

FORGOTTEN ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

SUBANTARCTIC ISLANDS
OF NEW ZEALAND

EXPEDITION DOSSIER
23 – 30 DECEMBER 2020



Heritage Expeditions

Antarctica • Western and South Pacific
Subantarctic Islands • Russian Far East





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You won't find them mentioned in a travel brochure on your high street; you won't find them in most guidebooks, you probably don't know anyone that has ever been there and they don't even appear on some maps of the New Zealand's South Pacific – these are the 'forgotten islands'. Despite their low profile, they are among the most remarkable wildlife reserves in the Southern Ocean, designated UNESCO World Heritage sites and afforded the highest protection of any nature reserves in New Zealand. Remote, uninhabited and on no regular shipping route, access is further restricted by a strict Management Plan which limits the number of people allowed ashore each year.

Departing the Port of Bluff, Invercargill, the first of these islands we visit are The Snares. No landings are permitted because the islands are honey-combed with seabird burrows. Of particular interest are the Snares Crested Penguin, a Snares Island Tomtit and Fernbird – all of which

are endemic. We should see them all as we enjoy the dramatic coastline and tree daisy forest from our Zodiac cruise.

In the Auckland Islands, the largest of the island groups, we will have the chance to spend the day ashore on Enderby Island, arguably the most amazing Subantarctic Island. Here you can hike through the windswept Rata forests, and along the exposed coastal cliffs. The wildlife is never far away and its lack of fear means close encounters, great for photography and observations. In Carnley Harbour in the south of the Auckland Islands there are a number of fascinating sites, including a Shy Albatross colony, abandoned Coastwatcher's huts, a shipwreck and castaway depots that we can visit. The weather will dictate what we do.

Campbell Island, the southernmost island of this expedition, is an example of what can be achieved in restoring islands. In recent years sheep, cattle, cats and rats have all been eliminated and the island is rapidly recovering. The great English botanist Sir Joseph Hooker, a friend of Charles Darwin, visited Campbell Island in the 1840s and described the flowering fields of 'megaherbs' to be "second to none outside of the tropics". We can say the same now, because of the removal of these introduced animals. This island is also the home of the majestic Southern Royal Albatross, the endemic Campbell Island Flightless Teal and Snipe.

These islands represent a priceless ecosystem. Joining this expedition redefines natural history travel and will leave you wishing you could have spent more time there.



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ITINERARY

Day 1: Invercargill

Make your way to the Ascot Park Hotel, from where we will transfer you to the Port of Bluff. (Reporting times and the departure time of the transfer will be confirmed with your voyage documents). The township of Bluff is situated on the north-eastern side of Bluff Hill, an extinct volcanic cone which forms a knoll at the southern end of the Bluff Peninsula which extends into Foveaux Strait.

The captain and expedition team will be waiting for your arrival at the ship to greet you and show you to your cabin. You will have the opportunity to familiarise yourself on board and there will be formal introductions to the team followed by safety briefings.

Join the captain on the bridge or fellow travellers on deck as we set sail for The Snares Islands. We will sail past Ruapuke Island, formerly a local Maori stronghold supporting a population of over 200 people. We will also be able to see Stewart Island. Despite appearing quite small on most

maps it is really quite large and has a 700 kilometre coastline. Seabirds that we may encounter at this early point in the voyage include: albatross, petrels, cormorants, gulls and Little Blue Penguins.

Day 2: The Snares – North East Island

The closest Subantarctic Islands to New Zealand, they were appropriately called The Snares as they were once considered a hazard for sailing ships. Comprising of two main islands and a group of five islands called the Western Chain; they are uninhabited and enjoy the highest protection as Nature Reserves. It is claimed by some that these islands are home to more nesting seabirds than all of the British Isles together.

We plan to arrive early in the morning and as landings are not permitted we will Zodiac cruise along the sheltered eastern side of the main island if the weather and sea conditions are suitable. In the sheltered bays, we should see the endemic Snares Crested

Penguin, Snares Island Tomtit and Fernbirds. Cape Pigeons, Antarctic Terns, White-fronted Terns and Red-billed Gulls are also present in good numbers. There are hundreds of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters nesting on The Snares; the actual number is much debated. The Buller's Albatross breed here from early January onwards.

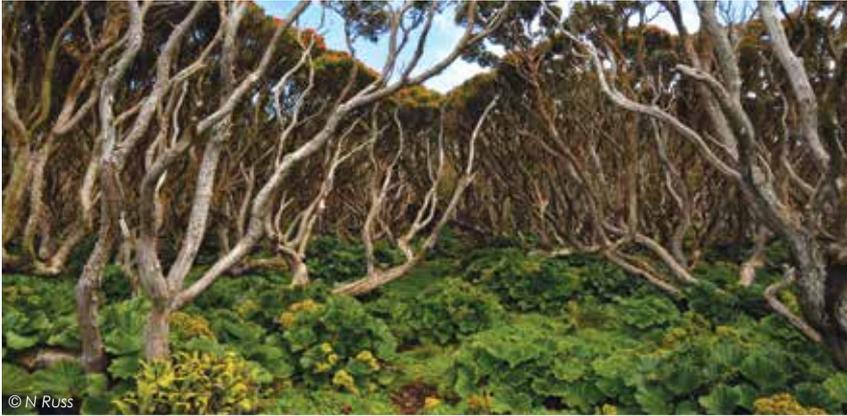
Day 3: Auckland Islands – Enderby Island

The Auckland Islands group was formed by two volcanoes which erupted some 10-25 million years ago. They have subsequently been eroded and dissected by glaciation creating the archipelago as we know it today.

Enderby Island is one of the most beautiful islands in this group and is named for the same distinguished shipping family as our own vessel. This northern most island in the archipelago is an outstanding wildlife and birding location and is relatively easy to land on and walk around. The island was cleared of all introduced animals (pests) in 1994 and both birds



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Day 4: Auckland Islands – Carnley Harbour

In the south of the archipelago there is a very large sheltered harbour, rich in human history including shipwrecks, treasure hunters, Coastwatchers and of course scientific parties. We plan to arrive early morning from our anchorage at Enderby Island. We enter the harbour through the eastern entrance which is guarded on both sides by dramatic cliffs and rugged, tussock-covered hills.

Our activities here today are totally weather dependent. We have a number of options. If the weather is OK there will be an opportunity for the more energetic expeditioners to climb to the South West Cape and visit the Shy Mollymawk colony. Above the colony we occasionally see Gibson's Wandering Albatross breeding. This climb provides magnificent views in all directions, especially over the western entrance to Carnley Harbour, Adams Island and Western Harbour. For those not able to make the climb (it is reasonably difficult) there will be an opportunity to Zodiac cruise along the coast of Adams Island and Western Harbour, with landings in the later.

Other options include the Tagua Bay Coastwatcher's hut and

and the vegetation, especially the herbaceous plants, are recovering both in numbers and diversity.

Our plan is to land at Sandy Bay, one of three breeding areas in the Auckland Islands for the Hooker's, or New Zealand, Sea Lion, a rare member of the seal family. Beachmaster bulls gather on the beach defending their harems from younger (ambitious) males, to mate with the cows shortly after they have given birth to a single pup. Hookers or New Zealand Sea Lion numbers are in a slow decline, for reasons which are not obvious but most probably connected with a nearby squid fishery.

During our day ashore there will be several options, some longer walks, some shorter walks and time to spend just sitting and enjoying the wildlife. The walking is relatively easy. A board

walk traverses the island to the dramatic western cliffs from there we follow the coast on the circumnavigation of the island.

Birds that we are likely to encounter include the following species: Southern Royal Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Auckland Island Shag, Auckland Island Flightless Teal, Auckland Island Banded Dotterel, Auckland Island Tomtit, Bellbird, Pipit, Red-crowned Parakeet, Yellow-eyed Penguin and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. There is also a very good chance of seeing the Subantarctic Snipe. Other more common species we will see include the Goldfinch, Song Thrush, Blackbird, European Starling, Red-billed Gull and Redpoll. On Derry Castle Reef we will look for migratory waders which could include Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone and possibly vagrants.





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lookout (the former is derelict) which was occupied during the Second World War. We could visit Epigwatt and the remains of the 'Grafton' which was wrecked here in 1864. All five men aboard survived and lived here for 18 months before sailing their modified dinghy to New Zealand to get help. Two of the survivors wrote books about their ordeal. Their firsthand accounts tell us a lot about their time here. Alternatively we may visit the Erlagan clearing where a German Merchant ship cut firewood to fire its boilers after slipping its moorings in Dunedin on the eve of the Second World War. Another potential site is Camp Cove where we can see the remains of the castaway depots established and maintained by the New Zealand government between the 1860s and early 1900s. We depart Carnley Harbour for Campbell Island this afternoon.

Days 5 to 6: Campbell Island

We have two days to explore Campbell Island, New Zealand's southernmost Subantarctic territory. Its history is as rich and

varied as the other islands we have visited. Discovered in 1810, it was soon occupied by sealers who introduced rats and cats.

In 1895 the New Zealand government advertised the island as a pastoral lease. The lease was taken up by an entrepreneurial New Zealand sheep farmer who stocked the island with sheep and cattle. The farming practices, which included burning the scrub, modified the island considerably. The farming lasted until 1934 when it was abandoned. Coastwatchers were stationed on the island during the war and at the end of the war the station was taken over by the New Zealand Metrological service. They maintained a manned weather/research station there until 1995.

In the early 1970s the island was fenced in half and stock was removed off the northern half. The impacts of the remaining animals were monitored and they were all eventually removed in 1990. The vegetation recovered quickly and the cats died out naturally. In a very ambitious (and never before attempted on such a large scale) eradication programme the New Zealand Department of Conservation successfully removed the rats. With the island declared predator

free, the way was clear to reintroduce the endangered Campbell Island Flightless Teal which had been rediscovered on an offshore island in 1975. Snipe, which were formerly unknown from the island but were discovered on another offshore island, recolonised the islands themselves. The vegetation which the great English botanist, Sir Joseph Hooker described in 1841 as having a "Flora display second to none outside the tropics" is flourishing and is nothing short of spectacular.

We will offer a number of options which will enable you to explore the island. There will be extended walks to Northwest Bay and possibly Mt Honey. There will also be an easier walk to the Col Lyall Saddle. All of these options will allow you the opportunity and time to enjoy the Southern Royal Albatross which nest here in large numbers. We also visit areas of the island which contain outstanding examples of the megaherbs for which the island is renown.

Other birds we will search for include the teal and snipe, although the later is what we would refer to as a 'luck' bird. The endemic shag can be seen on the harbour, but unfortunately the nesting colonies of Rockhopper Penguins, Grey-head, Black-



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browed and Campbell Island Albatross are outside of the permitted areas and we will have to look for these species at sea.

Other birds we should see include Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Southern Skua, Red-billed Gull, Black-backed Gull, Antarctic Tern, Redpoll, Dunnock and New Zealand Pipit.

Day 7: At Sea

We are at sea en route to the Port of Bluff. We will take the opportunity to recap the many experiences we have had on this expedition. This is also a good opportunity to download and edit any remaining photos while they are fresh in your mind and you have the experience of our expedition team on board for questions. There will also be some good pelagic birding opportunities.

Tonight we enjoy a farewell and celebratory dinner with new found friends with time to reflect on a wealth of new experiences.

Day 8: Invercargill

We arrive at the Port of Bluff early in the morning. After breakfast, Customs formalities and a last minute opportunity to bid farewell to your expedition team you disembark and board our complimentary coach transfer to either a central city point or to the airport. Our adventure ends but memories will last long beyond this.

In case of unexpected delays due to weather and/or port operations we ask you not to book any onward travel from Invercargill until after midday today.

Note: During our voyage, circumstances may make it necessary or desirable to deviate from the proposed itinerary. This can include poor weather and opportunities for making unplanned excursions. Your Expedition Leader will keep you fully informed. Landings at the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand are by permit only as administered by the Government of New Zealand. No landings are permitted at The Snares.

DATES

Voyage #SOE2066
23 – 30 December 2020

PRICES

Heritage Suite \$ 6,900 pp*
Large lounge area, separate bedroom with double bed and a single bed in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Large forward and side facing windows allow great views.

Mini Suite \$ 6,400 pp*
Separate bedroom with a double bed and a single bed or sofa in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Mini Suites have windows.

Superior Plus \$ 6,000 pp*
Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Superior \$ 5,600 pp*
One bunk (one upper and one lower berth), writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Main Deck \$ 5,400 pp*
Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

Main Deck Triple \$ 5,000 pp*
One bunk (one upper and one lower berth) and one additional lower berth, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

* The price listed includes the additional landing fee of \$400 pp. (All prices are per person in US\$)

PRICE INCLUDES

Landing fees, pre/post cruise transfers, all on board ship accommodation with meals and all expedition shore excursions.

PRICE EXCLUDES

All items of a personal nature, laundry, drinks, gratuities. International/domestic flights, visas and travel insurance.

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