

IN THE WAKE OF SCOTT & SHACKLETON

ROSS SEA, ANTARCTICA

EXPEDITION DOSSIER

13 JANUARY – 11 FEBRUARY 2021



Heritage Expeditions

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





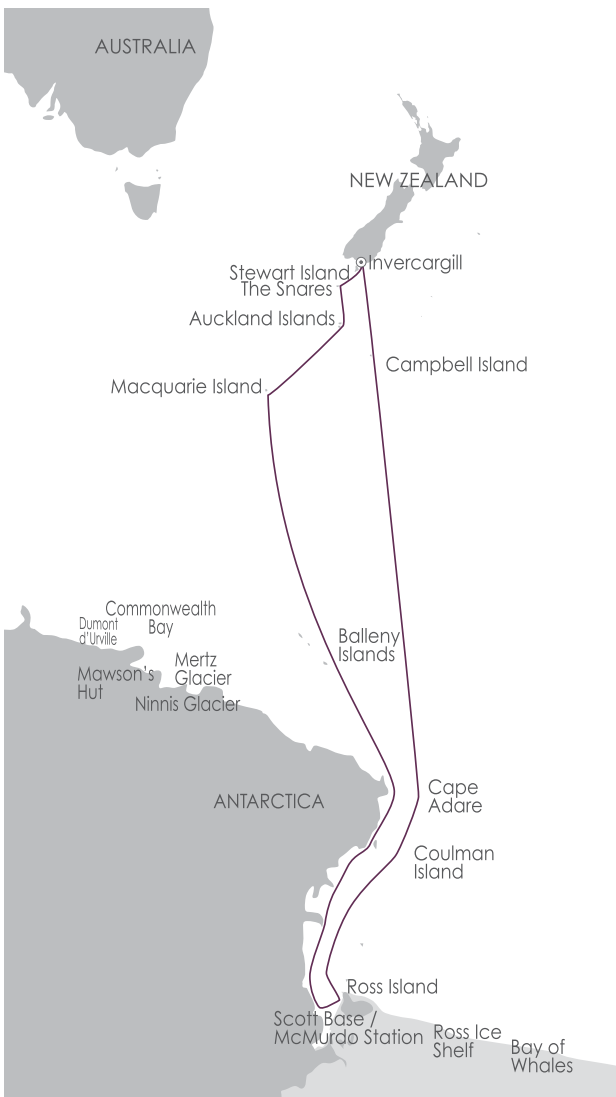
© S Ott



© K Ovsyanikova



© G Jones



The Ross Sea region of Antarctica is one of the most remote places on Planet Earth and one of the most fascinating places in the continent's human history. With shipping restricted by impenetrable pack ice to just two brief months each austral summer, few people have ever visited this strange and beautiful territory, with opportunities for non-scientific personnel limited to a handful of tourist expedition ships. Heritage Expeditions offers such a voyage on its own fully equipped and ice-strengthened ship *Spirit of Enderby*, crewed by some of the most experienced officers and sailors in the world and staffed by a passionate and knowledgeable expedition team. This is a unique opportunity to experience nature on a scale so grand there are no words to describe it.

The Ross Sea takes its name from Sir James Clark Ross who discovered it in 1841. The British Royal Geographical Society chose the Ross Sea for the now famous British National Antarctic Expedition in 1901-04 led by Robert Falcon Scott. That one expedition spawned what is sometimes referred to as the 'Race to the Pole'. Ernest Shackleton almost succeeded in 1907-09 and the Japanese explorer Nobu Shirase tried in 1910-12. Scott thought it was his, but was beaten by his rival, Norwegian Roald Amundsen in the summer of 1911. Shackleton's Trans- Antarctic expedition in 1914-17 marked the end of this 'heroic' or 'golden age' of exploration, but many of the relics of this era, including some huts, remain. The dramatic landscape described

by these early explorers is unchanged. Mt Erebus, Mt Discovery and the Transantarctic Mountains are as inspiring today as they were 100 years ago. The penguin rookeries described by the early biologists fluctuate in numbers from year to year, but they still occupy the same sites. The seals, which are no longer hunted for food lie around on ice floes seemingly unperturbed. The whales, which were hunted so ruthlessly here in the 1920s, are slowly coming back, but it is a long way back from the edge of extinction, and some species have done better than others. Snow Petrels, Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Antarctic Prions and South Polar Skuas all breed in this seemingly inhospitable environment.

There is so much to do and so much to see here, from exploring historic huts and sites to visiting penguin rookeries, marvelling at the glacial ice tongues and ice shelves, and understanding the icebergs and sea ice. Then there are all the seabirds, seals and whales to observe and photograph, modern scientific bases and field camps to visit and simply the opportunity to spend time drinking in the marvellous landscape that has always enthralled visitors.

Lying like stepping stones to the Antarctic continent are the little known Subantarctic Islands. Our journey also includes The Snares, Auckland, Macquarie and Campbell Islands. They break our long journey, but more importantly, they help prepare us for what lies ahead, for these islands are part of the amazing and dynamic Southern Ocean ecosystem of which Antarctica is at the very heart. It is the powerhouse which drives this ecosystem upon which the world depends.



© A Russ

ITINERARY

Day 1: Invercargill

Arrive at Invercargill, New Zealand's southernmost city. Established by Scottish settlers, the area's wealth of rich farmland is well suited to the sheep and dairy farms that dot the landscape.

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 because they were probably considered a hazard by their discoverer Lieutenant Broughton in 1795. Comprising of two main islands and a smattering of rocky islets, they are uninhabited and highly protected.

North East Island is the largest of The Snares and it is claimed that this one island is home to more



© R Robinson

nesting seabirds than all of the British Isles together. We will arrive early in the morning and cruise along the sheltered eastern side of the rugged coastline by Zodiac if weather and sea conditions are suitable (landings are not permitted). In the sheltered bays, we should see the endemic Snares Crested Penguins, Snares Island Tomtit and Fernbirds. Cape Pigeons, Antarctic 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. Around Christmas time each year the Buller's Albatross return here to nest. Out on the Western Chain (considered part of The Snares island group) the Salvin's Albatross will already be nesting. Other nesting seabirds include Cape Petrel (or Pigeon), Mottled Petrel, diving-petrel and Broad-billed Prion.

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.

The group is one of the largest in the Subantarctic and has a

most colourful history of discovery and attempted settlement. Characterised by towering cliffs and rugged sea stacks, these islands have borne witness to many a shipwreck in days gone by.

Enderby Island in this group is a great place to view birds and wildlife and is perhaps the most beautiful of all the Subantarctic Islands. Located at the northern end of this cluster of islands, it offers a varying landscape with a low plateau of scrubland and cushion bog. We will enjoy the extensive areas of regenerating patches of megaherbs especially the *Anisotome latifolia* and *Stilbocarpa Polaris*. Introduced cattle, rabbits and mice were removed from this island in the mid 1990s and the plants and birds are responding, increasing in numbers and diversity.

The island enjoys a much milder climate than most Subantarctic Islands because of its location. 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



© K Ovsyanikova

birth of 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. As we explore further inland it is not unusual to encounter a sea lion relaxing in the gnarled and windswept rata forest.

In the forest behind the beach we find Bellbirds, Red-crowned Parakeets and the friendly Tomtits. Yellow-eyed Penguins also nest in the forest and under the tangled divaricated shrub *Myrsine divaricata*. You can see them as they travel backwards and forwards across the beach to their nests, especially in the evenings. On the more open terrain beyond the Rata forest we find nesting Royal Albatross and the endemic Auckland Island Dotterel. There is also a good chance of seeing the endemic Auckland Island Flightless Teal and the Subantarctic Snipe. Migratory waders (if there are any) congregate at Derry Castle Reef, and it is not unusual to observe Bar-tailed Godwit and Turnstone here.

As we explore further we should also have the chance to see the following species: Northern Giant Petrel, Auckland Island Shag, Tomtit and Pipit and the



© K Ovsyanikova



© O Liodden

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. Other more common species we will see include the Goldfinch, Song Thrush, Blackbird, European Starling, Red-billed Gull and Redpoll.

Day 5: Auckland Islands – Carnley Harbour

We arrive in Carnley Harbour, once the caldera of the Carnley volcano. The walls of the caldera have been breached on both the eastern and western sides, separating Adams Island to the south. The eastern entrance is navigable for smaller vessels such as ours. The extensive harbour is rich in history and in opportunities. Our activities are totally weather dependent as the wind often funnels down the harbour making anchoring and some landings impossible.

We have a number of options including a reasonably difficult scramble to a Shy Albatross colony on South West Cape. For those not able to manage this there will be the option to Zodiac cruise the pristine shores of Adams Island and Western Harbour. If

wind and weather prevent us from doing this, other options include a relatively easy walk to an abandoned Coastwatcher's hut and lookout used during the Second World War. If landing on the shores on the north arm of Carnley Harbour where the *Grafton* was wrecked in 1865, the remains of the vessel and their castaway hut can still be seen. There are two other sites of interest that if we can't land at the above sites we might consider. They are Camp Cove, site of the official Government Castaway depots constructed in the late 1800s and the 'Erlangen' clearing where the German merchant ship of the same name cut firewood on the eve of the Second World War which allowed it to leave New Zealand undetected.

Day 6: At Sea

At sea, learn more about the biology and history of the Subantarctic Islands and the Southern Ocean through a series of lectures and presentations. We will be at sea all day, so it is another opportunity to spot pelagic species including (but not limited too) the Wandering Albatross, Royal Albatross, Shy and White-capped Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, White-chinned

Petrel, Mottled Petrel, White-headed Petrel, Cape Petrel, diving-petrel, Grey-backed and Black-bellied Storm-Petrels. This is potentially some of the best pelagic 'birding' on the expedition and for those with country lists (of birds) we will be passing from New Zealand into Australian waters.

Days 7 to 8: Macquarie Island

Australia's prized Subantarctic possession, it supports one of the highest concentrations of wildlife in the Southern Ocean. Millions of penguins of four different species – King, Rockhopper, Gentoo and the endemic Royal – breed here. We plan to spend our time divided between the two approved landing sites, Sandy Bay and Buckles Bay as well as a Zodiac cruise at Lusitania Bay if weather conditions permit.

At Sandy Bay a Royal Penguin rookery teems with feisty little birds trotting back and forth, golden head plumes bobbing as they march to and from the shore. All three million of the world's Royal Penguins breed on Macquarie Island. There is also a substantial King Penguin Colony. Some of the best observations will be had by quietly sitting and letting the birds come to you. They are both unafraid and inquisitive – the combination is unique.



© N Russ



© G Riehle

At Buckles Bay we will have a guided tour of the Australian Antarctic Division Base which was established in the late 1940s and has been manned continuously since then. There is a range of scientific research being undertaken here as well as a very strategically important weather station.

Large groups of Southern Elephant Seals slumber on the beaches and in the tussock at both of our landing sites. These giant, blubbery creatures will barely acknowledge our presence, lying in groups of intertwined bodies, undergoing their annual moult. Younger bulls spar in the shallow water,

preparing for their mature years when they will look after their own harems.

The King Penguin rookery at Lusitania Bay is noisy and spectacular. A welcoming committee will likely porpoise around our Zodiacs as a quarter of a million King Penguins stand at attention on shore. In the centre of the rookery, rusting condensers are grim reminders of a time when scores of penguins were slaughtered for their oil. Now their offspring have reclaimed this territory.

In 2011 the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service

undertook one of the most ambitious eradication projects anywhere in the world. Their plan was to rid the island of all introduced species including rabbits, rats and mice. It looks like it has succeeded and the island and its wildlife is responding. The vegetation is re-establishing and petrel and prion numbers are increasing.

It is an amazing island, in addition to the penguins and elephant seals, there are three species of fur seals to be found there and four species of albatross, Wandering, Black-browed, Grey-headed and Light-mantled Sooty.

Days 9 to 12: At Sea

Soaring albatross and petrels circle the vessel as we steam ever southward through the Southern Ocean. Lectures now concentrate on Antarctica and the Ross Sea region. We will pay attention to water temperatures so that we know when we cross the Antarctic Convergence into the cold but extremely productive Antarctic waters. Drifting icebergs carry vivid colours and come in extraordinary shapes. Each is a unique, natural sculpture. The captain will manoeuvre the ship in close for your first ice photography and announce a special celebration as we pass the Antarctic Circle and into Antarctica's realm of 24-hour daylight!

Relax in the ship's bar and catch up with some reading in the library. If you have brought your laptop with you there will be time to download and edit photos while they are fresh in your mind.

Days 13 to 22: Antarctica's Ross Sea Region

During our time in the Ross Sea region, we will visit the highlights



© L Carnaby

of Antarctica's most historic region. Due to the unpredictable nature of ice and weather conditions, a day-by-day itinerary is not possible. The captain and Expedition Leader will assess daily conditions and take advantage of every opportunity to make landings or send you out in the Zodiacs. Our program emphasises wildlife viewing, key scientific bases and historic sites, as well as the spectacular scenery of the coastal terrain, the glaciers and icebergs of the Ross Sea. Whilst specific landings cannot be guaranteed, we hope to visit the following as well as seek out new, perhaps previously unvisited areas.

We hope to visit the following areas:

Cape Adare

Cape Adare's bold headland and the Downshire Cliffs greet us as we approach Cape Adare – ice conditions permitting – at the tip of the Ross Sea, the site of the largest Adelie Penguin rookery in Antarctica. Blanketing the large, flat spit which forms the cape is the huge rookery which now, at the height of summer, numbers over one million birds – an absolutely staggering sight. You will never forget your first experiences in a ceaselessly active and noisy 'penguin city', where the dapper inhabitants show no fear of their strange visitors. Our naturalists will point out various aspects of their lifestyle and, by sitting down quietly, one may observe the often comical behaviour of the penguins, courtship displays, feeding ever-hungry chicks, territorial disputes and the pilfering of nest material. Curious penguins often come very close, presenting superb photographic opportunities. Surrounded by a sea of penguins, we will find Borchgrevink's Hut, the oldest in Antarctica, an



© S Blanc

overwintering shelter for the first expedition to the continent in 1899. It is a fascinating relic of the 'Heroic Age' of Antarctic exploration and we are able to inspect the interior, which still contains artefacts of the early explorers. One thousand feet up in the hills behind Cape Adare is the oldest grave in Antarctica, that of 22-year-old Nicolai Hansen, a member of Borchgrevink's expedition.

Cape Hallett

The enormous Admiralty Range heralds our arrival at Cape Hallett, near the head of the Ross Sea. The scenery here is wild and spectacular; mountains rear up towering out of the sea to over 4,000-metres high and giant glaciers course down from the interior to the water's edge. We land next to the site of the abandoned American/New Zealand base, home to large

numbers of Adelie Penguins and Weddell Seals.

Franklin Island

This rugged island, deep in the Ross Sea, is home to a large Adelie Penguin colony and other nesting seabirds. We will attempt a Zodiac landing near the rookery as well as exploring the coastline. If a landing is achieved and weather conditions are suitable there will be an opportunity for those who are feeling fit to climb to the summit of the island.

Possession Islands

These small, rugged and rarely visited islands lie off the shore of Cape Hallett. An Adelie Penguin rookery, numbering tens of thousands of birds, blankets Foyen Island. Observe their busy and sometimes humorous activities, with the Admiralty Mountains forming a superb backdrop across the water.



© D Brown



© O Belonovich



© K Ovsyanikova

Ross Ice Shelf

The largest ice shelf in Antarctica, the Ross Ice Shelf is also the world's largest body of floating ice. A natural ice barrier, at times it creates hazardous weather conditions, with sheets of snow blown at gale force by the katabatic winds coming off the polar ice cap. Just 800 miles from the South Pole, this daunting spectacle prevented many early Antarctic explorers from venturing further south. From the Ross Ice Shelf we cruise eastward along the shelf front, with its spectacular 30-metre high ice cliffs, which sometimes calve tabular icebergs.

Ross Island – Mount Erebus/ Cape Bird/Shackleton's Hut/ Scott's Hut

At the base of the Ross Sea we arrive at Ross Island, dominated by the 13,000ft high volcano, Mt Erebus. The New Zealand Antarctica programme maintains a field station at Cape Bird, where scientists study many aspects of the region's natural history, including the large Adelie Penguin colony. Scientists may be at the field station

when we arrive. At Cape Royds we visit Sir Ernest Shackleton's hut, built during the Nimrod polar attempt of 1907-1909. Lectures explain many facets of Shackleton's amazing expeditions. He was possibly one of the greatest, and certainly one of the most heroic of the Antarctic explorers. Though the legendary explorers are long gone, the area around the hut is far from deserted, having been reclaimed by the original inhabitants of the area – thousands of Adelie Penguins in the world's southernmost penguin rookery.

Also found on Ross Island is Cape Evans, the historic site of Captain Scott's second hut, erected in



© J.L. Heuroux

1911 and beautifully preserved by the Antarctic Heritage Trust. It stands as testimony to the rigours faced by pioneering explorers. Inside the hut we will witness the living conditions almost exactly as they were when Scott, Wilson and Ponting occupied these quarters. Behind the hut, Mt Erebus looms above with its plume of white smoke spiralling up from the still-active inferno in its bowels.

McMurdo and Scott Base (including Scott's Discovery Hut)

These are always on our wish list but ice, weather and operational requirements for the National Programs, including cargo and fuel unloading and icebreaker activities sometimes prevent us from getting in, especially on the January expedition. Our February expedition is generally more successful but not guaranteed.

Terra Nova Bay

Baia Terra Nova, an Italian summer research station, is one of the most modern and attractive in Antarctica. The scientists and support staff here are always most hospitable and enjoy showing us around their lonely but beautiful home. The Italians conduct many streams of scientific research and also claim to have the best 'espresso' in Antarctica! Nearby is the German base, Gondwana, which is used occasionally and the South Korean station, Jang Bogo. The Chinese are planning a base nearby as well.

Days 23 to 26: At Sea

En route to Campbell Island, take part in a series of lectures designed to prepare you for our visit tomorrow. Pelagic species abound here as they did en route to Macquarie Island earlier in our voyage. Above all, take the time to rest and enjoy shipboard life after the excitement of the Antarctic.



© E Whitehead

Days 27 to 28: Campbell Island – Perseverance Harbour

New Zealand's southernmost Subantarctic territory, the Campbell Island group lies approximately 660km south of Bluff. We visit Campbell Island, the main island in the group, and spend the day exploring the island on foot from Perseverance Harbour, a long inlet cutting into the undulating landscape. Campbell Island is a truly magnificent place of rugged scenery, unique flora and abundant wildlife. Perseverance Harbour where we drop anchor is an occasional refuge for Southern Right Whales who come here to calve. Here we will find a now abandoned New Zealand meteorological station as well as Campbell Island Shags, penguins, fur seals and rare Hooker's Sea Lions.

As rats and sheep have been successfully removed, there has been an encouraging increase in small bird numbers and the recovery of wild flowers and megaherbs. Campbell Island Flightless Teal have been successfully reintroduced, a previously unknown Snipe is re-colonising the island from neighbouring Jacquemart Island and the Pipit is making a comeback.

The highlight of our visit however is a walk to the hilltop breeding sites of Southern Royal Albatross, over six thousand pairs of which

breed on Campbell Island. These magnificent birds, close relations to and the same size as the Wandering Albatross, have the largest wingspan in the world and are very approachable, making superb photographic subjects.

Day 29: At Sea

At sea en route to the Port of Bluff, take the opportunity to relax and reflect on an amazing experience. This is 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. We will recap the highlights of our expedition and enjoy a farewell dinner tonight as we sail to our final port.

Day 30: 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 #SOE2170
13 January – 11 February 2021

PRICES

Heritage Suite \$ 32,880 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 \$ 30,280 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 \$ 29,180 pp*
Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Superior \$ 25,880 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 \$ 23,880 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.

* The price listed includes the additional landing fee of \$880 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, meals and all expedition shore excursions.

PRICE EXCLUDES

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

2170170519