

March 2024 – Antarctic: Wilkins Ice Shelf, beyond the polar circle

13 – 28 March 2024

A great Polar experience in one of the most isolated areas on the planet. In this epic journey aboard the Hondius, 107 meters long and 170 passengers, we will explore the remotest regions of the Antarctic Peninsula such as the rarely visited Bellingshausen Sea, Marguerite Bay and Alexander Island. We will sail from the tip of South America to the glaciers and snow-capped peaks of the sixth continent crossing the mythical Drake Passage first and then the polar circle till the spectacular Wilkins Ice Shelf. The grandiose panoramas and the huge icebergs will frame an incredible fauna: Killer Whales, Fin Whales, Humpback Whales, Sea Elephants together with hundreds of thousands of Gentoo, Antarctic, Adelie Penguins and 5 species of Seals including the fearsome Leopard.

PROGRAM

13 March

In Ushuaia we will embark the MV Hondius, a modern 170 passengers ship built for the navigation in the polar waters, an ideal solution for a trip like this that requires several days of open ocean navigation. In the late afternoon we will begin our cruise in the **Beagle Channel** and then in the Southern Ocean and the **Drake Passage**.

Overnight on board.

14-15 March

Crossing the Southern Ocean southwards towards the Antarctic peninsula, **Albatrosses and Giant Petrels** will follow our ship offering excellent opportunities for observation.

Overnight on board.

16 March

Today in the afternoon we will arrive near the **Antarctic Circle**. If pack ice permits, we will sail the **Pendleton Sound** and attempt a landing on the southern tip of the rarely visited **Renaud Island**. Here we will have the opportunity to see the first **Adélie Penguins** and to enjoy a spectacular view of the icebergs present in this unique polar environment.

We will then move to the **Fish Islands** where we will meet one of the southernmost colonies of Adélie Penguins and Antarctic Cormorants.

We will then spend the night in the **Crystal Sound area surrounded by spectacular scenery** where we will have good opportunities to observe **Killer Whales, Humpback Whales and Fin Whales**.

Overnight on board.

17 March

The first goal of the day will be **Detaille Island**, where we will disembark near an abandoned **British research station**, from whose elevated position we will be able to admire the island and the **imposing scenery of the surrounding glaciers**.

We then sail through **The Gullet**, one of Antarctica's narrowest and most impressive channels, with towering mountains on either side, Seabirds follow the vessel as playful Penguins and Seals occupy the floating ice. If conditions allow it in the afternoon we will be able to explore the area by zodiac.

Overnight on board.

18 March

Discovered and charted by the famous explorer Charcot, **Pourquoi Pas** offers a pleasant landing on a rocky beach against the backdrop of the mighty **Moider Glacier**. A gentle walk from the landing site provides an impressive view, while **Antarctic Fur Seals** relaxing behind the beach are a nice addition to the wildlife we've encountered on this voyage.

After lunch we head toward **Horseshoe Island**, named for its distinctive shape. An **abandoned research station** provides an insight into the early days of scientific research, and original artifacts show how different life was in those pioneering days. The hut is set among **some of the most beautiful scenery in Antarctica**, with views over the mountains and snow of Pourquoi Pas Island as well as Horseshoe Island's mountain range. This is a photographic landing in many senses. Two old wooden boats even remain at the landing site as if waiting for their final launch.

Overnight on board.

19-22 March

Provided ice and weather conditions allow, you next head toward **Antarctica's ice shelves (the George IV and Wilkins)**. Here we hope to show you the scale of these vast cliffs and expanses of ice that will dwarf us and our ship. **A range of Antarctic wildlife like Humpback Whales, Fur Seals, Adélie Penguins, and maybe even one or more Ross Seals may appear.**

Overnight on board.

23 March

Jenny Island will give another aspect to your Antarctic experience, offering raised beaches, hanging glaciers, and moss carpets. The island is also popular with wildlife: **Terns, Skuas, Elephant Seals, Leopard Seals, and Adélie Penguins are all regular visitors.**

A landing at **Leonie Island** will take your breath away. There is also the possibility to take a hike to the peak of the island, giving you a **dramatic panorama of Marguerite Bay and Adelaide Island**.
Overnight on board.

24 March

Lagoon Island is the most northern island of the Leonie Islands group, also discovered and charted by Jean-Baptiste Charcot. This low laying island will provide a stark contrast to the previous days with its gently sloped beaches and flat areas to explore. The wildlife here will varies depending on snow cover. If there is little snow the ground is almost desert-like in appearance.

The **Mikkelsen Islands** offer a spectacular Zodiac cruise where we **hope to encounter up to five Antarctic Seal species**. We may also see some beautiful birdlife, such as **Giant Petrels and Adélie Penguins**.

Overnight on board.

25-27 March

Crossing back the Drake Passage northwards towards South America, **Albatrosses and Giant Petrels** will follow our ship offering excellent opportunities for observation.
Overnight on board.

28 March

After breakfast we will disembark and fly home.

* Those who wish to continue the journey can stay onboard and continue with the Lost Archipelagos cruise.

** It is a real expedition in poorly explored areas so the program could be carried out in a different way due to weather or ice; it is essential to be flexible.*

VOYAGE MAP



Included in the price:

- Voyage aboard Hondius as indicated in the itinerary.
- Free use of rubber boots.
- All excursion and activities throughout the voyage.
- Three meals a day during the cruise.
- Group transfer from ship to airport.

Not included:

- Flights.

PRICE PER PERSON Twin Porthole Cabin Euro 11.150
(different cabin categories available, ask for details)