



**OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS**

Expedition Log

The Antarctic Peninsula & The Weddell Sea

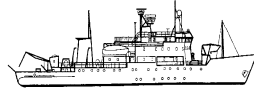
23rd of November – 3rd December 2009

On board the

M/V Professor Molchanov

НИС Профессор Молчанов



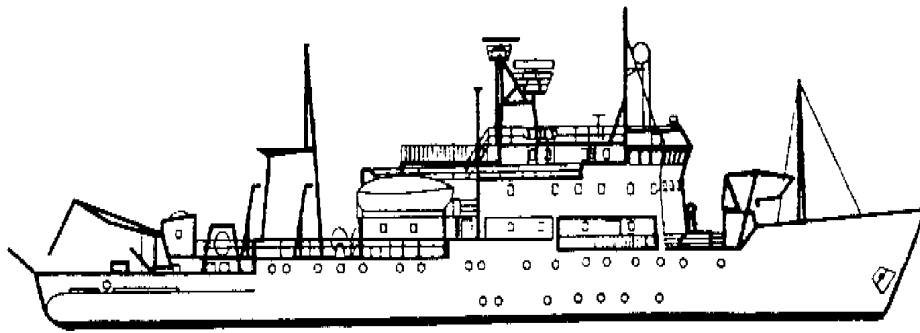


Professor Molchanov

НИС Профессор Молчанов

The "Professor Molchanov" is an ex-research vessel from the Hydrometeorology Institute in Murmansk, Russia. She was built in 1983, in Finland, and was designed as an ice strengthened ship. She measures 71.6 metres (236 ft) in length and 12.8 metres (42 ft) across the beam. She draws 4.5 metres (15 ft), which enables her to move into relatively shallow waters.

Professor Pavil Alexandric Molchanov, the man, was born in the Russia in 1893. He was a famous meteorologist and specialized in the Arctic. He developed radio signals for weather balloons and was the first Soviet person to captain a Zeppelin Airship. He drowned in 1930.



With

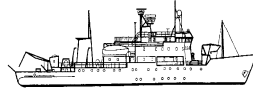
**Captain – Nikolay Parfenyuk
and his Russian Crew of 19**

and

Expedition Leader – Troels Jacobsen (Denmark)
Guide/Lecturer – Jordi Plana Morales (Citizen of the World)
Guide/Lecturer – Oscar Westmann (Sweden)
Hotel Manager – Daniela Cristoff (Argentina)
Head Chef – Richard Arokiasamy (Malaysia)
Sous Chef – Joe Labansin (Malaysia)

Ship's Physician – Dr. Jan Muhring (The Netherlands)

And 48 of us from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Switzerland, UK, USA.



23rd November 2009 – Ushuaia

Position at 16.00 pm: 54°50'S / 68°20'W

“Channel about 1½ miles wide, hills on both sides above 2000’ high...scenery very retired – many glaciers, uninhabited, beryl blue, most beautiful, contrasted with snow.”

Charles Darwin – description of the Beagle Channel

Ushuaia, a Yamana indigenous word meaning “bay that penetrates to the west”. It is considered as the most southerly city in the world. And is called by the Argentineans as “el fin del mundo” = “the end of the world”. Surrounded by mountains to the North and the Beagle Channel to the south. The mountains around, coming right down to meet the sea here in Patagonia, are the last part of the Andes range, that runs along the entire length of the South American continent. A bit further South there is another settlement, a small town in the Chilean side of the channel named Puerto Williams (...let’s say the southernmost “town” in the world...) that we would pass on the way east to the open ocean.

With a rapidly growing population of 55,000 people, **Ushuaia** is a flourishing duty free port with a fishing industry particularly famous for its crabs (centolla). There are other new industries as well, notably electronics. The new buildings and roads give the appearance of a latter day “frontier town” and one of the few remnants of the last century is a beautiful Victorian timber building right on the harbor. Its first owner purchased the so-called Casa Beban building through a catalogue over a hundred years ago. The museum in the former prison has a fascinating and well-arranged series of displays. Ushuaia is also the most popular jump-off point for travel to Antarctica.

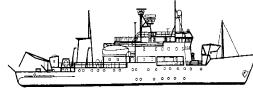
At four in the afternoon *Professor Molchanov*, staff and the crew were ready to welcome us on board, where we got some time to find our cabins, unpack, rest a little or enjoy the beautiful view from the deck for the first time.

Approximately half past five we joined our Expedition Leader Troels, the two guides Oscar and Jordi and the Hotel Manager Daniela in the ship’s bar for an introduction to the expedition staff and the ship. Here we learned the basic

procedures on board for our upcoming voyage, and were cautioned as well about a potentially rough crossing through the Drake Passage.

Shortly after our departure, we were called again into the bar for a mandatory safety briefing. This was all about the theoretical part for procedures in case of an emergency, followed by the “abandon ship” drill, where everybody gathered together dressed in warm clothes and with the bulky orange life jackets even getting into the life boats. Not really a cozy place to be but a really useful tool in case of an emergency.

At eight o’clock our first dinner by our Malaysian chefs Ritchie and Joey was served in the dining rooms, but a few of us were a bit late because we were enjoying the beautiful Beagle Channel and relatively good weather on the outer decks. The channel was named for Robert Fitzroy’s ship, whose second voyage here brought along a young man who would revolutionize the way we view the world - Charles Darwin. The Channel was also defined as the southern border between Chile and Argentina during the 1881 Boundary Treaty. However, the Treaty did not solve the problem of three uninhabited islands (Picton, Lenox and Nueva) at the eastern mouth of the channel, and for many years the trio was claimed by both countries. The chief contention was whether Chile would project sovereignty claims and exclusive economic zones out into the South Atlantic from these islands. The dispute brought the two nations to the brink of war and was resolved only in the latter part of last century.



24th November 2009 – The Drake Passage

Position at 7.30 am: 56°20'S / 65°18'W

Air Temperature: 7°C, overcast with breeze from the west.

The wind and the seas had picked up during the night as Troels voice woke us up that morning. Our numbers were decimated for breakfast but for those who were up, a fantastic display of wildlife waited outside. Five species of albatross had been seen. Cape Petrels, Southern Fulmars and Giant Petrels were soaring the skies around the ship. Our good Jordie then gave us a most interesting presentation on all these beautiful seabirds we might encounter on our journey. Among others we learned that the Wandering Albatross could have a wingspan reaching over three meters!

The weather was improving and after a delicious lunch we met up in the lecture hall again. It was then time for Oscar to tell us the story of Shackleton's epic voyage. We were treated with beautiful authentic photographs and Oscar's enthusiastic storytelling. After hearing how some of the men of the expedition survived 22 long months in the remotest parts of our world we all felt happy about the comfortable times we live in. Later that day we then attended Troels interesting presentation touching upon all the penguins we were hoping to encounter down on the white continent. It was amazing to learn how well adapted to their environment these little birds really are. As the sun started shining most of us spent some time on deck in excited anticipation of what was yet to come. It was a fascinating feeling to have nothing but the vast southern ocean in all directions and that the depth of water below us was several thousand meters. Before dinner we all met up in the bar for a recap and Troels told us a little of the future plans. Our speed had increased throughout the day and it looked as if we might get to Antarctica even earlier than we had expected! That night we let the gentle motion of the ocean rocks us all to sleep...

25th November 2009 – The Drake Passage & Robert Island, South Shetlands

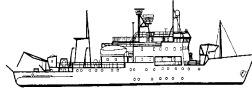
Position at 7.30 am: 60°33S / 61°09W

Air Temperature: 7°C, clear skies with a fresh breeze from the northwest.

Troels woke us up at half past seven announcing sunny weather and pretty good sea conditions. During early morning the water temperature has dropped to around 2°C and we were sailing south of the 60° latitude, meaning that we were just in the Antarctic Convergence, entering Antarctic waters, in a region where subantarctic waters meet with the colder and denser waters from the south. This is the biological limit of the Antarctic ecosystem and also the limits of the distribution of krill the main food supply the Antarctic birds and marine mammals.

The sun was shining all day, giving us a Drake crossing that usually does not get much calmer than this.

At half past ten Oscar did a brilliant presentation about *Nordenskjöld Antarctic Expedition* in 1901-1903, that was interrupted for a while due to a Humpback whale sighting. After a while he caught up where he left with his lecture about a relevant part of early historical Antarctic exploration in an area that we plan to visit.



Afterwards half of us (the ones assigned to life boat number 1) join Troels for a mandatory briefing, the combined IAATO (International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators) Guidelines and Zodiac Briefing. Here we learned of the regulations concerning how to behave in the white continent, home of the penguins and the safety essentials for getting in and out of the Zodiacs, the inflatable rubber boats that we will be using to get out of the ship for the landings and zodiac cruises.

Dining rooms were almost full during lunch and all of us were optimistic that weather and sea conditions would remain the same, allowing us to reach South Shetland Islands in a record time, as we were doing good speed on our Drake Passage crossing.

At around half past three in the afternoon the first big icebergs were at sight and a while after also land. In fact we were looking at Nelson and Robert Islands, belonging to the South Shetland archipelago. The South Shetlands were first sighted in 1819 by William Smith, an English merchant sailing in his brig, the *Williams*, from Valparaiso to Montevideo. When he informed the British Admiralty of his sighting they did not believe him, and so he sailed south again and again he sighted them. This time the Admiralty acted on his word, making him pilot of his own ship and installing Edward Bransfield as captain. The two men sailed the *Williams* south and, as Smith had surmised, discovered the South Shetlands, which they named for their similarity in latitude to the Scottish Shetland Islands in the northern hemisphere.

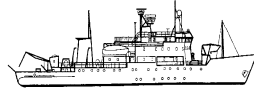
But before that we had the Mandatory IAATO and zodiac briefing for the rest of us (the ones assigned to life boat number 2) and the vacuum cleaning of all the clothes and bags that we all intend to use on land, a preventive measure to avoid introducing seeds or any foreign species to the Antarctic ecosystem.

Between five and six in the afternoon we were already sailing through the Nelson Strait, were some more Humpback Whales were blowing at some distance from the ship. This strait is lying between Nelson and Robert Islands. It was probably first charted in 1821 by Capt. Nathaniel B. Palmer, American sealer, who named it Harmony Strait; Then renamed King George's Strait on Capt. George Powell's chart of 1822, and Parry Straits by James Weddell on his chart of 1825. It has since become known as Nelson Strait, probably taking its name from Nelson Island, which it adjoins on the east.

As we had an incredible high speed crossing of the Drake Passage, we were able to do a landing already after dinner. The chosen place was Robert Point, a place marking the SE tip of Robert Island. This point, which probably has been known to sealers and whalers in the area for over 100 years, takes its name from the island.

The wind conditions were not so promising to do activities on land, but we managed to get out of the ship around eight, and enjoyed quite an incredible landing, windy, wet and with a bit of swell on the beach. Elephant seals were all around and in the way to check a Chinstrap Penguin rookery we struggle with deep snow at the same time as trying to keep an appropriate distance from hundreds of Giant Petrels nesting in the rocky outcrops of this beach and surrounding hills. Fantastic scenery, an incredible





number of this Giant Petrels around and Elephant Seals lying on the beach in a nice sunset on a bit cloudy afternoon. Just before ten o'clock everybody was out of the beach and in the Zodiacs going back on board, after a great "bonus" landing. Anyway it was not so easy to get in the rubber boats on the beach as the wind and swell increased during the last hour, but the "Antarctic evening shower" and the wet feet in the zodiacs were worthwhile. Great starting of our Antarctic adventure!

26th November 2009 – Brown Bluff & Erebus and Terror Gulf

Position at 07.00 am: 63°45S / 57°10W

Air Temperature: 1°C, mostly cloudy with a breeze from the northwest.

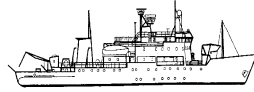
For the early birds the morning had been something out of the ordinary. As we had sailed through Antarctic sound, gigantic tabular icebergs flanked us creating a surreal landscape of extraordinary beauty. After a sturdy breakfast it was time for the brave to set out on a proper continental landing. We had anchored at



Brown bluff and over the choppy sea we set out in our zodiacs. Ashore, an Adélie Penguin rookery, set under massive volcanic rocks seemingly stretching all the way to the sky, met us. In our own time, we wandered along the ice-strewn beach, accompanied by hundreds of the "little guys in tuxedos". The penguins were busy nesting as their breeding season had started. Pebble after pebble was picked or stolen and brought to the nest. Many of them were also either on their way from or to the ocean to fish for krill. Sitting on the beach we could observe



how they assembled in groups, seemingly to muster courage, before they suddenly all darted in to the water. Memory card after memory card was filled but many also simply just sat and beheld this wonder of nature. There was also a Gentoo Penguin rookery here and these penguins have their name after an old derogatory name for Hindus. The Gentoos forage closer to shore than any other penguin apparently disliking to be too far from home. We also saw Kelp Gulls, Skuas, Blue-eyed Shags (or Antarctic Shag) and even



the Antarctic angel: the all-white Snow Petrel. The breaking waves on our landing site had been building up and going back to the ship was a wet adventure. Fortunately for us we were dressed for the occasion and it all just made a cup of coffee on the ship taste all the better. During lunch, our skilled captain navigated the ship deeper in to these southern waters. Impressive icebergs were seen in all directions. We were now on the quest for the elusive Emperor penguin.

The Emperor penguin is the largest of all penguins standing up to one hundred and twenty centimeters high and weighing up to 45 kilos. It is the only animal that breeds in Antarctica during the winter, a season of extremely low temperatures, darkness and howling blizzards. It is a phenomenally adapted bird, able to dive to more than five hundred meters of depth in their search for food.

Approaching Seymour Island we finally saw the anticipated pack ice edge. In the winter, the surface of Antarctica effectively doubles as the ocean around it freezes and we now witnessed the remains of that ice. Following the ice edge we saw dozens of Crab-eater Seals and hundreds of Adélie Penguins resting on the ice. Suddenly, Troels excited voice was heard over the PA system; Emperor ahead! Those who were not already out and about, quickly got in their long johns and ran out on deck. There it was, standing on its own on the land locked sea ice between Snow Hill Island to the east and James Clark Ross Island to the west. What a beautiful animal it was, so different from all the other penguins with its unsurpassed dignity and elegance. In silence we admired the rare bird agreeing that this was a moment to cherish. After spotting that Emperor we saw no less than three more that evening before we started heading north for more adventures. What a day!

27th November 2009 – Devil Island & Paulet Island, the Weddell Sea

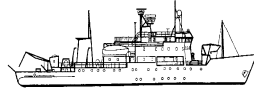
Position at 06.30 am: 63°45'S / 57°10'W

Air Temperature: 0°C, Overcas and snow, light breeze from the east.



The wakeup call was pretty early, at half past six, as we were planning to land at Devil Island. The windy and snowy weather was trying to pull back the courage of some of us to go ashore letting behind the warm and cosy *Molchanov*, but blizzards are part of what Antarctica is, aren't they? So, after having breakfast, at eight, everything was ready to start with the landing operations.

Devil Island is located North of Vega Island in the Erebus and Terror Gulf. It is a narrow island 1 nm long with a low summit on each end, lying in the centre of a small bay 1 nm SE of Cape Well-met where 2 stranded parties of the Nordenskjöld Expedition miraculously met in 1903, in the northern coast of Vega Island. It was discovered and named by Nordenskjöld too. Here we were greeted by endless streams of Adélie penguins coming from or going to sea and laying on their nest, half buried by snow and facing a quite strong blizzard. It was cold and windy



out there but we had an unforgettable Antarctic experience in that landing.

In order to reach the second stop of the day we had to pass endless numbers of huge icebergs stranded on the southern side of Paulet Island. It is a relatively shallow bit of water and if southerly winds prevail (as they had recently) the ice grounds off the island. For a while we were not sure whether we could make it or not, but it mattered little as we had a spectacular iceberg cruising early afternoon. The weather played along nicely with hardly any wind and sunshine. Paulet Island is a circular shaped volcanic island about 1 nm in diameter, lying 3 nm SE of Dundee Island, off the NE end of Antarctic Peninsula. Discovered by a British expedition under Ross, 1839-43, and named by him for Capt. the Right Honourable Lord George Paulet.

The Swedish Antarctic Expedition (1901-03).

The Swedish geologist Otto Nordenskjöld led the expedition onboard the ship *Antarctic*. Otto was the nephew of the famous Nills AE. Nordenskjöld, who was the first to navigate the North-East passage in 1878. Captain of the *Antarctic* was C.A. Larsen, who had sailed in Antarctic waters before in 1892 and later was a pioneer in the modern whaling industry in South Georgia. The expedition wanted to penetrate far into the Weddell Sea but was stopped by the ice. Nordenskjöld and five crew members were put ashore on Snow Hill Island to winter there (1901). The plan was that they would be picked up the next summer by *Antarctic* which sails to Patagonia to spend the winter there.

The team on Snow Hill Island builds a comfortable hut. Among other things, they are the first to do a major sledge journey in Antarctica, where some 400 miles are travelled. On Seymour Island they discover the first fossil of an extinct giant penguin.

The following summer, 1901/02, the *Antarctic* sails south again to pick up the men at Snow Hill. The ship is however stopped by the ice, long before Snow Hill is reached. Three men are dropped off at Hope Bay (Antarctic Sound), from where they try to reach Snow Hill on foot, 320 kilometres to the south. Unfortunately the way to Snow Hill is blocked further south by open water so the three cannot make it. They therefore return to Hope Bay and build a primitive hut there.

In an attempt to reach Snow Hill from the north the *Antarctic* sails around Joinville Island to find a passage but close to Paulet Island the ship is crushed by the ice. The crew manages to reach Paulet Island after 16 days across the pack-ice.

The expedition now consists of three separate groups with nobody knowing about the others' hardship. Nordenskjöld has to spend another winter on Snow Hill Island (1902). Those that are marooned in Hope Bay and on Paulet are worse off. They build huts from rocks and survive on penguin and seal meat.

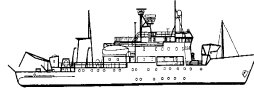
Miraculously, the Hope Bay team is able to survive the winter and find their way back to Snow Hill Island where they meet Nordenskjöld at Cape Well-Met on Vega Island close to Devil Island.

On Paulet Island Larsen and the 20 crew of the *Antarctic* kill 1100 Adélie penguins and store them for the winter. During the winter one person, Ole Wenersgaard, dies of an unknown illness. He is buried on Paulet where his grave is visible in the midst of hundreds of Adélie penguin nests. The rest survives.

After the summer of 1902/03 Captain Larsen and 3 men row with an open boat to Hope Bay only to find a note that the three have left for Snow Hill. Then Larsen decides to row to Snow Hill.

In the meantime the Argentinean ship *Uruguay* is sent out to search for them. It reaches Snow Hill where Nordenskjöld, Larsen and 10 men are rescued. The others on Paulet Island are rescued immediately after.

We disembarked directly on a snow step and for the first time in that trip we used the snowshoes to walk around this huge Adélie Penguin rookery and Antarctic shag nesting place. A good number of the Adélie's were trying to get out of the water directly jumping out to reach the elevated snow platform that was covering the beach. Some of us spend quite a long time trying to get a good picture of these acrobatic jumps. Other fellow travellers climbed the rising beach to get our first up-close look at the Adélie penguin – some of the 100,000 breeding pairs on Paulet! As we made our way along the beach we zigzagged between the nesting Adélie's reaching the remains of the hut from an expedition where Captain Larsen overwintered with the remainder of his crew of the *Antarctic*. One man died during this time there (Ole Wenersgaard). Ole, aged only twenty-two, died of heart complications on June 7, 1902, as Otto Nordenskjöld's crew endured a winter of hardships here after their ship had



been crushed in the ice, and we could see his grave just between an Adélie penguin rookery and the nesting shags.

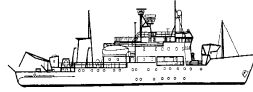


28th November 2009 – Half Moon Island & Deception Island, South Shetlands

Position at 07.30 am: 62°44'S / 58°59'W

Air Temperature: -1°C, partly cloudy, breeze from the west.

The gods were smiling at us now. From a clear blue sky the sun was shining as we were speeding across the bay at Half Moon Island. On the beach we were met by Troels, Jordi and Oscar and were given snowshoes before it was time to explore. The scenery surrounding the Island was out of this world. High mountains with their snow covered, jagged peaks in all directions. Dramatic glaciers were running down the sides of these mountains as if a giant had tried to cover them in whipped cream. Walking up the hill we saw hundreds of chinstrap penguins commuting between the ocean and their rookery at the top of the island. At a veritable penguin highway, we stopped, giving way to these adorable little creatures sometimes so accurately referred to as “the little mountaineers”. Venturing further, we saw nesting Antarctic terns and Kelp gulls. Carefully avoiding getting too close to these sensitive birds we took some time to simply enjoy the sunshine. Weddell seals and Elephant seals could be seen resting on the snow seemingly unaware of our presence. Half Moon Island is also the home of an Argentinean Base, however this was unmanned and we were the sole visitors in the beautiful weather. The almost tropical heat eventually forced us to remove garment after garment and left some in t-shirts. Truly now having experienced the extremes of the Antarctic climate we headed back to the ship.

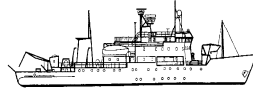


After lunch, Troels voice again was heard over the PA-system announcing our approach to Deception Island. We were to sail in to the caldera of an active volcano! Our skilled captain carefully dodged the submerged Ravens rock at the entrance of Neptune's Bellows as we admired the splendour of this narrow passage. Once anchored in Whalers Bay a few of us then headed off on a little hike. Our

fearless leader Troels gave us an interesting talk of the whaling days as we passed several remains of that time. We learned that the unfathomable slaughter that took place in the first half of the twentieth century was the result of an insatiable thirst for whale oil in combination with the technological inventions of the time. Eventually arriving Neptune's Window, a gigantic opening in the side of the rock face, we enjoyed a splendid view of the interior of the island.

Being an active volcano, Deception Island last erupted in 1971 causing a massive landslide, which destroyed a Chilean base and covered large parts of the old whaling station. Intrigued, we explored the remaining buildings, envisioning what had taken place. Making our way to the landing site we then became witnesses to the fact that this was truly a place of some seismic activity. From the beach, steam was rising, indicating that the heat of the earth's inside was not far away. Heading back to the ship, we were then met by Daniela whom had prepared a rum-spiked hot chocolate in which we willingly indulged. Come dinner, we sailed out of Deception Island and Troels then ended this beautiful day with a few words of our future plans.





29th November 2009 – Lemaire Channel, Petermann Island & Pléneau Island

Position at 7.30 am: 64°50S / 63°11W

Air Temperature: 3°C, partly cloudy, light breeze from the north.

The different activities programmed for today looked amazing on paper, and definitely... what a great day we had!

Starting early morning with a voice is going to be difficult to forget after this trip... Troels announcing his "...good morning, good morning...!", but right after that we heard another announcement: "...killer whales close to the ship". That was it!, if our Expedition Leader voice was not enough to get out of bed... this orcas did it quite fast.

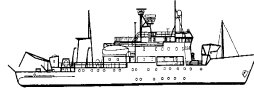


Everybody from bed to the front deck or the bridge, enjoying the fantastic spectacle of a group of approximately 12 orcas that were quite curious and interested in our ship, getting pretty close to it in the incredible frame of the Gerlache Strait.

This strait is separating the Palmer Archipelago from Antarctic Peninsula. Lutenant Adrien de Gerlache explored the area in January and February 1898, naming it for the expedition ship *Belgica*. The name was later changed to honour the commander himself.

After this great orca experience, we had breakfast and the sailing through the Lemaire Channel was waiting for us. This waterway is an 11 kilometres long, app. 1.6 kilometre wide passage which runs northeast-to-southwest from Splitwind Island and False Cape Renard in the North to Roulin Point and Cape Cloos in the South, separating Booth Island from the Antarctic Peninsula. The Lemaire Passage was discovered by Dallman's German Expedition of 1873-74, and later named for a Belgian explorer of the Congo (who has never been





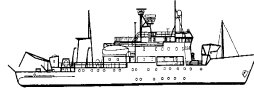
here...), and was first navigated by Gerlache's Belgian Expedition in 1898. Ever since then, the mountains looming over the ship and the ice that can clog the channel makes it one of the most exciting and spectacular waterways in the world. Just while navigating the channel the sun itself gave us another spectacular view with a "perihelion", a ring around the sun produced by small iced crystals in the atmosphere refracting the sun rays.

Afterwards we dropped anchor just south of the Lemaire Channel, between Booth Island to the north and Pléneau Island to the south, a place where we did a zodiac cruise amongst large number of icebergs run aground in a magnificent sunny and quite warm weather conditions. After a few minutes visiting icebergs with all kind of colors and shapes, at least 4 Antarctic Minke Whales were sighted and we all directed our zodiacs towards the area where they were... What a good hour of whale watching we had! As the whales did not get scared of the Zodiacs, but were rather quite curious, surfacing very close to us. Ok, after this - what else? Why not looking around for a Leopard seal? Off we went and... we were lucky again as, after a while, one was located resting on an iceberg. So, still some time to get back to the ship, what better than spending some more time cruising in the area? This we did ... just a second... listen to the radio... something is going on... Troels spotted 5 Crabeater Seals on an ice floe! We all located the spot and spend some time looking at this seals, the most common pinniped in the world. Before going back to the ship, we still had some more time for milling around the icebergs. What a great experience for all of us!

The day was not over yet as we planned another activity for the afternoon, a landing in Petermann Island. The island is 1 nm long, lying 1 nm SW of Hovgaard Island in the Wilhelm Archipelago. Discovered by a German expedition 1873-74, and named by Dallmann for August Petermann, noted German geographer and founder of *Petermanns*



Mitteilungen. The Zodiacs landed in a small cove named Port Circumcision, on the SE of the island. This place was discovered on 1st January 1909 by the French explorer Charcot, who named it for the holy day on which it was first sighted. The cove served as a base for the ship *Pourquoi-Pas?* during the 1909 winter season. The weather was getting overcast, but this just added some more dramatic appearances to the fantastic mountain and glacier landscape surrounding us. Peterman Island is home to both Gentoo and Adélie Penguins. The Adélie colony is declining in numbers the last few years; the reason for this is a dramatic warming of this part of the Antarctic Peninsula (something like 2.5°C in less than 50 years). Adélie's are real cold climate penguins, breeding further south. The Gentoo Penguins however take advantage of this warming so there numbers are increasing rapidly. There are new colonies starting all over the area.



An easy walk through the still deep snow (that was not a problem for us anymore as now we are really used to the snowshoes that we wear in most of the snowy landing sites) leads us to the Adélie colony and to the small amphitheatre where next to Adélie's also Antarctic Shags nest. After visiting this area, we went back past the landing site where there is the possibility to walk over to the other side of the island. Here we had a great view over the ocean and icebergs in the bay. The light this afternoon was great as the sun slowly started its slow decline on the horizon.

Returning to the ship, we were briefed about tomorrow planned activities and also welcomed by our hotel manager Daniela and our chefs Ritchie and Joey to a BBQ on the stern deck. We had a great meal outside while we were slowly sailing the Lemaire Channel again, but now towards the north. Some of us were quite late as the party kept going for a while after the BBQ... probably not very wise... (we were to be woken up at half past five)... but really funny in the fantastic frame of the Lemaire Channel.

30th November 2009 – Neko Harbour & Danco Island

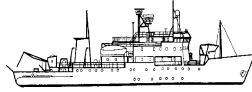
Position at 5.30 am: 64°50S / 62°32W

Air Temperature: 0°C, mostly overcast, strong breeze from the west.

Troels gentle voice announced that it was now 5:30 and time to get up. One or two yawns later we stood all dressed up on a windy foredeck in Neko Harbour. Before the sailors even got the gangway down our anchor suddenly dragged as fierce gusts intensified the already strong wind. Our captain tried to reposition our ship however the decision was made to abort the landing. Many of us walked out on deck to experience this force of nature set in the beautiful surroundings here in Andvord Bay. Here, glacier-laden mountains proudly guarded a Gentoo rookery, set by the shore. Icebergs were scattered about in the bay and we slowly navigated between them towards our next destination. Many enjoyed a well-earned nap before breakfast, which was sturdy and prepared us for new adventures.



The time had now come for our last landing and for this we had chosen Danco Island. Ashore we were again equipped with snowshoes and Jordi led the way. Up, up and far away. The hill was steep and droplets of sweat formed on each end of every temple. But as Shackleton's motto declares: "by endurance we conquer", we were certainly not going to stop half way. After carefully crossing a few penguin highways we finally arrived at the top from where we marvelled at a breathtaking view. From



here we could see the entire Errera Channel with the actual peninsula as well as a few islands such as Rongé and Cuverville as a back drop. In between, the icy water was laden with icebergs, bergy bits and growlers. Here we could also enjoy parts of some of the thousands of Gentoo Penguins nesting here during the Antarctic summer. What labour they go through to find a snow-free spot! We saw penguins mating, and penguins stealing pebbles from each other and penguins simply resting on the snow. Walking down the hills some set off to explore the outskirts of the island while others headed back towards the landing site with a special purpose. It was time for a proper Antarctic swim! Down by the beach the fearless undressed and headed for the water. Oh what a delight to indulge in that crystal clear and icy cold Antarctic water. Was there ever a more refreshing experience? Ashore the swimmers all agreed that this was a highlight while the others thought of it as crazy...

Speeding across the water in the Zodiacs we looked with nostalgia towards the shores of beautiful Antarctica, painfully admitting that it was now time to set sail for the north. Once we were all aboard the ship was fired up and off we went.

That evening we all gathered in the bar for a recap and Troels talked a bit of our future plans and the weather we could expect crossing Drake's passage.

1st December 2009 – The Drake Passage en route to Ushuaia

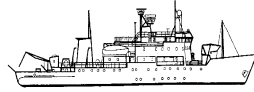
Position at 07.30 am: 61°33S / 64°10W

Air Temperature: 0°C, overcast with light breeze from the SE

Wake up call was at half past seven, and we were now on the open ocean doing good speed. It is strange not to see land anymore and feel that we are on the way back to Ushuaia; the beginning of the end of the trip. Sadly no more running up and down the ship getting dressed and undressed for the landings, running up and down looking for the life jackets and no more stepping in the Zodiacs. The sky was overcast and cloudy this morning but the sea was really calm - even better than the Gerlache Strait yesterday. So, in fact, almost nobody was sea-sick and we had quite a lot of people around in the bar and on the bridge spotting seabirds. Antarctic Petrels, Southern Fulmars, Cape Petrels, Antarctic Prions, Black Browed and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross were flying around the ship.

As its going to be a normal day at sea where a few lectures were offered. After breakfast Troels invited everybody to the dining-lecture room for a talk about the ice, *Ice is Nice* he called it, explaining a bit about ocean currents, different kinds of ice and their connection to the Antarctic ecosystem.. Then after lunch Steve gave us a great talk about the life of a Sea bird, telling us the stories of the harsh life of these birds and some biological adaptations for facing the life at sea. And then, to finish the lectures for today, Jordi talked about the cetaceans of the Southern Ocean, making an introduction to the different species of whales and dolphins, but mostly explaining his experiences during five years working with the Humpback whales in Southern Patagonia and Antarctic Peninsula.

The day ended with the daily briefing and recap, very nice dinner and afterwards some of us gathered ourselves at the bar to chat about trips, polar animals, sea-sickness etc.... it was getting a bit rougher during the evening although the wind kept at a steady westerly breeze. By now we were quite accustomed to the ship's movements and most of us faired quite well on the moving ship.



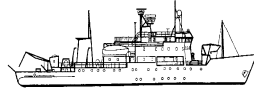
2nd December 2009 – Cape Horn

Position at 07.30 am: 56°54S / 66°41W

Air Temperature: 3°C, overcast, fresh breeze from the west.



The vast Southern Ocean, home to millions of seabirds, dolphins, seals and whales, is a fantastic stretch of sea. This is where we woke up and where the waves had been building up during the night. We however, had our sea legs and no one was missing for breakfast. From the bridge we enjoyed the graceful flight of Cape Petrels, Royal and Wandering Albatross. It was then announced that Oscar would give a presentation on his personal experiences from the Explorer incident. Explorer was the world's first purpose-built expedition vessel launched in 1969. In 2007 she sank in the Bransfield Strait and Oscar told us the tale of how all 154 onboard were evacuated and saved. Fascinated we listened to the story before it was time to go out on deck to witness the mighty Cape Horn. The Chileans had given us permission to come in close for a good look. The mighty horn is undoubtedly one of the most famous landmarks in the world and the adjacent waters the grave of hundreds of ships. How fortunate we were that the weather allowed for this spectacular view. Suddenly a group of Peales Dolphins appeared! The agile and playful animals were bow riding in the waves in front and around the ship. What a wonderful sight this was. After another delicious lunch it was now time for an inspection of the engine room. In small groups we followed one of the engineers around and were treated with an exclusive view of "the heart" of the ship. Later that afternoon our expedition team screened a movie called "Around the Cape Horn with Peking". Incredible footage from 1929 gave us a unique insight to what life was like on a square-rigger in the old days. Captain Irwin Johnson's colourful narrative made us feel like we were actually there. Evening came and we all met up in the bar where Troels held a speech thanking us all for a wonderful trip, which, indeed it had been. What wonderful things we had seen in the last week. It was not without nostalgia we now had to face the fact that the trip was now coming to an end. As we were at anchor in the mouth of the Beagle Channel the seas were calm and many stayed up late that night talking about all the things we had experienced in the Southern Ocean and beyond.



3rd December 2009 – Ushuaia

Position at 08.00 a.m.: 54°50'S / 68°20'W

In the early hours of the morning, the *Professor Molchanov* reached the pier in Ushuaia and our long journey in the Southern Ocean came to an end. We put our luggage out and had our last meal together, then went down the gangway for the last time, saying farewell to new-found but good friends. Some of us went directly to the airport and connections home while others headed for hotels and tours in South America. We had finished one incredible expedition, and now turned to look forward towards the long trip home.

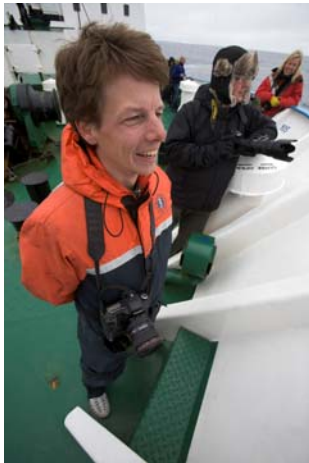
Total mileage of this trip: nm = km = statute miles

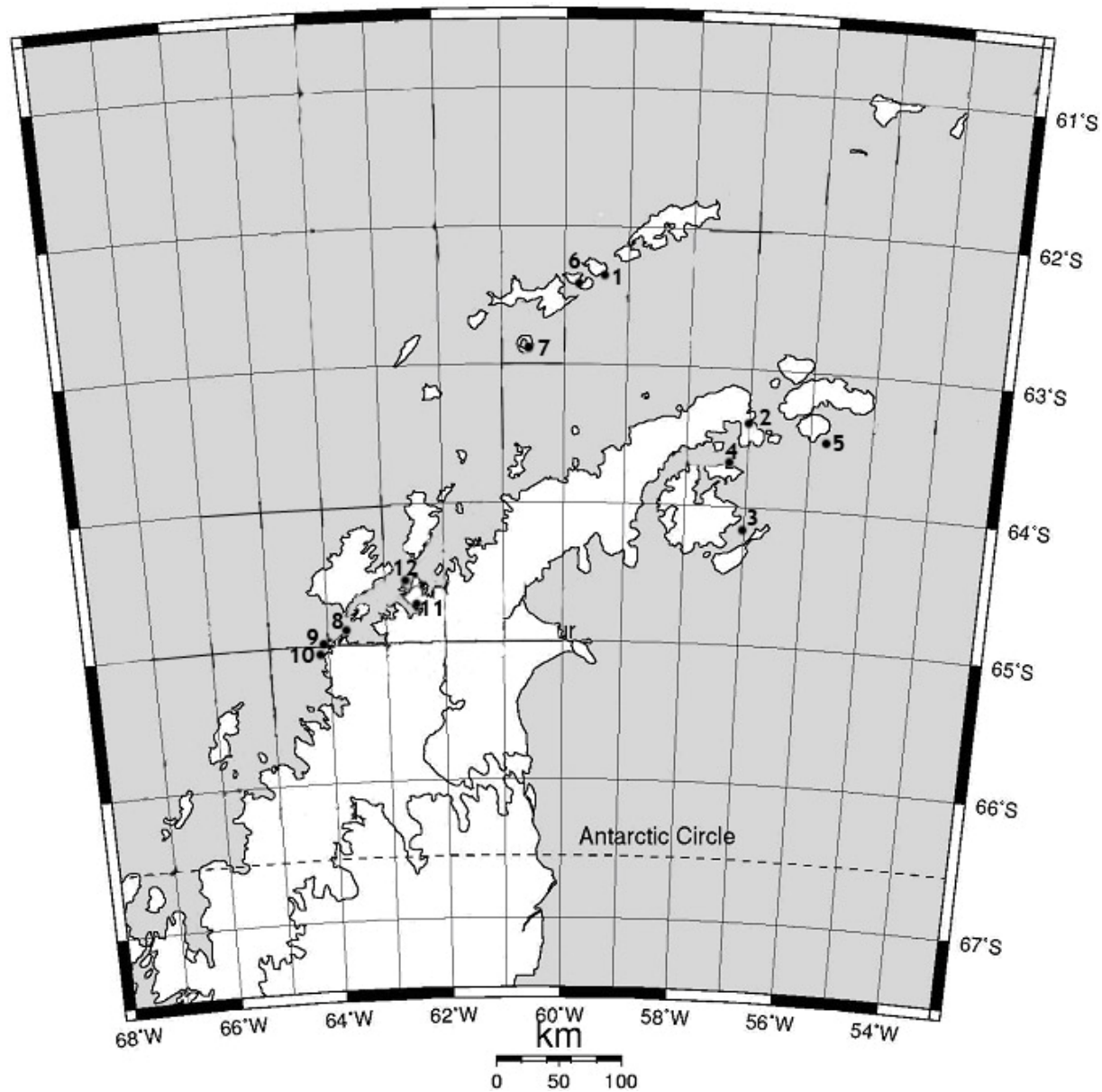
On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions we wish you a safe journey home and hope to see you again sometimes, maybe in the other polar region.

www.oceanwide-expeditions.com

Log compiled by: Oscar and Jordi

Pictures: Troels, Jordi & Oscar





1. Robert Point, Robert Island
2. Brown Bluff, Antarctic Continent
3. Emperor Penguins
4. Devil Island
5. Paulet Island
6. Half Moon Island
7. Whalers Bay, Deception Island
8. Lemaire Channel
9. Pléneau Island
10. Petermann Island
11. Neko Harbour (cancelled)
12. Danco Island, Errera Channel

The Antarctic Peninsula & the Weddell Sea onboard Professor Molchanov from 23 November – 3 December 2009

Species list

Birds:

<i>Aptenodytes forsteri</i>	Emperor Penguin
<i>Pygoscelis papua</i>	Gentoo Penguin
<i>Pygoscelis adeliae</i>	Adelie Penguin
<i>Pygoscelis antarctica</i>	Chinstrap Penguin
<i>Spheniscus megallanicus</i>	Magellanic Penguin
<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	Wandering Albatross
<i>Diomedea epomophora</i>	Royal Albatross
<i>Diomedea melanophris</i>	Black-browed Albatross
<i>Diomedea chrysostoma</i>	Grey-headed Albatross
<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	Light-mantled Sooty Albatross
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	Southern Giant Petrel
<i>Macronectes halli</i>	Northern Giant Petrel
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Southern Fulmar
<i>Daption capense</i>	Cape Petrel
<i>Pagodroma nivea</i>	Snow Petrel
<i>Thalassoica antarctica</i>	Antarctic Petrel
<i>Pachyptila vittata</i>	Antarctic Prion
<i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>	Thin-billed Prion
<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>	Blue Petrel
<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	White-chinned Petrel
<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	Sooty Shearwater
<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Wilson's Storm-petrel
<i>Fregetta tropica</i>	Black-bellied Storm-petrel
<i>Pelecanoides magellani</i>	Magellanic Diving-petrel
<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>	Antarctic Shag
<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>	Rock Shag
<i>Chionis alba</i>	Pale-faced Sheathbill
<i>Catharacta chilensis</i>	Chilean Skua
<i>Catharacta maccormicki</i>	South Polar Skua
<i>Catharacta antarctica</i>	Sub-Antarctic Skua
<i>Larus scoresbii</i>	Dolphin Gull
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	Kelp Gull
<i>Sterna vittata</i>	Antarctic Tern
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Arctic Tern
<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>	South American Tern

Marine Mammals:

<i>Balaenoptera bonaerensis</i>	Antarctic Minke Whale
<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Humpback Whale
<i>Hyperoodon planifrons</i>	Southern Bottlenose Whale
<i>Orcinus orca</i>	Killer Whale
<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>	Peale's Dolphin
<i>Lagenorhynchus cruciger</i>	Hourglass Dolphin
<i>Mirounga leonina</i>	Southern Elephant Seal
<i>Hydrurga leptonyx</i>	Leopard Seal
<i>Leptonychotes weddellii</i>	Weddell Seal
<i>Lobodon carcinophaga</i>	Crabeater Seal