



The great Antarctic expedition

19 days- Buenos Aires to Buenos Aires

2015 Departures ONLY

On these departures, due to available flight times, you will stay overnight in a first class Buenos Aires hotel. After check in, it's possible to join an optional City Tour to explore. Your evening is at your own leisure. The next day, you begin your voyage!

Day 1 Buenos Aires/Ushuaia

Our voyage departs from the province of Tierra del Fuego and the southernmost city in the world – Ushuaia.

Our flight leaves Buenos Aires in the morning which gives you a few hours to explore Ushuaia, the southernmost town in the world. The flight duration is approximately 4 hours.

Our local representatives will greet you at Ushuaia airport. Transfer to the pier, including an orientation tour of Ushuaia or the possibility to join an optional excursion to Tierra del Fuego National Park. Time permitting; you will have a chance to explore Ushuaia on your own before embarkation at 16:00.

Cruise-only guests: Please present yourself at the pier for embarkation at 16:00.

Once onboard there will be a welcome meeting during which the Captain will present his officers and expedition staff. They will introduce you to the ship's safety procedures and outline the programme for the coming days.

In the evening we set a course for the Southern Ocean and the adventure that awaits us.

Day 2 At sea

Enjoy our onboard lecture series as we head across the open seas and look out for wildlife.

We set course for the Falkland Islands located 480 km (300 mi) east of the southern tip of Argentina and approximately 1,000 km (600 mi) north of the South Shetland Islands in Antarctica. The Falklands Islands consist of two large islands and around 700 smaller ones with an estimated population of 3,060. Captain John Strong of *HMS Welfare* made the first recorded landing here in 1690. We will begin our lecture series with a focus on the dramatic history and diverse wildlife of the islands as we keep a watch for wandering albatross and dusky dolphins.

Days 3-4 The Falkland Islands

This unique sub-Antarctic environment is home to more than 70 animal and bird species including king penguins and albatross.

After a day's sail we reach the westernmost settled outposts in the Falklands. Some of these remote farms have been family owned for six or seven generations. The sheep graze alongside immense colonies of albatross and rockhopper, king, and macaroni penguins while predatory striated caracaras patrol overhead and upland geese forage at the water's edge. A visit to one of these homesteads often includes an invitation for cakes and a cup of tea and a chance meet those who have chosen to live on the edge of Antarctica.

First settled in the early 1840's, Stanley was chosen as the seat of government for its sheltered harbour and access to fresh water. In earlier years Stanley existed as a provisioning and repair stop for ships battered by Cape Horn and achieved a notorious reputation as a haven for vagabond seamen. This reputation is long gone and the 2,000 current residents of Stanley are warm and inviting. The town is easy enough to discover in a day on foot as most shops and services are centered on the port. The museum, post-office featuring first day covers, plenty of shops with locally made wool items, and perhaps most importantly Stanley's lively pubs are all centered on the port.

Depending on the final decision on landing sites, there will be a hike offered. One of the options could be an easy hike to a cliff with black browed albatross, a rockhopper colony and a cormorant colony if landing at New Island. If alternative landing site is chosen, a different walk will be set up on Falkland Islands.

Days 5-6 At sea

During the time at sea, our continuing lecture series will help prepare you for the wonders of South Georgia.

South Georgia's rich historical tapestry of exploration, whaling, and conflict lends a powerful backdrop to its rugged scenery and bustling wildlife. Our expedition team is well versed in every facet of South Georgia, from its geology and glaciology to the mating rituals of sooty albatross and king penguins, to the legends of the Norwegian whalers. One story that is sure to be told is that of Sir Ernest Shackleton and the men of the ill-fated *Endurance*.

Days 7-8 South Georgia

"The wild rocks raised their lofty summits till they were lost in the clouds and the valleys lay buried in ever-lasting snow." - Captain James Cook, upon his discovery of South Georgia in 1775.

There is nowhere, in any latitude, quite like South Georgia; magnificent mountain scenery with glaciers galore and beaches teeming with wildlife. Its unique position inside the Antarctic ecosystem yet outside the limit of the yearly sea ice makes this 3,755 square kilometer (1,500 sq mi) island home to tens of millions of breeding penguins, seals and seabirds. We plan to cruise through the mountainous Drygalski Fjord at the southern end of the island. We hope to visit Fortuna Bay where huge elephant seals lounge on the sand, fur seal pups race in and out of the water, albatross soar overhead, and king penguins can be seen in the thousands. We also plan to visit some of South Georgia's abandoned whaling stations such as Stromness and the historic Grytviken, founded by legendary Norwegian sea captain C.A. Larsen. At Grytviken we will find the whaling museum, Norwegian seaman's church, and the tiny graveyard where we can pay our respects to the great Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton.

South Georgia offers nice hiking options, and one of our favourites is walking the last part of the route that Sir Ernest Shackleton took on his brave journey: crossing the island's rugged mountains to find help to save his 22 men left on the isolated Elephant Island. The 5.5 km hike takes us from Fortuna to Strømness, the abandoned whaling station where Shackleton finally managed to get help. Due to the remoteness of the island and the safety of our operation, there is a requirement of a good level of fitness for each hiker. This hike will only be conducted when weather conditions are very favourable.

Day 9 At sea

As we continue to Antarctica, we learn more about the wonders of the Deep South.

In addition to spotting for the magnificent wandering albatross and other seabirds, we continue our lecture series focusing on the history, environment, and wildlife of Antarctica. Our series includes a thorough introduction to the Antarctic visitor guidelines from the Antarctic Treaty and International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO).

Day 10 South Orkney Islands

A day in the area of the deserted South Orkney Islands.

The South Orkney Islands lie in the Scotia Sea about 600 km north-east of the Antarctic Peninsula. They were discovered by American and British sealers in 1821 and have since served as a base for Scottish, French and Argentine sealing and scientific expeditions.

Day 11 At sea

As we get even closer to the Antarctic Peninsula, we continue our lecture series.

We will cruise by the Washington Strait and Coronation Island before setting course towards Elephant Island and Antarctica where we hope to arrive on the morning of day 12.

Days 12-16 Antarctica

The continent is an endless white wilderness full of fantastic impressions of nature. We will learn the history of the great explorers as we travel in their footsteps and see the landscape as they saw it - unchanged, remote, and awe inspiring.

While in Antarctica, we will attempt to land on several sites, some of them described below as examples. On land, our expedition team will explain what you see and help you avoid disturbing nature and wildlife. When conditions allow, hikes or other activities on land and sea may be offered. Participation on any hike requires a good level of fitness, and that you are accustomed to hiking in uneven terrain.

Days 17-18 Drake Passage

With our bow pointed north and unforgettable images and experiences in our souls, we are invited to gain a new understanding of the Antarctic.

The voyage from the Antarctic Peninsula to Ushuaia at the southern tip of Argentina is roughly 950 km (600 mi) or 40 hours sailing time in good weather. During the voyage north, we will continue our lecture series and recap our experiences of Antarctica, the Falkland Islands/Malvinas, and wonderful South Georgia and South Orkneys.

Day 19 Ushuaia/Buenos Aires

After spectacular Antarctica and its endless impressions, we make landfall at the world's southernmost town.

We arrive at the Argentinian town of Ushuaia in the morning. Ushuaia is counted as the world's southernmost town and lies on Tierra del Fuego, south of the Magellan Strait and here our voyage ends.

Disembark after breakfast, with the possibility of joining an optional excursion in Ushuaia (with its end at the airport) or be transferred to the airport. If time allows, we include a stop at the city center on our way to the airport. In the early afternoon we board the flight back to Buenos Aires.

