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TRIP DETAILS
- Antarctica

Departures Daily
Trip Ref 4742

ITINERARY IN BRIEF

PRICES FROM $8,500

Classic South Georgia

Day 1: Fly from Santiago, Chile to the Falklands
Today we board LAN Chile in the morning in Santiago, Chile for the flight to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) with a stop in Punta Arenas. After arrival at Mount Pleasant airport we will be transferred to Stanley where leisure time in town or excursions will be offered.

In the evening we will board our ship the USHUAIA and make ourselves at home in the assigned cabins. Introduction to the crew and expedition staff will follow. The ship will sail towards South Georgia, widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and inspiring places on earth with more wildlife than virtually anywhere else on the planet, around 18.00 h.

Days 2-4: At Sea
The open bridge policy on the USHUAIA allows you to join our officers on the bridge and learn about navigation, watch for whales, and enjoy the view. These waters are also home to countless seabirds, which often ride the currents created in the wake of the ship. Join the lecturers and naturalists on deck these days as we search for seabirds and other local wildlife. Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Wandering Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Cape Petrel, Giant Petrel, Blue Petrel, Antarctic Prion and many other species can be seen from the decks and the bridge.

On board, our extensive lecture program will begin these days. Our expert naturalists share their knowledge of the wildlife and unique ecosystems we will encounter throughout our voyage. Our lecture team will accompany us through every step of the journey, offering insight and ready knowledge on this amazing region.

Days 5-8: South Georgia
South Georgia will come in sight! Though extremely isolated, it has an amazing scenery ranging from high mountains and mighty glaciers to deep fjords and low-lying grassland.

Our exact itinerary will be determined by local conditions on sea and land. The following destinations are among those we hope to explore:

Elsehul
If sea- and wind-conditions have been favorable to us during the crossing, we might be able to start our program in the late afternoon of October 22 in the extreme North-west of the island, at Elsehul. This beautiful little harbor is the only visitor site on the island where colonies of Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatrosses can be viewed from zodiacs within the protection of sheltered inshore waters. If conditions allow, we might even be able to walk up to a nesting site of a couple of Light-mantled Sooty Albatross.

Right Whale Bay
Another possible landing for this day could be an excursion to the sheltered Right Whale Bay. Here we would land on a beach formed by black volcanic ashes, home to fur seals, elephant seals and King Penguins amongst other bird species, such as Prions and Giant Petrels.

Bay of Isles
The magnificent Bay of Isles is studded with numerous islets. Some of them are open for visitation.

Prion Island
On the tussock-grass covered islet, we would love to show you a breeding colony of Wandering Albatross. We ascend to the summit on a wooden board walk, which takes us close to their nests, offering comfortable viewing platforms.

Salisbury Plain
Other landing sites may take us to see the handsome King Penguins that breed on South Georgia in abundance. Salisbury Plain sometimes called the "Serengeti of the South" is a wildlife site without parallel. Several large glaciers provide a dramatic backdrop for the tens of thousands of King Penguins that nest in the tussock grass of this remarkable ecosystem. The wide beach makes for excellent walking as we visit the colony, where we are literally surrounded and delightfully outnumbered by throngs of curious, gentle penguins. Elephant and fur seals also abound, as well as Southern Giant Petrels and the occasional wandering Gentoo Penguin. Prepare for an awe-inspiring experience.

Fortuna Bay & Stromness Bay

In Fortuna Bay we will try to follow in the footsteps of the great explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton as we cross over to Stromness Bay. Today the whaling station which operated here from 1907 is abandoned and King Penguins as well as seals roam free through the streets. Buildings are occupied by elephant seals and guarded by fierce fur seals. On our way over the plain, we come across a colony of Gentoo Penguins in the vicinity of a melt water lake. They like to nest on the grass here.

Grytviken
Once a thriving whaling station, the ruins of Grytviken stand as a reminder of an era of exploitation that thankfully grows more distant by the day. In Grytviken, another former whaling town, we would also like to invite you for a visit to the most interesting Museum about Natural History and Whaling in the area, as well as to the last resting site of Sir Ernest Shackleton at the nearby graveyard in King Edward cove. Join the USHUAIA is team for a graveside toast honoring this remarkable explorer and venerated mariner.

Gold Harbour
Gold Harbour offers some of the most spectacular scenery of the voyage: an amphitheatre of hanging glaciers and vertical cliffs rise straight out of the sea and the towering snow-covered peaks of Mt. Patterson create an unforgettable backdrop to an exceptional abundance of seabirds and seals.

We hope to make a landing on the beach. The surrounding cliffs of Gold Harbour provide habitat for nesting Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, which can often be seen soaring above the beach.

A large colony of King Penguins offers a fantastic opportunity to photograph these dramatic birds, and the sandy beach is a favorite haul-out spot for massive southern elephant seals.

Cooper Bay
Another highlight for today could be a visit in Cooper Bay at the southeast extremity of the South Georgia. There is a wealth of wildlife at this site, in a spectacular setting. Chinstrap, Gentoo and Macaroni Penguins dot the tussock slopes and there are plenty of fur seals on the beaches. Fascinating volcanic rocks towering over small fiords, invite for a thrilling zodiac cruise to watch wildlife from the waterfront.

Drygalski Fjord & Larsen Harbour
We hope to reach the Drygalski Fjord at the southeast extremity of the island. Although Drygalski Fjord is glaciers have retreated significantly in recent decades, they remain one of the most striking features of this coastline, particularly the Risting and Jenkins Glaciers. With a little luck, we might see the glaciers calve and witness the birth of a new iceberg.

A small colony of Weddell seals, South Georgia Pipit, Smaller Burrowing Petrels and Prions may be seen on Larsen Harbour.

Days 9-10: At Sea
We will start crossing the waters to the South Shetland Islands offering excellent opportunities to be out on deck or to catch up on your reading and reflect on the amazing experience in South Georgia of the past few days. Lectures and activities will be offered throughout these two days.

In the afternoon we will leave Stanley and sail East en route to South Georgia. The island group of South Georgia is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and inspiring places on earth with more wildlife than virtually anywhere else on the planet. Though extremely isolated, South Georgia has amazing scenery ranging from high mountains and mighty glaciers to deep fjords and low-lying grassland.

Day 11: Elephant Island, South Shetland Islands
Sir Ernest Shackleton admirers will need no introduction to this historic isle. In 1916 Shackleton was forced to leave 22 of his men stranded on these shores, while he and five others embarked on an unbelievable last-ditch rescue attempt. What followed is one of the greatest rescue stories of all time. We will attempt a zodiac cruise off this historic site and every passenger will return with a greater knowledge of this gripping tale of adventure in a truly remarkable part of the world.

Days 12-14: Antarctic Peninsula & South Shetland Islands
The South Shetland Islands are a haven for wildlife. Vast penguin rookeries, beaches ruled by Antarctic fur seals and southern elephant seals make every day spent in this amazing island group unforgettable.

The Antarctic Peninsula is remarkable history will provide you with a type of excitement often only associated with the early explorers. You will have time to explore its amazing scenery, a pristine wilderness of snow, ice, mountains and waterways, and an incredible wide variety of wildlife. Apart from penguins and seabirds you are very likely to see Weddell, crabeater and leopard seals as well as Minke, killer (orca) and humpback whales at close range.

We hope to navigate some of the most beautiful waterways (depending on the ice conditions), such as the Antarctic Sound and the Northern Gerlache Strait. We plan to make at least two landings per day. However, our exact itinerary will be determined by local conditions on sea and land. The following destinations are among those we hope to explore:

Deception Island, South Shetland Islands
Long ago, volcanic pressure on Deception Island resulted in a tremendous eruption that caused the island is peak to explode. The resulting caldera flooded with seawater, creating the unique landmass we may visit today. Our Captain will expertly pilot the ship through a narrow gateway in the icy cliffs of the island, taking the USHUAIA into the caldera itself. Stark volcanic landscapes wait for us on the inside. Brave souls may don their bathing suits for the unusual opportunity of a swim in the Antarctic, since the waters around Deception Island are usually geo-thermally heated!

Half Moon Island, South Shetland Islands
The crescent-shaped island lies in the entrance to Moon Bay between Greenwich and Livingston Islands. There are some excellent hiking opportunities and some truly glorious scenery. A short climb uphill over the cobbled beach is required to reach the first of the breeding

Chinstrap Penguins.

Antarctic Sound
The passage to the east side of the Antarctic Peninsula traverses Antarctic Sound, which is 30 miles (48 km) long and 7-12 miles (11-19 km) wide and runs northwest-to-southeast. This is where huge tabular icebergs roam. All-white, Black-pupiled, and Black-billed Snow Petrels are likely to be coursing over the scenery, often joined by Pintado Petrels and early in the spring, by Antarctic Petrels streaming south to nesting territories on slopes fringing the Weddell Sea.

Brown Bluff
The spectacular rust-colored promontory on the Tabarin Peninsula, Brown Bluff, is located south of Hope Bay. On its long beach more than 20,000 Adelie penguins and a smaller group of Gentoo Penguins have found their home. There is also a potpourri of Kelp Gulls, Snow Petrels, and Pintado Petrels swirling above. This would also be a continental landing.

Argentinean Antarctic Station Esperanza
Another possibility to actually step onto the continent would be a visit to the Argentinean Antarctic Station "Esperanza". The year round station in the Antarctic Sound counts with a small school, as some of the personnel did come with their children to Antarctica. In the immediate vicinity there is a colony of Adelie Penguins, which we might also visit.

Hydrurga Rocks
This small island group of islets lies east of Two Hummock Island in the Palmer Archipelago. Chinstrap Penguins, Blue-eyed Shags, and Kelp Gulls are confirmed breeders. Once we have climbed uphill - the island rises to approximately 25 meters above sea level - the views of the northern Gerlache Strait with its steep ice-covered mountains in the backdrop are stunning.

Portal Point
Portal Point served as the gateway for a route to the Peninsula plateau. The snow slope from the landing rocks rises steeply toward the plateau. There are large glacial tongues extending down to sea level. These terminate against the sea in high ice cliffs. Nearby Charlotte Bay is often filled with icebergs.

Days 15-16: At sea crossing the Drake Passage
We leave Antarctica the evening before and head north across the Drake Passage. Named after the renowned explorer, Sir Frances Drake, who sailed these waters in 1578, the Drake Passage marks the Antarctic Convergence, a biological barrier where cold polar water sinks beneath the warmer northern waters. This creates a great upwelling of nutrients, which sustains the biodiversity of this region.

The Drake Passage also marks the northern limit of many Antarctic seabirds. As we sail across the passage, Antarpply Expeditions; lecturers will be out with you on deck to help in the identification of whales and an amazing variety of seabirds, including many albatrosses, which follow in our wake. Join our lecturers for some final lectures and take the chance to relax and reflect on the fascinating adventures of the past days on the way back to Ushuaia.

Day 17: Arrival at Ushuaia
We arrive at Ushuaia in the early morning and disembark the USHUAIA after breakfast.

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Included in the cruise price:
Voyage aboard the USHUAIA as indicated in the itinerary.
All meals throughout the voyage aboard the USHUAIA.
All shore excursions and activities throughout the voyage by zodiac.
Program of lectures by noted naturalists and leadership by experienced expedition staff.
All miscellaneous service taxes and port charges throughout the program.
Comprehensive pre-departure material.
Detailed post-expedition log.

** LAN Chile flight from Santiago, Chile to Stanley, Falkland Islands (Malvinas) on October 19, 2013; transfers in Stanley from the airport to the USHUAIA and excursions in and around Stanley; as well as landing fees in South Georgia

Not included in the cruise price:
Any airfare, whether on scheduled or charter flights; pre- and post land arrangements; transfers to / from the vessel; passport and visa expenses; Government arrival and departure taxes; meals ashore; baggage, cancellation and personal insurance (strongly recommended); excess baggage charges and all items of a personal nature such as bar and beverage charges and telecommunication charges; and the customary gratuity at the end of the voyages (guidelines will be provided).

Notes:
Special Rates For Families A Child (Under 16 Years) Accompanied By Two Adults Will Be Free Of Charge In A Triple Superior Cabin Or Triple Suite.

N.B. All Rates Are Subject To Change, Especially Possible Fuel Surcharges.

Rates:
All rates are quoted per person in US Dollars, based on twin occupancy. A limited amount of twin cabins (except suites) are available for single occupancy at 1.5 times the share rate. Suites may be reserved at 2 times the share rate. A third berth in two of the suites maybe occupied at 50% of the published twin share rate. Shared accommodation can be arranged on request.

All rates are subject to change and reserves the right to modify the published rates without prior notice.

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