouchers available to purchase on onboard. Subject to satellite coverage **EXCLUSIONS** Airfares to/from disembarkation city Visa & passport fees (if applicable) Travel insurance Beverages (other than tea & coffee) Meals ashore Personal expenses such as laundry & bar Gratuities for the crew (guidelines will be provided) Pre and post land arrangements Government arrival or departure taxes (if applicable) Additional optional activities A fuel surcharge may be applied to all bookings

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Difficulty Rating	2 (light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request. Please contact us for more details. No single supplement will apply if willing to share in selected cabins.

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Notes	Prices are based on per person, and may be based on quad/triple/twin share. Prices are correct at time of publishing but are subject to change at any time. Itinerary is subject to change depending on weather and ice conditions. **Helicopter transfers:** During these voyages, we transfer our passengers to shore using Zodiacs and operate helicopters in areas where Zodiacs cannot be used. If conditions allow for helicopter transfers, we will attempt landings on both land and sea ice. Our plan is to make helicopter landings when possible, though we cannot guarantee a specific amount of helicopter time in advance. Helicopters provide a great advantage in reaching certain landing sites that are otherwise almost inaccessible, but local conditions (weather, ice, and other forces of nature) determine the final itinerary. These conditions may change rapidly, impacting our ability to use helicopters. Please understand and accept this. Safety is our greatest concern, and no compromises can be made. The vessel is equipped with three helicopters. One helicopter always needs to be supported by a second functioning helicopter. No guarantees can be given, and in no event will claims be accepted. All itineraries are for guidance only. Programs may vary depending on ice, weather, and wildlife conditions. Landings are subject to site availabilities, permissions, and environmental concerns per IAATO regulations. Official sailing plans and landing slots are scheduled with IAATO prior to the start of the season, but the expedition leader determines the final plan. Flexibility is paramount for expedition cruises. The average cruising speed for our vessel is 10.5 knots. Please note: Due to increased fuel costs, a surcharge of USD$29 per passenger, per night, will be applied to voyages departing between 15 November and 31 December 2026. Later departures will be assessed and updated as further information is made available. If you have any questions please Contact Us. In rare and unforeseen situations, an operator may apply a fuel surcharge after your booking has been confirmed and paid. This is outside our control and uncommon, but transparency with our travelers is important to us.
Price Dependent upon	Departure Date, Fuel Surcharges, Cabin Category, Currency Fluctuations, Seasonality & Availability.

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SUSTAINABILITY

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