

GALAPAGOS OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

SUBANTARCTIC ISLANDS OF
NEW ZEALAND & AUSTRALIA

EXPEDITION DOSSIER
11 – 23 DECEMBER 2020



Heritage Expeditions

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





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This is without doubt one of the most inspirational and informative journeys or expeditions into the Southern Ocean ecosystem that one can make anywhere in the world. Long recognised for their rich biodiversity, the Subantarctic Islands lying to the south of New Zealand are UNESCO World Heritage sites. This places them in a select group of only 180 natural sites that have been designated as 'the most important and significant natural habitats' on the planet. They are also afforded the highest conservation status and protection by the Australian and New Zealand governments and access to these islands is by permit only. On this expedition we offer you the unique chance to explore, photograph and understand these wonderful places in the company of some of the most knowledgeable and passionate guides.

As a young biologist, Heritage Expeditions founder Rodney Russ first visited these islands in 1972 with the New Zealand Wildlife Service. He organised New Zealand's first commercial expedition there in 1989 and it was only natural that his family should travel with him, what wasn't predicted was that they would join him in the business and be as passionate about the conservation of this region as he is. Now, many years and over 100 expeditions later, Rodney's sons Aaron and Nathan continue their father's enthusiasm and legacy for this region with Heritage Expeditions. As the original concessionaire we enjoy good relationships with the conservation departments and some of the access permits we hold are unique to these expeditions.

The name we have given to this voyage 'Galapagos of the Southern Ocean' reflects the astounding natural biodiversity and the importance of these islands as a wildlife refuge. (The book 'Galapagos of the Antarctic' written by Rodney Russ and Aleks Terauds and published by Heritage Expeditions describes all of these islands in great detail.) The islands all lie in the cool temperate zone with a unique climate and are home to a vast array of wildlife including albatross, penguins, petrels, prions, shearwaters and marine mammals like sea lions, fur seals and elephant seals. The flora is equally fascinating; the majority of it being like the birds and endemic to these islands.

This renowned expedition includes four of the Subantarctic Islands, The Snares, Auckland, Macquarie and Campbell. Each one is different, and each one is unique – just like this expedition.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Invercargill

Passengers should make their way to the Ascot Park Hotel where our group will spend the first night of the expedition. This evening there will be an informal get-together at the hotel for dinner; an excellent opportunity to meet fellow adventurers on your voyage and some of our expedition team.

Day 2: Port of Bluff

Today we enjoy breakfast in the hotel restaurant and take the opportunity to explore some of the local Southland scenery and attractions before heading to the Port of Bluff to embark the *Spirit of Enderby*. You will have time to settle into your cabin and familiarise yourself with the ship; we will also take the opportunity to conduct a number of safety briefings. You are invited to join the expedition team and captain on the bridge as we set our course to The Snares and our adventure begins.

Day 3: 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.



© R Robinson

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 4: 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 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 of a single pup. Hookers or New Zealand Sea Lion numbers are in a slow decline, for reasons which are not obvious



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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 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 first hand 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

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.

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.



© S Gutowsky

Day 5: Auckland Islands – Carnley Harbour

In the south of the archipelago there is a very large sheltered harbour it is rich in human history

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 this afternoon for Macquarie Island.

Day 6: At Sea

As we make our way south through the Furious Fifties also known as the Albatross latitudes, the birding especially south of the Auckland Islands should be good. We will have a series of informal lectures on the biology and history of the Subantarctic Islands. We will also prepare you for our visit to Macquarie Island.

Species that we may see include the Wandering Albatross, Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Northern and Southern Giant Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Little Shearwater. There should be plenty of prions including Fairy, Fulmar and Antarctic, identifying them is not easy – but we should get some great views.

Other species to be on the lookout for include the Soft-plumaged Petrel, Mottled Petrel, White-headed Petrel, Grey-faced Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-Petrel, Wilson's Storm-Petrel and Black-bellied Storm-Petrel.

Days 7 to 8: Macquarie Island

The great Australian Antarctic Explorer Sir Douglas Mawson once called Macquarie Island "One of the wonder spots of the world." You are about to discover why as we spend two days exploring this amazing Island. It was one of the first of the Subantarctic Islands to obtain World Heritage Status and



that was largely due to its unique geology. It is one of the few places on earth where mid-ocean crustal rocks are exposed at the surface due to the collision of the Australian and Pacific Plates.

The island was discovered in 1810 and was soon ravaged by sealers who introduced various animals including rats, mice, cats and rabbits. The native bird population was virtually eliminated and plants destroyed. The Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service which administered the island recently embarked on a very ambitious eradication program which appears to have

been successful. The island is now predator free and both the birds and plants are responding. It is amazing to witness the regeneration and the increase in the number of birds.

Macquarie Island is home to four species of penguin, Kings, Royals, Gentoo and Rockhopper. The Royal Penguin occurs nowhere else in the world. During our visit we will land at two sites (subject of course to weather and sea conditions) and you will get a chance to see, observe and photograph all four species, although the Rockhopper is much harder to capture than the others.



Macquarie also has a large population of Southern Elephant Seals. Pups are born in October and weaned in November when the breeding adults return to sea. The weaners and sub adults lie around on the beaches. The weaners go to sea sometime in January, running the gauntlet of Orcas or Killer Whales who are waiting offshore.

We plan a landing at the Australian Antarctic Research Base at Buckles Bay where you will be able to meet with scientists and base staff. The original base was established in 1947 and the island has been 'manned' since then. It is one of the longest continuously occupied bases in the Subantarctic.

We depart for Campbell Island on the afternoon of the second day.

Day 9: At Sea

Today is very similar to Day 6 except we are north bound and hopefully running with the prevailing weather which should make it a bit more comfortable. There will be briefings and lectures on Campbell Island in preparation for our visit there and opportunities for pelagic birding and/or simply relaxing.

Days 10 to 11: Campbell Island – Perseverance Harbour

We have plenty of time 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 (by the same sealing captain who discovered Macquarie Island) it too 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, at the end of the war the station was taken over by the New Zealand Metrological service and they maintained a manned weather/ research station on the island 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





© E Bell

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 which 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-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 12: At Sea

At sea en route to the Port of Bluff, take the opportunity to relax and reflect on an amazing

experience. We will recap the highlights of our expedition and enjoy a farewell dinner tonight as we complete the last few miles of our journey.

Day 13: Invercargill

Early this morning we will arrive in the Port of Bluff. After a final breakfast and completing Custom formalities we bid farewell to our fellow voyagers and take a complimentary coach transfer to either a central city point or to the airport.

In case of unexpected delays due to weather and/or port operations we ask you not to book any onward travel 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 #SOE2064
11– 23 December 2020

PRICES

Heritage Suite \$11,000 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 \$10,400 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 \$10,000 pp*
Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Superior \$ 9,300 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 \$ 8,950 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 \$ 8,300 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 \$800 pp. (All prices are per person in US\$)

PRICE INCLUDES

Landing fees, pre/post cruise transfers, one night hotel accommodation in a twin share room (incl. dinner/breakfast), 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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