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## **CHRISTMAS IN ANTARCTICA**

**10 Nights / 11 Days**

### **Day By Day Expedition Itinerary**

#### **Day 1 / Punta Arenas, Chile to Port Stanley, Falkland Islands**

Our journey commences this morning in the southern Chilean city of Punta Arenas. We meet at a central location before transferring to the airport for our scheduled flight to Stanley in the Falkland Islands. (This flight is included in the price of your voyage). After a short 90-minute journey we are met on arrival and transferred to the pier. Stanley is currently home to just over 2,000 residents and is reminiscent of a rural town in coastal Britain. It is charming with brightly colored houses, pretty flower-filled gardens, a quaint cathedral and several local pubs. The waterfront memorial, built to commemorate the lives of the servicemen lost during the Falklands War in the early 1980's, is a sobering reminder of recent history. There is time to explore the town, before we make our way to the ship for embarkation. After settling in to our cabins and exploring the ship, we meet our expedition team and fellow passengers. Excitement is in the air as we enjoy a welcome cocktail, dinner and cast off, bound for Antarctica – and the adventure of a lifetime.

#### **Days 2 - 3 / At Sea towards Antarctica**

We chart a southerly course for Antarctica. This stretch of the South Atlantic is rich in its bio-diversity and showcases an abundance of wildlife. We will be joined by hundreds of seabirds including the wandering albatross. Giant petrels and smaller Cape petrels are also constant companions as we make our way south. Photographing these magnificent birds from the deck of the ship takes patience and skill and our photography expert will be on hand to show you the best techniques. Join the ship's Captain on the bridge and learn about the operations of our modern research vessel. Throughout the day our onboard experts educate us with a series of presentations about the environment, the wildlife and history and the locations we hope to visit in the coming days. If we enjoy good sailing conditions crossing to Antarctica, we may include a visit to the very historic location of Elephant Island – a place central to the Shackleton story. It is from here that Shackleton and four of his companions set off on their epic ocean crossing to South Georgia 100 years ago. Shore landings at Point Wild are notoriously tricky due to surging swell onto the rocky beach. Nevertheless this is a thrilling place to visit.

#### **Day 4 - 5 / King George Island and Antarctic Peninsula**

This morning we are in position at King George Island – the largest in the South Shetlands group. There are two landing sites here and a visit depends on the prevailing weather conditions. Penguin Island and nearby Turret Point offer good opportunities for shore landings to view Adelie, chinstrap and gentoo penguins. Southern giant petrels, kelp gulls and Antarctic terns are also known to nest here. This afternoon we continue our journey south, navigating into the broad expanse of the Bransfield Strait – making our way ever closer to the Antarctic coastline. This is an important migration corridor for wildlife and we keep a lookout for whales in the waters surrounding the ship. Large icebergs will be present from this point onwards and make for striking

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photographs in the evening light. By morning, the towering mountain peaks of the Antarctic continent loom into view and we should make landfall around Wilhelmina Bay. This is truly an 'A-list' location and a place we often encounter sizeable pods of humpback whales. We navigate under the towering cliffs of Spigot Peak and into the Errera Channel hoping for a shore landing at Cuverville Island – home to a rookery of Gentoo penguins. It's a fantastic location for a zodiac cruise or a paddle in the sea kayaks.

### **Day 6 - 8 / Antarctic Peninsula Exploration**

We encourage you to spend time on the outer decks soaking up the scenery as we navigate south. We pass through the ice-strewn waters making our way towards our ultimate objective, the Lemaire Channel. Given favorable ice conditions, our first goal will be to sail through the Lemaire, a narrow passage of water flanked by the towering peaks and glaciers of the Antarctic Continent on one side and Booth Island on the other. We hope to visit a working scientific base to learn something of the important climate-related research happening here. A hike over the snowy saddle of nearby Winter Island allows us to stretch our legs and explore a historic British Antarctic Survey hut. If the conditions are right, we aim to offer our overnight camping program to all adventurers somewhere in this vicinity. We have all the gear onboard and an experienced team to make this a night to remember! Petermann Island is home to an Adelie penguin rookery. Adelies, the smallest of the Antarctic penguins, nest here and share the location with Gentoo penguins and Imperial cormorants. The view to the north of Mount Shackleton and Mount Scott is impressive. These towering granite sentinels mark the southern entrance to the nearby Lemaire Channel. Pleneau Island offers more opportunities for shore landings. Just off shore, massive icebergs run a round in the shallows. Constant wind and wave action sculpt these gargantuan chunks of ice into fantastic shapes, revealing more shades of blue than you can possibly imagine. For many, a zodiac cruise here may well be a highlight of the voyage.

### **Days 9 - 10 / Gerlache coastline and South Shetland Islands, Antarctica**

Paradise Harbour is one of our favorite locations and may be the first opportunity to step foot on the continent of Antarctica itself. Nearby Neko Harbour offers another continental landing. Both locations offer terrific hiking opportunities up to panoramic viewpoints. For the sea kayakers, the paddling opportunities here are endless. Expect to be in full sensory overload by this time of the voyage. By morning we arrive in the South Shetland Islands. The adventure is not over and if the weather conditions allow, we sail the ship into the flooded volcanic caldera at Deception Island. This is a very dramatic place and history is all around us as we explore the old whaling station, with the rusted old boilers and dilapidated wooden huts. At the far end of the beach is an old aircraft hangar. This is where Australian, Sir Hubert Wilkins made the very first flight in Antarctica in 1928. There is also an outstanding hike here, high up onto the rim of the crater. On a sunny day, cruising along the coast of Livingston Island is a memorable experience. There are several other landing sites in the vicinity including Half Moon Island, or the broad pebbly beach at Yankee Harbour, where we sometimes encounter Weddell seals sunning themselves. This is another great spot for a hike or a zodiac cruise. It's a fitting place to reflect on a wonderful expedition. Charting a course for King George Island in early evening light, we enjoy a special dinner attended by the Captain of the ship.

### **Day 11 / King George Island – return to Punta Arenas, Chile**

This morning we are anchored off King George Island. We say goodbye to our crew and transfer ashore by zodiac and time permitting, we will explore the surrounding area. There are several important science bases here including Chile's Frei Station and Bellingshausen Station. We are transferred to the airstrip for the two and a half hour flight to Punta Arenas in southern Chile (this flight is included in the price of your voyage). We recommend you spend a night in Punta Arenas in the event of any delays returning from Antarctica today. On arrival, a transfer is provided to several hotel locations downtown. Punta Arenas is an interesting city – and also the gateway to the magnificent region of Patagonia.