



# EXPEDITION LOG

ANTARCTIC PENINSULA  
& THE POLAR CIRCLE

ABOARD M/V POLAR STAR



January 24th ~ February 4th 2010

Images courtesy of the expedition team

# WE SAILED WITH .....

<b>Captain</b>	Leszek Slawski
<b>Chief Officer</b>	Piotr Zengota
<b>Chief Engineer</b>	Zenon Berger
<b>Second Officer</b>	Jerry Malapad
<b>Third Officer</b>	Mark Paul Deposoy
<b>Bosun</b>	Bernardo Gonzales
<b>Head Chef</b>	Bryan Hanson
<b>Hotel Manager</b>	Natasha Hanson
<b>Doctor</b>	Amama Thornley
<b>Expedition Leader</b>	'Mighty' Megan Tierney
<b>Expedition Staff</b>	Gilles Bourque
	Simon Cook
	Lori Gross
	Hannah Lawson
	John Sparks
	Phillip Wash
	Josef Wermelinger
<b>Expedition Stafflings</b>	Alan Cook
	Luke Thornley
	Petra Wermelinger
<b>Ice Pilot</b>	Little Mo

## Day 1: Sunday 24th January - Ushuaia and the Beagle Channel

*'A journey is a person in itself, no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policies and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us.'*  
~John Steinbeck (1902-1968)

**Latitude:** 54° 48.6' S

**Wind:** breezy

**Air Temperature:** 12°C

**Longitude:** 068° 17.8' W

**Sea Conditions:** calm

**Average Speed:** 11 knots (kts)

Renowned for its changeable weather, Ushuaia provided rain, wind and sunshine too. The town is situated in a very dramatic position on the Beagle Channel. Facing Chilean territory to the south, it is backed by lofty, snowy peaks, which are the southern end of the mighty Andes. In the late afternoon we made our way along the bustling dock, passing various ships that were welcoming their own passengers, until we arrived at the *MV Polar Star*. Our home-from-home awaited us and it was a smaller, more robust vessel in comparison to the huge cruise ship on the other side of the dock. It was clear that we were not boarding just any cruise vessel; this was a unique expedition vessel, with a long history of adventure in the harshest of conditions. An air of excitement and anticipation surrounded us as we climbed aboard.



Once everyone was aboard with their luggage, Megan, our expedition leader met us in the observation lounge for an initial briefing. She introduced us to Captain Leszek who welcomed us aboard and raised a toast to the voyage. The expedition staff then introduced themselves and described their specialist interests and experience. Our Chief and Safety Officer, Piotr, followed with a safety briefing, highlighting a few important rules which would help ensure a safe trip for all. As we left the dock the sun came out, and the wind picked up a little.

The general alarm on the ship sounded at 18:45. The Captain announced that this was a mandatory lifeboat drill and that we should take our bright orange lifejackets and assemble at our muster points on deck 4 under the lifeboats. Port-side cabins to the port side and starboard to the starboard side - simple really, that is if you have figured out which end of the ship is which yet! After being accounted for by the officers it was time to find the dining room and enjoy our first meal on board. During dinner we passed the southernmost town in the world, Puerto Williams, on the southern (Chilean) side of the Beagle Channel. Ushuaia, with its 60,000 inhabitants, on the north side of the Beagle, claims to be the southern-most city in the world. Puerto Williams was originally a naval base founded in 1952; the settlement now has a population of 2,000 people including one of the last fluent speakers of the language spoken by the Yámana canoe Indians. This tribal group was encountered by Charles Darwin during his time in the Beagle Channel.

The last hours of the day were spent navigating the Beagle Channel, which was named after the ship, which circumnavigated the world between 1831 and 1836 with Charles Darwin on board. The Ushuaia port authority had provided a pilot to navigate us safely through the channel whilst the expedition staff helped to spot wildlife from the bridge. Magellanic Penguins were seen swimming around the ship and on the beach at their nearby colony whilst Imperial Shags flew low across the glassy channel, occasionally passing flocks of South American Terns surface-feeding on the water. We were also lucky enough to see our first few Black-browed Albatrosses. The small boat that collected the pilot arrived after dark and from then on we were on our own - en route to Antarctica and many exciting adventures!



## USHUAIA

Ushuaia lays at the extreme tip of South America, on the island of Tierra del Fuego, the land of fire. Its name is derived from a Yaghan word (the language of the nomadic Yámana canoe Indians) meaning 'inner harbour to the westward.' In 1906 the Argentine state founded a penal institution in Ushuaia largely for hardened criminals. The prisoners were responsible for most of the pre-1940 construction of the town. The prison ceased operation and was incorporated into the Naval Base in 1940. Ushuaia now has a population of about 60,000 permanent residents. They are descendants of English missionaries who stayed on as farmers, of Yugoslavians and Romanian miners, of sailors from Spain and Italy, who signed off or jumped ship here, of Chileans who came looking for work, of a few Germans, and just a handful of people bearing some blood from the veins of the native Indian population.

This is the southernmost city in the world, and it boasts graceful frame houses, self-made cabins and modern concrete buildings, all with the same roofs. There are no tiles here, only metal sheeting that is bolted down. The slopes are now being developed with smart hotels and ski facilities.

A spectacular chain of mountains, the Cerro Martial, rises behind the town, to the north. The ruined forest behind the town was caused by a terrible fire in 1918. The fire began to the west and raged eastward, so intense that the townspeople thought they might have to take to the sea in boats. Doused by torrential rain, the fire, which had lasted three months, was so bad that everything, even the seeds, was destroyed and the ground was left open to erosion.

### Day 2: Monday 25th January - at sea, northern Drake Passage

*'There must be a beginning of any great matter, but the continuing to the end until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory'*

*~Sir Francis Drake*

#### Noon report

**Latitude:** 57 ° 10.8' North

**Longitude:** 065° 59.5' West

**Wind:** 28 kts, near gale

**Sea Conditions:** 3-4 metre waves

**Air Temperature:** 10° C

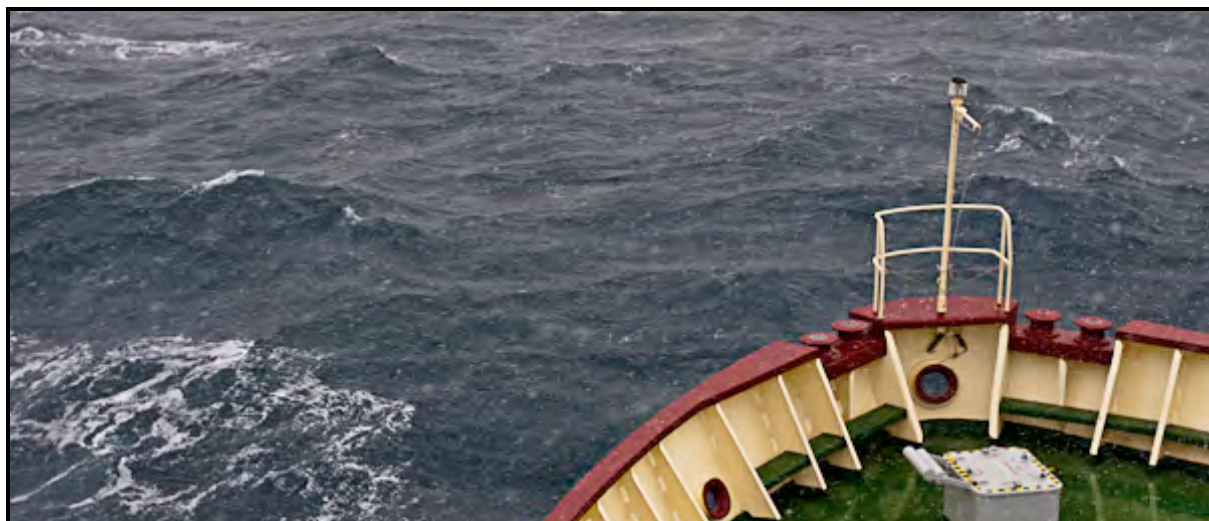
**Speed:** 10 kts

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 195 nautical miles (nm)

Shortly after dawn the outer islands in the Cape Horn archipelago could just be seen way off in the distance. The pre-breakfast hours were the best for birds, with four species of albatross spotted. The largest two were the Wandering and the Southern Royal, each of which has a wingspan of up to 3.5m/12'. This is the greatest wingspan of any bird in the world and the birds looked very much at home in what for us is a hostile, alien environment. At times they came very close to the ship but the lack of anything to provide a sense of scale meant that gauging size was extremely

difficult. A very lost land bird, a Correndera Pipit, found refuge on the ship during breakfast.

After breakfast we were able to learn a great deal more about the seabirds of this region when John spoke elegantly, eloquently and excitedly on the subject during a lecture in the lounge. As we got to know the ship and our travelling companions better, more activities unfolded - an exciting jacket exchange, a necessary expedition briefing and a seemingly obligatory session, after lunch, where we were able to closely inspect the inside of our eyelids. The latter was largely due to the change in the wind and sea conditions. The waves got bigger and bigger until, at one point, green water came over the bow. Luckily, as the afternoon progressed, both the waves and the wind moderated and there was a lot of sunshine too. For those still awake, instead of the boot-giving session, there was the chance to watch a documentary from the television series 'Pole to Pole'. This was followed later on by an excellent photographic workshop, courtesy of Lori and an evening albatross video by round-the-world yachtswoman Dame Ellen McCarthy.



### **Day 3: Tuesday 26th January - at sea, southern Drake Passage**

*'I now belong to the higher cult of mortals, for I have seen the Albatross'*

*~Robert Cushman Murphy*

#### **Noon report**

**Latitude:** 60° 26.2' S

**Wind:** Force 3, NNW

**Air Temperature:** 8° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 437 nm

**Longitude:** 061° 59.9' W

**Sea Conditions:** calm

**Average Speed:** 11 kts

This morning we were all pleased to find that the sea was much, much calmer than yesterday so we finally had a chance to unwind a little and begin to enjoy our passage to Antarctica. Sometime during the day there was a noticeable bump but it was only the ship crossing the Antarctic Convergence.

Although there were few birds to see and rain and sleet didn't encourage us to go outside, there was plenty going on inside the ship. Activities included: 'Can't run, fly even worse' (penguins, John), 'Ice' (Hannah), 'Whales of the Southern Ocean' (Lori), 'Encounters at the End of the World' (film), 'Rubber Boot Challenge' (interactive game) and 'The Great Vacuum Party' (indescribable). We also found time for breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack and dinner. What a day so time for bed!

## THE ANTARCTIC CONVERGENCE

The Antarctic Convergence, or Polar Front, is a narrow zone (up to around 30 kms wide) undulating between 50 and 60 degrees south. It encircles the continent and is best defined by continuous water temperature readings. The mixing zone is sometimes marked by a belt of fog or mist where warm, more saline currents coming south from the tropics meet cold, denser, less saline currents moving north from Antarctica. These conflicting currents converge, mix and sink. The mixing waters provide a sympathetic environment for abundant plankton that nourishes huge numbers of sea birds and mammals. However few planktonic organisms can cross this biological boundary, so the convergence delineates Antarctica from an ecological point of view. The political boundary is 60° South.

### Day 4: Wednesday 27th January – Ardley Cove, King George Island (62° 12' S, 058° 56' W) & Half Moon Island (62° 36' S, 059° 55' W)

*'Penguins are beautiful, interesting and funny. They are a pleasure to watch even though they do smell and their voices are not melodious.'*

*~George Gaylord Simpson*

#### Noon report

**Latitude:** 62° 15.4' S

**Wind:** Force 7, strong breeze, SE

**Air Temperature:** 1° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 618 nm

**Longitude:** 058° 48.1' W

**Sea Conditions:** wavy!

**Average Speed:** at anchor

Land ho! Late last night we passed between two of the South Shetland Islands (Nelson and Robert) on our way to Ardley Cove, in Maxwell Bay on King George Island. When we awoke we got our first feel of Antarctica - it was very windy and the rocky land was covered in fresh snow; so fresh that it was still falling from the sky. Off in the distance was a big iceberg, which was aground in shallow water. This was the first one for many of us and was a very exciting thing to see. Unfortunately, conditions were not good enough to get ashore at the nearby penguin colony so while we waited we were able to watch the BBC's 'Penguins of the Antarctic' and see Lori in action again. Her subject this time was the extraordinary adaptations of marine mammals. The only one of us who did get off the ship was Carol, who invited

most of the expedition team with her on an extra-special zodiac charter. She had also booked a scenic flight in a small aircraft and the pilot took her right over the ship. In truth we were all sad to see her depart and our best wishes flew with her.

Our afternoon destination was nearby Half Moon Island, the remains of an old volcano. On the way we were treated to a talk on the history of Antarctic discovery by Hannah. It was interrupted slightly by a fabulous, tabular iceberg. The ship changed course so that we could get close views and pictures of it. The ice was a beautiful light blue colour and there were numerous darker blue horizontal bands running through it. Swirling around the berg were numerous Cape Petrels and one eagle-eyed observer observed a number of similar but rarer, Antarctic Petrels among them.

Half Moon was soon reached but the wind was still windy and the waves were still moderate in size so a scout boat was sent out to check conditions at the beach. Despite waiting at the gangway in all our gear we were to be disappointed again, as it was realised that the wind and waves were going to make a landing too difficult to risk. Setting off for the south (where Silly Simon promised it would be sunny) we had a chance to see a film of bubble-netting humpbacks. Hopefully we will see the animals themselves shortly! Later in the evening we passed by the narrow entrance to the flooded caldera at Deception Island. The navigable channel looked very narrow but it was on our itinerary later in the voyage. After leaving Deception we continued in a southwesterly direction, down the Bransfield Strait towards the much narrower and hopefully more sheltered Gerlache Strait.



**Day 5: Thursday 28th January - Danco Island, (64° 44' S, 062° 37' W)**  
**Lemaire Channel (65° 04' S, 063° 57' W) & the Yalour Islands (65°**  
**14' S, 064° 10' W)**

*'Imagine a place bigger than the U.S. or Europe, sunnier than California, yet colder than the freezing compartment of your fridge. Drier than Arabia, higher than mountainous Switzerland, emptier than the Sahara. Only one place in the world fits that description. It is Antarctica, the strange, but beautiful continent at the bottom of the Earth.'*

*~This is Antarctica, Joseph M. Dubert*

**Noon report**

**Latitude:** 64° 44' S

**Wind:** light airs

**Air Temperature:** 12° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 774 nm

**Longitude:** 062° 37' W

**Sea Conditions:** calm

**Average Speed:** at anchor

The southern part of the Gerlache Strait is like a funnel and as we approached Danco Island the land on either side appeared to be very close. Not much actual land was visible though, for 99% of it was covered with snow and ice. Lofty peaks were snow-caked, huge crevassed glaciers tumbled to the sea and much of the coastline consisted of ice cliffs; there was even ice in the water. Other things were in the water too - lots of Humpback Whales! Early birds had seen several but the later risers didn't miss out because just before breakfast four whales swam right in front of the bow. They were feeding (and pooping a little bit) and completely ignored us as they went by. The sound of their exhalations was distinct; at times reminiscent of a trumpeting elephant. We saw heads and backs and huge pectoral fins and tail flukes when they made a deeper dive. What a start to the day!



Danco Island is small and round-topped and lies in the beautiful Errera Channel. Icebergs bobbed in the water and Gentoo Penguins beckoned us from ashore. They had their own tracks in the snow up the hill but we had to make one for ourselves. Brave 'Iron Man' Sparky volunteered to lead the way and some of us managed to get right up to the top, where sweeping views awaited us. In many places there were groups of penguin adults and chicks; the normal number is two in each nest. Some chicks were watched being fed but most were inactive. Occasionally a skua would drift by, always on the lookout for a Gentoo chick takeaway meal. By the landing place there was a colony of about 100 noisy Antarctic Terns, which, every now and then, would all rise from the ground together. Most of us took the opportunity to go for a short zodiac cruise before returning to the ship. Highlights included close views of icebergs and seals - Crabeater and the always impressive but menacing Leopard, complete with a full set of very large teeth.



During lunch we were underway and more whales appeared - humpback, bouncy Antarctic Minkes and a number of Orca. There was a very big male and at least two females with small calves. The ship was turned and the 'wolf of the sea' provided us with very good and close views. Continuing on our way, we soon approached the Lemaire Channel. The channel itself is about seven miles long and was discovered by a German expedition under Dallman in 1873-74. It was traversed in December 1898 by the Belgian Antarctic Expedition under Gerlache and was named by him for Charles Lemaire, a Belgian explorer of the Congo. We found the channel to be very dramatic as well as being very narrow in places. Lots of ice in the water was complemented by ice all over the towering mountains and all the ice in the numerous glaciers. Whales and seals appeared and disappeared and then we came out into the Penola Strait, not far from the Yalour Islands.

Our time here was very well spent and we were divided into two activity groups. There was a chance to go ashore and look at the small, scattered groups of Adélie Penguins as well as going zodiac cruising. The penguins had quite large chicks, most of which were filthy from the smelly muck in the colonies. Some were almost as large as their parents and chased them relentlessly for food. The birds were quite unafraid of us and some waddled up for a closer look. Our time in the boats was also very productive. The small islands were very scenic and housed many more penguins.

There were also icebergs to investigate and brash ice to drive through; popping noises could be heard as the melting process released trapped air inside. One berg had an oval hole through it and some lucky people photographed penguins through it! Nearby, a curious Leopard Seal checked out the food potential inside at least one zodiac. Luckily the occupants escaped unscathed and we were all soon on our way south towards the Antarctic Circle. It was a busy day but was very rewarding and successful.

**Day 6: Friday 29th January - Crystal Sound, (66° 23' S, 066° 30' W)**  
**Detaille Island (66° 51' S, 066° 47' W) & The Gullet (67° 10' S, 067° 38' W)**

*'An Antarctic expedition is the worst way to have the best time of your life.'*  
~Apsley Cherry-Garrard

**Noon report**

**Latitude:** 66° 51.6' S

**Wind:** none

**Air Temperature:** 10° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 1,021 nm

**Longitude:** 066° 47.5' W

**Sea Conditions:** calm

**Average Speed:** at anchor

Mighty Mighty Megs (as she is known to her Aussie mates back home) woke us all up early today with the exciting news that we were just about to cross the Antarctic Circle. The first two people across the line (brothers since birth) were right up at the pointy end but the rest of us weren't far behind them. Around us was an icy wonderland, with plenty covering the land and floating in the sea, which was a bit choppy. However, the sun was shining and before long we arrived at Detaille Island for a look at the long-abandoned British hut. To quote, "Base "W" is designated as Historic Site and Monument No. 83. It is sited at the northern end of the island. It is noteworthy as a relatively unaltered British scientific base of the late 1950's, providing an evocative insight into the way the bases were occupied during this period. It was built in 1956 and closed in 1959 due to the difficulty of access [heavy sea ice]. It was subsequently re-occupied for six months in 1965/66. During its short history as an occupied base it contributed towards the geophysical programme of the International Geophysical Year (IGY). In addition to the base building there are also dog kennels, an emergency store, fuel drum and cargo depots, an anemometer tower and wireless masts." Looking inside the hut was like going back in time.



In addition to landing on the island we had the chance to go out in the zodiacs. With a hot sun and decreasing wind it was very pleasant to cruise along the shoreline and around the icebergs, two of which had dramatic arches. Some Adélie Penguins on the rocks didn't seem to mind us looking at them and the numerous Weddell Seals were even less concerned about our presence. There was also the odd Antarctic Fur Seal among them. After lunch there was a toast on the stern to commemorate our crossing of the circle. Our next destination had an intriguing name, "The Gullet".

It was here that we reached the southernmost point on our voyage - 67° 10.3' South, 067° 38.9' West. The captain guided the ship through the narrow northern channel, dodging bergy bits and icebergs along the way. Dozens of Crabeater Seals were dozing on the ice and a few Minke Whales were seen too. The sea was flat calm and after the ship was stopped we disembarked and went off in the zodiacs to explore the locale. A Humpback Whale went close to the ship and was seen and photographed but, since it was diving continuously, it wasn't easy to get close to. More seals were approached and flying around us were Snow Petrels, Wilson's Storm petrels, Brown Skuas, Kelp Gulls and Antarctic Terns. One or two impromptu landings were made and one group, who landed to see some red and green snow algae, were told by the bridge that they were standing on the continent. Megan picked up some 10,000-year old glacier ice from the sea and it was later enjoyed in an end-of-day, celebratory drink or two.

**Day 7: Saturday 30th January - (continental) Prospect Point with the Fish Islands (66° 01' S, 065° 23' W) & Mutton Cove (66° 00' S, 065° 39' W)**

*'Who would have ever believed in penguins unless he had seen them'*  
~Connor O'Brien

**Noon report**

**Latitude:** 66° 01.2' S

**Wind:** Flat calm

**Air Temperature:** 4° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 1,160 nm

**Longitude:** 065° 20.9' W

**Sea Conditions:** glassy

**Average Speed:** weighing anchor

When we awoke we found that the ship had already arrived and was safely at anchor close to Prospect Point, the former site of another British hut. Antarctica has reserves of both titanium and uranium but Phil said that the Brits were here in search of an even scarcer element, unobtainium. The mainland was very close to the ship and the sea was full of ice, from large bergs to extensive brash ice. Not far away was a group of small islands called The Minnows. The zodiacs set off and did their own thing, with a landing on the continent itself being a high priority for everyone. Luckily the waters edge was ice-free so getting ashore was very easy for us. Scattered everywhere were hundreds of conical limpet shells. They are eaten whole by Kelp Gulls, the flesh is digested and the shells are then regurgitated, often at favourite places. It was also possible to land on the Minnows and get close to small groups of Adélie Penguins. On one island there was also quite a large group of Antarctic Shags and they too had large, dirty-looking chicks. In addition to the landings we also spent a long time cruising through and around the ice; the blue icebergs were particularly attractive and being completely silent for a minute or two revealed that

our surroundings were full of different sounds. Towards the end of our excursion it even started to snow!



It was only a short distance to Mutton Cove so Megan kindly allowed some naptime after lunch. Then it was off again in the zodiacs, around the bay, around the icebergs and around the small islands. There was still no wind and the sea was flat calm but without any of this mornings brash ice. Sometimes the sun illuminated distant, snowy mountains but in our area there was high cloud. Two hours in the boats cooled us down and made us feel peckish so what better way to end the day than with an outside Antarctic barbecue! Our chefs did a wonderful job out on the deck behind the lounge and we had the choice of either eating inside or out.

Late in the evening the captain inched the ship towards a small tabular iceberg so that we could get close views and pictures. Shortly afterwards the light from the setting sun was extraordinary. As the top of the golden globe sank down into the layer of cloud the uppermost portion of the sun turned a deep, sapphire blue. The top of the setting sun, as it reaches the horizon, often turns emerald green but blue is very rarely seen. Things continued to improve, light-wise, so many photographs were taken of the sunset colours, reflected off both the water and (for the arty-farty photographers) the bridge windows. The staff said that a sunset like this might only be seen once or twice during the whole summer season so we were very fortunate indeed.

**Day 8: Sunday 31st January - Port Lockroy (64° 49' S, 063° 30' W) & Paradise Bay (64° 51' S, 062° 54' W)**

*'Watching the coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma. There it is before you – smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid or savage, and always a mute air of whispering, come and find out.'*

*~Joseph Conrad*

**Noon report**

**Latitude:** 64° 49.4' S

**Wind:** 18 kts, northeast

**Air Temperature:** 8° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 1,266 nm

**Longitude:** 063° 31.6' W

**Sea Conditions:** calm

**Average Speed:** weighing anchor

Port Lockroy was established in 1944, abandoned in the 1960's and restored in 1996; it is now the second most visited place in Antarctica, after Deception Island. The morning dawned bright, clear and sunny, allowing perfect views of the surrounding mountains, including the Seven Sisters. Nearby was another cruise ship (they had started their landing at 05.30!) but they were soon on their way. After a very informative talk by the station personnel we were off in the boats to see the place for ourselves. We were split 50/50 between the museum/gift shop/post office and nearby Jougla Point, where there was the opportunity to climb up a hill for an overview. The penguins made us very welcome, there were a few shags in among them too and the whale bones were very impressive. The Gift Shop Girls also made us very welcome and were more than happy to take our funny little pieces of plastic and coloured paper in exchange for wonderful mementoes of our visit.

All too soon it was time to leave and be on our way to Paradise Bay, across the nearby Gerlache Strait. By now the wind had picked up to near gale-force but the bay itself, although overcast, was nice and calm. On the way many icebergs were passed and they were also a feature of our zodiac cruise. Once more, we were divided so that some were ashore (the third continental landing for a few of us) while the others were cruising in the nearby cove. The Gentoo Penguins around the unoccupied base buildings had quite large chicks but one bird was seen with an egg (one of two) that was hatching. Every now and then the sitting adult would rise and a tiny foot and flipper could be seen sticking out of the hole in the egg. It was a very moving thing to see. In the cove many of us saw ice calving from the front of the glacier and there were also numerous seals sleeping on the many pieces of floating ice. After dinner we were told that we were off to the South Shetlands.



**Day 9: Monday 1st February - Whaler's Bay, Deception Island (62° 59' S, 060° 34' W) & Hannah Point, Livingston Island (62° 39' S, 060° 37' W)**

*'What is travelling? Changing your place? By no means!  
Travelling is changing your opinions and your prejudices.'  
~Anatole France*

**Noon report**

**Latitude:** 62° 59.1' S

**Wind:** 30 kts, near gale

**Air Temperature:** 3° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 1,432 nm

**Longitude:** 060° 33.8' W

**Sea Conditions:** turbulent!

**Average Speed:** at anchor

The wind was howling and the snow was driven horizontally but were we going to be put off a landing in Whaler's Bay? Good heavens, no! Breakfast was again interesting, with the ship rolling to and fro and fro and to. The queue was much shorter than usual but the rolling stopped as soon as we entered Neptune's Bellows, the narrow and dramatic way in to the flooded caldera. Turning hard right, the ship was soon at anchor and most of us were soon zipping over the water to explore the area. There was a choice of the old, derelict aircraft hangar, the old, derelict British Antarctic Survey huts or the old, derelict, whaling station. Alternatively, there was an option to walk along the beach and up to Neptune's Window, a gap in the caldera wall. With a lack of hot water and a biting wind of up to 35 knots there were only two takers for a Polar Plunge. However, the brave souls (Lisette and John) ventured out of their clothes and into the water. Congratulations, I think.....



## GEOLOGY OF DECEPTION ISLAND

Deception Island is the sub-aerial remains of a previously much larger shield volcano that is 80% submerged. Port Foster (max. depth 190 m) is a breached caldera that formed when the centre of the volcano collapsed below sea level after a huge prehistoric explosive eruption ejected lava from the magma chamber below the surface. Smaller eruptions have continued at irregular intervals for at least several thousand years, the first historically recorded by Wilkes in 1842, who saw 'the entire south rim of the crater on fire;' the latest episodes occurring in 1967, 1969, and 1970.

The 1967 eruption destroyed a Chilean scientific station at Pendulum Cove and a British station at Whalers Bay and required evacuation of the bases under emergency conditions. The five British scientists returned only to be evacuated again the following year when an eruption destroyed both the Chilean and British bases, and the whaling station. No permanent occupants live on the island, but both Argentina and Spain have summer stations there. The volcano is still active and steam can be seen from fumaroles around the caldera rim. The emergent flanks of the volcano exhibit examples of basaltic lava flows, ejected scoria and broken lava from cinder cones, and bedded ash fall-deposits.

Just a few miles to the north, at Hannah Point, there was hardly any wind at all! The zodiacs took us to a beach near masses of penguins, of the "Very Smelly" kind. In fact there were lots of Chinstraps and lots of Gentoos, all with very large and increasingly hungry and mobile chicks. By picking our way through the birds we soon came to something almost as smelly, a large group of belching, farting Southern Elephant Seals. They seemed to be quite happy wallowing in and rolling around in, stuff that had, until recently, been inside them all. Never mind, it was all part of our 'lifetime experience' so we gritted our teeth and took it on the nose. The animals were here to moult their skin and fragments of it could be seen lying around in numerous places. There were also a few Antarctic Fur Seals on the point and further along the beach was a confiding Weddell Seal. At the end of the beach walk was a pile of whale bones, fossils and interesting rocks.



In among the Chinstraps a few Macaroni Penguins had been spotted so many of us had the chance to see these orange-plumed punk-birds at close quarters. There were no chicks around so, presumably, the birds had not bred successfully. Time ran out much sooner than we wanted so, for the last time, we took our seats in the zodiacs for our final ride. After dinner Megan gave her long-awaited talk on 'Living and Working in Antarctica'. After that all we could do was retire to the bar in readiness for "The Drake".

## **Day 10: Tuesday 2nd February - at sea, southern Drake Passage**

*'On the open, limitless ocean, where time is meaningless and the horizon is always out of reach, there is nothing to mark one's progress save the occasional and unexpected cry of a bird, splash of a dolphin or spout of a whale.'*  
~Simon Cook

### **Noon report**

**Latitude:** 60° 34.5' S

**Wind:** 25 kts, easterly

**Air Temperature:** 4° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 1,644 nm

**Longitude:** 063° 19.8' W

**Sea Conditions:** rolling swell

**Average Speed:** 11.2 kts

It seems hard to believe that our time in Antarctica is over but it is true, we are on our way towards Ushuaia and trees. On the outside the weather was grey - grey sea, grey sky and grey fog. Just a few birds were seen and there was a glimpse or two of Hourglass Dolphins as well. Shortly after lunch something unprecedented for this far north in the Drake Passage was seen - two small icebergs! Inside the ship there was plenty going on in the observation lounge - in the form of both lectures (Megan's 'Project Penguin', John's 'The Roaring Forties' and Hannah's 'Heroic Age') and films ('The End of the Line' and the remarkable 'Around Cape Horn'. The latter is available from Mystic Seaport Film & Video Archives, Mystic, CT 06355, USA, 'phone +860-572-0711, [www.mysticseaport.org](http://www.mysticseaport.org)). It was also time to catch up on some sleep, eat some more, review photographs and video footage, nap in the captain's chair on the bridge, catch up on our journals and wonder if the \$50 charge for signed copies of this log was actually really worth it.....



## **Day 11: Wednesday, 3rd February - at sea, northern Drake Passage**

*'I am the albatross that awaits you at the end of the earth. I am the forgotten soul of the dead sailors from all the seas of the earth who rounded Cape Horn, they did not die in the fury of the waves, but fly today on my wings towards eternity in the cry of the Antarctic winds'*

*~Sara Vial (quotation from the Albatross Monument, Cape Horn)*

### **Noon report**

**Latitude:** 56° 08.0' S

**Wind:** 5 kts, northerly

**Air Temperature:** 7° C

**Distance sailed from Ushuaia:** 1,919 nm

**Longitude:** 065° 48.4' W

**Sea Conditions:** gentle swell

**Average Speed:** 11.9 kts

The sun rose this morning into a clear, blue sky but we soon sailed under a layer of high cloud. The sea was calm, with just a slight, rolling swell to keep us on our toes. We were accompanied by perhaps 10 or more large albatrosses; mostly Wandering but there was at least one Southern Royal. Early in the morning there were also glimpses of some whales; the distant ones were Fin or Sei and there was a very close Antarctic Minke Whale too. There was also what we at first thought was another, far-north, iceberg but it turned out to be just a French cruise ship.



After breakfast our focus was on the inside of the ship - clearing out our things from the wet gear room and listening to John ('War on Whales') and Gabriel ('The Antarctic Connection'). In the morning came the highlight of our voyage - account settlement! Shortly after lunch the engine room tours commenced and we were led down to where all those big oars stick out of the side of the ship. Even more exciting was the news from the Captain that he had changed course so that we could get a look at the famous Cape Horn. After our last happy hour the Captain was our host for a toast to our trip. This was followed by a superb photographic review of our highly successful voyage. All that remained was to eat our last dinner on board and sail back along the Beagle Channel to our berth on the dock in Ushuaia - journey's end!

Many of us have waited years for this voyage of discovery whilst some of us have had only a very short time to prepare for it. Whatever the case, it is an adventure that we will never forget and one that we will carry with us wherever we go in the future.

**And finally,**

*'Virtually every visitor to the ice returns to "civilisation" converted into a passionate, life-long South Polar Ambassador. The enriched lives of these privileged few will never again be the same for they have truly experienced paradise on earth. That such a wondrous, unspoiled place still exists on this beleaguered planet is one of the real miracles of the 20th century. The indescribable splendour of the magnificent*

*final frontier and its remarkable wildlife must be forever regarded as an irreplaceable international treasure that justly deserves to be protected indefinitely for future generations.'*

*~Frank Todd, 1988*

**Together we have sailed 2,045 nautical miles or 2,352 statute miles or 3,786 kilometres**

**We look forward to sailing with you again!**

<b>WILDLIFE LIST</b>	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
	Beagle Channel	Drake Passage	Drake Passage	S. Shetland Islands	Ant. Peninsula	Antarctic Circle	Ant. Peninsula	Ant. Peninsula	S. Shetland Islands	Drake Passage	Drake Passage	Beagle Channel
<b>BIRDS</b>												
Gentoo Penguin, <i>Pygoscelis papua</i>					X		X	X	X			
Adelie Penguin, <i>Pygoscelis adeliae</i>				X	X	X	X	X				
Chinstrap Penguin, <i>Pygoscelis antarctica</i>					X				X			
Magellanic Penguin, <i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>	X											
Macaroni Penguin, <i>Eudyptes chrysolophus</i>									X			
Wandering Albatross, <i>Diomedea exulans</i>		X	X							X	X	
Southern Royal Albatross, <i>Diomedea epomophora</i>		X	X								X	
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, <i>Phoebastria palebrata</i>												
Grey-headed Albatross, <i>Thalassarche chrysostoma</i>		X								X		
Black-browed Albatross, <i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	X	X	X						X	X	X	
Southern Giant-Petrel, <i>Macronectes giganteus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Northern Giant-Petrel, <i>Macronectes halli</i>		X	X							X		
Southern Fulmar, <i>Fulmarus glacialisoides</i>	X				X							
Cape Petrel, <i>Daption capense</i>			X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
Antarctic Petrel, <i>Thalassoica antarctica</i>				X								
Snow Petrel, <i>Pagodroma nivea</i>					X	X	X	X				
Soft-plumaged Petrel, <i>Pterodroma mollis</i>		X	X									
White-chinned Petrel, <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>		X	X							X	X	
Sooty Shearwater, <i>Puffinus griseus</i>											X	
Antarctic Prion, <i>Pachyptila desolata</i>				X						X		
Slender-billed Prion, <i>Pachytila belcheri</i>		X										
Blue Petrel <i>Halobaena caerulea</i>			X									
Wilson's Storm-petrel, <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Black-bellied Storm-petrel, <i>Fregatta tropica</i>			X	X						X		
Magellanic Diving-Petrel, <i>Pelecanoides magellani</i>		X									X	
Imperial Shag, <i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>	X											
Rock Shag, <i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>	X											
Antarctic Shag, <i>Phalacrocorax bransfieldensis</i>				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Upland Goose, <i>Chloephaga picta</i>	X											
Flightless Steamer Duck, <i>Tachyeres pteneres</i>	X											
Pale-faced Sheathbill, <i>Chionis alba</i>							X	X	X			
South Polar Skua, <i>Catharacta maccormicki</i>				X	X		X	X				
Chilean Skua, <i>Catharacta chilensis</i>	X											
Brown Skua, <i>Catharacta antarctica</i>				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Dolphin Gull, <i>Larus scoresbii</i>	X											
Kelp Gull, <i>Larus dominicanus</i>	X				X	X	X	X	X			
South American Tern, <i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>	X											
Antarctic Tern, <i>Sterna vittata</i>				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Correndera Pipit, <i>Anthus correndera</i>		X										
<b>MARINE MAMMALS</b>												
Humpback Whale, <i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Fin Whale, <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>												
Sei Whale, <i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>											X	
Dwarf Minke Whale, <i>Balaenoptera species</i>												
Antarctic Minke Whale, <i>Balaenoptera bonaerensis</i>					X	X	X	X			X	
Killer Whale, <i>Orcinus Orca</i>					X							
Hourglass Dolphin, <i>Lagenorhynchus cruciger</i>		X								X		
Antarctic Fur Seal, <i>Actocephalus gazella</i>				X		X	X		X			
South American Sea Lion, <i>Otaria byronia</i>	X											
Southern Elephant Seal, <i>Mirounga leonina</i>									X			
Leopard Seal, <i>Hydrurga leptonyx</i>					X	X						
Crabeater Seal, <i>Lobodon carcinophaga</i>					X	X	X	X				
Weddell Seal, <i>Leptonychotes weddellii</i>				X		X	X	X	X			

# Antarctica with Polar Star Expeditions

Jan 29<sup>th</sup> - Feb 4<sup>th</sup> 2010

