



Explorers' Antarctica

18 days Ushuaia to Ushuaia

Expedition Highlights:

- Follow in the footsteps of the great Antarctic explorers: Amundsen, Byrd, Charcot, Cook, Fiennes, Gerlache, Hillary, Mawson, Ross, Scott, Shackleton, Stromness and Weddell
- See snow-covered mountains, mighty glaciers and spectacular iceberg sculptures
- Encounter rockhopper, gentoo, macaroni, king, Adelie, Magellanic and chinstrap penguins
- Watch for seals, dolphins, and whales
- Identify seabirds including albatross, shearwaters and petrels
- Visit historic sites of the early explorers and the remains of whaling operations

Day 1 — Ushuaia, Argentina

Departing from Buenos Aires, fly to Ushuaia and transfer to the port. Embark *Silver Explorer* and bid farewell to Tierra del Fuego, the 'Land at the End of the World'. Meet some of your fellow explorers as you become acquainted with the luxurious amenities found on board. This evening, after settling in and setting sail, you will be introduced to your Expedition Team.

Day 2 — At Sea

The Expedition Team presents talks that will prepare you for the exciting adventures ahead. Tonight, you are invited to attend a special Welcome Aboard cocktail party hosted by the Captain, who will introduce his senior officers and various members of the *Silver Explorer* crew.

Day 3 — New Island, Falkland Islands

West Point Island, Falkland Islands

Today's adventure introduces you to the remarkable beauty of the remote Falkland Islands. New Island is a wildlife and nature reserve, and its many birds and animals are protected by an environmental conservation group. Once ashore, we will hike into the rocky cliffs to a rookery where rockhopper penguins and blue-eyed shags share the same nesting area. We will observe black-browed albatross going about their daily routines and may even spot upland geese. Our onboard historian will tell us about 'Barnard's barn' – a stone structure once belonging to an early settler, as well as the wreck of the Protector III – an old minesweeper used for seal hunting, now grounded just off the shore.

In the afternoon, watch for Peale's dolphins and the distinctive black and white markings of the Commerson's dolphin as *Silver Explorer* approaches West Point Island. Upon arrival, photographic opportunities are everywhere as you walk across rolling moorland and admire colonies of black-browed albatrosses that nest side-by-side with feisty rockhopper penguins. Learn about the island's

unique vegetation including the rare Felton plant. The hospitable island owners are always happy to answer your questions and share their stories.

Day 4 — Stanley, Falkland Islands

Stanley is the capital of the remote Falkland Islands, and has a distinct British ambience. Stroll through the charming streets of this colourful little town, lined with quaint cottages and a variety of traditional pubs. Visit the 19th-century Anglican cathedral and wander through the small local museum. Some lingering reminders of the 1986 Falklands War between Britain and Argentina may still be seen though the island has settled back to its quiet business of raising sheep.

Days 5–6 — At Sea

Binoculars and camera in hand, head out on deck to watch for seabirds and marine mammals. Gather in The Theatre to hear fascinating tales of adventure or to learn about the region's endemic wildlife and remarkable nature. Lectures and seminars are presented by knowledgeable experts in a variety of scientific fields. Other onboard diversions may include photography workshops, spa treatments, a workout in the Fitness Centre, and, of course, exquisite dining experiences.

Days 7–9 — South Georgia

This breathtaking destination of towering snow-covered mountains, mighty glaciers, and low-lying grasslands attracts an astounding concentration of wildlife: Southern fur seals, southern elephant seals and a variety of albatross species including black-browed, light-mantled sooty, grey-headed and the spectacular wandering albatross, plus thousands of king and macaroni penguins.

South Georgia is also linked to the early Antarctic explorers. Captain James Cook first stepped ashore in 1775, but perhaps more famous is Ernest Shackleton's arrival in 1916 following the sinking of his ship, the Endurance. Visit Shackleton's grave and the whaling museum at Grytviken. Here are some of the places we may visit:

Cooper's Bay

- An unforgettable view of huge icebergs can be seen surrounding Cooper's Bay as we approach.
- Enjoy a Zodiac cruise to see numerous breeds of penguins, such as macaronis and chinstraps, on the rocks and waters surrounding the island.

Gold Harbour

- A large king penguin colony can be found between Weddell Glacier and Gold Harbour.
- Seals can be seen resting on ice floes and sunning on the beaches.

Grytviken

- An historic whaling station, all that remain are the rusted hulls of long abandoned whalers.
- Now a museum, guests can learn about past whaling techniques and view various exhibits on exploration and discovery.
- At the burial site of the famous explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, we will toast the great explorer and his many accomplishments.

Salisbury Plain

- A favourite breeding ground for hundreds of thousands of king penguins, it is amazing to see how they completely cover the beaches and hills.

Days 10–11 — At Sea

Participate in onboard activities, relax in one of the lounges, or peruse an array of titles and topics in the well-stocked Library. Tonight, before turning in, take a stroll on deck and enjoy the solitude and splendour of the vast sea and sky.

Day 12 — Elephant Island, South Shetland Islands

Awesome glaciers flecked with pink algae greet us as we approach Elephant Island – so named for its abundance of elephant seals. In 1916 when Ernest Shackleton’s ship Endurance was crushed in pack ice in the Weddell Sea, the crew was stranded here for 105 days. Elephant Island is home to several chinstrap penguin rookeries, as well as 2,000-year-old moss colonies. Weddell seals and macaroni penguins can also be found on the spit of land Shackleton’s men named ‘Point Wild’.



Days 13–16 — Antarctic Peninsula

While sailing to Antarctica, every turn can reveal a new and breathtaking adventure. As the pack ice becomes thicker, it’s apparent to everyone that we are moving closer into Antarctica’s vast white wilderness. Remote and otherworldly, Antarctica is irresistible for its spectacular iceberg sculptures and calving glaciers, and for the possibility of up-close encounters with marine mammals. Watch for seals sunbathing on slow-moving ice floes and for humpback, Minke, and orca whales to surface from below the frigid waters. Each day we will attempt Zodiac departures, and, if conditions permit, we will cruise amidst colourful icebergs or step ashore to visit a variety of penguin rookeries and perhaps scientific research stations on complimentary excursions led by our team of natural history experts.

A flexible itinerary allows us to take advantage of favourable sea and weather conditions. In the true spirit of expedition cruising, each day the Expedition Leader and Captain will determine our best course depending on weather, ice conditions and wildlife we may encounter. Here are some of the places we may visit:

Brown Bluff, Tabarin Peninsula (a 2,200-foot bluff on the Antarctic continent)

- Brown Bluff is an ice-capped, 745-metre-high, flat-topped mountain with a prominent cliff of reddish-brown volcanic rock.
- Adelie and gentoo penguins, kelp gulls, and pintado petrels use this as a breeding area.
- Birds such as the all-white snow petrel and skuas may be seen from a distance.
- As you explore the area, a Weddell seal may be seen basking in the sunlight.
- Wait long enough and you might see the Adelie penguins standing along the rocks, finally making their way into the surf.

Cuerville Island, Errera Channel

- The island was discovered by Gerlache’s Belgian Antarctic expedition of 1897–99, and was named for a vice admiral in the French navy.
- Large, bare rock areas provide nesting sites for gentoo penguins.
- Snow petrels and pintado petrels may be seen, and Wilson’s storm-petrels nest in the higher scree of the island.

- During Zodiac tours, we hope to see hauled-out Weddell and Antarctic fur seals

Paradise Bay (on the Antarctic peninsula)

- The bay is well named for its spectacular scenery of mountains, glaciers and icebergs.
- From the ship, observe Argentina's Base Brown, one of many Antarctic research stations.
- Here, you will actually set foot on the continent of Antarctica.
- View the wildlife from sea level while cruising in your Zodiac with one of our experienced Expedition Team members. There's a good chance you'll come across a crabeater seal relaxing on a nearby ice floe, or if you're very lucky, your Zodiac driver may locate a pod of Minke whales.

Port Lockroy, Goudier Island

- The British built a listening station here during WWII, which was then used as a research station in the 1950s, and since 1962 as a museum and gift shop.
- Snowy sheathbills and gentoo penguins roam outside the museum.
- Perhaps sight a whale or two during a Zodiac cruise.

Paulet Island

- As you arrive, you may well be amazed by the sight of Adelie penguins covering the entire island. The island is home to 80-90 thousand Adelies that come here to breed.
- On a nearby hill, view a massive colony of blue-eyed shags.
- Kelp gulls and snowy sheathbills are amongst the birds that breed on Paulet Island, and Wilson's storm-petrels are regularly seen.
- Listen as your Expedition Team guide tells of Otto Nordenskjold and his party that over-wintered on the island in 1912. Remnants of their hut still remain.
- If time permits, take a Zodiac cruise to view Crater Lake, impossibly blue icebergs, and Adelie penguins making themselves at home on the ice floes.

Port Foster, Whalers Bay (Deception Island)

- Deception Island is home to a collapsed volcano and an excellent example of a caldera where it is believed that the volcano's summit collapsed with one section sinking far enough to allow the sea to flood the interior. We plan to sail inside this breached wall through a narrow entrance called Neptune's Bellows.
- Our resident geologist will take the opportunity to explain the unique volcanic features of the area while our historian will introduce you to the whaling history of Deception Island.
- Still visible on the island are the boilers used to make whale oil in the early 1900s.

Days 17–18 — Drake Passage

The Drake Passage has a notorious reputation for its turbulent seas due to the Antarctic Convergence, a natural boundary where cold polar water flows northward and warmer equatorial water moves southward. When they meet, nutrients are pushed to the surface, often attracting a multitude of seabirds and whales. Spend some time on deck watching the horizon and the variety of seabirds that glide in the air currents of our ship's wake such as the black-browed albatross, sooty shearwaters and white-chinned petrels. Take this opportunity to attend additional presentations offered by the Expedition Team lecturers and to swap photos with new friends as we travel towards Ushuaia.

Day 19 — Ushuaia, Argentina

After breakfast, disembark the *Silver Explorer* and transfer to Ushuaia International Airport for your return flight to Buenos Aires.

Expedition highlights and wildlife listed here are possible experiences only and cannot be guaranteed. Your Expedition Leader and Captain will work together to ensure opportunities for adventure and exploration are the best possible, taking into account the prevailing weather, wildlife activity and ice conditions. Expedition Team members scheduled for this voyage are subject to change or cancellation.

