



# Classic Antarctica

## On board USHUAIA

### Expedition Log

13th - 23th November 2016

South Shetland Islands and Antarctic Peninsula

#### **MASTER of the VESSEL**

Sergio Osiroff Calle

#### **EXPEDITION LEADER**

Agustin Ullmann

#### **HOTEL MANAGER**

Hernán Escudero

#### **CHEF**

Luis Alberto Jaramillo

#### **GUIDES / LECTURERS**

Lida Elena Pimper (Assistant Exp. Leader, Biologist) Natalia  
Rosciano (Biologist)

Eduardo Larrañaga García (Biologist)

Alejandro Fazzio Welf (Naturalist)

#### **PHYSICIAN**

Dilia Martínez Mendez

# Our Itinerary

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*November 13: Ushuaia, Argentina – Beagle Channel*

*November 14: Drake Passage.*

*November 15: Drake Passage.*

*November 16: Gerlache Strait: Orne Harbour (Antarctic Peninsula) and Paradise Bay.*

*November 17: Gerlache Strait: Cierva Cove & Mikkelsen Harbour*

*November 18: Antarctic Sound: Gourdin island & Brown Bluff (Antarctic Peninsula). Edge of the Sea Ice.*

*November 19: Esperanza Station, Hope Bay. (Antarctic Peninsula)*

*November 20: South Shetland Islands: Telefon Bay & Pendulum Cove, Deception I. Half-moon I.*

*November 21: Drake Passage*

*November 22: Drake Passage, Beagle Channel*

*November 23: Ushuaia/ Tierra del Fuego/ Argentina*

***Distance Sailed: 2912 Nautical Miles***





# Sunday, November 13th 2016

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## Ushuaia, Argentina

Lat. 54° 48' S, Long. 68° 18' W

WIND: 13kn SW TEMP: 6°C

Departure was scheduled right after 6:00pm and at that time 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 to Antarctica.

Once onboard, we settled into our cabins before gathering in the bar for a Welcome Cocktail. This gave us all a chance to meet our fellow passengers of the USHUAIA and the expedition staff, as well as part of the crew. Before inviting us for a welcoming toast, our Expedition Leader Agustin Ullman also presented our Assistant Expedition Leader and biologist Lida Pimper, the biologists Natalia Rosciano and Eduardo Larrañaga García and the guide and naturalist Alejandro Fazzio-Welf. They would help us understand the wonders we were about to explore and give lectures during the trip. Agustin also introduced the doctor on board, Dilia Martinez Mendez and our hotel manager Hernán Escudero, who would be in charge of our well-being with a little help from his kitchen, dining room and cabin staff.

In the meantime, the USHUAIA was getting ready to leave the pier in Ushuaia. We were sailing through the scenic Beagle Channel, heading for the open South Atlantic Ocean. But after a short while, Agustin called us again for an important briefing on safety and abandon ship drill. Shortly after, the ship's alarm sounded a signal to practice this emergency evacuation drill. Moving to our cabins, we donned ourselves with the warmest clothes we could find as well as our life jackets and then headed to the muster station, which was the back of the bar. After a roll call, we knew that everybody was acknowledged for and were led to the egg-shaped lifeboats. We felt quite safe but at the same time we were hoping never have to use them at all.



A nice dinner awaited us shortly after the life boat drill giving a chance for everybody to get a bit more acquainted. The evening had not progressed for long as many went on deck to enjoy the great scenery of the Beagle Channel, where also the first birds were spotted. The medium sized black browed albatross, the sooty shearwater as well as the odd magellanic penguin were seen.

## Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup> 2016

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### Drake Passage

*WIND: 24kn NE TEMP: -1°C*

In the morning, we attended a lecture by Eduardo, where he taught us everything there is to know about "Birds of the Southern Ocean". He showed us how to identify the most common birds (seabirds) of the Drake Passage, giving us some really good tips about birdwatching. Also he taught us about general biological and behavioral aspects of these amazing birds. Right after that, we all jumped to the outer decks to see how much we learnt, identifying Black Browed Albatrosses, Southern Giant Petrels, Kelp Gulls, Pintado Petrels and Southern Fulmars.

After a nice lunch, we had our afternoon lecture. This time Agustín taught us some of the secrets of "Antarctica, the Land of Records". It was an interesting overview of some Antarctic facts, being this continent the driest, coldest, windiest, highest, most depressed, and more variable, among other things, of the world.

After having some snacks at the bar for tea time, many of us ventured out on the decks. The Crossing towards the south has been quite gentle so far, either way many of us were still not feeling 100% ourselves, and we needed either fresh air or just to lie in our bunks for a while. Some others, not seasick, took advantage of the nice sailing to take some beautiful pictures of birds of the Drake Passage.

Later on and after dinner we watched the movie "*Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure*".



## Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> 2016

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### Drake Passage, South Shetland Islands

*WIND: 30kn SW TEMP: -2°C*

Today we spent the day sailing towards the south. Drake Passage, we were told, was playing really nice on us. Despite this, many of us weren't feeling completely whole.

Once we arrived to the South Shetland Islands in the afternoon, our Expedition Leader, Agustin, summoned us into the bar for a few mandatory briefings. IAATO Guidelines for visitors to the Antarctic, how to get dress and the zodiac safety. All this made us feel very close to our first activity. Meanwhile, whales interrupted our briefings, like "welcoming" us all while we kept moving towards the south.

At night crossing the Bransfield Strait on the way south we took advantage of smooth seas to recover and gain our energy back after two days crossing the infamous Drake Passage



## Wednesday, November 16th 2016

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### Orne Harbour, Antarctic Peninsula

Lat. 51°07'S Long. 058°53'W

### Brown Station, Paradise Bay

Lat. 64°54.7'S, Long. 062°52.3' W

WIND: 19kn S TEMP: -3°C

Music started to sound earlier than expected this morning, and Agustín woke us up into an amazing and spectacular place, the Gerlach Strait. Just on our way to our morning activity at Orne Harbour, around us everything was dazzling and beautiful. We could see the mountains of the Antarctic Peninsula just ahead of us and the big islands Brabant and Anvers on the opposite side. What an unforgettable experience to start a day like this!

After taking what seemed like a million pictures, we got into the restaurant for breakfast, already thinking on what the day would show us. After enjoying some coffee, eggs, fruit, pancakes and what not, we were ready to start our first landing of this trip.

The boatswain and the sailors got the zodiacs ready, and what an experience to see how the ship gets ready to take us ashore! Everything works like a well-oiled machine. Seems that everyone knows where to be at the precise moment they are needed. We could hear the officers and the captain talking to the Expedition Staff from the bridge and getting all in place.

We started our activities with a landing on the Continent proper, at Orne Harbour. As we were walking over a glacier field it was paramount to stay on the trail to avoid crevasses. But once we got up to the viewing point we were rewarded. We could overlook not only the southern Gerlach Strait,



but also the smaller Errera Channel with its islands Cuverville and Danco. The mountains around us were completely covered in pristine snow, the glaciers reaching the sea were rumbling and there was even fresh sea-ice to be seen forming right in the bay. Some of us stayed a bit lower, settling down on ice-benches, which had been carved out by other expedition groups before us. From here we enjoyed the views over the bay of Orne Harbour with its blue glaciers and pointy mountain tops. It was marvelous.

For the afternoon we were to explore a promising place: Paradise Bay.

Paradise Bay is surely one of the most magnificent places on the Antarctic Peninsula. It is the site of a summer only Chilean station, González Videla, and named after President Gabriel González Videla, who in the 1940's became the first Chief of State of any nation to visit Antarctica. The second base in the bay is an Argentine station. Brown, was named for Admiral Guillermo Brown, the father of Argentine Navy, who fought the Spaniards during the independence period (1810-1824). Almirante Brown's two main buildings were destroyed by fire in 1984 by the disturbed base Doctor when the last supply ship was leaving for the season. He apparently wanted to avoid the wintering-over and figured that if the station burned down he could get home sooner.

Once on site the expedition Staff attempted to land on the station, but tide and ice conditions weren't trust worthy, so Agustin changed the program and we all took a zodiac cruise around the glaciers of the bay, finding Gentoo penguins, crabeater and weddell seals. We spent an hour in the cold waters, enjoying with our fellow boat mates an unforgettable first day in Antarctica.

## Thursday, November 17th 2016

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### **Cierva Cove**

**Lat. 64° 09'S, Long. 060° 53' W**

### **Mikkelsen Harbour**

**Lat. 63° 54'S, 060° 47' W**

*WIND: 2kn SE TEMP: 0°C*



The morning once again started earlier than expected, as Agustín woke us up to a beautiful and just astonishing day. Almost an hour before breakfast our expedition leader awoke us as we could not miss such and impressive scenery. No wind at all, perfect visibility and all of the Antarctic Peninsula ahead of us, showing why Cierva Cove is a must on every expedition.

After breakfast we jump again into the zodiacs and enjoyed a cruise around the beautiful iceberg and glaciers. Our guides were set with one goal: finding a Leopard Seal. We went looking up and down, checked alleys and hidden places around the Argentine Station. Suddenly our guides pointed out something in the waters and there it was. Swimming under the boat, magnificent, unique and majestic a leopard seal. When no one expected it, even more incredible, it hunted a penguin! It was surprising and for some of us even a little sad to see a small penguin trapped by those huge jaws.

Once we arrived on the ship, a delightful smell trapped us again, as the chef and his team had prepared a barbecue of lamb ribs, and other Antarctic delicatessen for lunch.

As we continued sailing north we found our way towards Hydrurga Rocks, our afternoon destination, blocked by the ice. Seems all the ice from the south of the Gerlach Strait had moved towards the north, blowing our way into Hydrurga.

Finding it impossible to get to our scheduled destination, our expedition team did not hesitate in looking for another location. With no delay we set course to Mikkelsen Harbor, an old whaling anchorage where we spent the afternoon amongst the friendly Gentoo Penguins that populate the island.

Mikkelsen Harbour is a small bay indenting the S side of Trinity Island in the Palmer Archipelago. It was discovered by the Swedish Antarctic Expedition, 1901-4. Mikkelsen Harbor contains remnants of an old whaling station which was named after the Norwegian whaler Captain Klarius Mikkelsen and his wife Caroline, who in 1935 became the first woman ever to set foot on Antarctica.

The hut was built by the Argentine Navy in 1954, and named after Captain Roberto Caillet Bois, a naval officer who had done a considerable amount of research on Argentine history and national rights in the Antarctic and the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.

The Argentines must have a sense of humor, because next to the entrance there is a doorbell and a sign requesting that visitors "please ring before entering".





# Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup> 2016

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## Gourdin Island, Antarctic Sound

Lat. 63° 11.7'S, Long. 057° 18.6' W

## Brown Bluff, Antarctic Sound, Antarctic Peninsula

Lat. 63° 31.3'S, Long. 056° 53' W

WIND: 13kn S TEMP: -2°C

Once again we were woken up early by our expedition leader. Seems like Antarctica is playing nice with us so far, as the day started once again in very calm seas, sailing north through the Bransfield Strait towards the Antarctic Sound. Big tabular icebergs on our way showed us the true intensity of this wild land. There is nothing like ice. Ice feels true, ice is pure.

The Bransfield Strait is a body of water, 100 km wide, it extends for 300 km in an ENE-WSW direction, and separates the South Shetlands from Trinity Peninsula and the Joinville Island group, off the N tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. In the E it opens between Clarence Island and Joinville Island, and to the W between Smith Island and Brabant Island. Discovered by Edward Bransfield on Jan. 20, 1820, while he was in command of the *Williams*, and thought by him to be a gulf. It was subsequently charted by sealers in the area. In the *Hero's* logbook, written up by her captain Nat Palmer, there is reference to Christmas Sound, and it is believed that what is meant by this is the Bransfield Strait.

Just as we were on our way to the Antarctic Sound, passing by Gourdin Island, conditions were nice and our expedition team decided to take a leap of faith and attempted a landing in the small but penguin crowded island. The expedition staff scouted ahead to prepare the landing site, but as we were to start landing, conditions proved not ideal, as already the first boat ashore had a tricky attempt with shallow waters combined with icy and thick snow at the landing site. So, using the prime directive of any Antarctic Expedition (flexibility!) a quick change in the plan: instead of landing, we zodiac cruised around the island. From the boats we had the opportunity to see our first Adelie penguins, along with Chinstrap and Gentoo that nest in the island.

Gourdin is the largest island in a group of islands and rocks 1.5 km N of Prime Head (the most northerly tip of the Antarctic Peninsula). Discovered by FrAE 1837-40, and named by Dumont d'Urville as Roche Gourdin, for Jean Gourdin, ending on board the *Astrolabe*. It appears as such on the 1838 and 1841 maps of the expedition, as well as in Vincendon-Dumoulin's 1847 atlas. It appears on a Spanish chart of 1861 as Roca Gourdin, and as Gourdin Rock on British charts of 1901 and 1948. On a 1912 map prepared by FrAE 1908-10, it appears as Rocher Gourdin. It was re-identified and

charted by Fids from Base D in 1945-47, and named by them as Gourdin Islet, and it appears as such on a British chart of 1949. UK-APC accepted that name on Nov. 21, 1949, and US-ACAN followed suit. It appears as such in the 1955 British gazetteer. On a 1953 Argentine chart, the entire group is called Islotes Gourdin, but on one of their 1958 charts as Rocas Gourdin. The name that was accepted by the 1970 Argentine gazetteer was Islotes Gourdin. However, the main island appears as Isla Gourdin on a 1954 Argentine chart, and on one of their 1957 charts as Islote Gourdin. On July 7, 1959, UK-APC renamed the main island as Gourdin Island, and it appears as such in the 1961 British gazetteer. US-ACAN accepted that name in 1963.

After having lunch we continued sailing into the Antarctic Sound, but excitement never ended. A group of Minke whales were performing fast movements around gigantic tabular icebergs. Sailing in between this ice monuments is an unforgettable experience. One feels truly on a different planet. Now, when one of this monuments just collapses next to you, seems like everything is happening at the same time. What an experience. A wall 40 meters long, by 30 meters high and 6 meters wide just broke next to us, and we could not believe what was happening.

Excitement slowly started to come down as we continued into the Antarctic Sound. Couple of hours passed until we reached the edge of the polar sea ice from the Weddell Sea. Unfortunately we could not cross into the Erebus and Terror Gulf on our way to Paulet, but to sail close to this ice is such a treat that nothing seemed to be lost.

While the Chief mate skillfully steered the ship in close proximity to the ice, we spotted seals, penguins and a Humpback whale just enjoying as much as we were.

But the day was not over yet. Again surprising us with more and more, Agustin announced one last landing to end the day in complete success. Brown Bluff is a large, pebbly beach with a low-angled scree slope, sloping gently upwards to the base of a tall cliff, rising approximately 300 ft. Beach pebbles are predominantly of weathered, well rounded, vesicular basalt but some granites and quartz pebbles are present locally. A volcanic breccia with large vesicular basalt fragments forms the outcrop at the base of the cliff. It is dark grey in color and shows no evidence for bedding or prominent columnar jointing. Vesicles appear to be unfilled. The upper parts of the cliff consist of cream colored, horizontally and partly low-angled, well-laminated pyroclastic fall material. Separating the basaltic breccia and the overlying pyroclastic rocks is a prominent unconformity that has much relief, particularly on the eastern end of the outcrop.



So the day ended again with a landing. We enjoyed two hours amongst our new best friends. Gentoo and Adelie penguins inhabit the place, but on the cliff we could spot Wilsons, Cape and Snow Petrels, Antarctic Terns and Kelp gulls.

A long day ended on a briefing about the next. Esperanza Station, our next stop. This just seems to get better and better!

## Saturday, November 19th 2016

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### Esperanza Station, Hope Bay, Antarctic Sound

Lat. 63° 23'S, Long. 057° 00' W

*WIND: 8kn SW TEMP: -1°C*

How many calm mornings can one have in the Antarctic? Seems this trip has had every single bit of great weather you can get. We awoke to a bright day at Hope Bay, just already in front of the Argentina Station.

Esperanza is an Argentine year-round scientific station, built on rock, 25 m above sea level, on Hope Bay (Esperanza is Spanish for “hope”), 30 m from the coast, on Trinity Peninsula, next to Britain’s Base D, and 1.5 km from Teniente Ruperto Elichiribehety (Uruguay’s summer station). **Dec. 31, 1951:** Work began on building the station, at that time a Navy base known as Destacamento Naval Esperanza. The base has some measure of fame because it is the birthplace of Emilio Marcos Palma, the first person to be born in Antarctica. The base has tourist facilities that are visited by about 1,100 tourists each year. The LRA 36 Radio Nacional Arcángel San Gabriel radio station started transmitting in 1979. A wind generator was installed in 2008, mounted by INVAP. The 43 buildings of the station have a combined space of 3,744 square metres (40,300 sq ft) Research projects include: glaciology, seismology, oceanography, coastal ecology, biology, geology, and limnology.

Once we landed on the station, each of our groups was received by inhabitants of the station. 54 people are living in the place since last January. 7 families, teachers and logistic and scientific personnel. We visited the open and closed museums, the small church and the school and finished



at the station mess room, where we were awaited with hot beverages and the chance to bring a souvenir from Antarctica.

While we were visiting their home, several kids and people from the station came on board our vessel, enjoying a break in their daily routine.

As we departed from the station we found ourselves sailing around tabular icebergs and minke whales. We spent the afternoon around this ice giants and beautiful mammals, on our way to the South Shetland Iceland.

## Sunday, November 20th 2016

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### Deception Island: Telefon Bay and Pendulum Cove

Lat. 64°08'S Long. 061°37'W

### Half Moon Island

Lat. 62°36'S Long. 059°55'W

WIND: 8kn NW TEMP: 2°C

Sunny Antarctica is unforgettable. But misty Antarctica feels real, gives you a very clear idea of what the first explorers saw. We couldn't believe our luck as we looked outside. We had already reached Deception Island in the South Shetland Island group, when we woke up this morning. This is the largest of three recent volcanic centers in the archipelago. Deception's rim has an average elevation of 984 feet (300 meters), with its highest points at Mt. Pond to the east and Mt. Kirkwood 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 coastline. We were aware of going into an active volcano this morning. Deception has erupted in 1800, 1812, 1842, 1871, 1912, 1956, 1967, 1969 and 1970 and he knew, when the next eruption would be due?

Agustín woke us up early today to give us the chance to see the ship entering the very narrow and somewhat shallow entrance of Deception Island. Neptune's Bellows are just 270 meters wide and a rock in the middle of the entrance adds some extra difficulties to the navigation. After crossing the Bellows, we enjoyed breakfast. Meanwhile the captain sailed the USHUAIA further into Port Foster, the subdued caldera of Deception Island. We got up to Telefon Bay, a small bay on the northwest side of Port Foster named for a salvage vessel that moored here in 1909, awaiting repairs. Here we



landed and took a hike up to a crater rim with a black glacier. With plenty of black volcanic ash in it, it looked like a layer cake.

Back on the beach we witnessed hundreds of birds, testing on the krill the volcanic caldera spitted ashore, but we were ready for our next landing at Pendulum Cove, located on the northeast side of Port Foster. For those who wanted to go for a swim, this was the place to do it. The flat, black sand beach was entirely composed of loose cinders, with no soil, and was deeply gouged by melt-water streams. When we arrived at Pendulum Cove, nice steam was coming out from the mild waters and the warmer sands. Our expedition staff had provided the towels and thus the bravest of the bunch went for a full Antarctic bath. It was coooold but we still had much fun!

During lunchtime the captain aimed for our next and last destination: Half Moon Island. This 1, 25-mile (2 kilometer) long, crescent shaped island lies in the entrance to Moon Bay just between Livingston and Greenwich Islands. It was known to sealers as early as 1821. On its southwest side a small Argentine station was located. The red buildings of “Camara” station were clearly visible against the blue-white glaciers in the backdrop. There was some truly glorious scenery. This was also the place where we got to say good bye to Antarctica and the penguins, as we visited the chinstrap penguin colony on top of the island.

Back on board we made our cabins ship-shape and prepared for choppier waters. Cameras were safely packed away, binoculars hidden in drawers as we were crossing the McFarland Strait towards the Drake Passage en route to Tierra del Fuego in Argentina.

## Monday, November 21st 2016

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### Drake Passage

*WIND: 27kn W TEMP: 0°C*

At night some had trouble sleeping but, as our captain would say: the Drake Passage was “reasonable”, not too rough and also not too uncomfortable. After breakfast our guides started offering lectures again to help us understand what we had seen.

In the meantime we were zipping along northbound, mildly rolling with a north-westerly wind ahead of us.



The Drake remained quite calm and we could even spot some more seabirds, maybe the last we would see for a while. A few albatrosses and Cape petrels seemed to wave us goodbye as they glided along beside the ship. Dinner was as good as usual, and most even managed to keep it all inside. As we exchanged stories about the days past, we realized that though we had all taken the same trip, our individual experiences varied quite a bit and it looked as if each of us had taken somewhat different journeys.

## Tuesday, November 22nd 2016

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### Drake Passage – Beagle Channel

Wake up call came as usual on our second day crossing the Drake. Reassured by the lack of major movement, we headed to the Dining Room to get some food. Early morning was spent chatting and downloading and selecting the many pictures we had taken throughout the trip. Our expedition staff once again offered educational activities and we enjoyed testing the recently acquired knowledge with an Antarctic Quiz.

The waters calmed down during the afternoon as we entered the sheltered area in the lee of Cape Horn and later the Beagle Channel.

In the afternoon, for the final recap the Expedition Staff had a surprise for us: A DVD containing the map of the journey, the wildlife checklist, notes on some of the lectures, our travel logs and a photo-show of pictures from the voyage.

At night we dressed up for the farewell dinner and we toasted goodbye, a very nice way to conclude an unforgettable journey.

After dinner we joined our fellow voyagers in the bar for a last beer on the ship. Of course we may have plenty of time for that in Ushuaia, but it felt more like saying goodbye to the bar and the ambience we created around it than saying goodbye to each other.



# Wednesday, November 23rd 2016

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## Ushuaia, Argentina

Lat. 54° 48' S, Long. 68° 18' O

Dawn lit the ending of our trip. We had returned the same but much different, changed somehow by having conquered a continent known by so few, loved by so many. The beauty we had experienced on the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and in the Antarctic would stay with us. It was a memorable journey.

After breakfast it was time to go. Fare thy well, Ushuaia, you explorer of the Ice!

**The Captain, crew and Expedition Staff are pleased of having had you on board the**

**USHUAIA. We hope to see you again and wish you a safe return home.**

*Thank you very much!*

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