



Kayaking Program Excursion Report

Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Antarctica Expedition

M/V OCEAN ENDEAVOUR

24th November – 12th December 2017

Paddlers

Michael Mahler, Vicky Paterno, Michael Fancourt, Liz Wright, Derek Parsons, Robyn Stevenson, Dai Williams, Anne Williams, Kylie McGregor, Kim Jamieson, Kim Taylor, Lorna Rankin, Nic Ward, Igor Davydon, Phil Baron, Karin Beebe

Quark Sea Kayak Guides

Sharon Nicholas and Ryan Munro

Total Paddles

eight

Location: Stromness, South Georgia

Kayak Guides: Ryan Munro & Sharon Nicholas

Safety Zodiac Driver: Jaymie McAuley

Date: Dec 1, 2017

Time: 1500 - 1730

Paddlers: Everyone

Weather: sunny, wind gust, +2 Celsius

Species sighted from the kayaks: Antarctic Fur seal, Luscious Fur seal, Elephant seal, South Polar skua, King penguin, Gentoo penguin, Giant petrel, Kelp gull, Antarctic cormorant, Antarctic tern, Light-Mantled Sooty albatross

Comment:

After a failed attempt to paddle at Elsehul and remaining optimistic we geared up again for a paddle at Stromness. Stromness is home to a former Whaling Station turned ship repair yard in South Georgia. The wind was considerably heavy in the open ocean, once the ship turned to starboard and headed into Stromness the bay gave enough protection from the wind to proceed with the paddle. It was not all easy from this point on, especially if you ask the guides Ryan and Shaz or the safety zodiac drivers Juani and Jaymie. a few of the kayaks flipped over and filled with water while on tow, another kayak fell off the tow line and drifted away, the other tow line got caught in the long kelp stems, engines stopped from being clogged with kelp as well, the wind was picking up and the waves were getting bigger, Ryan and Shaz began to think twice about going kayaking. They took a moment and ask the drivers to find a "quieter" place while they paddled together discussing options. The drivers found a suitable place to get everyone in the kayaks and we were off on our first paddle together in South Georgia. We basically took a downwind approach and drifted peacefully with the wind through long kelp forest, watching the fur seals wrestle and fight each while the elephant seals tried to ignore them. The sounds that come from these South Georgia animals are constant and noisy, not to mention the smells. After drifting along the northern shore line we paddled directly towards the whaling station to get an up close view. We were not allowed more than 200 meters away but this still allowed us to get a nice view before hopping back onto the zodiac where we were taken to the shore to walk about a kilometer to the same waterfall that Shackleton descended before finally arriving back to civilization. It was a great first paddle of many to come.



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Location: Grytviken, South Georgia

Kayak Guides: Sharon Nicholas & Ryan Munro

Safety Zodiac Driver: Juani Volker

Date: Dec 2, 2017

Time: 0900 - 1100

Paddlers: Michael, Vicky, Michael, Liz, Dai, Anne, Derek, Robyn, KJ, Kimo, Lorna, Nic, Kylie, Igor, Phil

Weather: 5 knot winds, sunny, warm

Species sighted from the kayaks: King penguin, Gentoo penguin, Kelp gull, Pipit, Antarctic tern, Elephant seal, Antarctic Fur seal

Comment:

Grytviken is home to the first whaling station to operate on South Georgia, it was a well-known location to many whaler's, sealer's and explorers in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Today, it is home to summer seasonal residents who operate the museum, gift shop and the many questions that the passengers from expedition ships have as well as government officials for those visiting this spectacular island not to mention the many seals and penguins who peacefully live here too.

We started this excursion by going directly to land to take part in the "toast to Shackleton" being given by our historian David Burton at the grave site of Shackleton himself. We quickly got back into the zodiac and met up with our kayaks further out along the shore of Cumberland Bay at a spot called Susa Point. At Susa point you could just see the Neumayer Glacier coming into view. Again we were met with lots of kelp to deal with, however this time around was more efficient. We could feel the current and swell pushing us around as we meandered through rocks and islets. The views of the surrounding mountains were exquisite, Mt. Duse (510m), Brown Mountain (330m), Orca peak (280m) and Mt. Hodges (605m) all towards over top of us as we paddled along the shore opposite of King Edward Point which is the home to the summer residents and a research station. The fur seals at Grytviken played/attacked each other on the shore as usual, some curiously swam near us with a mysterious look in their eyes, others jumped to and from the same rocks we paddled around, all looked as though they were having quite a fun time.

In the distance we could see the whaling station in its entirety. This was the place we were paddling towards, we wanted to make this paddle a bit shorter in order to give ample time to explore the museum, gift shop, whaling station, church and perhaps the cemetery. Our second paddle in South Georgia was a success and we were all excited for more to come.

Location: St. Andrews Bay, South Georgia

Kayak Guide: Ryan Munro and Sharon Nicholas

Safety Zodiac Driver: David Burton

Date: Dec 2, 2017

Time: 1530 - 1730

Paddlers: Michael, Vicky, Michael, Liz, Dai, Anne, Derek, Robyn, Kimo, Nic, Kylie, Igor, Phil, Karin

Weather: sunny, 0-3 knot wind

Species sighted from the kayaks: King penguin, Gentoo penguin, Antarctic cormorant, Kelp gull, Antarctic tern, Pintail, Antarctic Fur seal, Elephant seal

Comment:

It is not too often that a sea kayak guide has such an easy decision to make at a place like St. Andrews Bay. The weather was phenomenal to go for a paddle, Ryan and Sharon lowered the kayaks and we began our third paddle of this trip so early on.

We started the paddle from the northern end of the bay, here we had wonderful protection and a fun place to paddle. The swell was enough to allow us to have fun but safe enough to enjoy. Making our way through rows of rocks allowed us to get into some unique locations where even a zodiac could not get into. We watched the kelp ebb and flow with the incoming swell almost given us a calming feeling. There were not as many fur seals around this location which also added to the relaxed atmosphere of this paddle. After enjoying and exploring these small little alleyways of ocean we continued around the corner to see what was next. It was glorious to explore the coast of South Georgia in such a quiet vessel, being able to feel that freedom of doing it on your own or sneaking up to the shore or a penguin without disturbing them will always be with us. We finished the paddle by making our way along the beach where thousands of penguins, seals and other birds kept



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busy. There was large swell that was breaking onto the shore with a thunderous sound, a sound that the wildlife was so used to they didn't seem to even notice. After a quick group photo with an insane backdrop we loaded into the zodiac and made our way to shore, even though it took us a while to actually get to shore...once we were there it was well worth it.

Location: Gold Harbour, South Georgia

Kayak Guides: Ryan Munro & Sharon Nicholas

Safety Zodiac Driver: Juani Volker

Date: Dec 3, 2017

Time: 0600 - 0800

Paddlers: Vicky, Michael, Liz, Dai, Anne, Derek, Robyn, Kimo, KJ, Lorna, Nic, Kylie, Igor, Phil, Karin

Weather: light wind, sunny, warm

Species sighted from the kayaks: King penguin, Gentoo penguin, Kelp gull, Southern Giant petrel, Antarctic tern, Pipit, Pintail, Antarctic cormorant, Antarctic Fur seal, Elephant seal, Leopard seal

Comment:

Gold Harbour is known to be one of the best, if not the best landing site in South Georgia, definitely a staff favourite. Usually, it is quite tough to get the zodiacs to shore as this location is so exposed to the open ocean. We had nothing to worry about here as today, South Georgia treated us. There is essentially no wind and the shore team was able to take two zodiacs at a time at shore, which may be a first. This weather set us up for a kayak of a lifetime. We were able to get our kayaks into some amazing locations, most of which a zodiac could not enter. We saw Elephant seal wieners playing, penguins watching us from shore, curious Fur seals excitedly swimming in the water almost looking as though they were trying to impress us. Birds soaring gracefully high above us as we gazed into the sky wondering how we got here.

Everything seemed so calming and relaxing until we saw a Leopard seal. We all rafted up into one big group, sat and watched and wondered where he would pop up next. At one point the seal came right up beside us no more than 3 feet away. He seemed very calm and only curious, our guides Ryan and Sharon did not seem to worry too much about this seal. There were also a few other zodiacs in the area that the seal was inspecting, back and forth to all vessels he made his way calmly to each so all involved got a great view.

After this exciting viewing of such a large seal while sitting so low in the water with only plastic separating us we cautiously moved away from the seal and continued our expiration in this fascinating location. It was a thrill to have the opportunity to be kayaking in the open Southern Ocean along the shores just outside of Gold Harbour. Again, we spotted what seemed to be another Leopard seal, this time Ryan and Sharon thought it was a bit agitated and considering the wind was picking up they opted to turn the group around and get back to more shelter. We ended the paddle by returning to the same spot we saw the Leopard seal to get back into the zodiac where we returned to the ship to have breakfast after which we were sent back out to land at Gold Harbour.

Location: Kinnes Cove (Madder Cliffs), Antarctica

Kayak Guides: Ryan Munro & Sharon Nicholas

Safety Zodiac Driver: Cam Browne & Katelyn Rennicke

Date: Dec 7, 2017

Time: 0900 - 1130

Paddlers: Michael, Vicky, Michael, Liz, Dai, Anne, Derek, Robyn, Kylie, Igor, Phil

Weather: 10 knot winds, cool, some cloud cover with sunny breaks

Species sighted from the kayaks: Crabeater seal, Weddell seal, Adelle penguin, Gentoo penguin, Giant petrel, Kelp gull, Antarctic cormorant, Antarctic tern, Wilson's Storm petrel

Comment:

Arriving in Antarctica brought much excitement around the ship in the early hours. The sun was shining as we woke up but it was the number of icebergs and glaciers that caught our eyes and woke us up. massive icebergs floated near the ship and shore cooling the ocean. The sun shimmered off the sea and sparkled the blues from the ice allowing for some great photographic opportunities. The conditions allowed for a



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great kayak opportunity, we had a smaller group this morning as five of the kayakers were also skiing with Pete and Keith high up on top of Madder Cliffs.

Our paddle began in the middle of Kinnes Cove with views of massive glaciers coming down off the mountains and icebergs as far as the eye could see in the middle of the Antarctic Sound. Once we were all settled back into the kayaks after being out of them for several days we got up close to a small islet where many Gentoo and Adelie penguins live. We had not seen Adelie's as of yet so it was a treat and the shoreline allowed us to get up very close for a proper view. The Adelie penguin was named after the wife of Jules Dumont D'Urville of France, Jules was one of the early explorers from the mid to late 1800's. From here we made our way towards the base of Madder Cliffs where even more Adelie's called home. This is where we were treated with a "special" zodiac handing out cups of hot chocolate. We each took our turn paddling alongside to get out "shot" of hot chocolate. Slowly we made our way along the shore watching the Adelie's go about their daily life. Groups gathered in what we would call a "waddle" looking as though they may jump off the frozen snowbank from the winters snow fall, they never did seem to be able to build up enough courage to jump into the freezing water.

By the end of our paddle we found ourselves drifting along with the strong current, as if we were planktonic, the wind had picked up and helped the current along with our drift. We spent the final few moments going with nature, enjoying nature and being with new friends. It was a special morning for everyone involved we felt lucky to have this experience and a new vision of what makes this world beautiful and spectacular.

Location: Brown Bluff, Antarctica

Kayak Guides: Sharon Nicholas and Ryan Munro

Safety Zodiac Driver: Jaymie McAuley

Date: Dec 7, 2017

Time: 1500 - 1730

Paddlers: Michael, Vicky, Michael, Liz, Dai, Anne, Derek, Robyn, Kylie, Karin, Igor

Weather: cool, sunny period, cloud cover, 10 – 15 knot winds

Species sighted from the kayaks: Gentoo penguin, Adelie penguin, Wilson's Storm petrel, Snowy sheathbill, Antarctic tern, Antarctic cormorant, Kelp gull

Comment:

Upon the approach to the anchorage at Brown Bluff the wind was quite heavy. It was blowing at a steady range from 15 - 20 knots, some white caps were appearing and our guides were having mixed feelings about going of a paddle. Once the wind speeds near 20 knots at Brown Bluff, it has a reputation for displaying the ever so intense Katabatic winds. Both glaciers on either side of the site are a definite threat to creating these fierce wind speeds and this was on our guides minds. They checked the weather forecast and the wind was expected to completely drop, they were also confident they had protection but feared the paddling area may be short and not really worth it...But they wanted to get out just as much as the rest of them so they went for it. In the end it was worth it, the wind did drop out and we had an amazing paddle along the shores of Brown Bluff. We were able to paddle up close to the penguins, rock hop around some shallow rocks, past the landing site and ended paddling along a massive glacier coming off the mountain and into the ocean.

Location: Half Moon, Antarctica

Kayak Guides: Sharon Nicholas and Ryan Munro

Safety Zodiac Driver: Juani Volker & Katelyn Rennie

Date: Dec 8, 2017

Time: 0900 - 1130

Paddlers: Michael, Vicky, Michael, Liz, Dai, Anne, Derek, Robyn, Kylie, Nic, Igor, Phil, Austin and Esther

Weather: cool, sunny period, cloud cover, light winds

Species sighted from the kayaks: Gentoo penguin, Chinstrap penguin, Wilson's Storm petrel, Snowy sheathbill, Antarctic tern, Antarctic cormorant, Kelp gull, Weddell seal



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Comment:

We awoke to a spectacular morning of sunshine and light wind as the Ocean Endeavour made its way towards Half Moon island. We lowered the kayaks, SUP boards and skiers along with the zodiacs for this excursion. Shortly after getting on the water the skies covered with clouds and the temperature began to drop. This did not deter us as we carried on around the northern end of the crescent shaped island. In the distance we could see a hillside covered in moss, as we navigated our way between rocks while managing the swell. Once past these rocks we entered between and close by a tall rock face covered with lichen, it gave us an up close look at this volcanic rock. From here we spotted a Weddell seal lying peacefully on the snow from the looks of it he had been hauled out for a while and was fast asleep. The water depth was extremely shallow allowing us to see the rocks on the bottom clearly, showing us the how little sediment there is in the water. Beautiful pieces of brash ice lay floating in this pristine water, some filled with air bubbles while others were nothing but frozen water... the ones you want for your whiskey. Our goal was to make our way around the entire island, a circumnavigation and to do so we needed to continue paddling. Further up the coast we saw two more Weddell seals hauled out and again sound asleep. Just after this we paddled up to the skier who were making their way around the island as well. After a brief chat, wave and a few pictures we carried on and had our own photo shoot with a beautiful blue iceberg. We were lucky to have an overcast, grey sky as this really brings out the blue hues from the ice. We continued further around the island but time was running out if we wanted to get to shore. Therefore, we decided to leave the last few minutes to enjoy our beautiful surroundings, everyone took 10 or so strokes away from each other to find their own slice of heaven, no talking, no paddling, no photos, just breathe in, take in and create memories. We are sure that scene along with the many Gentoo penguins who came nearby at that time instilled memories that will last a lifetime.

Location: Barrientos Island, Antarctica

Kayak Guides: Sharon Nicholas and Ryan Munro

Safety Zodiac Driver: David Burton

Date: Dec 8, 2017

Time: 1500 - 1700

Paddlers: Everyone

Weather: Foggy, 5-10 knot winds, cool

Species sighted from the kayaks: Gentoo penguin, Chinstrap penguin, Antarctic cormorant, Kelp gull, Elephant seal

Comment:

This was to be our last paddle of this Epic voyage, fortunately the weather permitted it to proceed. Barrientos island is known for its fast moving current, this was evident as we entered into the zodiac, you could see just how fast the water was moving. Luckily, our paddle was not to be in this fast moving current. Just as the paddle began we could see a massive fog bank forming in the distance. Soon enough that fog bank was on top of us and we could only see a vague outline of the shore and ourselves. At times it was a beautiful site to see our outlines glistening in the sun and fog. The conditions on this day for this paddle were that of a true sea kayak adventure, we had fog, waves, swell and a sense of adventure. By this point in the voyage the guides had complete confidence in the team to take them into what seemed like the unknown.

We had to utilize our safety zodiac driver to scan ahead to look for the safest passages at times. The swell was large enough to create some good sized breaking waves at various points which we had to keep an eye on. It was essential to keep good group awareness in these foggy conditions as it does not take long to lose sight of any one kayak. With all these conditions occurring, everyone remained calm and seemed to thoroughly enjoy this epic true sea kayak. At one point we had to pick our way through the middle of a couple breaking waves, slowly but surely we followed each other keeping a keen eye on the incoming swell, some caught a bit of a wave and went for a surf.

As the paddle continued the fog seemed to get thicker and thicker. We had to be continuously searching for shallow rocks who were just hiding below the tide level. We somehow managed to spot some Elephant seals strewn along the shores in a quiet cove on the back side of Barrientos. The swell and waves did not let up; it also did not stop us from enjoying this amazing paddle. We carried on until we arrived in another beautiful small cove which was much more sheltered. This is where we decided to finish the paddle as we had the opportunity to beach our kayaks up on shore and automatically be able to enjoy our last time on shore with the penguins.



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It was an absolute pleasure to have paddled with you all in this pristine landscape. Paddling in Antarctica is a very special experience that very few others get to do. We hope you continue to paddle in various places around the world.

All the best from,

Shaz and Ryan