

**ANTARCTICA, SOUTH GEORGIA,
& THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CRUISE**
Aboard the *M/V Minerva* (formerly *Explorer II*)
JANUARY 2–21, 2010

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“Glittering white, shining blue, raven black, in the light of the sun the land looks like a fairy tale. Pinnacle after pinnacle, peak after peak—crevassed, wild as any land on our globe, it lies, unseen and untrodden.”

— Captain Roald Amundsen, 1911

The Antarctic is a region of superlatives, and for many, represents the ultimate travel destination. Here, the visitor, a stranger in an ice-filled world of breathtaking beauty, comes face-to-face with some of the world’s most sensational wildlife spectacles, replete with penguins, albatrosses, skuas, seals, and whales. Soaring, snow-covered mountains, fantastically sculpted icebergs, and icy waterways present panoramic scenery of unsurpassed splendor. Captain Amundsen offered his description of Antarctica nearly a century ago, yet he understood then what is still true for travelers today; that nobody who goes to Antarctica returns unmoved, that the continent’s pristine wilderness and unbridled natural beauty are as timeless as the ancient snows that veil her.

In this remote and ageless environment, touched but not tainted by the hand of man, the legendary wildlife of Antarctica flourishes. During the austral (southern) summer, seals, whales, penguins, and other seabirds flock to the nurturing Southern Ocean to feed on huge schools of krill, the vital link in the Antarctic food chain. So special and unique is Antarctica that in 1959 the Antarctic Treaty was drafted to preserve the region for peaceful and scientific purposes only. Today, researchers from many nations work together, unlocking Antarctica’s remaining secrets.

VENT and Abercrombie & Kent are proud to present an opportunity for interested travelers, natural history enthusiasts, and birders to venture to the White Continent, a place that has enticed explorers into its waters for nearly a century. For this remarkable voyage, we’ve assembled an itinerary that offers maximum opportunities for viewing the birds and mammals of the Antarctic Peninsula AND the two South Atlantic island outposts of South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. For birders and nature-oriented travelers this is essential as this is where most of the wildlife is found. Simply, this is the most comprehensive expedition to the Southern Ocean. This is truly a trip of a lifetime.

Over the course of this expedition you will witness some of the finest scenery on the planet, enjoy intimate encounters with wildlife that is totally unafraid, and experience the thrill of treading in places where comparatively few have gone before. Among the many highlights, we'll cruise the Beagle Channel, surrounded on all sides by rocky headlands and snow-capped mountains, enjoying the thousands of seabirds that fill the sky and water around us. Penguins, albatrosses, giant-petrels, petrels, and diving-petrels, shearwaters, and skuas are all typically encountered.

In the Falklands we'll visit a colony of Rockhopper Penguins and Black-browed Albatross. We can wander through Port Stanley, capital of the archipelago and learn about the Falklands War of more than 20 years ago. On majestic South Georgia we'll wander among hundreds of thousands of King Penguins, view nesting Wandering Albatross and see a colony of Macaroni Penguins. We'll take time to visit an old whaling station at the island capital of Grytviken.

In reaching the Antarctic Peninsula, we'll voyage through magnificent waterways, protected bays, and deepwater fjords. Traversing the Lemaire and Neumeyer channels provides scenes of extraordinary beauty, with towering, glacier-coated mountains on all sides. We'll see massive glaciers calving enormous chunks of ice into the sea, make numerous excursions to remote islands and hidden bays aboard Zodiac landing craft, and visit active scientific research stations.

During our time at sea we will have opportunities to observe a tremendous variety of birdlife. The pelagic birding in these southern waters is among the best in the world. In crossing the famed Drake Passage and the Polar Front (Antarctic Convergence), we should see as many as five species of albatross, including the huge Wandering and Royal albatrosses, as well as several species of prions, storm-petrels, petrels, diving-petrels, and shearwaters. When not searching for wildlife above decks, you'll attend lectures by naturalists and ship staff below decks, who together combine to bring you expertise on all facets of natural history and human exploration of Antarctica.

We'll travel aboard the M/V Minerva, owned by Abercrombie & Kent and considered one of the finest expedition vessels in the world. Once aboard, you'll travel in total comfort, enjoying spacious accommodations and excellent cuisine. The guest quarters are among the most elegant available on any Antarctic cruise. A state-of-the-art lecture lounge is great for daily discussions and updates while outside, the Promenade Deck offers tremendous views of Antarctic seascapes. Minerva's ice-strengthened hull and stabilizers guarantee safety throughout your voyage. An experienced cruise staff, physician, and onboard lecturers accompany all voyages.

January 2-3, Days 1-2: Travel to Ushuaia, Argentina. Participants should plan to depart from home on January 2, arriving in Buenos Aires, Argentina on the morning of January 3. From Buenos Aires, participants should take a connecting flight to Ushuaia. There are several flights that service Ushuaia every day, but travelers should be advised that there may be only one flight available providing non-stop service. Upon arrival in Ushuaia, you will be transferred to the Albatross Hotel where a room has been reserved in your name. Participants arriving early enough will find excellent birding opportunities along the waterfront, only a few minute's walk from the hotel. Early this evening you will meet your tour leader in the lobby of the hotel for an orientation and welcome, followed by dinner.

NIGHTS: On board commercial aircraft (January 2)
Albatross Hotel, Ushuaia, Argentina (January 3)

January 4, Day 3: Tierra del Fuego National Park; Ushuaia waterfront; embark the *Minerva*; cruising the Beagle Channel. With 65,000 inhabitants, Ushuaia is a thriving port city set amid spectacular surroundings on the southern coast of Tierra del Fuego. Ringed by snow-capped mountains and overlooking the Beagle Channel, Ushuaia provides an exciting and picturesque embarkation point for our voyage.

As we will not board the ship until late in the afternoon, our schedule will likely afford us most of the day in and around Ushuaia, in which case we'll take time to seek out some of the special birds of the area. The premier attraction around Ushuaia is Tierra del Fuego National Park, where we will spend a full morning of birding.

Tierra del Fuego National Park, at more than 130,000 acres, sits along the international border with Chile and harbors some of the finest glacial scenery in South America. Alpine lakes, extensive beech forests, and rugged mountains characterize the landscape. The birding in the park is often very good. In our short time here we may find Black-faced Ibis, White-throated Caracara, Chilean Swallow, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, and Patagonian Sierra-Finch, among other Fuegian birds. The ultimate prize is the Magellanic Woodpecker, one of the largest and most beautiful woodpeckers in the world. Previous trips have encountered this species at several places in the park.

Following lunch we will spend our remaining time birding the coastline and protected bays that form the scenic Ushuaia waterfront. Only minutes from the city center, one may experience a sampling of some of South America's most elegant waterfowl, which use the near shore waters and coastal ponds for breeding during the summer season. We'll watch for Upland Goose, Crested Duck, Yellow-billed Pintail, Speckled Teal and Chiloe Wigeon. Flightless and Flying steamer-ducks are two of the more sought-after species we'll want to track down. Beyond waterfowl, we're likely to encounter the beautiful Dolphin Gull, Brown-hooded Gull, and South American Tern.

This afternoon, we'll board the *Minerva* and begin our cruise, traveling east down the Beagle Channel. With a fresh perspective gained from being aboard the ship, we'll find ourselves surrounded on all sides by dramatic mountain scenery, with many of the higher peaks still locked under retreating winter snow. Seabirds fill the air and water around us. Chilean Skuas and Dolphin Gulls are common while Magellanic Oystercatchers and Flightless Steamer-Ducks inhabit the rocky coastline. We'll also encounter the first of many other seabirds, watching especially for Magellanic Diving-Petrel.

NIGHT: Aboard *Minerva*

January 5, Day 4: Cruising the South Atlantic—from the Beagle Channel to the Falkland Islands. We'll spend the entire day at sea today, making our way from the mainland to our first major destination, the Falkland Islands. The crossing requires most of a day to complete, but offers our first opportunities for sea watching. From the time we leave the port in Ushuaia, we will be immersed in the remarkable abundance of seabirds that are typical of the waters off southern South America. We'll watch for seabirds, whales, and dolphins from the ship's decks, particularly in the nutrient-rich waters closer to the mainland. Sightings of Commerson's and hourglass dolphins; Chilean and Brown skuas; Black-bellied Storm-Petrel; and Cape Petrel regularly take place in these waters, while farther out to sea we are bound to encounter some of the more exciting scarcer seabirds, such as Royal and Gray-headed albatrosses.

When not on deck, we'll enjoy the amenities *Minerva* has to offer, including presentations by the expedition staff.

The Falkland Islands archipelago consists of two large islands and about 200 smaller ones.

NIGHT: Aboard the *Minerva*

January 6, Day 5: The Falkland Islands: Port Stanley. Lying 300 miles off the coast of Argentina, the rainy, windswept cluster of islands known as the Falklands, occupy a remote corner of the South Atlantic. For many,

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the Falkland Islands are a historical oddity, the site of a short, but bitterly contested war between England and Argentina in 1982 over ownership of the islands. Today, the islands exist as a self-governing territory of the United Kingdom, with a population of 3,000, most of which resides in the territorial capital, Port Stanley (or just Stanley to locals).

The Falklands are in fact a wildlife-rich location, with many important colonies of breeding penguins, albatross, waterfowl, and land birds. Several species of seals and dolphins that occur in the near shore waters are not found in the colder waters to the south. The Falklands are not true sub-Antarctic islands, but they hold much wildlife not found in the Southern Ocean and serve as a popular stop between ocean crossings to and from South Georgia.

We will arrive in the Falklands early this morning and will have most of the day to explore Stanley. Located on East Falkland, Stanley is the main center of population in the islands. The amount of time we spend here will depend on the cruise schedule, but possible activities include visits to the Falkland Islands Museum or a guided tour with a local historian. An example of the rich history of Stanley lies in the fact that approximately twenty shipwrecks can be seen at various points along the seven mile harbor front. Stanley was also at the center of the Falklands War of 1982 and the preserved battlefields are readily seen outside the town. If group size warrants, a local guide may accompany us a short distance outside of town to look for Two-banded Plovers and Rufous-chested Dotterels, both of which nest around the tundra and roadside ponds by the airport.

NIGHTS: Aboard *Minerva*

January 7-8, Days 6-7: Cruising the South Atlantic—from the Falklands to South Georgia Island. We'll enjoy these next two days at sea cruising the considerable distance to South Georgia Island. As the crossing is lengthy, you'll have many opportunities to join your leaders on deck for a couple of hours of sea watching, or simply relax in comfort below decks. Ship staff present lectures on the history, geology, and wildlife of South Georgia to prepare us for our arrival.

Sea birding is rewarding throughout these waters and sightings of spouting and breaching whales are anticipated. Among the numerous Black-browed Albatross, giant-petrels, Cape Petrels, and Slender-billed Prions, are smaller numbers of Royal and Wandering albatrosses, Common Diving-Petrel, Greater Shearwater, and Gray-backed Storm-Petrel.

One-hundred-fifty miles west of South Georgia, the lonely Shag Rocks rise out of the Atlantic Ocean. Time permitting, we'll cruise part way around them, observing the vast numbers of birds that congregate around hillside nesting colonies. South Georgia Shags and Antarctic Prions nest here by the thousands and the surrounding waters literally teem with thousands of other seabirds. The whole scene provides a truly incredible spectacle.

As South Georgia marks the northeastern-most point of our route, the oceanic waters in this corner of the Atlantic occasionally hold such rarer bird species as Sooty Albatross and Atlantic and Soft-plumaged petrels.

At some point we'll cross the Polar Front, or Antarctic Convergence. Between 50° and 60° south, the Polar Front represents a critical interface in the ocean, where warmer sub-Antarctic water flowing south overrides colder Antarctic water flowing north. This overlap zone produces jarring changes in water temperature and salinity. Krill, the vital link in the Antarctic food chain, flourishes here and sustains the millions of birds and animals that call Antarctica home.

NIGHTS: Aboard *Minerva*

January 9-11, Days 8-10: South Georgia Island. Lying 870 miles east of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia rises from the Southern Ocean like a great alpine citadel. Treeless, mountainous, ice-clad, and alone at the edge

of the submarine Scotia Ridge, this island outpost provides beautiful scenery in staggering proportions. Lofty, snow-covered peaks tower 9,000 feet above sea level; hilly, windswept moorlands characterize the lower slopes; and a magnificent coastline is scalloped with inlets and deepwater fjords, carved over eons by more than 150 glaciers.

South Georgia also hosts some of the world's most stupendous wildlife spectacles, with millions of penguins being its most obvious inhabitants. Tens of thousands more albatross, petrels, diving-petrels, Antarctic fur seals, and southern elephant seals roam the island's beaches and grassy slopes. The Antarctic Peninsula may garner more attention, but it cannot provide the overwhelming combination of beauty and wildlife found at South Georgia.

A colorful human history rounds out the experience of a visit here. For more than fifty years whaling stations on the island formed the hub of the South Atlantic whaling industry.

Formerly included in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, South Georgia was designated as a British Antarctic Territory following the end of the Falklands War. We will have three full days to explore different parts of the island and surrounding islets. We'll make zodiac excursions to a number of bays and beaches; spend time at some of the largest penguin colonies; and visit the territorial capital Grytviken, home to the silent remains and artifacts of an abandoned whaling station. We'll view the granite marker on the humble grave of the polar explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton. Among the many possible landing sites while at South Georgia are:

Elsehul – This bay at the northwest corner of the island is known for its nesting Gray-headed Albatross, in addition to huge numbers of Antarctic fur seals.

Bay of Isles – One of the best known sites on the northwest coast of South Georgia, the Bay of Isles offers access to broad gravelly beaches, beautiful mountain scenery and a huge abundance of wildlife. A zodiac landing at Salisbury Plain puts us in the close company of 100,000 pairs of King Penguins, most colorful and second largest of the penguins; Brown Skuas, Antarctic fur seals and southern elephant seals. Nearby Prion Islet is rat free and supports a healthy population of the endemic South Georgia Pipit and an endemic "South Georgia" race of Yellow-billed Pintail. A walk up into the small island's interior will likely produce close encounters with Wandering Albatross and Brown Skuas on nests.

Hercules Bay – A zodiac cruise of this small bay takes us up close to Macaroni Penguins and South Georgia (Blue-eyed) Shags.

Stromness – Situated within scenic Stromness Bay, this former Norwegian whaling station was abandoned in 1961. A stop here now offers terrific mountain scenery and opportunities to visit a colony of Gentoo Penguins and to wander close to the abandoned whaling station.

Grytviken – Territorial capital of South Georgia, Grytviken is the site of South Georgia's first whaling station, established by the Norwegians in 1905. Abandoned since the early 1960s, it currently is manned by only a couple of people, but still offers several fascinating sights, including a restored whaler's church, a post office and the small South Georgia Museum. In the nearby whaler's graveyard "The Boss," Sir Ernest Shackleton, rests in peace. Wildlife is abundant at Grytviken as well, with opportunities to view King Penguins, Antarctic Terns, and elephant seals.

St. Andrews Bay – St. Andrew's Bay, on the east coast of South Georgia, boasts an enormous colony of King Penguins rivaling that of Salisbury Plain. Approximately 100,000 pairs reside here during the Antarctic summer. A walk through the colony will bring us up close to birds of all stages of development, and also reveal Brown Skuas, Kelp Gulls, and Snowy Sheathbills. An added benefit of a landing at St. Andrews is sweeping vistas of the entire colony and the sea beyond.

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Royal Bay – Site of the remains of a base built by German explorers, Royal Bay is home to a colony of 9,000 pairs of King Penguins, Gentoo Penguins, and South Georgia Shags.

Gold Harbor – Among the most famous of South Georgia’s wildlife viewing areas, Gold Harbor offers excellent access to elephant seals, fur seals, and King Penguins for starters. Steep, tussock-covered hillsides are the preferred nesting site of Light-mantled Albatross and giant-petrels lounge on the beach. Besides the wildlife, majestic natural surroundings include glaciers, towering cliffs and a broad gravel beach.

NIGHTS: Aboard *Minerva*

January 12-13, Days 11-12: Cruising the Scotia Sea—from South Georgia to Antarctica. Of the four ocean crossings we’ll make on our expedition, the voyage through the Scotia Sea between the Antarctic Peninsula and South Georgia is often the most exhilarating. We’ll take two days to cover almost 800 miles, during which time we’ll head steadily southwest into the higher latitudes. Along the way we’ll re-cross the Polar Front (Antarctic Convergence) and eventually encounter ice.

The first ice we see is likely to be smaller bergs that have drifted with the currents north from the Weddell Sea. In time the ice becomes more plentiful and larger until we begin to observe the massive remains of the disintegrating winter icepack. Icebergs of all shapes and sizes appear around the ship, from horizon to horizon. Cutting through the slushy water, the sound of debris ice scraping against the ship’s reinforced hull is unforgettable; the sight of giant chunks of ice floating like monuments will leave you mesmerized. In between you’ll witness icebergs of all shapes and sizes. Some appear as massive squared off edifices while others show up as wave-sculpted masterpieces. Behemoth tabular icebergs finally appear, broken off the continental ice shelf and adrift. Bigger than life, some of these bergs tower hundreds of feet over the ocean and stretch for over a mile.

Ice often becomes compressed as it ages. When this happens it loses its ability to reflect the full spectrum of colors that comprise white light and instead can only reflect blue. We’ll observe blue ice, some of which gleams incredible cobalt under overcast skies.

Besides the dazzling ice spectacle, you’ll once again be under the spell of Antarctic wildlife. Near South Georgia Blue Petrels skim across the ocean, while further south Southern Fulmars and White-chinned Petrels arc through the ship’s wake. We’ll watch for the ghostly white Snow Petrel, a bird closely tied to the pack ice and whose presence is difficult to predict.

Approaching the South Shetlands, our first sight of land is likely to be Elephant Island—rugged, mountainous, and ice-covered, yet undeniably beautiful.

NIGHT: Aboard *Minerva*

January 14-17, Days 13-16: Expedition cruising along the Antarctic Peninsula and South Shetland Islands. The ice-covered islands, snow-veiled mountains, and picturesque waterways of the Antarctic Peninsula and South Shetland Islands form the most wondrous panoramic scenery on Earth. The peninsula is a narrow finger of land that projects north from the main continent toward South America and separates the Weddell from the Bellingshausen seas. The South Shetlands meanwhile, exist as a natural gateway to the peninsula when crossing the Polar Front (Antarctic Convergence). The next 4 days will be spent exploring the region, expedition cruising through numerous scenic straits and channels. Aboard the ship’s fleet of Zodiacs, we’ll cruise among ice floes, land at penguin rookeries, and visit with scientists at research stations. We’ll also be sure to make a continental landing on the peninsula in at least one place, allowing us to “claim” the seventh continent!

The onset of the Antarctic summer allows us to experience the deep rich colors of the sea and ice, the dramatic etchings of coastlines, and the sheer walls of towering icebergs. The pristine air lends an unusual quality to

Antarctic light, so that colors are truer and landscapes sharper. We can clearly see snow-capped peaks on every horizon, often tinted rose-red or burnt orange by the late evening sun.

We'll experience incredible wildlife encounters on a daily basis. Three species of "brushtail" penguins—Chinstrap, Adelie, and Gentoo—nest here and we hope to visit colonies of each. Moving south along the peninsula, South Polar Skuas replace the Browns and we may even have the opportunity to compare the two side by side. We'll pay close attention to the ice floes, where leopard, crabeater, and Weddell seals haul out to rest. Whales often use these protected, food rich waters for feeding and we have good chances for encountering minke, killer and humpback whales.

Although the specific itinerary depends on sea and ice conditions, we'll have no shortage of places to explore. Some of the places we plan to visit include:

Lemaire Channel – The extravagant beauty of the Lemaire Channel makes it a popular, and essential, destination for many Antarctic voyages. Situated along the Antarctic Peninsula, the Lemaire offers a spectacular transit of a narrow icy waterway, with 3,000 foot peaks looming on either side. The high point of the trip is a spectacular four mile stretch, lined by sheer rock and ice, with Booth Island towering above. If the weather is clear the dramatic mountains are reflected beautifully in the water. Crabeater and leopard seals and Adelie Penguins are seen with frequency resting on ice floes. Though only an hour is required to cruise the length of the Lemaire, the whole experience is totally unforgettable.

Petermann Island – Lying beyond the southern end of the Lemaire, Petermann Island was named for German geographer August Petermann who led an expedition here in 1873-74. Largely snow-covered, Petermann hosts large colonies of Adelie Penguins and smaller numbers of Gentoo Penguins and Antarctic Shags. This marks the southern-most point for most expedition cruises.

Anvers Island and the Neumeyer Channel – Anvers Island is among the largest of the islands along the north Antarctic Peninsula, measuring some 37 miles wide. It is separated from the mainland by the wide Gerlache Strait. Though most visitors do not typically visit the island itself, the chief attraction is a cruise through the 17-mile long Neumeyer Channel. Like the Lemaire, the Neumeyer presents landscapes of overpowering beauty, characterized by snow-capped peaks and massive glaciers. Leopard seals haul out on ice floes and the rarer Antarctic Petrel is occasionally seen.

Port Lockroy – Established by the British in 1944 as a weather and reconnaissance station, Port Lockroy operated until 1962. The original building now represents the oldest British building on the Antarctic Peninsula. Now restored, it is listed under the Antarctic Treaty as a historic site and monument. It is open during the summer months, where it operates as a museum and visitor center. A post office allows visitors to send postcards or letters home via the Falkland Islands and the U.K.

Palmer Station – Established by Americans in 1964, Palmer Station sits at the southwest corner of Anvers Island. The facility is a center for active research, including a study monitoring the long-term effects of changing sea ice cover on Antarctic marine life. Well run, the station houses impressive saltwater tanks and aquariums. The gift shop is said to be the best in Antarctica.

Paradise Harbor and Neko Harbor – Situated along the peninsula's Danco Coast, these two harbors are an important and popular stop in Antarctica. The reason is that it offers visitors the chance to actually set foot on the Antarctic continent. Beyond that, the scenery here is extraordinary, with ice in the water and ancient, deeply cracked glaciers ringing the bays on all sides. The Chilean and Argentine bases, Gonzalez Videla and Almirante Brown, are here as well and receive many visitors. The snowfields surrounding Neko Harbor hold a colony of Gentoo Penguins and the rocky cliffs above Paradise Harbor host a colony of Antarctic Shags.

Errera Channel and Cuverville Island – The Errera is another of the Antarctic's dramatic passages, framed by the Arctowski Peninsula on one side and Ronge Island on the other. The five and a half mile voyage reveals

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3,000 foot mountains looming over an icy channel that closes to 3,000 feet at its narrowest. Cuverville Island, at the north opening of the channel, holds a large colony of Gentoo Penguins, said to number 5,000 pairs. In the 1990s, the island was the study site of researchers trying to determine the effects of tourism on the health of penguin colonies.

South Shetland Islands – When coming from South America or South Georgia, the South Shetlands provide a spectacular entrance to the Antarctic region. Rugged mountainous islands rise from the ocean like an impressive volcanic gateway, giving first time visitors a taste of what lies beyond. Massive tabular icebergs float freely in the inter-island waters and Bransfield Strait, and huge colonies of Chinstrap Penguins form during the Antarctic summer on the slopes of many of the islands. This sub-Antarctic archipelago covers a considerable distance from northeast to southwest, but our schedule includes zodiac landings at a number of locations.

Elephant Island – Elephant Island lies at the eastern terminus of the South Shetland group and is probably best known for its location where Shackleton’s men overwintered as they awaited rescue. High, impenetrable, and locked in glaciers, Elephant is an island fortress. Yet it is also a place of incredible beauty and the site of thousands of breeding Chinstrap Penguins and Antarctic Shags. Sea conditions and heavy cloud-cover often prevent ships from landing there, but for those who make it, what awaits are huge, cracked glaciers, an ice-blue bay at Point Wild and thousands of nesting seabirds.

King George Island – Largest of the South Shetland Islands, King George is largely covered by glaciers. Admiralty Bay is the site of a Brazilian research base and remains ice-free year round

Greenwich Island and Yankee Harbor – Yankee Harbor is a protected bay on the south side of Greenwich Island and hosts large numbers of Gentoo Penguins and Snowy Sheathbills.

Hannah Point, Livingston Island – Though landing here can be difficult, this site is an excellent place to view a variety of nesting seabirds. Gentoo Penguins are joined by an occasional Macaroni Penguin; Kelp Gulls watch for an easy meal and giant-petrels and Antarctic shags are also present in numbers. The beaches on the back side of the point are desirable resting places for crabeater and Weddell seals.

Deception Island – Deception Island is quite unlike any other place we will visit on the cruise. Featuring a blown-out caldera in the middle of a still-active volcano, Deception offers visitors a chance to stroll on black gravel beaches and actually take a dip in geothermally heated waters. The island is accessed through a hole in one side known as Neptune’s Bellows, so named for strong winds that whip across the entrance. A stop at Whaler’s Bay provides time for a walk to Neptune’s Window, which provides thrilling views of the sea and sometimes the Antarctic Peninsula beyond. Whaler’s Bay possesses a colorful history of Norwegian whaling station turned into a base of British occupation in WWII. Volcanic activity since the 1960s has demolished nearly all of the remaining buildings and the bay is now the domain of Antarctic Terns, elephant seals, fur seals, and penguins.

Bailey Head – Known as a hard place to land a boat, Bailey Head offers an unforgettable traipse up a glaciated valley into the heart of a massive colony of Chinstrap Penguins. Hundreds of thousands of penguins live here during the Antarctic summer and form long black-and-white processions as they move back and forth from the sea to their nests. The spectacle is overwhelming as seemingly every patch of ground up to the surrounding ridgelines is occupied by Chinstraps in various stages of the breeding cycle.

NIGHTS: Aboard *Minerva*

January 18-19: Days 17-18: Cruising the Drake Passage. Between the tips of South America and the Antarctic Peninsula, the Southern Ocean pinches in, forming the Drake Passage. Discovered by Sir Francis Drake in 1578, the Drake Passage is a region where circumpolar ocean currents concentrate and bring the waters of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans together. This area is justly famous, or infamous, to every type of traveler who has ever crossed it. And no trip to Antarctica would be complete (or possible!) without crossing “The Drake.” When on

its best behavior, the “Drake Lake” offers an effortless transit on smooth seas; but can add some excitement to the voyage when riled by strong westerly winds. Fortunately, the seas are at their calmest during the Antarctic summer and many crossings are easy.

During our journey we are sure to witness a wondrous abundance of wildlife. The pelagic birding in these sub-Antarctic and Antarctic waters is among the best in the world. We should see as many as five species of albatross, including the lovely Gray-headed and giant Royal and Wandering albatrosses. Among the thousands of other seabirds, we’re likely to see Northern and Southern giant-petrels, White-chinned Petrel, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, and Antarctic Prion. One of the most beautiful birds to grace the Southern Ocean is the Cape Petrel. Painted a striking combination of black and white, these endearing little birds serve as constant companions through much of the crossing. At times they swirl around the ship, only feet above the ocean surface, while at other times they’ll take advantage of sudden updrafts and vault to eye level before peeling away.

These nutrient-rich waters also support an impressive mix of cetaceans. Past trips have recorded fin, sei, Antarctic minke, humpback, long-finned pilot, and killer whales. Several of the rarer “beaked-whale” species are observed on occasion.

Below decks you can attend daily lectures by ship staff on a variety of topics related to Antarctica. At some point we’ll re-cross the Polar Front.

NIGHTS: Aboard *Minerva*

January 20, Day 19: Disembark *Minerva* in Ushuaia; departing flights home. We’ll disembark *Minerva* early this morning in Ushuaia followed by direct transfer to the airport.

NIGHT: On board commercial aircraft

January 21, Day 20: Arrive home. International flights departing on the night of January 20 arrive home or in another airport for transfer to connecting flights home.

Antarctica programs are designed as expeditions which require a degree of flexibility and spontaneity. Every effort will be made to follow the published itinerary, but please note that they are offered subject to change at the discretion of the ship’s captain, based on sea, weather, and ice conditions.

TOUR SIZE: The *M/V Minerva* holds 122 passengers, of which VENT has reserved an allotment of space for this Antarctic expedition. **Please note that if registrations do not warrant, the cruise company may sell any unsold berths to the general public. A VENT leader will accompany this cruise with a minimum of 6 registrations. If registration numbers do not warrant the presence of a VENT leader, the morning field trip to Tierra Del Fuego National Park on January 4 will be led by a local birding guide.**

TOUR LEADER: Bob Sundstrom

Bob Sundstrom has led VENT tours since 1989 to destinations including Hawaii, Mexico, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Iceland, Papua New Guinea, the Southwest Pacific islands, Antarctica, the Bering Sea, and many destinations throughout North America. Bob takes a strong interest in both the natural and cultural settings of his tours. He earned his doctorate at the University of Washington. Bob and his wife Sally live in the rural Scatter Creek Valley south of Olympia, Washington. Bob lived in Seattle for more than two decades, continues to teach birding workshops, and leads a program of short, regional tours that begin in the Seattle area. During two seasons of work in the Pribilof Islands, he helped chronicle the occurrence of North American bird rarities. A skilled birder with a special interest in bird song, Bob has served on the boards of several nature and

conservation organizations, is a member of the Washington State Bird Records Committee, and is a co-author of *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest*. When not on tour, Bob keeps busy as the lead writer for the daily public radio program *BirdNote*, which is archived at www.birdnote.org.

CRUISE INFORMATION

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: Cabin prices quoted are per person based on double occupancy. Single supplements are quoted separately. All staterooms are outside cabins with portholes, windows or balconies; en-suite bathrooms, direct dial satellite phone systems; TV/DVD player; radio and hairdrier. Cabins will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Those single travelers who wish to share their cabin will be charged the single supplement if no cabin mate can be found.

<u>Cabin Category</u>	<u>Per Person (double occupancy)</u>	<u>Single Supplement</u>
Category SB, Standard	\$11,995	\$3,000
Category B, Standard	\$12,695	\$3,200
Category SA, Standard	\$13,995	\$4,100
Category A, Standard	\$14,695	\$4,400
Category SP, Superior	\$16,995	\$8,100
Category D, Deluxe	\$19,495	\$13,900
Category S, Suite	\$22,695	\$21,600
Category OS, Owners Suite	\$29,695	\$28,605

Please Note: Single cabin are limited.

Included in your cruise package:

- Transfer in Ushuaia from airport to hotel on January 3; land transfers around Ushuaia on January 4; land transfer from ship to airport in Ushuaia on January 20.
- One night hotel accommodation in Ushuaia on January 3
- Three non-shipboard meals: dinner in Ushuaia on January 3, and breakfast and lunch in Ushuaia on January 4,
- Shipboard accommodation (16 nights).
- All shipboard meals and drinks, including alcoholic beverages(excepting top shelf/premium spirits).
- Access to public viewing areas.
- Zodiac excursions.
- Ship staff (Expedition Leader and lecturers).
- Ship crew (including Zodiac drivers).
- VENT leaders.
- On-board medical officer.
- Antarctica visitation fees (as of prices current to September 20, 2008).
- Gratuities to ship crew (zodiac drivers, maintenance workers, dining room attendants, cabin attendants, etc.)

Not included in your cruise package:

- Roundtrip air transportation from home to Ushuaia and back.
- Passport fees and airport departure taxes.
- Hotel accommodations prior to January 3; hotel accommodations after the night of January 19.

- Meals prior to dinner on January 3; meals after breakfast on January 20.
- Laundry, postage, telephone calls, emails
- Emergency evacuation charges
- Antarctica visitation fees (fee increases above the level current to September 20, 2008)
- Travel insurance
- Gratuities to ship staff (Expedition Leader and lecturers)
- Gratuities to VENT leaders
- Fuel surcharges

REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1500**. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due September 4, 2009.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS: All cancellations, for any reason, must be received in writing. Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$750 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$750.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

Any refunds will be reduced by applicable airline cancellation penalties. No refunds will be made in the event of “no shows” or cancellations made on the day of sailing. **We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance and/or travel insurance to protect yourself.**

GENERAL INFORMATION

GOVERNMENT FEES, TAXES, AND VISITOR’S FEES: The *M/S Minerva* is responsible for port costs at embarkation and disembarkation. Visitor fees for the various landings presently scheduled for this itinerary are not being assessed. In the event, however, that Visitor Fees are assessed by any governmental or governing bodies before embarkation of the cruise, Victor Emanuel Nature Tours reserves the right to pass such fees to the Client and must be paid before the commencement of the voyage.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this voyage. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of brochure printing. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

Because of the agility required for cruises on board an expeditionary vessel, travelers with disabilities, heart and/or respiratory problems, or other significant physical limitations or conditions are advised not to participate in expeditionary cruises. Please be advised that medical conditions that are discovered at any time during or prior to boarding and which, in the sole and reviewable opinion of the Captain, may jeopardize the health or safety of the Passenger or any other individual, will be grounds to deny the Passenger permission to board the ship at the point of embarkation, and/or to require the Passenger to leave the ship and terminate his or her continued participation in the cruise. By forwarding the deposit for this cruise, the Passenger certifies that he or she is in good physical health and capable of performing normal activities on this expedition.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

IMPORTANT NOTE: Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the voyage is MANDATORY for participation in this cruise. A good website for information and acquisition of both Trip cancellation insurance as well as Emergency Evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

Due to the nature of the expedition, weather conditions or government regulations may require changes to be made to the itinerary and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to the itinerary described, within the limits of safety and time. In the event of changes, passengers have no right to any refund or other compensation. Expedition fees are based on group participation. Should you choose not to take part in any activity or make use of services provided, no refund will be made.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of VENT. Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First and business class travel may be available on some flights. **All requests for travel assistance (air tickets, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 90 days prior to departure date. Within 90 days, arrangements must be made on your own.**

Note: Buenos Aires is regarded by many as the finest, most sophisticated city in Latin America. An obvious European influence permeates the city's parks, architecture, and culture. Sometimes called the "Paris of the South," Buenos Aires has long been an enticing destination for many travelers. For birders and other natural history enthusiasts, Buenos Aires is equally compelling. Several premium birding areas are accessed from the city center in 45 minutes or less. If you plan to spend time in Buenos Aires before the cruise and would like to take advantage of local birding possibilities, we can arrange for a skilled local guide to accompany you into the field for an extra fee.

In Buenos Aires, some of the city's famous major landmarks you can visit on your own are:

The **Plaza de Mayo**—a site and sculpture commemorating the first Argentine government; **Casa Rosada (Government House)**—seat of the executive branch of the Argentine government; **Cabildo**—town hall of colonial times; **City Hall and Cathedral**—a mausoleum housing the Great Liberator, General Jose de San Martín; **San Telmo**—the city’s oldest district features a flea market, old mansions, and an antique market; **La Boca**—Italian immigrant neighborhood features colorful houses and sidewalk cafes; **La Recoleta Cemetery** – Neo-classical gates, Greek columns and marble mausoleums adorn the “national” cemetery, which hosts the gravesites of some of Argentina’s most important and famous people, including Eva Perón; **Palermo Park**—one of the most beautiful parts of the city features botanic and zoological gardens, in addition to **Congress Building and Square**; **9 de Julio Avenue**; and **Puerto Madero**.

An excellent birding area, Costanera Sur, lies close to the city center. Should you plan to come early to Buenos Aires, you may wish to visit this location on your own. Should you wish to spend more time birding in the area, you may hire an excellent local guide through our Argentine ground operator. Please contact our office if you wish to learn more about this option.

Costanera Sur is an enormous preserved wetland alongside a major metropolitan park. Waterfowl are the primary attraction as the majority of the waterfowl of southern South America occurs here, including Coscoroba Swan, Rosy-billed Pochard, Red Shoveler, and Silver Teal. Expansive mudflats hold Gray-hooded and Brown-hooded gulls, Snowy-crowned Tern, Collared Plover, South American Snipe and many others.

Ecologica Reserva de Vicente Lopez, a public park and preserve, offers swampy wetlands and open woodlands. Landbirds are abundant highlighted by Chimango Caracara, Picazuro Pigeon, Guira Cuckoo, Gilded Sapphire, Checkered and Green-barred Woodpeckers, and Sayaca Tanager.

CONDITIONS:

The Ship – *M/V Minerva*

- Five Star service & amenities of a traditional luxury vessel plus the hardware of an adventure ship
- 198 Guests
- 1A1 Super Ice Rating
(highest possible for passenger vessel)
- Advanced environmental marine technology
- Fleet of Zodiac landing craft
- Extensive lecturer program
- Crew to guest ratio: 1 to 1.5
- Luxuriously appointed, ocean-view staterooms

You can also work out in the gym, unwind in a sauna, enjoy a massage or watch a movie at the cinema. Each day you'll meet for informal pre-shore briefings or post-excursion wrap-ups in the ship's lounge or theater-style auditorium. Mid-morning bouillon and afternoon tea are served daily. The gracious, wood-paneled library with its 4,000+ volumes is one of the largest at sea.

The Lounge is the social heart of the ship, where you can chat with other passengers and enjoy informal lectures. Two open bars, the Shackleton and the South Cape, provide additional corners where you'll probably spend a good deal of time socializing with fellow guests and mingling with members of the expedition. The atmosphere is informal and unregimented, with a warm sense of camaraderie. Liquors, wines and beverages are complimentary on board.

Dining – Seating is not assigned; you can sit where, when and with whom you please in the Main Dining Room and in the alternative Verandah. In the Main Dining Room with its panoramic windows, you can select from imaginative à la carte menus that also include a choice of spa cuisine and vegetarian offerings. The Verandah

Antarctica, South Georgia & the Falkland Islands, Page 14

Restaurant serves breakfast and lunch buffets in a casual environment. There is always a selection of light fare and vegetarian dishes, and special diets can be accommodated with advance notice. In-cabin room service is available.

On board, all bar drinks —excepting premium liquors and premium wines such as champagne — are included in your cruise fee.

While on Land – Walking conditions on land are generally not difficult, yet it is important to pay close attention to footing and walking conditions. The diversity of topography in Antarctica guarantees that you'll experience a variety of terrain, from soft sand, to coarse gravel, to stepping around large boulders. Walks to penguin rookeries frequently involve treks of varying length through shallow snow and ice. In the Falklands, most walking is over fairly even ground, but tall grasses are often slick with recent rain. Conditions on South Georgia are similar to Antarctica.

While at Sea - While cruising at sea you'll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for sea watching, or remain below decks and relax in the library, the passenger lounge, or your stateroom. The sea is generally at its calmest during the austral summer, but rough conditions may develop at any time. Heavy winds regularly affect the latitudes around 40° and 50° south. Many summertime crossings of the Drake Passage are uneventful, but passengers should be prepared for the possibility of a rough transit. The same can be said of the crossing between the Falkland Islands and South Georgia.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: All expedition cruises to Antarctica take place during the austral summer, from November–March. In this timeframe, we can expect beautiful sunny days, but conditions can change without warning in the higher latitudes, and overcast skies, poor visibility and precipitation do occur. November/December departures coincide with the onset of the summer season and tend to be a little colder, with a greater likelihood of experiencing snowfall. The February/March period means warmer daytime temperatures and more prolonged periods of sunshine. Whatever precipitation there is occurs in the form of rain. All temperatures are listed in Fahrenheit (°F).

Temperatures at the Antarctic Peninsula are likely to be the coolest of the trip, averaging in the mid to upper 30s. Sunny days and intermittent overcast are expected. Visibility should be good most days, but low clouds can obscure viewing conditions.

Lying considerably farther north, the Falkland Islands are likely to be 10-20 degrees warmer than at the peninsula, but you should be prepared for cool conditions. Wind and rain are aspects of life in this archipelago, making moderate temperatures feel colder. Temperatures in the Falklands range from the upper 30s to mid 50s, but average in the low to mid 40s in December and January.

The weather at South Georgia changes frequently and is difficult to predict. Overall, you should expect conditions that average between those in the Falklands and the peninsula. Temperatures range from the mid 30s to mid 40s and precipitation occurs in the form of light rain and snow showers. Prolonged periods of sunshine are regular in the summer months, but periods of bad weather are possible.

Buenos Aires, Argentina, is very warm in the austral summer. Temperatures range into the mid 80s during the day and drop into the 60s at night. Sunny and dry conditions are expected.

Ushuaia, Argentina lies at the tip of South America, with weather affected by the city's proximity to the sea and mountains. Temperatures range from the upper 30s to low 50s, but can feel much colder on a windy day. Persistent wind is regularly encountered around the city itself, but nearby Tierra del Fuego National Park is more sheltered by high mountains.

While cruising at sea, a steady wind-chill can dramatically affect even moderate temperatures.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult with airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, essential toiletries, medications, a change of clothing, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

CLOTHING: Antarctic expeditions are casual environments. Comfortable and practical clothing is recommended while on board the ship and ashore, for daytime and evening wear. For the Captain's Welcome Aboard and Farewell dinners a Smart Casual attire is appropriate. For women this includes casual dresses or slacks/blouses ensembles; for men, khakis/slacks and open-collared shirts. Men may choose to wear a sports jacket for such occasions. A list of essential items includes:

- **Waterproof Rain pants – REQUIRED** for protection against precipitation, ocean spray in zodiac landing craft and wet landings. Your rain pants should fit comfortably over your regular pants. Some types feature a zipper on the outside of the lower pant leg, enabling you to pull your pants on and off without removing shoes or boots.
- **Warm, waterproof gloves and mittens – REQUIRED** for almost every circumstance. Thin glove liners are a good choice when trying to use your fingers for taking pictures or using binoculars.
- **Warm Socks** – Thin cotton or polypropylene socks are a good choice, in combination with a few pairs of wool socks. It is important to have clean, dry socks through the duration of the voyage. Pack accordingly.
- **Regular Pants** – Denim, cotton, corduroy, or wool pants are acceptable in dry conditions, such as when birding from the ship's decks; and for evening recaps, social hours, and dinners.
- **Hats, scarves and gaitors – REQUIRED.** You will need a cotton, knit, or wool pull down cap at the least, while a warm scarf or gaitor come in handy when exposed in windy conditions.
- **Long Underwear - STRONGLY RECOMMENDED.** Silk or other lightweight material is sufficient for most people. Those who are easily chilled might consider a heavier material, such as wool.
- **T-shirts (long- and short-sleeved)** – Simple cotton shirts for wearing under warmer outerwear.
- **Turtlenecks and flannels** – More warm weather clothing for wearing under parkas, fleeces, and sweaters.
- **Warm Sweaters or Polar fleece** – Offers excellent insulation against cold temperatures.

FOOTWEAR: **IT IS MANDATORY** that you bring a pair of pull-on rubber, waterproof, knee-high boots with strong rubber-ridged, nonskid soles that fit comfortably. With wet landings, you will be stepping from the zodiac into icy water that may be up to 10" deep. You should expect to walk over icy, uneven ground between the shore and the various penguin colonies you'll visit. Do not bring heavy, "clunky" boots or boots with poor traction, as you need the right footwear that will keep you warm, yet agile. Make sure that your boots fit comfortably over thicker socks as well. Waterproof lightweight boot coverings that can be worn over hiking boots or shoes, such as NEOS Performance Overshoe, are also recommended. Some places to find boots with these specifications include Cabela's, REI, L.L. Bean, Defender Industries, and Rocky Boots.

When on board the ship, comfortable walking shoes, or deck shoes are sufficient.

PARKAS: You will receive a complimentary expedition parka, with hood, for your cruise to Antarctica. These parkas are made of quality material and are designed to keep you insulated against cold temperatures and precipitation. Some companies prefer that you submit your order weeks or months before the cruise departs, while others simply distribute the parkas at the time of boarding. **Please read your pre-departure material carefully, as it will provide information for obtaining the parka.**

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is provided by the ship staff for an extra charge. Check with the staff upon embarkation for turnaround time.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your Antarctic expedition:

- **Backpack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all landings and excursions
- **Ziploc bags** – Excellent for keeping small items or any items of value dry; bring several different sizes
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick**
- **Tissue packs**
- **Binoculars** – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7 x 35, 8 x 42, 10 x 40, or 10 x 42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7 x 35 or 8 x 42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes - Since most wildlife viewing will take place on a moving ship or zodiac, or among the birds and animals at very close range, you do not need to bring a spotting scope. Your tour leaders will have one available for group use on the occasions where it is necessary to have one.

PASSPORTS AND DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS

A valid passport is required. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

On board ship, it is customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with Customs and Immigration authorities. Your passport will be collected prior to or upon embarkation, and returned upon disembarkation.

Depending on the cruise route, you may have opportunities to have your passport stamped in the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and on the Antarctic Peninsula. The Cruise Director will keep all passengers informed when such options become available.

VISAS

Visas are not required for U.S. and Canadian citizens for entry into Argentina, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, or Antarctica. Note that a “reciprocity” fee applies to all U.S. and Canadian citizens entering Chile, and that a one-time payment of \$100.00 must be paid in USD. For Canadians the fee is \$55 USD. Also note that this fee is subject to change without notice.

Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. citizens may vary; please check with the consulate or embassy of Argentina.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Antarctica includes most necessary expenses, including all meals aboard the ship. You will want to bring enough cash to cover such extra expenses as taxi rides, gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own before and after the cruise, and personal items. U.S. travelers checks are also recommended for meeting expenses during the cruise. Small denominations of cash are best as the places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills or travelers checks. In Ushuaia and Stanley, change is returned in local currency. Shipboard accounts can be paid with most major credit cards. Visa and MasterCard are universally accepted. Please inquire for further details regarding the use of Diners Club and American Express.

Should you extend your vacation in Buenos Aires beyond what is offered in the cruise program, you'll want to consider obtaining local currency. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Argentina is the Argentine peso (ARS). 100 centavos = 1 peso.

As of April 2, 2008, the conversion rate is:

1 US dollar = 3.70 Argentine pesos

TIME: Argentina and the Falkland Islands are all three hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST), and South Georgia is 4 hours ahead of EST. Antarctic Standard Time is the same as Greenwich Mean Time, which places it 5 hours ahead of EST, however, many people stationed in Antarctica adopt the time zone of their home territory.

MEDICAL SERVICES: A qualified physician is in attendance at all times, but must be made aware of any potential medical problems that might arise because of any medical condition, disability, or illness of any passenger on board. **Please return your medical information form in a timely manner.**

No sophisticated medical facilities are available in Antarctica. Passengers who are not fit for an expedition cruise, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the cruise. A serious health emergency in Antarctica may result in an air evacuation, which will come at considerable expense to you. **Comprehensive optional insurance, including coverage for medical evacuation, is available and highly recommended. This coverage is available through your trip cancellation policy, if purchased through VENT. Please consult your insurance agent or existing policy, if in effect, for the terms and limitations of your existing coverage. Refer to the section on Trip Cancellation Insurance.**

HEALTH: As of this writing (March 2009), no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into any country or territory on this route. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. Please consult with your physician about keeping up with routine vaccinations.

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If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the expedition safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Motion Sickness – Travelers should anticipate traveling in rough water at some point during the voyage. Although the Drake Passage is known for its turbulent seas, passengers may experience challenging sea conditions on any of the crossings. Even people who have never been motion sick may find themselves at risk in the Southern Ocean. Many ships visiting Antarctica carry a supply of anti-motion sickness medication for general availability to passengers. We recommend that you consult your physician on an appropriate medication.

Sun Exposure – The sun's ultraviolet rays are more dangerous in Antarctica than most other places in the world. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (877) FYI-TRIP. You can check the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current aboard ship is 110 volts AC, as in the United States. Outlets are designed to fit American-style plugs. Small appliances can be connected to the outlet in your stateroom without the use of converters or adapters. There is a 110/220 volt outlet in the bathroom for razors only.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com, offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

Antarctica is a subject widely written about. A great many books and magazine articles have been written over the past century addressing its magnificent wildlife and rich human history. Although a person could research the topic indefinitely, the following list highlights some of the best material available about Antarctica that will prepare any traveler for a trip to the White Continent.

Jaramillo, Alvaro. *The Birds of Chile*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.

This is the best book available for this tour; it is a modern easy-to-use, pocket-size field guide covering all of Chile's birdlife, including southernmost Tierra del Fuego. Most importantly, the guide also includes **ALL** of the species the tour could possibly encounter in the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, Antarctica, and the Southern Ocean. The book is available through ABA Sales (www.abasales.com) and Amazon.com.

Couvre, Enrique and Claudio Vidal. *Birds of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego & Antarctic Peninsula*. Printed in Chile, by Fantastico Sur, 2003.

A recent photographic guide to the birds of the region; a quality reference guide which serves as a useful companion to *Birds of Chile*.

Narosky, Tito and Dario Yzurietta. *The Birds of Argentina & Uruguay*.

This book will be highly useful during the brief time spent around Buenos Aires at the beginning of the tour, but not after. The book is available through Amazon.com. The first edition, and a more recent Gold edition, are available. Your tour leaders will have a copy if you decide not to purchase your own.

Shirihai, Hadoram. *The Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife: Birds and Marine Mammals of the Antarctic Continent and Southern Ocean*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. Second Edition.

A beautifully constructed book offering species accounts, with photographs, maps, and illustrations, of all the “birds and marine mammals of the Antarctic Continent and the Southern Ocean.” Highly recommended.

Natural History:

Campbell, David G. *The Crystal Desert*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, Paperback reprint, 2002.

From the Publisher:

THE CRYSTAL DESERT: SUMMERS IN ANTARCTICA is the story of life's tenacity on the coldest of Earth's continents. It tells of the explorers who discovered Antarctica, of the whalers and sealers who despoiled it, and of the scientists who are deciphering its mysteries. In beautiful, lucid prose, David G. Campbell chronicles the desperately short summers on the Antarctic Peninsula. He presents a fascinating portrait of the evolution of life in Antarctica and also of the evolution of the continent itself.

Murphy, Robert Cushman. *Logbook for Grace*. Time-Life Books, 1982 (Originally published in 1947).

This is the remarkable autobiographical story of the young naturalist Robert Cushman Murphy's year aboard one of the last Yankee whale ships on an expedition to the Antarctic. Over the course of the 1912 journey, Murphy maintained a detailed log of his encounters with the incredible wildlife of the Antarctic region, of whaling, and of the actions of his fellow shipmates. Murphy's keen observations of the natural world is evident in his writings, eventually published in 1947 as *Logbook for Grace*, which is named for the new wife he left behind for the sake of adventure, and for whom the log was kept. *Logbook* was later revived by his granddaughter, Eleanor Matthews, who repackaged the story in a third-person point of view. Published in 2003 under the title, *Ambassador to the Penguins*, the book has been well received.

Safina, Carl. *The Eye of the Albatross*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003.

This is a beautifully written account of Amelia, a Laysan Albatross from the Hawaiian Islands. More than just a story about a bird, Safina interweaves science and natural history with a genuine knack for storytelling to create a powerful account of marine life in the Pacific.

Human History:

Lansing, Alfred. *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*. New York: Carroll and Graff, 1995.

First published in 1959, this is the incredible story of the 1914-1917 expedition of the ship, *Endurance*. Featuring polar explorer Ernest Shackleton, this is one of the greatest adventure stories of all time and an essential read for this tour.

Other notable historical novels:

Amundsen, Roald E. and A.G. Chater (translator). *The South Pole: An account of the Norwegian Antarctic Expedition in the Fram, 1910-1912*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

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Considered by many the greatest polar explorer of all, Captain Roald Amundsen provides a personal account of his successful expedition to reach the South Pole. First published in 1912, the book remains a cornerstone of exploration literature.

Cherry-Garrard, Apsley, *The Worst Journey in the World*. New York: Carroll & Graff, 2003.

First published in 1922, this is an excellent account of Robert Falcon Scott's 1910-1913 expedition to the South Pole, including the unforgettable story of the three members (including the author) who battled the odds to collect Emperor Penguin eggs at Cape Crozier.

Fienes, Ranulph. *Race to the Pole: Tragedy, Heroism, and Scott's Antarctic Quest*. New York: Hyperion, 2004.

This is a more recent and highly regarded historical account of Scott's quest to reach the South Pole before his rival Amundsen. Highly recommended.

TIPPING: For this departure, all tipping of ship staff and crew is included in the cruise fee. If you feel that any of the services you have received during the cruise exceeded your expectations, please feel free to leave an additional amount.

If you feel one or all of your VENT leaders or any local guide has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect January 2009 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.