



Classic Antarctica

On board M/V USHUAIA

Expedition Log

March 5th to March 15th 2014

South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula

MASTER of the VESSEL

Sergio Osiroff Calle

EXPEDITION LEADER

Sebastian Arrebola

HOTEL MANAGER

Rafael Bucarey

CHEF

Luis Alberto Jaramillo

LECTURERS/GUIDES

Valeria Otero Faus –AEL- Guide
Alejandro Fernandez Ajó –Biologist-
Alejandro Fazzio Welf –Historian-
Maria Constanza Marchesi–Biologist-

PHYSICIAN

Dr. Lynne Hoole

Our Itinerary

March 5: Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina.

March 6: Drake Passage.

March 7: Drake Passage, South Shetland Islands.

March 8: Portal Point, Wilhelmina Bay, Cuverville Island.

March 9: Neko Harbour, Brown Station / Paradise Bay.

March 10: Lemaire Channel, Petermann Island, Girard Bay.

March 11: Palmer Station, Danco Island.

March 12: Deception Island, Half Moon Island / South Shetland Islands.

March 13: Drake Passage.

March 14: Drake Passage, Beagle channel.

March 15: Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina.

Total navigated distance: 1645 nautical miles.



Wednesday, March 5th

Ushuaia, Argentina.

Lat. 54° 48' S Long. 68° 18' W



Temp: 10° C
Windforce: NE16 knot

We spent most of the first day in Ushuaia until we walked along the pier to the MV USHUAIA for embarkation at 4pm and departure to Antarctica! We could not wait: all of us were at the dock early time. Excitement was palpable! We were going on a trip to Antarctica, an impossible, unthinkable place, where the sky would hang upside down and the world was frozen.

Departure was scheduled for 6 pm: the ropes were lifted from the quayside and our expedition ship moved off and headed out into the Beagle Channel to begin the long journey south.

We settled into our cabins before returning to the bar for a welcome cocktail of chilled champagne and a fabulous spread of fruit, cold meat and canapés.

Shortly after boarding, we went to the welcome briefing by our expedition leader Sebastian Arrebola, who presented the planned activities for the evening and set the scene for the following days. He introduced to us the others staff members of the voyage: Valeria Otero Faus, one of the Guides and Assistant Expedition Leader; Alejandro Fernandez Ajó, a Biologist; Alejandro Fazzio Welf, an historian and Maria Constanza Marchesi, a biologist. They would help us understand the wonders we were about to explore and give lectures during the crossing of the Drake Passage to prepare us for Antarctica.

He also introduced the first crew-members we would need to know: our hotel manager, Rafael Bucarey, who would be in charge of our well-being during the voyage, our doctor, Lynne Hoole, who we hoped not to have to see too often.

The captain, Sergio Osiroff Calle had news that wasn't welcome: he told us about high winds we would have to expect during the crossing of the Drake Passage, the huge body of water that separated Tierra del Fuego from the White Continent; a turbulent place!



M/V Ushuaia at the pier in Ushuaia

After the briefing we awaited the lifeboat drill in our cabins and when the noise started, we made our way to the lounge with our big, orange life jackets and gathered at our muster stations. We went outside to have a look where the lifeboats are on the ship and of course, these boats are the one part of the ship where we were hoping never having to spend any time at all.

After the drill we enjoyed the views of the Beagle Channel as we sailed out between the shores of Argentina and Chile.

We had dinner, our first meal onboard, and then had a chance to explore the ship. Many of us chose to have an early night in preparation for the Drake Passage and others enjoyed a movie "Orcas, wolves of the seas"

Thursday, March 6th



Drake Passage

Morning Temp: 5°C
Windforce: W30 Knot
Afternoon Temp: 5° C
Windforce: W 25 knot

The morning started with a fascinating lecture on Pelagic Seabirds by Kata, who also took us outside later in the afternoon to watch some of these great creatures. There were some of the bigger albatross around and a few of us marveled at the sight of the huge Wandering albatross which we had the great luck to spot. There were a good number of Giant petrels as well as a handful of Cape or Pintado petrels. It was great to get some fresh air too.

After lunch we had another lecture. Our Expedition Leader on board, Sebastian, gave us a fascinating talk about "Antarctic Geography". We were going to the highest, driest and coldest continent on this planet!

After a snack it was time for another lecture and Alejandro (Kuaker) invited us for his lecture on the Belgium Antarctic Expedition. We were eager to learn about Antarctic heroes and maybe also a little surprised that he had chosen the Belgian Antarctic Expedition from the year 1897 to give us an insight about how life was like for those intrepid men. The expedition is hardly known but it soon made sense when he explained that most of the places we would see were named for people with some kind of association with that journey.

After dinner's movie was "Winged Migration".



Wandering Albatross

Friday, March 7th

Drake Passage, South Shetland Islands.

Lat: 62° 32' S, Long. 59° 47' O



Morning Temp.: 2°C
Windforce: W25 knot
Afternoon Temp: 3° C
Windforce: W 19 knot

We were sailing in very highwaters. It was hard: the wind was coming from the west and the sea was following fast. A good number of us that were on the outer decks enjoyed the "Drake". Most people managed to come out of their bunks at least to listen to the interesting talks our Expedition team was offering and even enjoyed the tasty meals the galley had prepared.

Shortly after, Alejandro gave us a lecture about "Penguins" and we knew right away that these little creatures would be our new best friends. We were fascinated by their smart adaptations to the cold and their environment in general, but did also look forward to see them waddle and behave like dwarfish gentlemen. What makes them so funny to us is probably just that we see ourselves in them, or at least a cartoon version of ourselves.

After lunch, Sebastian gave the IAATO and zodiac briefings so as to be ready for our arrival in Antarctica. This outlines all the guidelines and regulations necessary for travelling in this remote part of the world, where the priority is to leave the pristine environment and its wildlife undisturbed. We were then outfitted with landing lifejackets and rubber boots - everything we needed for our first beach landing the following days. Walking back up from the conference room, we got the first glimpse of land outside! The rugged South Shetland Islands offered glimpses through the dense cloudbanks and we also enjoyed our first big icebergs floating by silently. We sailed the English channel in between of Robert and Greenwich islands.

Finally, we continued navigating along the Bransfield Strait to reach the northern part of the Gerlache strait the next morning.

After Dinner´s movie was the "8 below". As we retired to our bunks we still had to counter the soft rolling of the ship to get any sleep, but in the end we did manage.

Saturday, March 8th

Portal Point, Wilhelmina Bay.

Lat. 64° 30' S, Long. 61° 46' O

Cuerverville Island.

Lat. 64° 41' S, Long. 62° 37' O



Morning Temp.: 2°C
Windforce: -
Afternoon Temp : 5° C
Winforce: NW 16 knot

We had a great time on our first day sailing the Gerlache strait to our destination, which would be our first continental landing at Portal Point.

Sebastian woke up us at 6.00 a.m.

A Falkland Islands Dependency Survey hut was established here in 1956. The hut has now been removed to the museum in Stanley and only the foundations remain. Portal Point served as the gateway for a route to the polar plateau. Immediately behind the low point on which the hut was located the (usually snow-covered) land rises steeply upslope towards the plateau.

We walked up on hard snow to appreciate the beautiful landscape around the area, most of us walked to the summit of the snowy hill. We enjoyed the beautiful landscape around and the big icebergs surrounding the place. It was amazing!

On the way back to the ship we were already hungry and we hoped to get a nice breakfast onboard.

After breakfast we sailed the Gerlache Strait towards Wilhelmina Bay.

De Gerlache named this bay during his expedition in 1898 after the 18-year old Queen of Netherlands. Amazing view from the outer decks and from the bridge, we sailed a narrow channel in between the continental Danco coast and Nansen and Brooklyn islands, enjoying many humpback whales on the way, then the "Ushuaia" sailed north to reach Gerlache Strait and the northern part of Errera channel.

Our hotel manager Rafael was waiting for us to give us another great lunch.

Shortly after lunch Sebastian announced the next landing on Cuerverville Island in the northern part of the Errera channel. It was named after Vice Admiral of the French Navy who helped to provision the "Belgica". This 2 kms by 2.5 kms is a steep-sided dome, two-thirds of which is covered by a permanent ice-cap.

The northern shore is a beach of cobbles and boulders, approx. 1.5 km long, backed by steep vegetation-covered cliffs toward the east and gentler slopes to the west.

We landed easily, then walked along the Gentoo penguin rookery the largest and the most visited in the Gerlache strait region. After taking some pictures of them, we walked on a snow track to the hill, where we could get an amazing view of the Errera channel, Ronge island and the Graham Land with the Arctowski peninsula behind. On the northwest end, the skuas nesting upslope were vigorously defending their nests, and we were advised to stay clear.

Before heading back to the ship, our expedition staff and sailors took us around some of the very stunning glaciers and icebergs, where we saw a couple of Leopard seals resting on the ice, but all too soon it was time to go back on board for a rest. We had recap and briefing for the next day.

After lunch we enjoyed the movie "Extreme Ice"

Sunday, March 9th

Neko Harbour / Andvord Bay

Lat. 64° 50' S, Long. 62° 32' W

Brown Station, Paradise Bay

Lat. 64° 54' S, Long. 62° 52' W



Morning Temp: 2°C
Windforce: E 5 knot
Afternoon Temp: 6°C
Windforce: -

In the morning we landed at Neko Harbour. This small harbour indents the eastern shore of Andvord Bay and was named for the floating whale factory ship, Neko, which operated in the South Shetlands and Antarctic Peninsula in 1911-1912 and 1923-1924, and often used this bay. Andvord Bay is surrounded by mountains and glaciers spilling down to the shoreline, is about 5 kilometers (3 miles) wide and some 14 kilometers (9 miles) long, and was named by de Gerlache to honor Rolf Andvord, the Belgian consul in Norway. Gentoo penguins, kelp gulls and skuas nest here. We landed on a cobble beach and went from there a little higher to an elevated gentoo colony and then we walk up to another panoramic view of Neko harbour and its surroundings. From there we had a beautiful expansive view of Andvord Bay. By noon we came back to the ship to enjoy a good meal.

This afternoon we were promised another landing on the continent, now in Paradise Bay. We entered this beautiful bay early at 3 p.m., after lunch, to find great weather. Our expedition leader announced that we would land on our second continental landing shortly.

The landing site was the Argentine Brown Station where we walked outside the buildings and were offered a climb up to a rocky hill to a panoramic view of Paradise Bay. We enjoyed going up the slope and reaching the rocky place of Brown Station immensely. It was not that high, but what a steep climb! and all of us had a good time. Landing at Brown Station was really a sample of wonderful Antarctic weather. Despite of the cold, we were all amazed. A part of the group were to a zodiac cruise in Skontorp Cove, where we appreciated the huge glacier and icebergs floating on the bay. Time went really fast and we had to return to the ship.

Back on our ship, we enjoyed an Antarctic wedding!

The Captain Sergio and Sebastian, celebrated in the bow of the ship the ceremony.

After dinner we sailed de Gerlache Strait once again towards Lemaire channel.

Monday, March 10th

**Lemaire channel.
Petermann Island.**

Lat. 65° 10' S, Long. 64° 08' W

Girard Bay.

Lat. 65° 08' S, Long. 64° 00' W



Morning Temp: 0°C
Windforce: SW 2 knot
Afternoon Temp: 5°C
Windforce: NW13 knot

This morning we woke up at 6.30 AM for the navigation in the Lemaire channel. Shortly after, at the northern entrance of the Lemaire Channel. Some of Minke whales were around our ship! Crabeater seals were resting on small icebergs we passed. We enjoyed a placid navigation in the narrow space between the continent and Booth Island. It was a wonderful cloudy day. Called the "Fuji Funnel" or "Kodak Gap", this channel is 11 kms long (7 miles) and less than 500 mts wide at its narrowest point. The ice conditions were perfect as we passed through the Lemaire channel from the north to the south. This scenic channel was named by Adrien de Gerlache, after his friend Jacob Lemaire - the Belgian explorer of the Belgian African Congo. Booth Island on the west side of Lemaire Channel, is where Dr. Jean Baptiste Charcot wintered during his first Antarctic expedition in 1904. We were taking a lot of photos from the outer decks before we were to enjoy a tasty breakfast.

After breakfast we landed at Petermann Island, where we were soon walking over the rocks covered by snow it was a little slippery while keeping our distance from hundreds of curious Gentoo penguins.

It lies at the southern end of the Lemaire channel at 65° 10' south. We saw our first Adelie penguins and polar Skuas as well.

Petermann was discovered by a German whaling expedition in 1873-4 and it was named after the German geographer August Petermann. It is 1 mile long (1,6 km). We walked around to see the Adelie penguins with their chicks, a nice view of the Penola Strait and huge icebergs that floated in the mirror-like water. Penguins, Minke and Humpback whales swam in groups past our vessel. We landed at the same cove where Jean Baptiste Charcot wintered during his second expedition in 1909. Charcot named it Port Circumcision in honour of the date he discovered the little cove, 1st of January, the annual feast day of the circumcision of Jesus. We return to our vessel to keep warm and enjoy a tasty lunch.

After lunch a part of our group went out to do a zodiac cruise between icebergs in a place called Girard bay at the south entrance of Lemaire channel: it was amazing! We were enjoying this fabulous bay very much, sailing in a calm sea and between the surrounding icebergs, where we saw a group of crabeater seals on the ice and some leopard seals, a group of blue-eyed cormorants were flying over us, a stormy weather was coming.

We had to return to our vessel for a rest and to chat with our adventure partners and wait for the next adventure day.

After dinner we enjoyed a movie "The march of the penguins"

Tuesday, March 11th



Palmer Station

Lat. 64°46´S, Long. 64°03´W

Danco Island.

Lat. 64° 43' S, Long. 62° 36' W

Morning Temp: 3°C
Windforce: -
Afternoon Temp: 3° C
Windforce: -

In the morning after a nice breakfast we were to land in a Palmer Station. It´s located in the south part of Anvers Island, in Port Arthur. Palmer Station is named after Nathaniel Palmer. In 1820, at age 21, on a sealing expedition in his 47-ft (14 mts) sloop Hero, he was the first American to record sighting Antarctica. Palmer Station was built in 1965. The first building at the new station, the biologist laboratory, opened its doors to science in 1970. Palmer Station supports science year-round and accommodates approximately 20 people in the winter and up to 44 in the austral summer. Of the three U.S. Antarctic stations it is the only one that is accessed routinely during the winter.

Penguins group landed first at the Station, while Seals group were to Torgersen island where there is an Adelie penguins colony. We walked around the station with a staff guide, he showed us the scientific buildings, some living areas and the gift shop, the staff invited us to enjoy some coffee and brownies at the bar of the Station.

Shortly after we came back to the ship, we left Palmer Station sailing the Bismarck Strait and then the fabulous Neumayer channel, in between of Anvers and Wiencke islands. Neumayer channel is about 25 kilometres (15 ½ miles) long and in places only 2.5 kilometers (1 ½ miles) wide, with snowy summit of Mount Francais, the highest peak on Anvers island, towering 2.760 meters (9.055 ft) above it, it was a little cloudy we couldn't see the higher mountains.

In the afternoon we landed at Danco Island. This small island, about 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) long and 180 meters (590 ft) high, lies in the Errera channel south of Cuverville Island. First charted by de Gerlache's Belgica expedition in 1898 is named after Lieutenant Emile Danco, an officer on the expedition, who died of a heart attack on 5th of June, 1898 during the wintering-over. He was buried in a hole in the ice behind the ship, which was locked in the ice.

We landed in the snow covered island where we walked along the coast watching Gentoo penguins and alone chinstrap penguin between them. Some of us played a "snow balls war" it was so funny! Slowly, little by little we returned back with the zodiacs to the ship, while the snowfall continued.

In the night we enjoyed a movie about the Shackleton's Expedition.

Wednesday, March 12th



**Deception Island, Half Moon Island.
South Shetlands Islands.**

Lat. 62° 35' S, Long. 59° 54' W

Morning Temp: 1°C
Windforce: SW 27 knot
Afternoon Temp: 2° C
Windforce: SW 10 knot

It had been a longer navigation to get as far as the South Shetland Islands over-night. The ship had been sailing in a reasonably moving sea in the Bransfield strait. At 8.30 am we found ourselves just outside the spectacular entrance to the horseshoe shaped Deception Island.

Deception is the largest of three recent volcanic centres in the South Shetlands. The others are Penguin Island and Bridgeman Island. Deception's rim has an average elevation of 984 feet (300 meters), with highest points at Mt. Pond (1,798 feet; 548 meters) to the east and Mt. Kirkwood (1,522 feet; 465 meters) to the southwest. Above 328 feet (100 meters) Deception's cinder motif yields to glaciers and ash-covered ice, which reach the sea at many places along the outer coastline. Deception is still an active volcano. It erupted in 1800, 1812, 1842, 1871, 1912, 1956, 1967, 1969 and 1970.

Passing through Neptune's Bellows, as the spectacularly narrow and shallow entrance into the caldera is called, was a rare treat. Our captain manoeuvred the USHUAIA expertly inside and soon our landing site could be seen. This morning we wanted to explore Whaler's Bay. This was the small bay first encountered to starboard after passing into the ring shaped and 9,2 miles (14,8 kilometres) in diameter caldera. Whaler's Bay has a southwest-facing, broad and flat, cinder beach. The beach – or one should say, what we could see of it, as there was a thick snow cover - was strewn with volcanic ash and cinders of various sizes, which covered the old barrels, equipment, whalebones, and other debris from the whaling and research groups that once operated here. Several melt-water streams from the snow and the glacier above, form channels that cut through the ash.

Due to conditions - more than 30 knots of wind - zodiac activities were cancelled and we couldn't land on Deception Island. Sebastian announced a waiting time to see if the condition of wind would change. It didn't, so we left the island again to try and find better weather.

The Staff had organized a quiz about Antarctica, we played in 8 groups like kids, the winner group was "Proa a Malvinas" with 27 correct answer over 30. The Staff gave them 2 bottles of argentina's red wine!

Captain Sergio and Sebastian decided to try for another landing in the McFarlane channel, at Half Moon Island after lunch. We were to land last time.

Named for its crescent shape, It is 2 kilometres (just over 1 mile) long, and lies on the northern side of the eastern tip of Livingstone island, whose glaciers loom in the background when visibility is good.

The landing site was near of the eastern tip of the island on a beach sheltered by crags, a small wooden boat wreck lies near a colony of nesting chinstrap penguins.

We walked the ridge behind the beach it was plenty of Antarctic fur seals that arrive towards the end of summer. We saw many Weddell seals resting on the beach, and hundreds chinstrap penguins and some Gentoo penguins. A seasonal Argentina's Camara station (established in 1953) lies to the west. It was snowing almost all the time; we came back to the "Ushuaia".

Those of us still up and running returned the landing gear (life vests and rubber boots) to the guides and hung out in the bar with some coffee and a good book.

We prepared to enter the Drake Passage in our way back north in the early evening. After a tasty dinner we watched a movie "Trapped in the end of the world" about the Swedish Antarctic Expedition, and later went to sleep.





Thursday, March 13th.

Drake Passage.

Morning temp. 1° c
Windforce: SW 27 knot
Afternoon temp. 2°C

After breakfast we had gotten used to the moving seas again and some of us were getting mobile and roamed the public spaces, the bar and the TV room. In the morning some of us watched some seabirds on the outer decks and later Kata invited us to an interesting lecture about "Whales and dolphins of the southern oceans".

As the day went by we had a little snooze here and there, caught up on reading or enjoyed talking to our fellow passengers.

After a tasty lunch, Valeria gave us an other very interesting lecture about "Men and whales: a history of whaling"

It was great to watch the numerous birds gliding through the air. Cape petrels were flying in formations, Giant petrels silently flew past and later in the day Wandering albatross and Black Browed albatross were circling the ship.

After tea, Kuaker gave us a very interesting lecture about Charcot's Antarctic French expedition that was one of the top ranked Antarctic expeditions during the Heroic age.

As the ship smoothly rocked up north, we enjoyed the rest and watched a movie.

Friday, March 14th

Drake Passage

Today was our last day at sea sailing across the Drake Passage, heading towards the Cape Horn archipelago, and the Beagle Channel.

Once again the staff had organised a series of lectures and movies spread over the day.... One of the lectures was from Alejandro, talking about "Seals of the southern oceans".

In the afternoon we all met in the lecture room to watch a picture recap of our incredible journey and our guides presented the logbook. They had prepared a DVD with a map showing our route, a wildlife checklist, summaries of some of the lectures we attended, our Expedition Staff's bios, this logbook and a presentation with pictures and music of the whole trip.

Later we joined for a special farewell dinner and celebrated the end of this wonderful trip of a lifetime with a heartfelt toast.

Saturday, March 15th

Ushuaia

Lat. 54°48' S, Long. 68° 18' W

With the first daylight, we moored at the harbour in Ushuaia. After our last breakfast on board it was time to say goodbye to ship's crew, staff, and the USHUAIA, which had been our home and shelter for the last eleven days. With a tear in our eyes we walked down the gangway and too soon we were back in real life after our big adventure to Antarctica.

The Captain, Crew and Expedition Staff of the Ushuaia are very happy to have had you on board. We hope to see you again soon and wish you all a safe trip home!



Thank you for travelling with us!!



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