

Antarctica

February 13-28, 2023

We began planning this trip in December of 2021 when we signed with [Road Scholar](#) to leave Miami in February 2023 for Antarctica. The plan would involve flying from Miami through Buenos Aires to [Ushuaia](#), the capital of Tierra del Fuego. From that point we would board the ship [Ocean Victory](#) and sail through the [Drake Passage](#) to South Shetland Islands and, hopefully, on to the [Antarctic Peninsula](#).

Monday, February 13 – Our United flights from Portland (PWM) through Newark (EWR) to Miami (MIA) went without incident, although there were lots of delays. Our flight on Aerolinas Argentinas, as arranged by Road Scholar, was scheduled to leave Miami on the 15th so we had decided to leave a couple of days early to ensure that we would not be affected by weather delays.

Tuesday, February 14 – We took an Uber to [Santorini](#), a Greek restaurant in [Miami Beach](#), where we had a nice lunch outside not far from the beach. After lunch, we decided to walk to the beach then find a pharmacy to get some cough drops for Sue. We crossed a street and, suddenly, Sue fell face-first onto the sidewalk and cut her lip. She managed to sit up and rest against a pole. Meanwhile, several people arrived to offer help. She attempted to stand but immediately fainted. I tried to stop her from falling but lost my balance and hit my head on the sidewalk. At this point, even more people gathered to see what was going on. The crowd around us made the situation worse and then an ambulance showed up (someone had called 911). Sue was concerned and we decided to go to the emergency room at Mount Sinai hospital to have her checked over. After about four hours with no discernible cause, we convinced the doctor at the hospital that we needed to leave rather than spend the night there. We called Uber to go back to the hotel. When we returned, we were able to have a nice Valentine's Day dinner at the hotel restaurant.

Wednesday, February 15 – Our flight to Buenos Aires (EZE) from Miami took about nine hours with some delays. When we arrived, it took another two hours to get through Argentina customs. At this point, it was around midnight and we were taken by bus to our hotel in Buenos Aires.

Thursday, February 16 – Got up early to take a bus to the other airport in Buenos Aires (AEP) for our flight to Ushuaia (USH). We arrived at our hotel in Ushuaia, where we attended an orientation lecture about our expedition given by group leader Nicole. Afterwards we proceeded on our own to explore Ushuaia.



Friday, February 17 – We began with a trip to [Tierra del Fuego National Park](#) where we



hiked to [Bahia Lapataia](#) and [Lago Acigami](#) (sometimes referred to as Lake Roca). We saw local flora and fauna, many of which were surprising, including a very different type of birch tree, rabbits, and even a wild horse. We returned to Ushuaia for lunch then walked back to the town center where we shopped for souvenirs and explored some more.

Saturday, February 18 – We walked to the nearby [Maritime Museum of Ushuaia](#), where we experienced a fascinating history of life in Ushuaia and Tierra del Fuego. Then, after lunch, we were finally ready to board the [Ocean Victory](#) to take us to Antarctica. First, we were given an orientation lecture about the ship, including a safety drill where we donned our life preservers and proceeded to a designated gathering area on deck. Then we cast-off heading toward [Drake Passage](#) though the [Beagle Channel](#), passing the [Lighthouse at the End of the World](#) on the way.

Sunday, February 19 – In preparation for crossing Drake Passage, we used scopolamine patches to avoid seasickness. Although I had never been seasick, I used the patch just in case, because we had heard stories about how rough the crossing could be. However, the scopolamine apparently had an unexpected effect on me and I was awake most of the night and was hallucinating, according to Sue. It was very strange and, fortunately, did not last beyond that night.

Monday, February 20 – Happy Birthday, Sue! We arrived at the South Shetland Islands today and made a landing from the Zodiac boats at [Half Moon Island](#). The first landing was a rocky beach near the [Cámara base](#) where we saw the first Gentoo penguins of the trip. Then we made a second landing at the south end of the island where we saw even more Chinstrap penguins. There was also the wreck of an old whaling boat there. Later we also saw leopard seals and many types of sea birds. It was quite a birthday surprise for Sue. Additionally, when we returned to the ship, we learned that Nicole, our group leader, had arranged for Sue and me to have a private dinner on the observation deck that evening. It was a very special day and our first steps toward the Antarctic Peninsula.



Tuesday, February 21 – We arrived at the Antarctic Peninsula but were unable to land but we did cruise [Cierva Cove](#) in the Zodiac. We saw more penguins and some seals. To everyone's surprise, we came upon a penguin that was being eaten by a leopard seal. The attack was quite brutal but also very interesting. The seal does not like to eat



the feathers of the penguin so it thrashes about to remove them. Of course, the penguin was no longer concerned about it. We had a pleasant cruise and were told that there would be another cruise later. However, since our group was the last of the day to go out, our



trip was cancelled due to high winds that made it difficult for the previous group to return to the ship. Later we were



told some harrowing tales about how swells were affecting the Zodiac landings. That night at dinner, the restaurant featured dishes cooked



on hot stones. It was very smoky from the dishes being cooked over the hot stones so the windows were

opened slightly to help the smoke escape. It was also snowing at the time and the snow was falling onto our table as we ate while cruising at night through [Graham Passage](#).

Wednesday, February 22 – The weather was very good as we continued through Graham Passage and were able to cruise [Brialmont Cove](#). After an early dinner, we were able to cruise [Paradise Harbor](#) where we saw more amazing icebergs, as well as seals and more Chinstrap penguins and some passing Humpback whales. We then made our first landing on the Antarctic Peninsula.



Thursday, February 23 – Although we were not able to land, we did cruise [Leith Cove](#) which was filled with icebergs and, of course, penguins, seals and more whales.

When we returned to the ship, we were treated to a barbecue lunch on the pool deck because it was a sunny, relatively warm day. After lunch, Sue and I enjoyed some time in the hot tub until our fingers were sufficiently wrinkled.



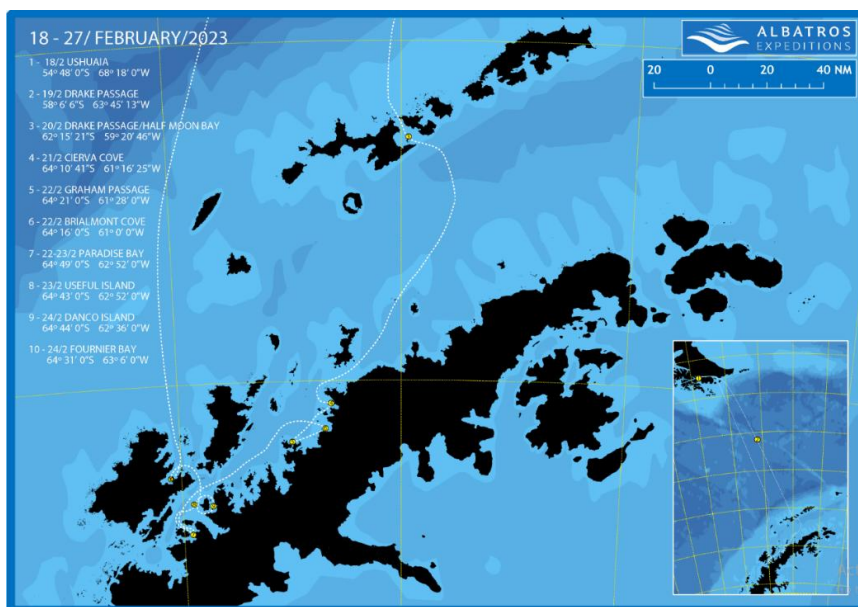
Later we were able to make a landing at [Useful Island](#) where we encountered a large penguin rookery, consisting of both Gentoo and Chinstrap penguins.

Friday, February 24 –We made a Zodiac landing at [Danco Island](#) before returning to Ushuaia, on our last day in Antarctica. Of course, there were lots of penguins and seals but not so many whale sightings. After our landing, we cruised around the island amongst massive icebergs and explored some of the icy cliffs on the mainland.



When we returned to the ship, we were able to visit the bridge. It seemed amazingly simple because of the technology that was used to guide the huge ship. We didn't see the captain on the bridge but the first mate provided a knowledgeable explanation of the process.

Saturday, February 25 – At sea returning through Drake passage to Ushuaia. Even though I wore another scopolamine patch, I didn't have the same experience as before. It was also a very calm trip. This map shows the itinerary of the *Ocean Victory* from Ushuaia to the South Shetland islands and back (see insert lower right) and from the South Shetlands to various places in Antarctica.



Sunday, February 26 – We arrived in Ushuaia where we disembarked and taken back to Celine del Fuego to sort out our baggage and prepare for a bus tour of another part of Tierra del Fuego through the southern part of the Andes to Garibaldi Pass. On the way back to Ushuaia, we stopped at Los Cotorras for lunch and we were treated to lamb that had been roasted whole over an open fire. Delicious! Afterwards, we returned to the airport in Ushuaia and began our trip home through Buenos Aires to Miami. It was a long trip but we only spent about forty-five minutes at Customs in Buenos Aires this time.



Monday, February 27 – We arrived in Miami early this morning and made our way to Wyndham Gardens and, because I am a Wyndham Rewards member, they let us check-in early. We walked to Airport Café and Liquor to have lunch of Cuban sandwiches, then took Uber to a nearby Target for clothes for Sue, since the airline had lost her luggage. It had been sent to JFK in New York from Buenos Aires. We returned to the hotel for a swim in the pool, which we had been told was heated. However, when I jumped in, it was obviously not heated so Sue decided not to check it out. It's a good thing she didn't take the Polar Plunge on the ship.

Tuesday, February 28 – Miami to Portland flight was uneventful and we arrived home in the early afternoon. Sue's luggage arrived the next day via FEDEX.

For more information - We will also email the Albatros Magazine if you would like to learn more about the *Ocean Victory* and details of the expedition.

