

SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES FALKLANDS, SOUTH GEORGIA & ANTARCTIC PENINSULA

ABOARD THE MOTHER-SHIP

POLAR PIONEER

19 day voyage with 9-11 days kayaking

8-26 November 2010

6-24 January 2011

This trip combines the teeming wildlife of the sub-Antarctic islands with the awe-inspiring landscapes of the Antarctic Peninsula. Guaranteed to refresh your soul. Our quiet presence makes kayaks the ideal craft for watching wildlife unobtrusively in a non-threatening manner, as we paddle beside colonies of penguins and seabirds or past seals sleeping on icefloes. Whales sometimes surface and blow nearby, as we paddle between ice floes, brash ice and icebergs of all shapes and sizes.

The Polar Pioneer carries a maximum of 54 passengers, of whom a small group of 8-12 may opt to paddle. Polar Pioneer is not a luxury ship although she is very comfortable with well-appointed cabins and common areas. She is maneuverable and strong, ideally suited for the sea passages between the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. We use the ship as a floating base camp and paddle at every opportunity. Our emphasis is on unique wildlife encounters, exploring pristine landscapes, visiting sites of historical interest and the occasional visit to scientific stations. Cruising in our own private group of paddlers, we generally visit the same sites as the other passengers but are more independent and may access areas not appropriate for zodiacs. If the ship's schedule allows, it may be possible to do an extended day trip, taking our lunch with us. Sea kayaking in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctica requires an adventurous attitude as the wind and elements play an important role.

Your sea kayak will give you intimate and unique perspectives of the stunning scenery and wildlife. In the last few years we have pioneered this style of travel in Antarctica and we are still very much in an exciting exploratory phase. There are magnificent opportunities for new discoveries, where paddling through a channel too narrow for the ship can take you to a whole new world - intensely quiet, dominated by ice. Zodiacs are available for extended shore excursions for those who do not wish to paddle on a given day.

Kayakers should have paddled before and be comfortable with the idea of paddling in cold water. You do not have to be an expert but should have an adventurous spirit and recognize that the weather will influence greatly what we can and can't do. This should not be your first paddling experience. Try to rent a kayak locally before leaving home if you would like some additional experience, or seek out a local operator for some paddling tuition. We could be paddling in winds and have little opportunity to instruct before our first paddle. We often begin our first paddling session from the shore and after that will be launching directly from the ship so you should be comfortable paddling on seas that could have a swell of 1-1.5 metres. Generally the water surface ranges from calm to a small wind chop on a 1 metre swell.

We'd be happy to talk to you about your level of experience, and may be able to advise you how to obtain the necessary experience before your trip.

Our paddling excursions are unlikely to involve camping out.



These notes will give you a brief idea of what you may experience on your voyage. We stress that this is an expedition style cruise and we do not have a set itinerary. Our actual program will vary to take best advantage of local conditions, spontaneous opportunities and wildlife. No two voyages are the same; there is always an element of the unexpected. This is true of course for the weather as well, which can vary from thick snow or sleety rain to brilliant sunshine. But, whatever the weather, your voyage will be full of wonderful surprises.

Sea kayaking is an option on several Polar Pioneer voyages each season. The surcharge of US\$1145 over and above the voyage cost includes use of your dry suit and kayaking equipment, and the services of an experienced polar sea kayak guide. We work in conjunction with Aurora Expeditions on these voyages. Numbers are limited.

OUTLINE ITINERARY

Day 1 - Embark Ushuaia

Expeditioners will gather in Ushuaia, and have time to explore the bustling community that lays claim to being the world's most southerly town. It sits beneath the spectacular mountains of Tierra del Fuego on the edge of the Beagle Channel. There are plenty of things to keep you occupied while waiting to board Polar Pioneer at 1600 (4pm). You could take a trip to the Lapataia National Park by train or bus, or visit the small museum, which has informative displays about the original inhabitants and the current population of Tierra del Fuego.

Ushuaia is a duty free port with a reputation for its Argentine chocolates, cheap alcohol and leather goods, and is a great place to buy souvenirs and presents. There are a host of excellent restaurants available whether for a quick coffee, or for an excellent meal of king crab or an Argentine barbecue.

Our competent Russian crew will welcome us aboard Polar Pioneer in the afternoon. Sailing down the Beagle Channel, we will settle into shipboard life and enjoy our first meal on board.

Days 2 – At sea, towards the Falkland Islands

Cruising towards the Falklands we will commence our lecture program. During the voyage's various sea passages, we will learn about the wildlife, geology, history and geography of the Falklands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. We will be given guidelines for approaching the wildlife and talk about the implications of the Antarctic Treaty, as well as being briefed about using our Zodiacs (inflatable rubber boats) for excursions from the ship.

Our various destinations are a photographer's paradise, for the professional and amateur alike. There will be discussions about how to protect your equipment from salt water and tips for taking good pictures. The sea kayakers will attend a briefing to distribute dry suits, pogies (paddling mitts for your hands), lifejackets, neoprene boots and dry bags

The mood on board is definitely casual. A favourite pastime is to stand at the stern deck watching the many seabirds, including majestic albatrosses and giant petrels, following in our wake, skillfully using the air currents created by the ship to gain momentum. Feeling transformed, we approach the Falklands, receptive and open.

Day 3 Landing on the Falkland Islands

Early this morning we should pass Beauchene Island which has a huge colony of nesting black-browed albatross. No landing is permitted here, but just passing close to this wild and remote island lashed by giant waves, the air filled with swooping diving birds, provides a sense of the power of nature.



Weather permitting, we would like to visit one of the outer Falkland islands, New Island, half of which is owned by naturalist Ian Strange who is dedicated to the study and preservation of the wildlife. As we approach the islands, the kayaks will be brought out of the hold and rudders adjusted for our paddling pairs. We would like to paddle to shore, weather permitting. A short walk across the grassy slope behind Ian's farmhouse brings us to a large rock-hopper penguin colony, balanced on the edge of spectacular cliffs that drop steeply to the crashing surf.

Between the penguins' nests are gentle black-browed albatross sitting serenely upon beautifully moulded mud nests. The air is filled with soaring albatross, turkey vultures, skuas and many species of sea birds. We will also visit a small colony of Magellanic penguins whose burrows can be seen amongst the tussock grass. If we have time, we may also visit West Point Island where we will enjoy the hospitality of the family that owns and farms this island. We may walk or be ferried by jeep to another rock-hopper penguin rookery and black-browed albatross colony.

Alternatively we could set a course for Sea Lion Island, a low-lying island that appears dull and uninteresting as we approach. But don't be fooled! The mud flats, beaches and tussock grass are teeming with creatures including, of course, the sea lions that breed here. If we land on Sea Lion Island we will spend most of the day here, and take a walk to a cliff top where rock-hopper penguins nest beside blue-eyed shags. Sea Lion Island is one of nature's gems.

Day 4 – Port Stanley, Falkland Islands

If time allows, we will visit Port Stanley, the capital of the Falklands. We can paddle to shore or out through the heads, visit the museum, go shopping, post letters or simply enjoy a beer at the Globe Hotel. We will leave the Falklands about lunchtime to head for South Georgia.

Days 5,6 – At sea bound for South Georgia.

Our lecture program will resume and we can share our experiences of the Falkland Islands. Between the Falklands and South Georgia you will be entranced by the ceaseless flight of the many seabirds that follow our wake. You may decide to join the whale watchers on the bridge, or just relax and read a favourite book. If time and weather conditions permit we could pass close to Shag Rocks, a fascinating group of jagged rocky islets protruding from the sea. Blue-eyed cormorants fill the air and the precarious nesting sites are white with guano. We should approach South Georgia some time during the evening on the sixth day. South Georgia is a tiny speck in the South Atlantic Ocean, located in one of the most desolate parts of our planet. A 3000 metre mountain range traces the spine of this long, narrow island. Between the mountains, shattered glaciers carve their way through tussock grass to the deeply indented coastline.

Days 7-10 – South Georgia

To us, South Georgia is one of the most beautiful places in the world. Though geographically speaking the island lies in the sub-Antarctic area, as do the islands of Macquarie and Heard, it has a climate more in keeping with the true Antarctic regions. This is because South Georgia lies wholly within the Antarctic Convergence.

South Georgia is a British possession, having been claimed and named for King George III on 16 January 1775 by Captain James Cook, who records in his journal:

"The wild rocks raised their lofty summits till they were lost in the clouds and the valleys lay buried in ever-lasting snow. Not a tree or a shrub was to be seen, no, not even big enough to make a toothpick. I landed in three different places, displayed our colours and took possession of the country in His Majesty's name under a discharge of small arms." (Quote from "Antarctic Housewife" by Nan Brown.)

We have four days exploring the network of harbours along the northern side of this wonderful island. We combine the fascination of local history with wildlife havens by visiting the old whaling station at Grytviken. Nearby are enormous penguin rookeries in St Andrew Bay, Royal Bay, Gold Harbour and Salisbury Plain, to name just a few. This is expedition kayaking and our paddle options will be adjusted daily to suit the weather and sea conditions. We will have time to both paddle and wander on shore to best experience this wonderful place.

Some of the destinations we plan to visit in South Georgia are listed below:

Grytviken

Originally a Norwegian sealing and whaling station, it was finally abandoned in 1965. Here we must be careful to avoid stepping on sleeping elephant seals as we skirt the ruins of factory buildings peering into the past, trying to imagine what it was like when whale processing was in full swing. Abandoned ships lie sunken alongside old wharves, while pitted concrete walls remind us of the more recent Falkland's War, which started here.

Sir Ernest Shackleton died from a heart attack during his final expedition on board the Quest on 6 May 1922. His body was laid to rest at Grytviken and we hope to make a pilgrimage to visit the cross his men erected in his memory looking out across beautiful Cumberland Bay.

St Andrews Bay

The sandy black beach is a resting place for hundreds of elephant seals that haul out on the shore to moult. Behind the beach, the sight and sound of tens upon tens of thousands of king penguins at different stages of the breeding cycle will be overwhelming. The glacial river that runs into the sea here will be alive with penguin chicks and elephant seal pups testing their aquatic skills. If we lift our gaze from the wildlife for a moment, we will glimpse the snow-capped peaks of some of the world's most spectacular mountains.

Godthul

Imagine indented bays lined with bleached whalebones, teeming with fur seals and with penguins just "hanging about". Here you have the opportunity to clamber through the tussock to a spectacular plateau offering magnificent views across the island and the waters beyond. A careful descent leads us to a magnificent Macaroni penguin rookery.

Prion Island

We will aim to visit Prion Island where we can sit quietly to watch serene wandering albatrosses sitting proudly on eggs or cute downy chicks. We may be blessed by the performance of an intimate courtship dance, or may witness a youngster being lovingly fed. We watch adolescents exercising their wide wing spans, trying to launch themselves into the air, as they realise that Mum and Dad will no longer feed them and they must leave the island in search of food.

Other stunning wildlife destinations we may visit include:

Elsehul Bay	Royal Harbour
Cooper Bay	Drygalski Fjord
Larsen Harbour	Stromness
Salisbury Plains	Gold Harbour
Right Whale Bay	Possession Bay

Day 11 - At Sea

Leaving South Georgia we head across the Scotia Sea in a southwesterly direction towards the South Orkneys, a stunning group of remote and isolated islands.

Day 12 - South Orkney Islands

The ocean takes on a whole new perspective once we are surrounded by the surreal presence of floating ice sculptures. The memory of the sight of your first iceberg will remain with you forever. Today we hope to make landings and kayak on and around the South Orkney Islands. We may visit beautiful Shingle Cove on Coronation Island where we have our first view of Adelie penguins. Or we may visit the Argentinian station of Orcardas, where the remains of the 1904 Bruce Expedition hut can still be seen.

Day 13 - At Sea / Elephant Island

Today we set course for the Antarctic Peninsula. Our recaps and lectures will resume and there will be time to gather strength for the busy days ahead. We will attempt firstly to land on historic Elephant Island at the outer limit of the South Shetlands.

A host of choices is now open to us and, depending on the ice and weather conditions, the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula is ours to explore. Our experienced leaders, who have made countless journeys to this area, will use this expertise to design our voyage from day to day. This allows us to make best use of the prevailing weather and ice conditions and wildlife opportunities. As we are so far south, we will experience approximately 18-20 hours' daylight. There is plenty of time for sleep when you get home!

Elephant Island

If the weather is kind we will aim for Elephant Island, a half-submerged mountain cloaked with an ice sheet at the outer limits of the South Shetlands. After their ship the Endurance was crushed in pack ice in the Weddell Sea, Ernest Shackleton and his men climbed into three open boats and finally, on 14 April 1916, made landfall on this tiny toe of rock and ice in the vastness of the Southern Ocean. The men had not been on land for sixteen months! We may sail past Cape Valentine to see the beach where the men first put ashore. Weather permitting, we hope to follow the coastline six miles west to Point Wild. We will attempt to make a landing where the men eventually set up camp under two of their upturned open boats and some old tents, while Sir Ernest, Worsley and four other crew members sailed to South Georgia for help. Conditions at this point are often unsuitable for landing due to the large swells surging around hidden rocks, but it is always worth a try! Just to set eyes on this hallowed site sends shivers down the spine.

Days 14-16 - Antarctic Peninsula

Once we arrive in the calmer waters of Bransfield and Gerlache Straits, we hope to go kayaking twice a day, spending as much time on the water as possible. We can get ashore by kayak or use Zodiacs (inflatable rubber boats). Sometimes we will cruise along spectacular ice cliffs or encounter whales. In these situations we will appreciate the distinct advantage of being on a small vessel, which gives everyone the opportunity to experience these very special close encounters with wildlife. Our Australian or New Zealander chefs will prepare delicious meals that, accompanied by good conversation, will become a focal point of our shipboard life.

For our paddling excursions we will choose between sheltered bays such as Paradise Bay, Port Lockroy and the Lemaire Channel. We would normally leave on a kayaking excursion immediately after breakfast or sometimes after lunch, returning to the ship for dinner.

Most paddles range from two and a half to four hours. We endeavour to have at least one extended paddle where we will be away from the ship for most of the day and generally meet the ship at a different location.

There are many exciting places we can choose to visit. A sample of these follows:

Half Moon Island

A wildlife rich island tucked into a neat bay at the eastern end of Livingston Island. On a clear day the glaciers and mountains of Livingston Island dominate the scene. There is a large chinstrap penguin rookery tucked in between basaltic turrets coloured by yellow and orange lichens. Gulls nest on these turrets and there are often fur seals and elephant seals hauled out on the pebble beaches. At one extremity of the island there is a large colony of nesting blue-eyed shags. At the other end lies a small Argentine station that is sometimes occupied by scientists conducting research on the penguin colony and surrounding waterways.

Deception Island

Visiting Deception Island is like making a journey to the moon. We sail through the narrow opening of Neptune's Bellows to enter the flooded volcanic crater. Inside is an unworldly scene, virtually devoid of life. Glaciers flow down from the edge of the crater, littered by black volcanic ash.

We can explore the lifeless remains of a derelict whaling station and a vacant British base, or climb to the rim of the crater. Steam rises from the shore indicating that the water is actually warm enough for a swim, for those who dare. Outside the crater, if conditions allow, we might land at Bailey Head to explore the enormous chinstrap penguin rookery that featured in David Attenborough's Life in the Freezer series.

Paradise Harbour

A protected bay surrounded by magnificent peaks and spectacular glaciers. Rocky cliffs provide perfect nesting sites for blue-eyed shags, terns and gulls. The serenity of Paradise Harbour envelops us once the sound of the dropping anchor fades from our ears. This is a haven for whales and sometimes we meet humpbacks, orcas and minke, as well as crabeater seals, as we explore the bay in Zodiacs. Imagine being so close to a whale that when he surfaces to blow, the fishy spray of his exhalation momentarily blurs your vision. I cannot find words to describe this experience; I just feel uplifted and full of joy.

Lemaire Channel

If the ice conditions allow, standing on the bow of Polar Pioneer and quietly moving through the narrow Lemaire Channel will be one of the highlights of our voyage. Cliffs tower 700 metres directly above the ship. The water can be so still that perfect reflections are mirrored on the surface. Often gigantic icebergs clog the channel, creating navigational challenges for our captain and crew, and they may even obstruct our passage.

Other places we may visit around the Antarctic Peninsula are:

Pleneau Island

Neko Harbour, Andvoord Bay

Port Lockroy, an historic British base that is now a museum and post office

... or a variety of other surprises.

Days 17, 18 - Drake Passage

Time to head back to Tierra del Fuego, with lectures and videos to complete our Antarctic education. This is a time for reflection and discussion about what we have seen and felt, and the impact this voyage has had on our attitude to life. As we approach the tip of South America, our Captain may sail close to legendary Cape Horn, weather conditions permitting.

Day 19 – Beagle Channel.

During the early morning we cruise up the Beagle Channel, before quietly slipping into dock in Ushuaia about 0700. As soon as customs have cleared the ship we will be free to disembark. It's a busy time, with people saying farewell to our crew and to fellow passengers who have shared the intensity of exploring this magnificent white wilderness. We head off in our different directions, hopefully with a newfound sense of the immense power of nature.

THIS TOUR INCLUDES

- Accommodation on board the Polar Pioneer and use of all public areas.
- All meals on board.
- All sightseeing, shore excursions, and Zodiac rides as required for the cruise itinerary.
- All port landing service charges imposed by local administrations and government authorities.
- Lectures, videos, slide and film shows on board.
- Service of the vessel's expedition staff.
- Basic attention and treatment by the ship's medical staff.

- Pre departure information and briefing.
- The trip price comprises the voyage cost plus a surcharge for the kayaking option. This surcharge covers use of a drysuit, all your paddling and kayak equipment, and the services of a professional sea kayak guide.

THIS TOUR DOES NOT INCLUDE

- Air or land transportation to or from the ship.
- Excess baggage on any flights.
- Vaccination costs / passport / visa fees (if required), airport departure tax, Noise levy tax, government taxes.
- Items of personal nature, laundry, bar charges, wine, phone calls, cable / telex / fax charges, etc.
- Tips to on board service personnel.
- Any travel or personal insurances or emergency evacuation charges.
- Any hotels, meals, transfers or other services before or after the cruise.
- Any medication or treatments by the ship's medical staff other than basic day to day necessities.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS AND EXPERIENCE

The voyage is suitable for people of most ages and physical abilities. However, if you have selected the kayak option this should not be your first paddling experience. As with most activities, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling. It's a good idea to take some regular exercise like walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming ahead of the trip - paddling is even better!

You do not have to be an expert kayaker but should have an adventurous spirit and recognize that the weather will influence greatly what we can and can't do.

We require all participants to complete our "Experience Form" and return it to us immediately after booking. It is required to confirm your spot.

SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES

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SHIP DETAILS

Polar Pioneer

Polar Pioneer was built in Finland in 1985 as an ice-strengthened research vessel. In 2001 she was refurbished in St Petersburg to provide comfortable accommodation for 54 passengers.

Polar Pioneer is not a luxury ship; she is homely and strong. The accommodation is simple yet comfortable and the meals are wholesome and uncomplicated. The mood on board is definitely casual. A small fleet of Zodiacs (rubber inflatable boats) with outboard motors enable us to travel from ship to shore.

Length - 71.6 metres, Beam - 12.8 metres, Draft - 4.5 metres, Displacement - 2140 tonnes, Cruise speed - 10-12 knots, Powered by - 2 x 1560 HP diesel engines, Chef – European, Australian or New Zealand, Captain & Crew – Russian.

General Facilities:- Bar/lounge/library area, Sauna, Laundry Service, Medical Clinic staffed by a doctor, Dining area, TV/Video (NTSC & PAL systems), Lecture room.

There are five classes of cabins on board the *Polar Pioneer*

- **Triple Cabins** have two lower bunks and one upper bunk, porthole, wash basin, desk, storage. Shower and toilet facilities located conveniently just outside the cabins.
- **Twin Share Cabins** have two lower bunks, porthole, wash basin, desk, storage. Shower and toilet facilities located conveniently just outside the cabins.
- **Twin Private Cabins** have two lower berths, two have upper & lower berths. All cabins have private bathroom (shower and toilet), window, desk, ample storage.
- **Mini-Suites** have one double bed and one fold down couch in separate sleeping areas, private bathroom, (shower & toilet), windows, desk, sitting area, refrigerator, TV and video facilities, electric jug. Two only.
- The **Captain's Suite** features a double bed in separate sleeping area, private bathroom (shower & toilet) forward and port windows, desk, large lounge and table area, refrigerator, TV and video facilities, electric jug. One only.

