

# Keene Luxury Travel's Guide to Silversea Expedition Cruising



## Table of Contents

*For easy navigation, feel free to click one of the subjects listed below to hop directly to that page.*

Silversea Expedition Cruising Overview.....	1
General Information & Landing Reports .....	2
Ship Review   <i>Silver Cloud and Silver Wind</i> .....	4
Ship Review   <i>Silver Endeavour</i> .....	8
What to Wear .....	10
Antarctica Landing Reports .....	12
Arctic Landing Reports .....	21

# Silversea Expedition Cruising Overview

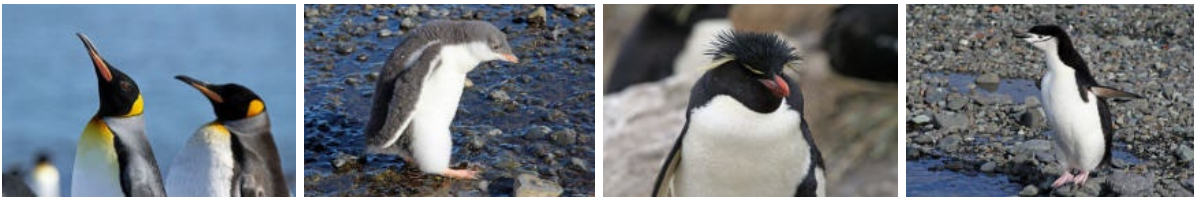
Visiting Antarctica with thousands of penguins and the Arctic with the majestic polar bears and Walrus offers a wonderful and unforgettable adventure.

[Ngairé Keene](#), [Susan Walsh](#) and KLT Staff have cruised numerous times to both Antarctica and the Arctic area of the Svalbard Islands. Keene Luxury Travel has the expertise to assist you in this incredible adventure! **Keene Luxury Travel recommends Expedition ships offered by SILVERSEA Cruises.**



## Antarctica | Home to Thousands of Delightful Penguins

For details on the cabins, landing reports, what to wear and many details on Antarctica — [click here!](#)



## The Arctic | Svalbard Islands in Search of the Polar Bear & Walrus

For details on expedition cruise to the Arctic — [click here!](#)



## Silver Cloud and Silver Wind Expedition Ships

Launched late 2017, Silversea has created a "game changer" in the expedition cruise market with the Silver Cloud was changed to an Expedition ship. In 2021 the Silver Wind (sister ship to the Silver Cloud) was also adapted to be an expedition ship. Both these ships were Silversea's luxury small ships and have all the trimmings of a luxury ocean liner. The ships have been outfitted with an Ice Hull in order to navigate the polar regions as well as a completely refurbished interior. While onboard the Cloud, I could not wrap my head around the fact that this is truly an expedition ship. The cabins are wonderfully spacious starting at 240 square feet for a Vista cabin and 297 square feet for a Veranda cabin. Most cabins feature a spacious walk-in shower and there are some cabins with a bathtub/shower combination. There are all of the facilities that you usually find on a luxury ocean liner such as a Main Show Lounge with great sight lines, a Panorama Lounge, an Observation Lounge, a Library, large Beauty Salon, Spa Facilities, Exercise Facilities, Guest Laundry, Card Room, Boutique, Internet Cafe, Connoisseurs Corner, Swimming Pool and a Jacuzzi. Dining options include the main restaurant, La Terazza for casual dining, Le Champagne (French restaurant for an extra charge), and a deck grill which features "Hot Rocks"



at night. The ship is equipped with a new style of zodiac (see the picture at left). This makes for a more comfortable zodiac ride with less bumping in the water. The boot room and loading area is really large and if you have been on an expedition ship before then you know how much difference that will make to your expedition experience. A maximum of 200 guests for the Polar Regions on a ship that holds 260 guests. The Expedition Team includes some of the best expedition team experts in the business. Fares are all-inclusive of beverages in the dining rooms and the lounges (excluding fine wines and liquors) and tips for the staff. Please see ship review for more details below.

## The Silver Endeavour was purchased by Silversea in 2022 and is a great addition to the Silversea Expedition Fleet.

This is an amazing ship. One of the most expensive expedition ships ever built costing almost double the price of other new expedition ships. The ship is stunning without being glitzy and has multiple dining options. Suites start at 357 square feet and are one of the most amazing designs I have ever seen on cabin of this size. A desk with two chairs and a shelf above the desk for storage and more outlets than you can imagine. Two sinks and a toilet in a separate room with a sink and two entry doors. One from the bathroom and one from the cabin. Massive vanity for the ladies with lots of drawers. Along with a wet closet to hang up your parka and store your life vest. Please see the ship review for more details.

## General Information & Landing Reports

**CLOTHING REQUIRED OTHER THAN ZODIAC ATTIRE:** Most of the time, it was very casual however on the welcome aboard night a few people dressed up a little. Everyone over-packed because none of us knew what to expect. It was basically casual dress for dinner, with blue jeans being quite acceptable at night.

During the day, we all just wore tracksuits or very casual clothing. We seemed to spend a lot of time in the zodiacs or up on deck with the red parkas that were supplied by the ship, so nobody paid much attention to what we were wearing anyway. I bought a new coat, lined and warm, and never put it on. I brought way too many fleece tops and heavy sweaters, since I thought it would be cold on the ship. It was not; it was actually very warm and well insulated. In fact, people wore short sleeves and t-shirts during the day while on the ship; just normal everyday wear, short and long-sleeved shirts for men and twin sets or light sweaters for women is all you need. Just bring one or two warm fleece tops for going in the zodiacs. I also brought hiking boots, which was a mistake because I never put them on. You have to wear the provided rubber boots because of the zodiac landings. A pair of tennis shoes or comfortable shoes for walking around the ship during the day and one pair of shoes for evenings is all you need. For more details, see our detailed report of - [What to Wear](#).





**TEMPERATURE:** Every trip will be different. For our Arctic and Antarctica sailings we experienced snow, wind, rain, sunshine, and absolute calm. The temperature hovered around 35 to 45 degrees most of the time. It was cold on the zodiacs but once ashore it was usually fine. In fact, we were so bundled up that we often were overdressed and found ourselves peeling off the layers underneath our parkas once onshore.

**DAYS AT SEA:** The expedition ships do a fantastic job of filling the days at sea with activities. Each day they have lectures, all of which are really interesting. The lecturers are top notch and provide a wonderful combination of expertise and people skills.

**NATURALISTS:** The cruise will have Naturalists and an Expedition Leader. The credentials of these people were really quite amazing. On every landing, they were there to greet you, and would show you where to go and answer any and all questions about the animals and surroundings. By the time you leave, you feel like they will be your friends forever and the knowledge you gain is very insightful and interesting.

**THE WILDLIFE I ENCOUNTERED:** ARCTIC - The polar bears are an amazing sight and are the main event. Closely followed by the huge Walrus. Of course, there are whales and other sea life and thousands of birds. ANTARCTICA - The penguins (thousands of them) are absolutely delightful and not at all afraid of humans.



**ZODIAC LANDINGS:** Loading in and out of the zodiacs is not too difficult and the staff is wonderful at helping you in and out. After a few landings it gets much easier. Each cruise will be different depending on the weather and where the ship schedules the landings. There are multiple landing sites and the Captain and Expedition Leader will change the schedule constantly to ensure that you get the best possible conditions and landings.



**MOTION DISCOMFORT:** The patches for motion sickness have improved recently and seem to work well for those who need them. You can purchase wristbands, which work on pressure points and then there no drugs for this method of relief. If you were to be too uncomfortable, the ship always has appropriate medication at the front reception desk. You may also consider using the patch or anti-seasickness drugs. Ginger tablets also help with motion sickness. I suggest you take some medications with you and have it in your cabin if you think you may need it.

**CRUISE TICKETS:** Your final cruise documents will be full of information regarding your expedition cruise. Please read these instructions carefully and call your Keene Luxury Travel Consultant if you have any questions. Be sure to tag all the bags with the luggage tags provided by Silversea. If you have booked air through the cruise line, a Silversea representative will meet you at the gate upon arrival.

**THE FLIGHTS:** You will fly into a major international airport. When required, Silversea will provide a charter flight to get you to the embarkation port.

**AIRLINE SEATING:** Due to consistent problems with lost seats and frequent flyer numbers by the airlines, neither Silversea nor Keene Luxury Travel will handle seat assignments for your flights or entry of frequent flyer numbers into your airline record. The computer may generate some seat assignments automatically. This does not mean they are the best seats available on the plane. When you get your airline schedule, please call the airline directly and handle this detail personally. Airlines often change flight numbers without notifying passengers and as a result, frequent flyer numbers and



seat assignments do not always make the transfer. If it is important to you where you sit and that you get credit for your miles, call this in initially and re-confirm a few days before departure and upon check-in to make sure your seats and frequent flyer number is in the system.

**BAGGAGE LIMITATIONS:** This can vary each year. Please DO NOT overpack. With the self-service and regular laundry available, simply plan on washing and wearing the same casual outfits during the trip.

**INTERNET:** E-mail and internet is available on the expedition ships. There are computers in the ship library and Wi-Fi hot spots in the library area and in all cabins. Packages are inclusive or you can purchase a faster connection. These rates will vary over time and are dependent on the length of the cruise.

**REPEAT PASSENGERS:** My image of the Antarctica or Arctic trip was that it would be a once in a lifetime experience and once you have done this trip, that you would not need to go back. However, it is surprising how many people were repeaters. Since the weather can change the mood and look of this region, each trip will be a completely different experience. One of my favorite days was cloudy, overcast and misty; it seems to be well-suited the environment.

**REWARDS PROGRAM:** This program saves you hundreds of dollars on your cruise. We will send you a check with your final cruise documents for the amount applicable to your cruise. This amount will be noted on your Keene Luxury Travel invoice.

**BOOKING YOUR EXPEDITION:** Please do not procrastinate if you want to book an Antarctica or Arctic voyage. Each year these cruises sell out quickly.

## Ship Review | *Silver Cloud & Silver Wind*

**OVERALL OPINION:** These are luxurious ships and it is hard to wrap your head around the fact that this is indeed an expedition ship. This is particularly true when it comes to the cabins. The ship has great cabins similar Regent's and Silversea's regular ships, and definitely better than many mass-market lines. While these two ships are sister ships, they are not completely identical in accommodations. Please reference the Deck Plans for suite specifications for each ship.

[Click To See Deck Plans & Suite Layouts for the Silver Cloud](#)

[Click To See Deck Plans & Suite Layouts for the Silver Wind](#)

**Vista** | *The least expensive cabin; windows only, smaller. Located on Deck 4. – 240 sq ft*

**Veranda (Forward) & Deluxe Veranda (Midship)** | *Decks 5, 6 & 7 – 295 sq ft*

These categories are all basically the same with only very minor differences. All feature interactive flat wall mounted TV with a large movie collection; walk-in closets; stocked mini bar; 110-volt and 220-volt outlets; writing desk; and other amenities. There is a lot of storage space as both the closet and writing desk have drawers. There is a couch and two chairs in all cabins. Butler service and room service in all cabins.

**Vista Cabins** have less square feet and no balcony. An exceptional value, if you do not care if you have a balcony.

For the **Veranda** and **Deluxe Veranda Cabins**, the balcony adds a lot of light and makes the cabin feel much larger. A balcony does make a difference and is always handy for taking that quick picture. In the polar regions, the scenery can be magnificent so it is really nice to be able to pop-out for a minute and snap that shot.

**Medallion Suite** – 517 sq ft (*Silver Cloud*), 441 sq ft (*Silver Wind*)

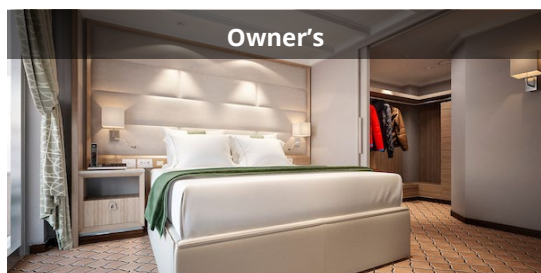
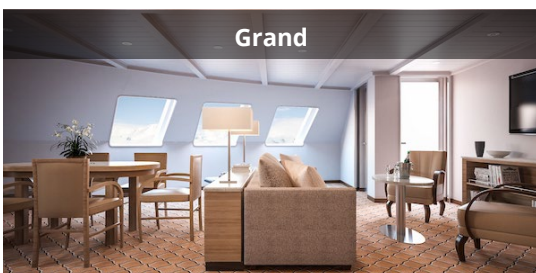
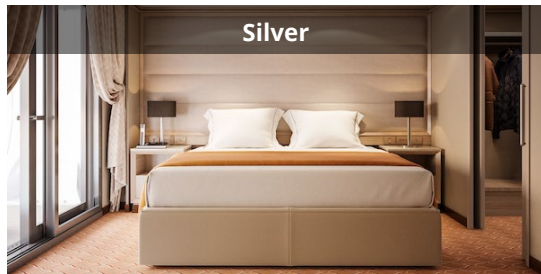
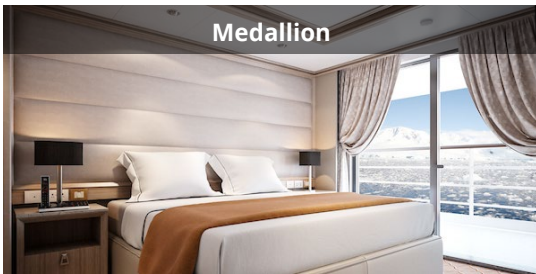
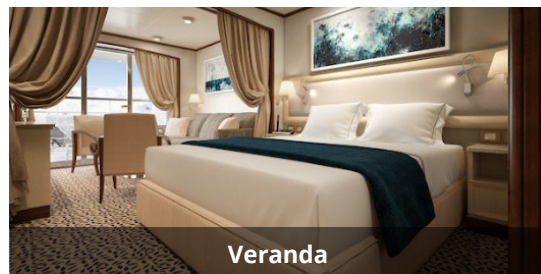
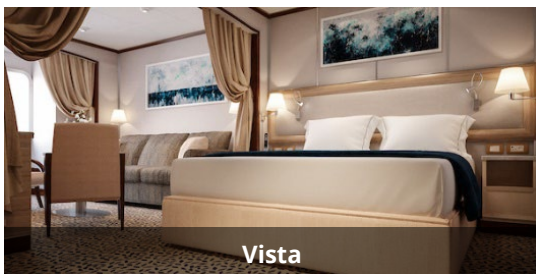
**Silver Suite** – 581 sq ft (*Silver Cloud*), 517 sq ft (*Silver Wind*)

**Royal Suite** – 736 sq ft | **Grand Suite** – 1,019 sq ft | **Owners Suite** – 587 sq ft

These suites are wonderful - All with a separate living area. The closets are REALLY big. These suite's bathrooms are all large and are varied in layout. Each room is so unique and I was not able to preview them all so I cannot comment on all the individual suites in detail.

I have had the opportunity to stay in the **Silver Suite** on the *Silver Cloud* and it had two identical bathrooms, and a HUGE closet area. Also, a lounge with a nice sized dining table. The **Medallion Suite** is the same layout as the Silver Suite but with only one bathroom. These sell out quickly

I was able to stay in a **Royal Suite** and could have stayed there a long time. Really large lounge with a nice desk, a nice bathroom with a large tub and HUGE closet. The large suites are all very nice.



## Public Areas

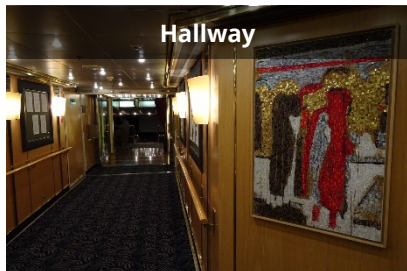
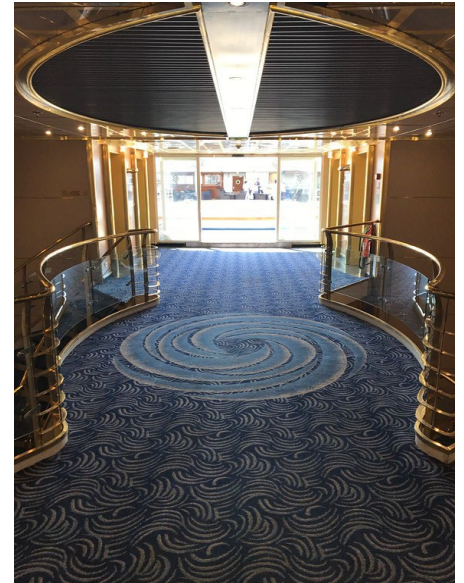
There are a lot of facilities and lounges which are unique to an expedition ship... The Show Lounge, The Observation Lounge (at front of the ship), Panorama Lounge (often used for daily recaps), Card Room, Internet Cafe, The Spa, The Boutique, the Beauty Salon, Exercise Room, and The Connoisseurs Corner. There is also a swimming pool and jacuzzies, as well as an outdoor grill and pool bar.

**Show Lounge:** A large main lounge with great sight lines similar to a main lounge on an ocean ship. Far more seating than is required which gives it a very spacious feel. Nice large stage for presentations and excellent acoustics. Also, there is comfortable seating with room for the waiters and drink service. This may be used for presentations.

**Beauty Salon and Spa:** These facilities are nicer than I have seen on many full-size ocean ships.

**Spacious Hallways and Seating Areas:** Throughout the ship there is a feeling of space. Halls are wide, seating areas and rooms are not crowded. The artwork all over the ship is very interesting. There is just a really comfortable feel to the entire ship.

**Laundry:** The ship features laundry service and also a guest laundry.



Hallway



Seating Area



Observation Lounge

## Dining Options Onboard

**The Restaurant:** The meals in the main dining room were outstanding. Nice choices on the menu and the beef, chicken and fish dishes were all equally delicious. Niche lighting and plenty of room between the tables. Reasonably quiet as the room absorbs sound. We experience excellent service in this restaurant and it was faster than most main dining rooms on a ship.

**La Dame by Relais & Châteaux:** is an extra cost French Restaurant that served a really sensational menu with quite a few options for this type of restaurant. Every course was outstanding.

**Le Terrazza:** This is the casual buffet breakfast and lunch venue with cooked to order eggs at breakfast, and freshly prepared pasta to order at lunch. The buffet everything looked nice and fresh with an excellent assortment of dishes. They do serve you the hot foods from the buffet and I personally prefer self-service. Salads and desserts are self-service. The meals here were better than I anticipated. The fresh, cooked to order pasta was outstanding.

**Pool Grill and Hot Rocks:** There is also a pool grill on the deck serving casual food. At night, the pool grill offers HOT ROCKS. This is a lot of fun as you cook your own food on hot rocks. Believe it or not, in the polar regions it is still fun as they have heaters and you wear your coat, hat and gloves. Quite an experience.

**24-hour Room Service:** The room service menu offers a fairly large variety of choices.

## Expedition Experience

**Zodiacs:** I am very excited about the new zodiac design. Rather than balancing on the rounded side of the zodiac, there is flat part on the top where you sit and you sink down a little and the rise in the front supports your knees. Hard to explain but this will negate the majority of the bumping. Plus, it feels easier to get in and out of the zodiac.

**Boot Room:** I could not believe the boot room. Normally on other expedition ships this area is extremely small and crowded. However, this boot room is HUGE and has automatic boot washers. Gone are the days of fighting for space to take off your boots and standing on one foot trying to clean the bottom of your boots.

**Loading Area:** Normally people gather in a small area to board the zodiac. It can get very cramped and you are all dressed for the cold so it can get hot waiting in a big group of people to get off. This ship has a massive loading area, so you are no longer packed in like sardines, plus the elevators go right to the loading area. Fantastic!

**Expedition Team:** More expedition staff than I have ever seen. They say 19 but we had about 22 when we were on the ship. All of the super stars that I have met over the years were there. This is the flagship for the expedition team so I anticipate we will have a super team onboard. Plus, the facilities in the main lounge and Panorama lounge will enhance all the presentations.



New Style of Zodiac



Testing the Zodiac





# Ship Review | *Silver Endeavour*

**OVERALL OPINION:** This is a WOW ship. This is the most expensive expedition ship ever built. The ship has great cabins, superior to most luxury ship cabins. All suites feature espresso-makers, custom bars and snacks.

## **Veranda** | *Standard suite, location affects pricing. Decks 5, 6, 7 & 8 – 356 sq ft*

The emphasis is on a curved look. No hard corners, most aspects of the cabins are curved. The standard suite, a Veranda offers 356 square feet. The location of the suite affects the pricing.

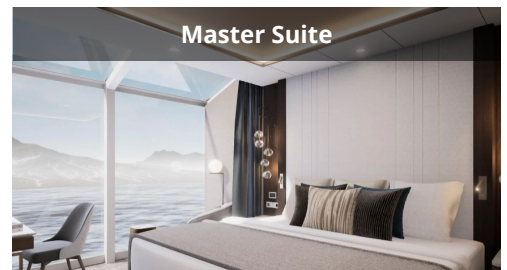
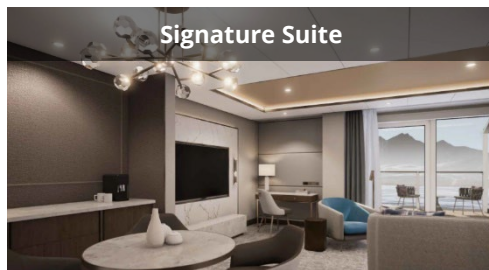
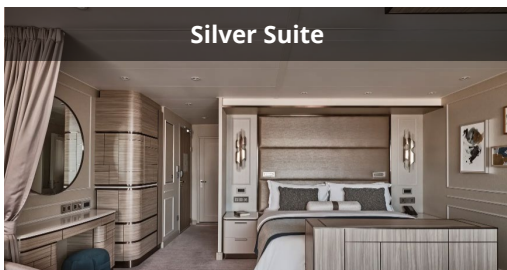
Storage space is amazing with lots of drawers. Wall-mounted outlets and USB-C ports are everywhere, including bedside. Bedside lighting controls feature many levels. There's also a large desk that seats two people and wonderful vanity table with a large round mirror and many curved drawers.



The bathroom's large sink has faucets on both ends so two people can use it at the same time. The large marble shower with both rain and handheld shower heads includes a wide bench. A separate room has the toilet and an extra sink which can be accessed from the bathroom or the cabin.

## **Silver Suite – 535 sq ft** | **Signature Suite – 721 sq ft** | **Master Suite – 999-1,001 sq ft** **Grand Suite – 1,668 sq ft** | **Owners Suite – 1,868 sq ft**

The **Silver Suites** have a large balcony, large closet and bathroom with double vanities, walk-in shower, and separate lavatory. A step up from the standard Veranda. **Signature Suites** include a separate bedroom from a large living and dining area, large veranda, and contemporary bathroom with whirlpool tub. **Master Suite** is spacious and immersive, surrounded by floor-to-ceiling windows with wow-factor views from the large living areas and balcony. The **Grand Suite** has an oversized balcony, small second bedroom and nice sized dining table. You can also adjoin the Grand Suite with a Superior Veranda Suite for an additional bedroom. The large **Owner's Suite** has the largest onboard balcony, two bedrooms, a large living room, bathtub with scenic views and a large walk-in closet. Grand Suite and Owner's Suite bathrooms are large. There is a large vanity with an over the counter mounted oversized contemporary sink and narrow shelving on both sides of the vanity, The shower is not enclosed but drains directly into the floor area next to the bathtub. The bathtub and shower are behind a frosted glass door. On the other side of the vanity, is the enclosed toilet stall.



[Click To See Deck Plans & Suite Layouts for the Silver Endeavour](#)

## Dining Options Onboard

**The Restaurant:** The main dining room is a very large area with space about for about 190 guests. Interesting menus and we found the food to be excellent. Menus changes constantly. No reservation required.

**La Dame:** This is the fine dining specialty restaurant serving French cuisine that is beautifully plated and served. This is the only restaurant with a charge of \$60 per person. This also includes all the wines. It is popular and reservations are required.

**Il Terrazzino:** This Italian restaurant is in the hallway on the way to the main dining room. It served really outstanding dishes and only seats 36 guests. Reservations are required.

**The Grill:** Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. This is a unique area with a heated swimming pool in the middle of the room which can disappear to provide more floor space. It is like a two-story glass solarium and fantastic to have abundant natural light and watch the scenery. During the day, they have a small buffet and plates to order. At night, it turns into a steak house that has a wonderful menu. Reservations are required for dinner.

**The Arts Café:** This is one of my favorite areas in the ship. A large room with lots of seating that I see as a very enhanced coffee shop. Food is out all day long changing from breakfast / lunch / pre dinner snacks. Serving wonderful coffee and teas, and all-day ice cream. The reception and cruise consultant's desk are in this area.

## Public Areas

The Silver Endeavour only just 200 guests and all the public areas are very spacious.

**Lounges:** There is an **Observation Lounge** on Deck 9 with panoramic views. The hallway to the Observation Lounge you will find the **Library, the Studio and Science Room with maps and charts**. You will often find the some of the expedition team in this area happy to answer any questions you may have. **The Explorer Lounge** is where the daily recaps take place. Situated on Deck 3 adjacent to the dining room.

On Deck 5, there is an aft observation area and a Promenade Deck. On Deck 6, there is a forward observation deck with a hot tub. Deck 10 there is a running track.

**Spa:** On deck 5 near the solarium, you find the spa with treatment rooms, a yoga studio and a gym.

**Connoisseurs Corner:** This cozy cigar lounge is located on deck 3.

**The Mud Room and Laundry:** Located on deck 2 this is the area where get ready for your expedition. There is also a laundry in this area, complete with a coffee machine.

## Technology

The Silver Endeavour has amazing technology. The Shotover gimbal camera system and the remote operated vehicle can take high quality images of wildlife up to 3 miles and footage is streamed directly to the TVS on the ship. The remote vehicle can explore to depths of nearly 2,000 feet for underwater photos.

Super-charged stabilizer and top end engines, polar class rating PC6 with an ice-strengthened hull will take you safely to many areas of the world. The dynamic positioning system allows to turn quickly and safely. There is no need for an anchor as the ship can maintain its position with it the positioning system.

In Antarctica, when the sea was quite rough with big swells, we were eating comfortably in The Grill. We were amazed at how steady the ship was in this type of sea condition.

# What to Wear

## Cold Weather Clothing

### The Dress for Dinner

There are two nights, Captains welcome and farewell dinners, where ship say elegantly casual rather than casual. On these nights only about 50% of the men wore jackets as dictated in the Silversea materials but most did not wear a tie. There were also some who did not wear a jacket and they were certainly not turned away. The other nights the dress was very casual to country club casual. Men wore open neck shirts or sweaters and trousers, and women wore pants and a top most nights. Not as upscale as a normal Silversea ship because this is an expedition cruise and far more casual. **Do not bring only warm items.** The ship is heated and you need some lighter clothing as they do keep it warm on the ship.

### The Dress During the Day on the Ship

Very casual and comfortable. Be sure to bring some cooler clothing as they keep it warm on the ship so you do not need all the heavy fleece type clothing. Even some short sleeve t-shirts would be appropriate.

### What to Wear for the Landing

**LIFE VEST** Last thing you put on is your life vest. These are very small and not big like many life vests can be. Not uncomfortable to wear.

**WALKING STICK** If anyone has a little difficulty with balance, a walking stick is a great idea and it does help steady you on the rocky landings. Quite a few people had these.

**PROVIDED CLOTHING** The ship will provide you with a polar parka and backpack that you can take home with you when you leave the ship. Even though the parka does not look very thick, it has a puffer jacket underneath and then the red polar parka. It is surprisingly warm and works great. I bought a new coat for my first trip and never used it! Make sure that your provided rubber boots are big enough for your pants and sock layers. This is important since they are hard to get on and off, especially if they are too tight. The pre-cruise materials suggest you bring your own boots, but in the past, there were plenty onboard. If you have exceptionally small or large feet then consider buying a pair of boots or renting them from Silversea.



**IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU BRING A PAIR OF WATERPROOF PANTS** The cheap type works fine with the rubber inside. We purchased a pair from REI of the lighter weatherproof nylon that were about \$75 and I actually really liked these pants. Be sure that they say WATERPROOF not WATER RESISTANT. Zippered pockets helped hold our room keys and the pants dry quickly. Sporting goods stores carry these. Lots of people had rubber overalls and they worked well, but pants are sufficient. These are very ugly but do not worry, everyone looks just the same.

**FIRST LAYER** First you need a layer of long underwear, top and bottom.; The silks are highly touted but I found that the plain cotton duofold sold at Oshmans and other sporting goods stores work the best. It is, of course, a personal choice. The silks are thinner, but believe me, everyone looks like a roly-poly, so it really does not make any difference. Dillard's carries a line of long underwear for women that I found to be excellent. I would also buy

the liner socks. These are either silk or cotton, very thin to wear under the thick socks. This makes quite a difference in the warmth and comfort factors. Another thing I found very helpful, was the liner gloves. This makes it much easier to slip on and off your leather gloves. Hand and foot warmers can be helpful but at most times it is not that cold. I always carry these but often do not use them. [Click here to purchase Hand/Foot Warmers from Amazon](#)

**SECOND LAYER** For the top I would wear another t-shirt, or if it appears to be cold, a layer of fleece, which is still light, yet warm. This is plenty with the polar parka that the cruise line will provide you. *NO ONE WILL EVER SEE THIS CLOTHING* as the parka covers up everything, so just buy cheap fleece tops; two would be sufficient. For the bottom, you need a pair of pants to go between the long underwear and the rubberized waterproof pants. If you do not have an extra layer and you perspire, you can get cold. I would suggest something that thins out at the ankle. You need to stuff all this in your boots, so if it is too full at the bottom it can be a problem. My husband wore blue jeans; I wore a pair of fleece pants. You will need one or two pairs of wool or ski socks. I wore two pairs and never had cold feet; my husband wore one pair and was fine.

**THIRD LAYER** You need a hat. The ones that worked the best were fleece, which is light and warm. The only problem is if the hat rides up, your ears can get very cold. The people that had hats with earflaps or earmuffs were very smart. These looked so silly in the store, but they really work well. The parka the ship gives you has a hood, but you need a warm layer under that. You will need leather or waterproof gloves. Fleece gloves get wet very quickly, so they do not work well. Once you take off those gloves, it is hard to put them back on without the glove liners. Put on your waterproof pants, your parkas, and your rubber boots and away you go. Always put the first pair of pants inside the boots and the rubberized pants on the outside of the boots. This way you stay dry when you step into water.

# Antarctica Landing Reports

*All pictures taken by Ken Hutyra during our cruises to South Georgia and Antarctica*

## The Falklands

Depending on your cruise ship itinerary you may do zodiac landings in the Falkland's or simply go to Port Stanley.

## New Island

A wonderful landing where you will see rockhopper penguins, brown-browed Albatross and their chicks, Upland Geese and King Cormorants. Landing on sandy beach, you talk a slow and gentle walk up the hill where the Upland Geese are in the grass. At the top of the hill, you are greeted by noise and wildlife in every direction. The penguins hop from the sea up the steep cliffs and then when returning to the sea they jump down as the waves come into shore.



## Saunders Island

Landing on a sandy beach, you walk along the foreshore and we were greeted by gentoo, Magellanic and King penguins. As you climb a little higher, you reach the colonies and can enjoy the antics of these delightful birds. On our landing, the wind was blowing and the drifting sand in between the penguins and the penguins riding the surf to get ashore was truly a stunning sight. For those who did not mind an uphill climb there was also brown-browed albatross colony and a stunning view of the harbor.



## Port Stanley

Port Stanley is the only "port of call" where we used the ship's tenders rather than the zodiacs. It is an interesting little town with pubs, tearooms, pretty gardens and shipwrecks everywhere.

It was nice to see the capital of the Falklands and we purchased quite a few items in the little shops. It is very English and they had some nice things to buy as mementos of the Falklands. The Information Center will be right in front of you when you debark the tenders. It is worth going in here. They do have Internet, but often it is in use.



They have a flyer that shows where the Internet services are located in the town and there are several different places. There is a bus that takes tourists to a Magellanic Penguin colony and this may be the only time you get to see this type of penguin. However, this experience will not be anything like the penguin encounters you will have in South Georgia or Antarctica. Some cruises offered some excursions that everyone really enjoyed. These trips took you to local farms where you could see penguin colonies. Some of the excursions were on 4-wheel drive vehicles. Since these are different penguins than you will see in South Georgia or Antarctica, it may be a wise thing to take these excursions. The town is small so there is not much else to do with your time in Port Stanley

## South Georgia

Why go to South Georgia? It is a wonderland of scenery and wildlife. I do encourage anyone considering the shorter Antarctica trip to reconsider. The king penguins are a really special breed and cannot be seen on an Antarctica only trip. Both areas offer incredible experiences that are so different it seems a shame to venture all the way to Antarctica and not include the islands of South Georgia.

On our first trip, I was not sure if I would enjoy the experience so I opted for the shorter Antarctica only trip. This simply meant I had to return to also include South Georgia. In the end, it cost me more time and money than if I had done both in the first place. If your time and finances allow it, I sincerely suggest you consider a cruise that encompasses both areas. Many consider their experiences in South Georgia as the highlight of the entire trip.

The diversity of wildlife in South Georgia is amazing. From the HUGE colonies of king penguins with the furry little brown chicks to the fur seals with pups that are so adorable; the huge elephants seals challenging each on the beach at Gold Harbor; to the wandering albatross colony; you will be delighted. The albatross has up to a 12-foot wing span and they swoop right over your head at Pinion Island. It is a photographer's dream, with the stunning landscape of green grass, the wildlife, and glaciers all in one picture. You also have the fascinating history of Sir Ernest Shackleton who came to South Georgia for help for his stranded men and is buried at Grytviken you can visit his grave.



## Rosita Harbor

This harbor is home to thousands of fur seals. The ship runs zodiac cruises around the edge of the bay, stopping at the areas of most activity to see the antics of the young fur seals and their parents. The little seals are learning to swim in the protection of the beds of kelp and further out the larger seals are porpoising around the zodiacs.

This was our first sighting of a "blondie" (a white fur seal) that is not an albino since they have some pigment. The birds were fascinating as they landed close to the zodiacs and flew over our heads. We were told we could not land on shore since an adult fur seal can be quite defensive of her young so it was not safe. However, even without landing it was a fantastic afternoon and it exceeded my expectations.



## Fortuna Bay, Shackleton, Glaciers and Whaling Stations

A wonderful landing spot full of king penguins and gentoo penguins. Seals were abundant and there were some herds of reindeer as well. There is a glacier as a back-drop to the fairly green tussock grass and the nice wide beach. The baby seals were a key attraction here with a small pool where the young seals are learning to swim. Looked like a seal day care facility, and was just delightful to watch. With a stream that ran across one area of the landing, the king penguins standing in the stream, the beautiful bay as a back-drop, and our ship, the Silver Explorer, anchored in the harbor it made for a



picture-perfect setting. South Georgia has an interesting history with the incredible story of Sir Ernest Shackleton and the whaling industry.

The other landing is to allow people to retrace Sir Ernest Shackleton's final portion of his trek to seek help for his men on Elephant Island and you walk from one side of South Georgia to the other. This is not an easy trek that requires some uphill walking and takes about three hours. For those in good shape and who like to hike, this is a wonderful experience. However, those that have doubts about their ability to take the walk should probably not attempt this as you cannot turn back. Once you start the walk, you must finish the walk. On this day, we off loaded those who were brave enough to take the final part of the hike that Shackleton made to reach the whaling station in Stromness Bay. Those who stayed on board enjoyed the incredible scenery of glaciers, mountains and old whaling stations along the coast.

## Grytviken

Grytviken is the official entry port of South Georgia and a Maritime officer will come on board to clear the ship. This is where Sir Ernest Shackleton is buried and the ship held a ceremony at the gravesite. Around the gravesite, were large elephant seals and we could "smell them" before we saw them wallowing in mud along the pathway. Located in the abandoned whaling station is a whaling museum and a small church. A walk was offered over the hill for wonderful views of the bay to the museum and church or you can take a shorter walk along the harbor and see all the baby fur seals. The museum is small but very well done and offers insight into the life of the whalers. You can buy souvenirs and post letters from the post office located inside the museum. The church was tiny and very picturesque.



## St. Andrews Bay

We awoke this morning to see bright sunshine shining on the mountains and hordes of King Penguins on the land. This is reported to be the largest King Penguin Rookery in South Georgia. What a magnificent sight! We were all anxious to get ashore and we were certainly NOT disappointed. There are small hills you can climb and look down to so many King Penguins that it was hard to even comprehend. Activity was taking place everywhere and all our cameras were clicking away as the Penguins entertained us with their antics. The waterfront was especially active with baby seals and penguins going in and out of the water and interacting with each other.



## Gold Harbor

This was many people's favorite landing in South Georgia. The diversity of scenery is truly spectacular; mountains, glaciers, plants, seals, birds and thousands of King and Gentoo penguins. The combination of the glacier and the rich green plants make for a stunning backdrop to the penguins. At our landing site, there were many elephant seals all piled on top of one another, grunting and making loud noises. They are so big when you are close to them. We all experienced an overwhelming sense of wonder at everything we were seeing. A stream ran through the beach area and many penguins were in the water and crossing between areas. Seeing the Gentoo penguins and the King penguins together was a treat



## Prion Island

This is a delightful spot that is all about birds and seals. You will be greeted on the beach by many fur seals and their pups plus birds sitting on the beach. This landing is all about the largest flying birds, the wandering albatross, as these birds are nesting on this island. A wooden walkway has been erected from the beach all the way up to the nesting area of the albatross.

It is a lot of steps but pretty easy walking. What is fun, is that the fur seals like using the walkway too and are often a few steps ahead of you and finally jump off as you arrive. Now and then, one will give you a little charge but of course you just clap your hands and they back off. Once you reach the nesting area, there is a viewing platform and you can be quite close to the birds and the fluffy grey chicks. It is a lovely sight and the view from the top is wonderful. This is a very easy walk that anyone without major walking difficulties can do. These birds can have a 12-foot wingspan and the opportunity to view these books up close is a unique experience.



## Antarctica

Antarctica is quite different from South Georgia. Here you leave the greenery behind and enter a world of ice, rock and snow. Very little grows here and the land is very fragile and must be treated with great respect. The beauty of this region is impossible to describe!

The nature of Antarctica is pristine but with rapid weather changes, from brilliant sunshine to driving gale force winds in a very short period of time. It is generally colder here than in South Georgia. If you have a calm day, it is amazingly comfortable with your long underwear and parkas and often you see people peeling off layers of their clothing. During the tourist summer season there are many gloriously sunny days to enjoy the spectacular scenery.

In Antarctica, you can see various types of seals; Weddell, Fur, Crabeater and Leopard Seals. Many varieties of whales and of course the stars of the show are the Penguins. Adelie, Chinstrap, and Gentoo are the penguins you will see in Antarctica.

These are the landings we have made. **Each trip will have different landing sites depending on the conditions during your trip.**



## Elephant Island and Point Wild

Most expeditions can only sail past this historical spot due to weather conditions. Fortunately, on one of our trips we experienced PERFECT conditions and it was a great outing. You cannot land but you do a zodiac ride around the area where Shackelton's crew were stranded and a statue is in place to the Argentine Captain who finally rescued the men. The area is full of chinstrap penguins and watching them entering and returning from the water and porpoising around the zodiacs was very entertaining. The adjoining bay had some spectacular icebergs that we buzzed around in the zodiacs.





On our 2012 cruise, we actually landed on Elephant Island. We were told the night before that there was little hope of landing on Elephant Island and in 10 years our expedition leader had never been able to land. That morning there was no wind, perfectly calm seas and there was excitement in Robin West's voice as he said "wear your rubber boots we are going to land". Each zodiac took turns landing as the landing area is very small and they laid out towels on the rocks to make it easier. Prior to our turn to land, we spotted a humpback whale from the zodiac and also watched spellbound as penguins jumped from the water high onto an iceberg. See picture at right.

Landing was exciting, a truly once in a lifetime experience. To stand in the place where Shackelton's men waited for rescue and comprehend how they were able to survive brought the story to life. There is a chinstrap penguin colony on the island so we also had the penguins to entertain us.

## Paulet Island

Paulet Island is located in the Weddell Sea. The odor here was the worse that we experienced on our entire trip, so with our fleece pulled over our noses we landed on shore. However, the scene was worth the smell as we were surrounded by a large colony of Adelie Penguins. It was very slippery so many stayed fairly close to the landing spot and just enjoyed watching the penguins. In a few weeks after we left, all these penguins will depart the island and go to sea.



An explorer, Larsen, and his men wintered here when stranded during an expedition. At the top of the hill, are the remains of a small stone hut they built. After the landing, we took a zodiac cruise of the icebergs around the island that were a beautiful blue in color with the penguins jumping into and out of the water.

## Fridtjof Sound

Later that afternoon we sailed through the Antarctic Sound and we went via the scenic Fridtjof Sound. We were treated to the sight of many whales and also massive tubular icebergs. The captain positioned the ship very close to a huge iceberg and we were all in awe of the color and size of this iceberg. During the afternoon, there were porpoising penguins jumping in front of the ship and birds at the rear of the ship. There were photographic moments around us all afternoon.



## Deception Island

Seals were everywhere along the beach. This is an abandoned British Antarctica Survey Base. It was also "swimming day." This is a volcanic area and the crew dug a pool on the beach. Due to the volcanic region, the water was warm and it became a hot tub. The plan was to run into the ocean and then run back to the beach and jump in the hot tub. A surprising number of the passengers engaged in this exercise. I think seeing people peel off polar parkas and long underwear to their swimming trunks was a spectacle I will always remember.



There were a few Chinstrap Penguins were on the beach, but not a large colony. The area right outside of Deception Island is where many whales are spotted. On our departures from Deception Island, we have seen Orcas, Humpback and Fin whales very close to the ship.

## Hannah Point

It was windy and a little rainy; however, it did not dampen anyone's enthusiasm because we were all wondering how the landings could get any better than what we had already experienced. Next stop was Hannah Point to see the elephant seals, gentoo and chinstrap penguins.

I was very grateful for the waterproof pants, as we did get splashed in the zodiacs going over. Once there, it was another stunning scene; thousands of penguins with gentoos on one side and chinstraps on the other. If a chinstrap strayed into gentoo territory, the gentoo would chase him away and then of course the gentoo ended up in chinstrap territory. It was a constant battle with them chasing each other back and forth. After walking up a slight incline, you look down on this incredible scene with lots of elephant seals lying on the beach piled on top of each other and surrounded by penguins going into and out of the water. With the rugged cliffs and raging sea, it was really fantastic scene and showed the wild side of Antarctica.



## Paradise Bay

The zodiac cruise of Paradise Bay was a wonderful experience. Huge glaciers and beautiful icebergs in every shape and size are all over the bay. This bay is in front of the Argentine Almirante Brown Station.

The landings are split so one group takes the cruise and one group visits the Almirante Brown Station and then a switch takes place. We saw whales, penguins and seals in the water and we moved our zodiacs very close. On one of our trips in Paradise Bay, our zodiac engine broke down and we were "rescued at sea" by another zodiac. A high-tech maneuver took place, where by the placing of oars between the two zodiacs we simply stepped across. It was quite thrilling. The glacier at the head of the bay has a unique shape that looks like a modern sculpture of a city skyline.

The picture below of a mushroom shaped iceberg with the small zodiac in front gives an idea of the size of this structure of ice. The seals are lounging on the ice and if you get too close, they slip in the water and then return very shortly after you leave.



## Almirante Brown Station

For many this is a very important stop as it is here that you actually stand on the seventh continent. After the cruise of Paradise Bay, we stepped onto the continent of Antarctica and visited the Argentine Almirante Brown Station. You could climb up the hill and slide down the ice to the bottom, if you wanted. The surroundings were really spectacular and everywhere you looked were mountains and glaciers, and, of course, gentoo penguins. There are a few researchers here but they do not sell souvenirs.



## Peterman Island

Peterman Island is located at the end of the Lemaire Channel. This beautiful rocky island is idyllically positioned in a natural bay. There is a penguin research place on the island with tents on it that the researchers stayed in during the summer.

On one of our trips to Peterman Island, there was a lot of snow on this landing and a lone penguin sitting on an ice right where we landed. Once again, there was the "click-click" of everyone's cameras. He looked like he was orchestrating the landing. Gentoo Penguins welcomed us ashore and further up an incline we found the Adelie penguins. This is a beautiful spot with mountains and icebergs all around the island.



## Lemaire Channel

This is a beautiful passage through a narrow channel that opens to the bay for Peterman Island. As you sail down the channel, the ship is constantly in sight of glaciers and photo opportunities. In the four hours we had been on Peterman Island, a large iceberg had blocked a portion of the narrow entrance to the channel. Looking at this iceberg, it really seemed to block our path. We watched as our Captain maneuvered the ship around the iceberg.



## The Iceberg Garden

I thought the icebergs at Paradise Bay were fantastic, but then we went into the iceberg garden. How anyone can explain what we saw, I do not know. Pictures cannot do this scene justice. There are incredible, large icebergs of every shape and color of blue you can imagine. Seals were everywhere and of many different varieties. It was amazing! Everyone was quiet because it was very mesmerizing and special. You did not want to break the absolute peace and tranquility of the surroundings.



## Port Lockroy

A British Station where you could go shopping. The two men manning the station sold t-shirts, stamps, postcards, etc., and you could mail something with a "South Pole" postmark. This was a lot of fun to do. It was also a beautiful spot with Gentoo Penguins absolutely everywhere and a backdrop of glaciers in every direction. Some of our best pictures came from here because the surroundings were once again spectacular.

I did not want to leave this area as the little penguin chicks seemed to be particularly inquisitive at this spot. Perhaps they were more comfortable with humans because the station was there. We also saw a variety of birds and small chicks wandering around among the penguins.



## The Neumayer Channel

The mountains were mirrored in the water and the channel was clogged with ice and icebergs. We tested the ship's ice rating as we made our way slowly through the ice and avoided the icebergs that often-held seals. We spotted whales and once again, the cameras clicked away furiously as everyone tried to capture this magical moment. The water where there was no ice was mirroring more than I have ever seen anywhere in the world.



The captain opened up the front of the ship and everyone was leaning over in amazement as the ice parted and we moved forward. When I show people pictures of this afternoon, it does not seem real. Picture postcard perfection in every shot.

## Cuverville Island

Another zodiac cruise in another amazing iceberg garden where we saw absolutely magnificent icebergs in every shape and size, however this time in brilliant sunshine. They looked so different from the other iceberg garden. Both were beautiful and I was so glad I had seen them in an both in an overcast sky (the blues are brighter) and then in the sunshine. Then we were onto Cuverville Island, for our last visit with our new found penguin friends.



This scene is hard to describe as there are thousands of penguins; which were very active with all their funny behaviors, and we now understood so much more. The ship nestled in the background with a huge mountain behind it and then in front the magnificent iceberg garden. Everywhere you look there is a photo opportunity.

## Visit To Russian Base of Bellingshausen and Chilean Base of Presidente Frei

King George Island and Maxwell Bay have the biggest concentration of Scientific Stations anywhere in the Antarctica. Of the two bases that were located next to each other, one was Russian and one was Chilean. These were interesting to visit and we wandered around looking over all the buildings, including a small Russian Church.



There was a store that offered souvenirs for purchase. Both the Chilean and Russian Bases, had small churches and the Russian Base allowed us to visit inside their quarters and they were surprisingly comfortable. Surprisingly there were about 15 children on the base, from small children to teenagers. Most of the staff, go home for the winter but a few remain onboard throughout the year.

## Madder Cliffs

This was an outstanding landing. The area has a great Adelle colony with a sensational backdrop of heavy ice with incredible shapes and sizes. Walking on the ice (not too slippery) you can actually go quite a distance up the hill, about a 20-minute walk. The moment you step ashore you are among the penguins so how far you want to walk is up to you. Almost everyone saw Leopard Seals on the ice and it was a wonderful experience.



## Brown Bluff

This is an Adelie penguin rich area with a black sand beach under a giant Brown Bluff. Located in the Antarctica Sound, the scene is wonderful and this landing is located on the mainland of Antarctica. A landing here means you have stepped on the 7<sup>th</sup> continent. The Adelie's line the beach marching up and down and finally one hits the water and then it is like a row of dominos as they all follow the leader into the surf. it was here I sat still and a penguin hopped right into my lap - how much more magical can it get!



## Yankee Harbor

This was a fairly easy landing. Ice had blocked the sandy beach so we had to go up a small rocky hill to reach the colony. Only about 10 to 15 feet to climb and the staff helped you up the hill; most people would have no problem with this landing. The Gentoo Colony was scattered around this large landing area. There were a few fur seals and some great skewer activity with many birds flying around trying to catch some of the smaller chicks. The Gentoos were molting on our visit so they were not too active.



## Cape Horn | South America

The final wondrous event was the opportunity to land at Cape Horn where we visited a Chilean weather station. On one trip, we had calm conditions here and on another the roughest water we had encountered. T-shirts, postcards and small items were available for sale. Several monuments grace the top of the hill. On one side you have the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic on the other side. Incredible picture opportunities with *green grass*, something we had not seen in a while.



I had a chance to play with a little girl that lives at the point. Her parents said she loves it when a ship arrives as I am sure most of the time it is pretty lonely living in this remote location. Upon returning to the landing site, the crew had champagne waiting for us and we sat on down in the sunshine and drank "champagne on the rocks" at Cape Horn.

# Arctic Landing Reports

**Expedition Itineraries:** The itinerary of every trip will be different depending on the weather and ice conditions. On the August 2010 trip, we were able to circumnavigate not just the main Island of Spitzbergen but go around the permanent eastern ice cap of Austfonna on the island of Nordaustlandet. No ship had done this for the previous two years and this was new territory for many of the expedition staff as well. On that trip, we saw 24 polar bears.



## TROMSOE TO LONGYEARBYEN

### Storstappen Island, Norway

Here the days expedition will be a zodiac tour around what we have been previously told was called Bird Island. The correct name is Storstappen Island. From a zodiac, we were able to get close into the cliffs and get better views of the nesting birds. We first spent some time with the skittish puffins - getting pictures is hard they will not allow you too close and they fly away when you try. We saw many Sea Eagles that were quite spectacular soaring over the cliffs and the zodiac. The highlight was going into a wonderful small cave area with brilliant green algae and interesting rock formations. We had some swell on one part of the tour that was probably the most swell I have ever encountered on a zodiac but everyone was fine so I am confident that those new to zodiacs are going to be fine for the whole voyage.



### Nordkapp, Norway

In the afternoon, we arrived in the North Cape area. The tough ones among us did a hike from the shore up the cliff side and then walked to the North Cape. You could see the trail from the ship as it zigzagged up the mountain. Not for me! Those doing the walk debarked and took a zodiac ashore. It was much tougher than anyone had anticipated but all made it safely to the top. The ship sailed onto a small village named Skarvag where the ship provided a bus trip to North Cape for the non-walkers. Skarvag is a small fishing village that is home to 47 people, with 8 children in the one school. Reindeer were everywhere and they like to hang out on the football field. There was one big reindeer in front of each goal and the others milling around the field. It really looked like a game was in progress. It was a beautiful sunny day and the scenery was terrific. North Cape was in sun then heavy fog and then sun again.



### Bear Island (first island in the Svalbard archipelago)

Guests do a zodiac tour of Bear Island. Fabulous scenery with thousands of nesting birds on steep cliffs of many varieties. The new chicks literally fall from the cliffs to join the fathers as they prepare to leave and go to sea. We did not see any new chicks take that huge leap from the cliffs but saw some little ones in the water. The adult birds encircled to the small chick to provide protection. Wonderful sight. A highlight was going through a cave. The entrance provided a little thrill as we ran the swell to the entry, the other side was covered with birds swirling around the cave entrance. It was really dramatic and we all loved it. So, on the way back we decided to "do the cave again" from the opposite direction.

## Kapp Lee

The original plan was a landing at Kapp Lee, however the presence of two Polar Bears changed the afternoon from a landing to a zodiac ride to view the bear and the walrus. One of the polar bears that had wandered down closer to the shore and a small group of walrus on the beach. During lunch, we could see the bear walking around but by the time we got there he had run out of energy and was sleeping on the rocks. There was one walrus that was more fun raising his head out of the water. We were all hoping he would haul himself on land to join the walrus already on the shore but he did not oblige us. We got reasonably close, about 100 yards. In this case, you really needed binoculars to see the animals well.



At the recap tonight, we were told due to the perfect weather and ice conditions we are going to circumnavigate not just the main island of Spitzbergen but go around the permanent eastern ice cap of Austfonna on the island of Nordaustlandet. No ship had done for two years and this was new territory for many of the expedition staff as well. They are all really excited about this opportunity. Supposedly the chance of excellent polar bear sighting is really high in this area.

## Alkefjeller

Alkefjeller an area of a large colony of guillemots perched on sheer rock cliffs, over 10,000 breeding pairs. The ship came really close and we drifted sideways in front of this magnificent rock formation and every tiny ledge was covered with birds. I am sure Ken got great pictures, but a picture could do this scene justice. It was different than being in a zodiac as we were at the same height as some of the nesting birds rather than looking up at them from the water. They look like penguins and there were pink algae in the snow that look like penguin poop. Thought I was on the wrong end of the planet! The weather was again perfect, no wind, bright sunshine the expedition team were very excited about the conditions and had their cameras out as well.



## Augustabukta

We were in the first group to leave for the landing to see walrus on a beautifully sunny day with no wind and totally calm seas. We were not disappointed. Walrus can be like the elephant seals in Antarctica where they just lay there like blobs with little or no movement. Today, we had a couple that were active; that is active relative to discussing walrus activity on land. One big walrus in the front was constantly scratching, sitting up and looking at us and rolling around. I am sure many have some great shots. Shortly after the second group arrived on shore, the polar bear lookouts spotted two polar bears coming from different directions towards the group and the fog started rolling in at the same time. Needless to say, it was a fast exit from the land as everyone grabbed a life vest and boarded the zodiacs. All made it safely back from the shore and this was handled extremely well by crew and passengers. The captain even came on the PA to congratulate the passengers for their efficient evacuation from the beach!



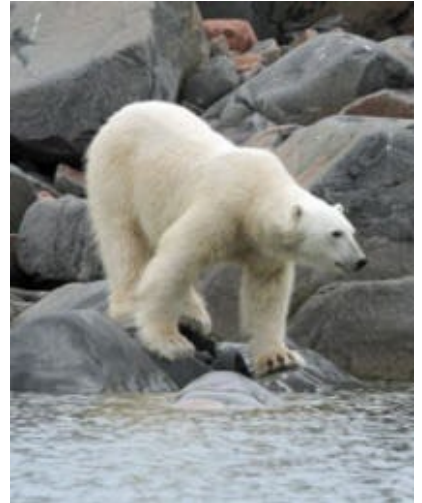
## Brasvilbreen Glacier

Dinner concluded with the most spectacular sail alongside the Brasvilbreen. We went to the bridge and watched waterfall after waterfall pour from the sides of the glacier. This is a spectacular sight and runs for 190 nautical miles alongside the southern and eastern edges of Austfonna. The expedition staff said it's the best glacier sighting they've ever seen. The weather was perfection, blue sky no wind, totally calm sea. It was hard to leave and go to bed!



## Storoya

**WHAT A MORNING!** Polar Bear Heaven! We sailed very close to the glacier around 6:30 am this morning. Wonderful scenery, then at 8:30 am the PA came on that they had seen three bears on shore. We were in the first group out on the zodiacs this morning and initially we saw the bears but they were all laying down and doing very little. One was on the snow and one was on the rocks. At about the same time, they both started stirring and lifting their heads. One started walking and we could see him well in the binoculars but not that well without them. He was raiding the arctic turns nests and the birds were going crazy. We moved around the area and watched these bears for about 30 minutes and just as we were coming back in, we saw two bears together moving over the rocks. We followed the bears with our zodiac and then it really got exciting. One of the bears head was spotted at the top of the rocks. The bear started to walk down to the water. He made his way very slowly and the cameras were going crazy. He came right to the water's edge and looked like he may get in the water to come and visit a nice food source - "US"! We were so close to the bear you did not need binoculars to see his massive feet and claws. We had the expedition leader in our zodiac and he told all the zodiacs to start backing away. It was an incredible sighting. Cannot imagine it can get better than that. We saw either 5 or 6 polar bears this morning but the one that put on a show for us will never be forgotten.



**WHAT AN AFTERNOON!** Polar Bear and Walrus Heaven!

The wind picked up and white caps were on the ocean. We were all in the second zodiac group so we were very comfy playing cards as the first zodiacs went out. Watching the zodiacs pitching around and spray flying it was tempting to stay onboard. After all, how much better could it get than this morning? All but three of us decided to venture out. Those coming in from the first zodiac were soaking wet but looked really happy and said it was worth it to get wet. Then we heard there are three polar bears and lots of walrus and the bears are circling the walrus and the walrus are everywhere in the water. So now we were all pretty excited about the adventure. It was not as rough in the zodiacs as it had appeared and then right after we started going to the shore line the sun broke through and the wind died down a little. It was still choppy but not bad.

When we got to the shoreline, there were walrus in the water all around us. It is amazing how graceful they are in the water. Our zodiac driver had to be very careful as he maneuvered our zodiac among the walrus and the other zodiacs. Three polar bears were on the shore all slightly separated from each other. The best was one bear that was really close to a group of walrus and started circling around the walrus. We were hoping he would make a charge at the walrus but no such luck. The walrus is as likely to win that battle as the polar bear. The bears only go for the old and weak or for young walrus. This was a scene straight out of National Geographic. The walrus were everywhere in the water and on land, three polar bears, and an incredible cloud formation that looked like mountains. We got a little wet coming back and the cold was starting to set in but worth every second for the sights we saw.





## Polar Plunge

This morning we got close to 81 degrees and then we stopped to do the POLAR plunge (those brave souls that wished to take a dip in the Arctic Ocean). Only one in our group, took that challenge and we all took pictures as he plunged under the water. It was fun watching people jump in and come out as fast as they could. The two executive chefs took the plunge complete with Chefs hats.



This afternoon there was a landing on shore and it was nice to step on land but this particular landing was not as interesting as other landings we had done. We were in groups and could not wander off and explore on our own.

## Monacobreen, Liefdefjord

*Incredible Polar Bear, Glacier and Birds:* At about 7:00 am, the PA announcement made us aware of a polar bear on an iceberg with a seal kill. We had about 10 minutes to get up on deck to see this wonderful sight. The bear was really quite close to the ship. He was eating the seal and the birds were flocking around for a few scraps. Unfortunately, the seal slid off the ice and then the polar bear went into the water and then started swimming to the shore. What a way to start a day.



At about 8:00 am, we departed the ship for a zodiac tour of the Monacobreen Glacier that proved to be another "wow" experience. The water was dead calm, the sun was shining and it was not very cold. We were fortunate to have the expedition leader, Robin, as our guide. The glacier was large and angled around the bay. There was a cave at one point that was constantly calving in HUGE chunks causing waves and swell. In the zodiac we edged as close as we could safely and saw some of the biggest calving I have ever seen and the appropriate waves and swell. We then stopped at another zodiac where the captain was serving champagne and chocolate covered strawberries. Gives a new meaning to champagne on ice!!

Then we went over to an area that has thousands of birds that feed in this area due to the food that is churned up from the glacier activity. As we watched another major calving took place and the birds scattered in every direction. A scene out of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

We looked at a large piece of black ice that has large rocks embedded that had come off the moraine of the glacier where two glaciers met. Plus, we got right next to a huge blue iceberg where we could touch it and stand in the zodiac and see how beautiful it was on the surface of the iceberg.



The finishing touch to the morning was when a huge piece of blue ice popped up on the surface from below. I never knew this would happen but our guide said this is always a danger as these pieces break off the glacier below the water line and pop up to the surface and there is no way to know when that will happen. Another reason there is a distance that must be kept. As Jim B said it was like the glacier giving birth.



## Afternoon Activity

In the afternoon, the landing turned into more polar bears. We were supposed to visit a trapper's hut and do a landing, but the bears are everywhere. This trip has seen 19 bears so far. A large polar bear was between the

landing spot and the hut so that made a landing impossible. However, the good news was they also spotted a mother bear and cub and so the plans were changed and a zodiac ride to view the mother and cub was planned.

The wind had picked up and the seas were white capping. It was obvious that it was going to be a wet and bumpy trip. The zodiacs are so stable that you can go in weather that you would not consider in a tender. The ride over was wet and big splashes hit us all. It took about 5-10 minutes in the choppy seas and spray to reach the polar bears. Then it started to rain lightly.

It looked like one bear was sleeping as it was curled up in a ball. We went round and round in circles looking at the bear but it looked like the bear was not going to move. She would raise her head from time to time and then just flop down again. So, we decided to head back to the ship and had just started our return when we saw the bear had moved a little and you could see the cub. Quick turn around and we headed back. We were rewarded with the mother rolling on her side with her head up and cub started nursing. The area they were laying had some nice moss and flowers it was a lovely setting. Of course, if we had sun, no rain and calm seas it would have been picture perfect. Ken was still able to get some nice shots and I am so ready for him to post some of these pictures as they are worth a thousand words.



## Smeerenburg

This morning we were at Smeerenburg, an old whaling station. The plan was to do a landing and visit the remains of this old whaling station. We were in the second group this morning. After the first group landed, a bear was sighted in the water that had come on shore and was heading towards the landing site. So, everyone quickly headed back into the zodiacs again and abandoned the landing site. Both groups did a zodiac ride to watch the bear. He was laying down and not too exciting just raising his head from time to time. We then did a zodiac tour of the whaling station. This is a stunning area with beautiful mountains that had just received fresh snow. Our zodiac driver was a Marine Biologist and spotted some jelly fish. One was really large with huge long tentacles and this added to the enjoyment of the morning excursion.



## Magdalena Fjord

The original plan for the afternoon was to visit an area where a whale had washed up on shore that the polar bears were feeding on. This had been written up in earlier logs of the ship so I was enthusiastic about this plan. However, the expedition leader came on and said we had seen enough bears already so we were going to head to Magdalena Fjord where people could do a landing and some walking in the Arctic. This is an area where there are not a lot of bears. Lots of complaints from the passengers; how can you ever see ENOUGH bears? So off we went, and when we arrived in the fjord, you guessed it, immediately they spotted a bear, and with a bear spotted, no landing was possible. This is a beautiful fjord and everyone enjoyed the scenery while an alternative plan was put in place. YEAH! The expedition leader decided to return to the area of the whale carcass and polar bears. So, we headed in that direction. Everyone on the ship was happy.



## Sallyhamna

The weather changes so fast. The first group went out and came back saying there was hail and snow and rough water and it was very cold, but they saw four bears and it was worth it. When we went, the sea had calmed down the sun was shining, no snow or hail and it was not that cold. We saw two bears, both sprawled out on the rock and sleeping. By the time we headed back, the seas had become rough and the wind had picked up. The weather changes in an instant. I am not sure of the count on the polar bears but it is in the low twenties.

## July 14th Glacier

This morning we arrived at the July 14th Glacier. This is a spot that we visited last year. The expedition team map out the easiest route (still not easy) to go up to and stand on the glacier which is an activity many enjoy. If you do not want to do that climb, then you can wander around on the shore and see the bird cliffs with many birds, including puffins and hope for a sighting of an arctic fox raiding the birds' nests and walk to the base of the glacier. It is a really nice landing the base is small round rocks for the most part with the bigger rocks and boulders closer to the glacier. The conditions were good only a very light wind and an overcast sky with patches of blue. During the landing, most made it up on the glacier, quite a few saw an Arctic Fox and the puffins were wonderful from the zodiac and many got some great puffin shots.



## Disembarkation

The adventure is over - it was an amazing trip! We purchased a transfer to town, which gave us two hours to look around and then a transfer to the airport for our flight back to Oslo via Tromsø. There is a free internet cafe in the mall area where I stayed and looked after everyone's carry-on luggage. I have been to Longyearbyen three times and spent three nights here and it is very small so I was happy to sit and play luggage-sitter. Many visited the museum which is really well done and lots of shopping took place. This is a good spot to eat lunch as it is tax-free and the food is much cheaper. The flight home was uneventful other than the hassle of getting off the plane in Tromsø, collecting your luggage (supposedly clearing customs). I saw one officer day dreaming in a corner paying no attention. Then you have to recheck your bags again, line-up and board the exact same plane.



We had a marvelous time, fell in love with the ship and the BEST expedition team we have ever experienced and look forward to returning to hunt for more polar bears.