



On The Edge Group

ANTARCTICA

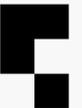
16 Dec 2019 - 30 Dec 2019

Clinical Updates
& Environmental Challenges
in Medicine



**WHY GO ON
THIS TRIP?**

People have been asking us to put together an Antarctica trip now for several years. So here it is...



On The Edge Group

SUMMARY

16 Dec | Ushuaia

Meet in Buenos Aires' domestic airport for the group check-in to fly to Ushuaia.

Transfer to hotel. Welcome dinner tonight.

Overnight Hotel Altos Ushuaia. Dinner included today.

17 Dec | Ushuaia

Introductory session / free day to explore Tierra del Fuego National Park or the museums of Ushuaia. Overnight Hotel Altos Ushuaia. Breakfast included.

18 Dec | On board

Embark this afternoon on M/V Plancius, setting sail along the Beagle Channel. Overnight M/V Plancius. Breakfast & dinner.

19 Dec | On board

Sail across the Drake Passage. Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

20 Dec | On board

Another full day at sea, you should see the coastline of the South Shetland Islands.

Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

21 Dec | On board

Weigh anchor near Wiencke Island. Guided shore landings and activities. Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

22 Dec | On board

Guided shore landings and activities. Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

23 Dec | On board

Sail along the narrow mountainous Lemaire Channel. Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

24-26 Dec | On board

Guided shore landings and activities. Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

27 Dec | On board

Sail away from Antarctica through the Drake Passage. Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

28 Dec | On board

A day at sea as you complete your crossing of the Drake Passage. Overnight M/V Plancius. All meals.

29 Dec | Buenos Aires

Disembark in Ushuaia and fly up to Buenos Aires. Overnight Mine Hotel. Breakfast.

30 Dec | Travel

Transfer back to the airport at a time of your choosing to catch your flight home. Onward travel. Breakfast



16 DECEMBER

USHUAIA

Arrive in Patagonia as you fly south onto the island of Tierra del Fuego and the world's most southerly city.

Head to the airport in Buenos Aires this morning for the flight down to Tierra del Fuego, in the very southernmost part of Argentina. The island of Tierra del Fuego is shared by both Chile and Argentina; Ushuaia, on the Argentine side, is considered the world's most southerly city.

On arrival transfer to your small friendly hotel on the shores of the Beagle Channel a couple of kilometres outside the main town. This afternoon you have time to explore, perhaps taking a walk in the nearby Tierra del Fuego National Park.

In the early 20th century Argentina sent its most dangerous criminals to the prison in Ushuaia – a safe option as there was nowhere for them to escape to.

The prisoners built the city's port and the railway and paved the way for the busy tourist centre it is today. The prison closed in 1947 and is now an excellent museum well worth a visit. There's also a compact museum tracing the history of the Yamana people, the indigenous inhabitants of the region, which is worth a look to discover the human stories behind the spectacular scenery





17 DECEMBER

USHUAIA

Relax today in the town of Ushuaia before you set off across sea toward the Antarctic.

Today is yours to relax as you prepare to board your vessel tomorrow and set sail south for the next, spectacular stage of your adventure.

If you'd like to stretch your legs, it's very easy to arrange a ride into the nearby Tierra del Fuego National Park. If you don't fancy a walk there is also a (very touristy) locomotive train that takes you into the park.

Equally, the town itself is very walkable. While it arguably doesn't have any major points of interest, its role as start/end point for most Antarctic cruises means there's always something of a buzz around the place.



18 DECEMBER *ON BOARD*

Enjoy time to stroll this morning before embarking this afternoon on M/V Plancius to set sail along the Beagle Channel and out into the Southern Ocean towards Antarctica.

After a morning to relax or explore more, this afternoon at approximately 16:00 you board the M/V Plancius where you will be greeted by the boat's Expedition Leader and staff and shown to your cabin.

This evening set sail along the Beagle Channel and into the Drake Passage. This voyage is ideal for anyone who wants to see Antarctica but likes to be more active.

It's also great for couples where one is more active than the other. Remember that activities, though included, are optional and run alongside normal wildlife based shore landings.





19 DECEMBER ON BOARD

Sail across the Drake Passage, the most exposed oceans on the planet. From the ship's bridge you can often see whales and dolphins.

The 500 mile crossing of the Drake Passage takes two days so is a time to get your sea legs and also start to learn about the adventures ahead of you.

There is a programme of talks while on board given by expert lecturers. By the time you arrive at the Antarctic Peninsula you should be up to speed on the continent's history and wildlife and know your Gentoo from your Chinstrap.

The boat operates an Open Bridge policy where you can go up and stand alongside the Captain while he and his crew navigate the ship. GPS cannot always be relied on in the Antarctic so the route is still plotted on charts and maps. All meals are included on the boat, expect buffet breakfasts and lunch and three-course evening meals served at your table in the dining room.



20 DECEMBER *ON BOARD*

After another full day at sea, you should see your first icebergs on the horizon and the coastline of the South Shetland Islands where you will land on the return trip.

Take part in the lectures and get to know your fellow passengers as you continue across Drake's Passage. From the bridge you can look out for seabirds including petrels and albatross as they fly alongside the ship.

As you see land this afternoon, you might try to imagine how the great explorers felt to see land for the first time after weeks in small boats in these seas. Lectures cover not only the natural world but also the incredible stories of human exploration.



21 DECEMBER ON BOARD

Weigh anchor near the dramatic glacial landscapes of Wiencke Island. These secluded calm waters will be base camp for the next two days of active exploration.

Rather than moving on each day, this itinerary tends to spend longer at specific sites on the Antarctic Peninsula – setting up a ‘basecamp’ from where you explore. As well as the ‘normal’ wildlife landings you will be able to kayak, snow-shoe, hike, camp out, ride zodiacs, learn photography and even try mountaineering, though please note that all activities are subject to change or cancellation depending on weather, sea conditions and ice.

Shore landings are led by your naturalist guides and zodiac drivers. Certified by IAATO (International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators), they combine an expertise in safely managing shore landings and small boat navigation with an intimate knowledge of the region’s history, flora and fauna.

This morning disembark and try kayaking in the calm waters around the islands. Full kit is provided and the group is limited to 14 kayakers. Kayaking in Antarctica is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the sheer scale of your surroundings in silence. Return to your boat where you will be greeted by the friendly crew and a hot drink or soup. Hiking is an option this afternoon. This active itinerary allows you to hike away from the shoreline on a three hour guided walk so that you can take in the breathtaking scenery on foot.



22 DECEMBER *ON BOARD*

A professional photographer teaches you how to best capture Antarctica's extraordinary scenery and wildlife in the best possible way.

Antarctica's landscapes are every photographer's dream and even novices find themselves keen to have a go. There is always a professional photographer onboard who can go ashore with you along with your guide for a photo workshop.

As well as the magnificent scenery of mountains, snow and ice, you can expect to see a wide variety of the native wildlife during the next few days.

Birds to look out for are blue-eyed shags, gulls, cape petrels, skuas, snowy sheathbills and Antarctic terns. Marine mammals that you are likely to see include Weddell crab-eaters, leopard seals as well as Orcas, and humpback whales.





23 DECEMBER ON BOARD

Sail along the narrow mountainous Lemaire Channel and stop to watch the humpback whales of Dallman Bay as you reach the most southerly point of your voyage.

Wake up to the sight of mainland Antarctica. Today you have your first continent landing. The peninsula is highly mountainous, its highest peaks rise to 2,800 metres directly from the sea. These mountains are considered to be a continuation of the Andes of South America, with a submarine spine connecting the two.

This morning the ship sails through the breathtaking Lemaire Channel which runs between the Antarctic Peninsula and Booth Island. The passage is about 10km long and about 1.5km wide at its narrowest. High sheer cliffs plunge straight into the iceberg filled waters, said to be amongst the world's most beautiful. Also known as Kodak Gap or Fuji Funnel as most people find it impossible to put down their camera.



24 - 25 DECEMBER ON BOARD

Stay close to the Antarctic mainland for the next two days as you take part in more activities, including the opportunity to put on crampons and go mountaineering.

Take a zodiac ride to get really close to the huge ice formations or take part in another hike on shore. If you are feeling adventurous you can even try mountaineering.

Small groups of no more than six walk together, to the higher grounds of the glaciers in the company of your specialist mountain guides. This is a very rare opportunity to really experience the unparalleled beauty of the peninsula. You do not need technical mountaineering experience but you must be physically fit.

This evening you might like to camp out to give you first hand experience of sleeping in the wilderness. You leave the boat after dinner and go ashore with your guide to a sheltered spot.





26 DECEMBER ON BOARD

Visit one of the continent's meteorological stations to learn about the changes in the environment. Experience the beautiful silence of Antarctica as you paddle along the shoreline of Neko harbour in two person kayaks.

Today you have the opportunity to visit one of the scientific research stations in Antarctica which is one of 30 stations on the continent carrying out important research into glaciology and meteorology.

This afternoon navigate past huge glaciers into Neko harbour. Wrap up warm as you will be in the zodiacs or kayaks for over an hour as you zig zag in and out of huge icebergs and get as close as possible to the glacier faces. On a clear day it is absolutely breathtaking.

As well as kayaking, today is also your last opportunity to step foot on the Antarctic continent so you might like to go for a hike around Paradise Bay. Zodiac rides are always available if you prefer to be less active



27 DECEMBER ON BOARD

Sail away from Antarctica and back out into the Drake Passage as you return north towards Argentina.

This morning you navigate north again via the Melchoir islands and towards the open sea of the Drake Passage. The Drake Passage is entirely open water with no land anywhere around the world at these latitudes. The flow of water here is said to be equivalent to 135 times that of all of the rivers on earth. That's 135 Sverdrups for the technically minded.

This unimpeded flow of water creates a spinning mass of ocean connecting the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean basins. It is this, the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, which cools the continent and creates the ice-cap. Apparently, when there was a land bridge to Antarctica, the temperatures in these latitudes were very significantly warmer.





28 DECEMBER ON BOARD

Today is spent at sea as you complete your crossing of the Drake Passage, landing back in Ushuaia tonight if the crossing is relatively smooth.

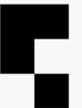
As you spend your last full day at sea, relax and chat with your fellow passengers about the amazing adventure of the last week. If you have a good crossing you may dock this evening in Ushuaia though rough seas can make the crossing take considerably longer.

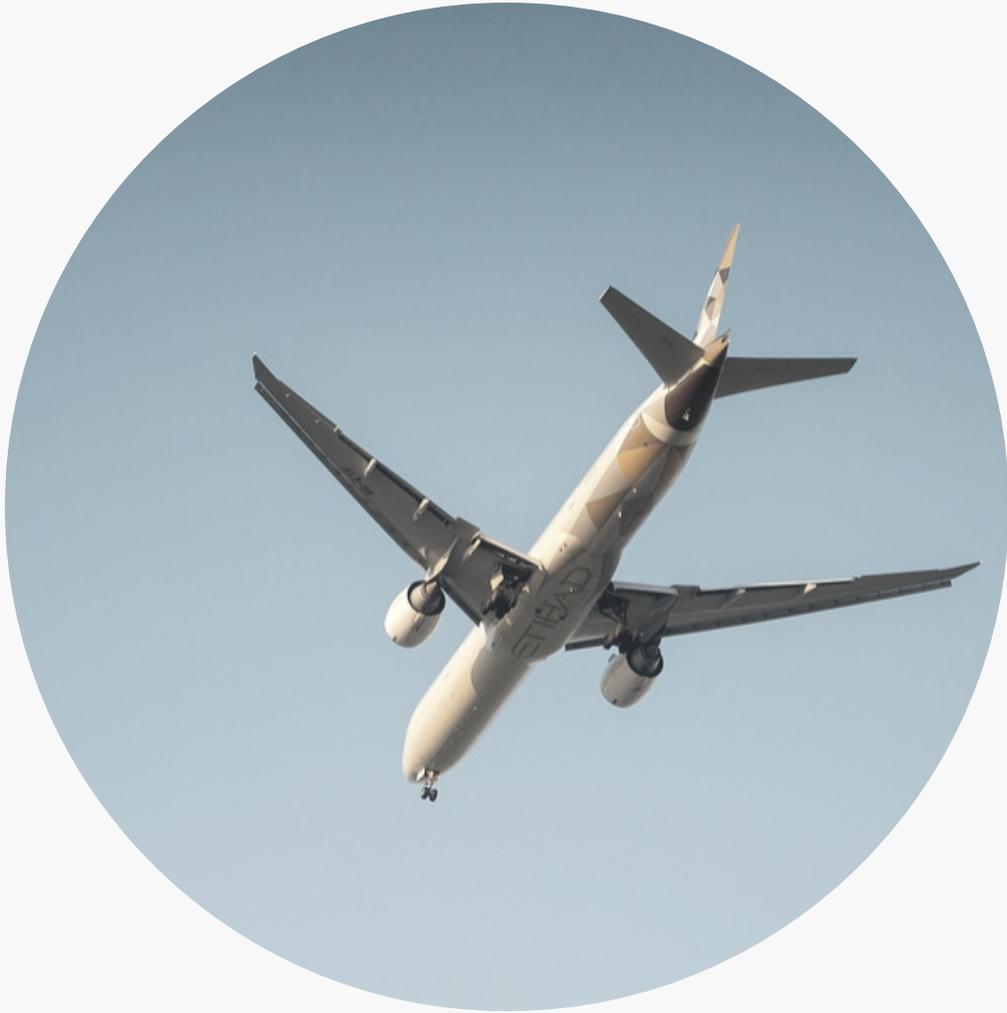


29 DECEMBER
BUENOS AIRES

Disembark in Ushuaia this morning and fly up to Buenos Aires where you spend your last night in South America.

Assuming you docked last night, you will disembark after breakfast to travel the short distance to the airport to fly north to Buenos Aires. Landing late afternoon, transfer to your Palermo hotel for a final night's stay.





30 DECEMBER TRAVEL

Transfer back to the airport at a time of your choosing to catch your flight home..





This journey is continually active but is resolutely not about frenetic adventure, most of our clients on this trip are in their 50s and 60s. But for anyone who loves the great, truly great, outdoors and being active, this is undoubtedly one of our finest adventures.

Antarctica is a very physical place, from the wild southern ocean crossing to the massive ice flows and high mountains. However, what is surprising to most people is that on the Antarctic Peninsula, in summer, conditions are relatively benign. You will want to be wrapped up warm and windproof most days but it isn't unknown for shore landings to happen in light fleeces.

For this particular expedition cruise, there is a distinct active element. What they tend to do is moor up for a couple of days at a time in order to run a rolling programme of activities nearby. During the cruise, you should be able to get out and about to enjoy sea-kayaking, snow-shoeing, hiking and even some mountaineering. For none of these activities do you need previous experience.

The kayaking is in calm waters and is at a level suitable for anyone from beginner up. There is little in this world to beat the quiet splashing sound of the paddles breaking the heavy silence of Antarctic waters.

As with all activities and landings in Antarctica, weather conditions define everything. If the waters are not calm enough then the kayaking will not be possible. Rough waters around the peninsula aren't the norm but are more likely towards the start and end of the summer season (Nov/Mar respectively).

Whilst all small ship Antarctic cruises involve walking on shore, this cruise allows you greater freedom to hike up and inland. Again, routes and extent of walks are defined by weather as well as the group's ability. The ship attempts to group people into similar activity bands to allow everyone to get the most from their time on board.

Show shoeing is a very gentle looking activity which requires rather more concentration than you might imagine – it's very easy to tread on your shoes and tip yourself over!

LEVEL OF ACTIVITY



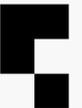


Once mastered though, it's a fantastic sensation to crunch over the top of deep snow. The mountaineering is probably best thought of as high level roped walking – crampons are worn but this is not Chris Bonington stuff, more of a human mule train along the ridges of Antarctica. That's not to make it sound like a trudge, you are walking in the most extraordinary remote place on earth so the views are beyond most people's imagining.

Cruises to the Antarctic run between November and March to take advantage of the long summer days as well as the calmer sea conditions in Drake's Passage. In theory the seas will be calmer in January or February than in November or March. However, this is a journey to the most remote place on earth across its fiercest seas. At any time of the season you can have rough crossings, in fact most crossings are rough to anyone not used to life on a ship.

At this time of year you are in the southern hemisphere's spring and summer, so temperatures in Buenos Aires should be pleasantly warm, even hot in Jan/Feb. Ushuaia, being much further south, will be quite a lot cooler.

LEVEL OF ACTIVITY



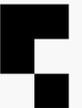


In Ushuaia, you stay in a good quality hotels which is well located. For the Antarctic cruise, you will stay in a twin cabin with private bathroom. As with any expedition boat in these waters, facilities are robust rather than luxurious. These are ships which generally were built for research purposes. At just under 90m long and 15m wide, your ship accommodates up to 116 passengers in 53 cabins. There is plenty of communal space between the restaurant, bar area and observation deck so you have space to roam. Once in Antarctica, sitting out on deck can be just wonderful.

And a final note on the Drake Passage. It's a wild stretch of sea which you cross for a couple of days going south and another couple of days going north. It can be physically demanding and tiring. However, it is part of the journey, part of the experience. It is our strong opinion that Antarctica is a place to be preserved, fiercely protected, and part of that is to make it difficult to get to.

To visit Antarctica, you have to 'earn your stripes' and that's the Drake Passage – or it can be when the seas are rough. That's to underplay the positives of the crossing, which include time to prepare yourself for Antarctica with talks and information as well as enjoying time with your fellow passengers, guides and crew.

LEVEL OF COMFORT



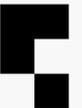


The focus of this holiday is undoubtedly the landscapes and exploring on foot, though you do get a glimpse of life both in one of South America's most cosmopolitan cities, and one of its most remote.

Antarctica is primarily a place to visit for the extraordinary landscapes and wildlife, and rightly so. However, much of what you learn will relate to the amazing human history of the continent. As well as visiting the current research facilities down there, no trip to Antarctica would be complete without an insight into the early days of exploration. Tales of endurance and an unquenchable thirst for discovery paint a very different picture of the first trips to the White Continent.

On a very different note, Antarctic expedition cruises tend to be very international affairs with passengers, crew and guides coming from all over the globe. This alone can make the experience wonderfully enriching.

LEVEL OF CULTURE





We hope to see you there!

ON THE EDGE GROUP

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