

# **MS Nordnorge**

## **Antarctica & Chilean Fjords**

### **November 4<sup>th</sup> - November 18<sup>th</sup> 2005**

#### **Ushuaia - Puerto Montt**

**Friday, November 4, 2005 – Ushuaia, Argentina**

*Exploration is the physical expression of the Intellectual Passion. And I tell you, if you have the desire for knowledge and the power to give it physical expression, go out and explore... If you march your Winter Journeys you will have your reward, so long as all you want is a penguin's egg.* – Apsley Cherry-Garrard

Welcome aboard the M/S Nordnorge for our voyage to the Antarctic Peninsula and the Chilean Fjords.

**Saturday, November 5, 2005 – Drake Passage**

*For sheer downright misery, give me a hurricane, not too warm, the yard of a sailing ship, a wet sail and a bout of sea sickness.* - Apsley Cherry-Garrard

The Antarctic Convergence is the where the warmer waters of the north meet the colder, denser, less saline waters of the south. As the colder water sinks beneath the warmer, an up-welling occurs that brings nutrients to the surface. Found between 40°S and 60°S, the convergence is an ever-changing frontier. It is the biological limit of the Antarctic ecosystem and anywhere south of the convergence is known as the Antarctic Ocean. While there is often a low fog in the area and an increase in wildlife, other than using a thermometer, there is no way to know when you are crossing it; the seas do not get rougher and the water colour does not change. Also known as the Polar Front, the convergence is a function of the Antarctic Circumpolar Current. The waters of Antarctica circle the continent in the world's biggest ocean current at an estimated rate of 150 million cubic metres per second – that's equivalent to around four Gulf Streams or 1,000 Amazon Rivers. As the densest water along the bottom moves north, it has tremendous impact on global weather systems. Once carried far into the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the polar water has a cooling effect on tropical and temperate waters and is important to the oceans' balance.

**Sunday, November 6, 2005 – Drake Passage / Arctowski Station, King George Island**

*You wait. Everyone has an Antarctic.* – Thomas Pynchon

In February 1819, British merchant William Smith was rounding Cape Horn in his brig *Williams* when he was blown south by a storm and first sighted the South Shetland Islands. Smith was promptly made the pilot of his own ship as the British authorities in Valparaiso placed aboard naval Captain Edward Bransfield. Together Bransfield and Smith surveyed the islands naming them for their similarity in latitude to Scotland's Shetland Islands. They then crossed Bransfield's eponymous strait and sighted the Antarctic Peninsula. This was considered for many years to be the first known sighting of Antarctica. However, an ethnic German from Estonia working for the Russian Navy named Thaddeus Thaddevich von Bellingshausen had unknowingly beaten them by three days. Being a Russian ship captain, Bellingshausen was working off the ten month Julian calendar and it wasn't until the 1940's when his work was translated into the twelve month Gregorian calendar that his prior claim was discovered. Smith's discovery precipitated a massive invasion of the islands by sealers and within a few years the fur seal population was almost entirely decimated. Since the sealers were largely secretive about their findings, we can never be truly sure of who discovered what and when.

Admiralty Bay is a three-pronged bay reaching deep into the heart of King George Island from the south. Poland's Arctowski station was named for geologist Henryk Arctowski, one of the two Poles who were members of Baron Adrien de Gerlache's 1897 Belgian Antarctic Expedition. Considered by many to be the most hospitable of the scientific bases, members there built an information centre so that tourists could continue to visit the station without interrupting ongoing work. Often incorrectly referred to as a 'gift shop', the little wooden hut was built from recycled materials by station personnel in their spare time and offers welcome respite from the biting winds. Visitors are often welcomed into the station for coffee and biscuits. The main building is known as the *Samolot* (airplane) for its shape and appearance from above. *Samolot* accommodates nearly forty people in the summer and around a dozen in winter. If you are asked inside, please remove your boots in the outer mudroom. Please do not enter any buildings or rooms unless invited to do so. Personnel often make the station's official stamp available and there may be T-shirts, pins, and information packages for sale in Euros and American dollars. Please do not leave the beach as there are fragile moss beds and grass just inshore. Keep an eye out for whalebones, particularly vertebrae, along the way. The Adélie penguin rookery is designated a Site of

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Special Scientific Interest and cannot be entered by visitors but the boundary is clearly marked and one can get close enough to the rookery to enjoy the Adélies and obtain good photographs.

#### Monday, November 7, 2005 – *Aitcho Islands / Half Moon Island*

*I now belong to a higher cult of mortals for I have seen the albatross. – Robert Cushman Murphy*

On this day in 1903, Carl Anton Larsen and five others set out to row a lifeboat from Paulet Island to Snow Hill Island to rejoin others from the Swedish South Polar Expedition. On the same day, the *Uruguay* arrived at Snow Hill to rescue Nordenskjöld and his men.

One of the more curious appellations in the area, the Aitchos were named for the British Admiralty Hydrographic Office or “H.O.” Lying in the English Strait between Robert and Greenwich Islands, they offer some of the most dramatic scenery in the South Shetlands. Icebergs drift past the volcanic plugs and spires and sheer cliffs give way to huge, green moss beds. The islands are home to nesting gentoo and chinstrap penguins as well as southern giant petrels and elephant and fur seals are regular visitors. The best way to observe the Aitchos is to sit quietly and soak up the scenery and penguin behaviour. Care must be taken to avoid fragile moss beds; please stay within the area defined by guides. Do not approach southern giant petrel nests, they are known as ‘Stinkers’ for their defensive reaction of spitting a foul smelling substance quite accurately. Landings are usually made in a sheltered bay on an unnamed island that provides easy walking.

A tiny two-kilometre long crescent-shaped island in the shadow of the picturesque mountains and glaciers of nearby Livingston Island, Half Moon is a favoured expedition stop for its large chinstrap penguin rookery. Snow cover may make this landing difficult in the early season but other than a short hill, walking is generally easy. The serrated and crevassed cliffs are also home to Antarctic terns, kelp gulls, snowy sheathbills, and Wilson’s storm petrels. Landings are usually made on an easily accessible, wide beach where an abandoned dory lies decaying. Down towards the western end of the beach is Teniente Camara station with its huge Argentine flags emblazoned on the orange buildings. The station has been sporadically staffed in recent years due to the Argentine economy and may not be available for visitation.

#### Tuesday, November 8, 2005 – *Cuerverville Island / Neko Harbour / Paradise Harbour*

*Who would believe in penguins unless he had seen them? – Conor O’Brien*

The Errera Channel is a scenic, narrow waterway between Rongé Island and the Arctowski Peninsula on the mainland. It was discovered by the *Belgica* expedition and named for Professor Léo Errera of the University of Brussels, a benefactor of the voyage. Errera is home to Danco and Cuerverville Islands. Cuerverville Island supports one of the largest known gentoo penguin colonies. This can be apparent from miles away given the right wind direction. Early in the season, snow cover impedes but doesn’t stop penguins accessing their nests and an intricate network of ‘penguin highways’ is carved into the snow. The shallow waters between Cuerverville and Rongé Islands often trap and ground icebergs and lends itself to superb ship-cruising. Up from the rookery, steep cliffs lead to the island top. These cliffs should be avoided so as not to damage the mosses and lichens that grow there. The cliffs are also home to skuas that are vigorous in defending their well-hidden nests.

Andvord penetrates deep into the Peninsula; from here the Weddell Sea side is a mere fifty kilometres away. Once inside the bay one is surrounded on all sides by the mountains and alpine glaciers of the Peninsula. The bay is splendidly scenic and fills with castellated icebergs and wildlife in the long days of the summer. Nestled at the bottom of the bay is Neko Harbour, named for a whaling ship which anchored there in the early 1900s. Neko has an Argentine refuge hut and a gentoo penguin colony. It is also one of the rare places in the Peninsula where one can come ashore on the Antarctic mainland. Do not enter the refuge. Hike up the hill to the penguin rookery and an amazing view of Andvord but do not continue on to the glacier as it is heavily crevassed. The glacier across the tiny harbour is very active and nice to commune with if you can find a guano-free rock near the refuge. Be careful not to get too close on the beach; the glacier creates very impressive but dangerous waves when it calves.

It is almost impossible to write about Paradise Harbour without referring to it as “the aptly named” Paradise Harbour. The name was given by whalers who would head here in a storm as the harbour offers protection from winds of almost any direction. Waterboat Point is on the mainland across from Lemaire at the northern end of

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the bay. This was the site of the ill-conceived but lofty-named British Imperial Antarctic Expedition of 1921 that had two teenagers living under a waterboat for the winter. Waterboat Point is home to the Chilean research base González Videla although little actual research takes place and they are fond of announcing themselves as “Paradise Bay Harbour Master” to passing ships. Farther down the bay is the Argentine base of Almirante Brown. In 1984, the station’s doctor flipped out and burned the base down. The Argentineans sent down a crew every summer to rebuild the base but it has been unmanned in recent years. We shall take our ship through Paradise on our way to tomorrow’s destinations.

**Wednesday, November 9, 2005 – Lemaire Channel / Petermann Island / Vernadskiy Base**

*I have often had the impression that, to penguins, man is just another penguin - different, less predictable, occasionally violent, but tolerable company when he sits still and minds his own business. - Bernard Stonehouse*

First sighted by Dallman in 1873 and then charted and traversed in 1898 by Adrien de Gerlache who named it for Charles Lemaire, a fellow Belgian who explored the Congo. The steep cliffs and glaciers of Booth Island to one side mirror the opposite shores of the Antarctic Peninsula. So much film is exposed in the area of the Lemaire that it is known by expedition staff as “Kodak Crack” or “Fujifilm Gap”. Navigation of the Lemaire is dependent on ice conditions.

Petermann Island was first discovered by German whaler Eduard Dallman and named for geographer August Petermann. It is perhaps more famous for its 1909 resident Jean-Baptiste Charcot. His ship *Pourquoi Pas?* wintered in a tiny cove on Petermann that Charcot named Port Circumcision. There is a cairn and plaque from the expedition on a hill nearby the ship’s old anchorage. There is a 1950’s era Argentine refuge as well, in recent years it has been kept up and visited regularly by the staff from Vernadskiy, the Ukrainian base two miles down the channel. There is a cross commemorating three men from Faraday (as Vernadskiy was known until the 1996 handover from the British.) They had holed up in the refuge but were lost trying to return to the base after a climbing expedition in the winter of 1982. Adélie penguins, imperial cormorants (blue-eyed shags), and the world’s southernmost gentoo penguin colony are the main attractions here at Petermann Island. From the landing site in Port Circumcision, one can move north over the perennially snow covered island to the Adélies and shags, south to the old refuge and gentoos, or west up the hill for an impressive view of “Iceberg Alley”. On the other side of Megalestris Hill there is a narrow but deep bay into the island. Narrow enough that it traps icebergs but deep enough that they don’t ground themselves, instead they wobble and bash together in the swells. Be careful of dangerous fur seals snoozing in the bare rocks of the hill. Depending on the state of the snow cover, expedition staff may not be able to allow hiking.

In 1947 the British built Base “F” on Winter Island near the site of a hut used by the earlier British Graham Land Expedition. In 1954 they closed the base and began building what would become the modern station of Faraday on nearby Galindez Island. Despite all their hard work, base staff still found time to build themselves the nicest pub south of 60° complete with pool table and dart board. In 1996, the British gave Faraday to the newly independent Ukraine who renamed the station Vernadskiy. The Ukrainians have been diligent in keeping the British traditions and memorabilia alive including the upkeep of the original base on Winter Island, now a museum. Visitors to Vernadskiy are given a tour of the facilities and offered locally made vodka at the station pub. The standard souvenirs of T-shirts and postcards are available and sometimes crafts like penguin ‘matroshka’ dolls made by station personnel over the winter as well. Early season visitors have a better chance at the handicrafts but are usually shut out of Wordie House due to ice. Vernadskiy has a pier and a boat ramp for easy landings, visitors will be asked to remove footwear. The Ukraine is one of the few non-claimant nations to offer a postal service from the base. The service is largely a novelty and one shouldn’t expect prompt delivery. Afterward, we will head back north through the Lemaire Channel and the Gerlache Strait towards Deception Island in the South Shetlands.

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**Thursday, November 10, 2005 – Whalers Bay, Deception Island**

*The continent has become a symbol of our time. The test of man's willingness to pull back from the destruction of the Antarctic wilderness is the test also of his willingness to avert destruction globally. If he cannot succeed in Antarctica he has little chance of success elsewhere. - Edwin Mickleburgh*

Enterprise Island in Wilhelmina Bay has the partially submerged wreck of the whaling ship *Gouvernoren* in Foyen Harbour. The ship caught fire in 1916 and was run aground in order to evacuate men and supplies. There were no fatalities. The bay is a choice feeding place for whales and therefore was a choice hunting ground for whalers. As Shackleton was marching his men across the ice of the Weddell Sea, his final destination was to be Wilhelmina Bay where he anticipated whalers could be found for rescue. As well as the possibility of whales, Weddell, crabeater, and leopard seals can be found and there are chinstrap penguins nesting on shore and Antarctic terns nesting in some of the bare cliff faces.

A portion of the wall of the volcanic caldera of Deception Island has collapsed, flooding the interior. Port Foster is the name given to the waters inside the ring-shaped island and is one of the world's great natural harbours. Access to the interior is through the 200 metre-wide entrance known as Neptune's Bellows for the winds which often howl through. There is a rock smack-dab in the middle just under the water and the area to one side is completely foul. Therefore the ship will have a mere 100 metres with which to navigate. As if to remind ship's officers to stay on their toes, the wreck of the *Southern Hunter* adorns one shore of the Bellows. It must be remembered once inside Port Foster that the island is an active volcano; its last major eruption was in 1970. Once safely through the Bellows, Whaler's Bay will begin to appear off the starboard side of the ship. Whaler's Bay was home to factory whaling ships as early as 1905, as many as thirteen at once. A shore station named Hektor was set up in 1912 to process the meat and bones left behind by the ships. The station closed in 1931 after modern additions to the factory ships allowed them to render the entire whale. Whaling in Antarctica was a tough life and the local cemetery held 45 graves, most of which were Norwegians. During Operation Tabarin in 1941, the British set up two bases in the Peninsula area. They chose Port Foster as an important anchorage and imaginatively named their base "B". Its counterpart, the equally imaginative Base "A", was at Port Lockroy. Both the base and station were largely destroyed by the '67 eruption. Most of the damage was done by a massive mudslide. The station was a centre for flying boats as they surveyed the Peninsula in the 1950s and Australian aviation pioneer Hubert Wilson made the first powered flight in Antarctica from here in 1928.

**Friday, November 11, 2005 – Drake Passage**

*If 70% of the earth's surface is covered by water, how come so much of it seems to be between Deception Island and Cape Horn? – Fernanda Solari*

In 1578, two-fisted pirate Sir Francis Drake sailed through the Straits of Magellan in his ship, *Golden Hind*. Drake was blown south and east by a storm and discovered a place where, "... the Atlantic Ocean and the South Sea meet in a most large and free scope." After declaring himself the "Southernmost Man in the World", he turned north to ransack the Peruvian coast. His eponymous passage was not traversed until 1616 by two Dutch brothers, Jan and Willem Schouten, who were trying to find a new route to the Indies. The Schoutens sailed *Hoorn* (named for their town) and *Eendracht* (Unity) right around Cape Horn from one ocean to the other. We will be sailing through Drake's passage the entire day, continuing our lecture series and keeping an eye out for wildlife.

**Saturday, November 12, 2005 – Cape Horn, Puerto Williams**

*I am the albatross that waits for you at the end of the earth. I am the forgotten soul of the dead sailors who crossed Cape Horn from all the seasons of the world. But they did not die in the furious waves. Today they fly in my wings to eternity in the last trough of the Antarctic winds. – Sara Vial*

One of the greatest graveyards for ships anywhere, crossing Cape Horn is a rite of passage for sailors the world over. On the island there is a small Chilean Naval station (usually just a husband and wife, a cat and a dog) and a monument to all the sailors who have perished while trying to 'round the cape. The monument is of an albatross in relief and the above poem by Sara Vial is inscribed at its base.

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The landing site is very exposed and prone to difficult surf. Rubber boots and rainproof clothing will be necessary. There is a long staircase (approx. 100 steps) and walkway to the top of the island. The lighthouse keeper may have souvenirs available in Chilean pesos and American dollars or Euros. The house is tiny and the residents only speak Spanish – please be patient. There is no landing limit here and we can land everyone at once.

We will embark two Chilean pilots who will be with us to Puerto Montt. After leaving the Horn, our route will take us to Puerto Williams for a brief stop in order to perform Immigration and Customs clearance into Chilean Territory.

Puerto Williams (pop. 2 000) sits on the southern shores of the Beagle Channel on Navarino Island. British Captain Fitzroy encountered the Yahgan (Yamana) and Alacalufe peoples here in 1828, four of whom – Jemmy Button, York Minster, Fuegia Basket and Boat Memory – he brought to England aboard *HMS Beagle*. Missionaries and fortune seekers established a permanent European presence here in the nineteenth century. Chile built a naval base here in 1953. In Puerto Williams you will be able to find the bow of the *Yelcho* (located now in front of the Navy's supermarket). This was the tug, commanded by Captain Luis Alberto Pardo, which rescued Shackleton's men from Elephant Island. Our arrival at Puerto Williams is dependant on our success at Cape Horn. If the weather permits at the pier, we will go alongside and disembark for a short visit while customs procedures are underway on board.

#### **Sunday, November 13, 2005 – Punta Arenas**

*Our principal intention and will has always been to preserve and augment the number of the Indians - Charles V*

The city of Punta Arenas (pop. 140,000), capital of the Magallanes region, sits alongside the Straits of Magellan at latitude 54° South. Its first name was *Sandy Point*, given by J. Byron in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A long time before however the first Spanish attempt to colonize the shores of the strait was doomed as the settlers of their early town, *Rey Don Felipe* (founded in 1584), tragically starved to death. Years later, Thomas Cavendish landed at this site and found only the remains of the city. He then renamed it *Port Famine* (today's current name; *Puerto Hambre*). Both coasts of the Strait of Magellan were originally inhabited by a culture of canoe hunters called *Kaweskar*. Observing their many fires along the coast when entering the strait for the first time, Fernando de Magallanes gave the name of Tierra del Fuego ("Fireland") to the big island located south of the strait. In 1843, Chile took possession of the strait and the Patagonian lands by establishing its first settlement and fort at a site known today as *Fuerte Bulnes*, forty miles south from the city of Punta Arenas.

#### **Monday, November 14, 2005 – Chilean Fjords / Skua Glacier**

*To dine with a glacier on a sunny day is a glorious thing and makes feasts of meat and wine ridiculous. The glacier eats hills and drinks sunbeams. – John Muir*

Battered by westerly winds and storms that drop huge amounts of rain and snow on the seaward slopes of the *Andes*, this rugged, mountainous area, called *Magallanes*, is geographically remote from the rest of the country. Alacalufe and Tehuelche Indians subsisting through fishing, hunting and gathering, were the region's original inhabitants. While the Alacalufe and Tehuelche survived in reduced numbers, there remain very few individuals of identifiable Ona, Haush or Yaghan (Yamana) populations.

#### **Tuesday, November 15, 2005 – Puerto Eden**

*I think that in future times the Spaniards who discovered this empire will be much esteemed and their names will be more talked of than in these present times....that which esteem most is not the conquests nor battles with the Indians, but the labour of discovery. - Cieza de Leon*

Located on Wellington Island (LAT 49°S), Puerto Edén has 265 inhabitants only ten of which are pure blood Kaweskar Indians (total ethnic population: 52 according to the last census). In 1930, the Chilean Air Force built a "sea landing" base for their hydro-airplanes that flew between Puerto Montt and Punta Arenas. One decade later, all the Kaweskar Indians that used to travel with their canoes from here to the Straits of Magellan, were put

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together in this new settlement named - since then - Puerto Edén. This small town has grown little by little each year, due the good price of king crabs and other fishing activities, like mussels, sea snails, and sea urchins.

**Wednesday, November 16, 2005 – Puerto Chacabuco**

*The kingdom of Chile is like the sheath of a sword, narrow and long. It has on one side the South Sea, and on the other side the snowy Cordillera which skirts the whole country. The land is of such good airs and so wholesome that no man has been seen to fall sick there. -*  
Marmolejo

Located at the east end of a narrow fjord, Puerto Chacabuco displaced nearby Puerto Aysén as the port for the Coihaique region when the latter's harbour silted up, due to an extensive deforestation of the area. Reached by ferry from Puerto Montt and connected to Coihaique by an excellent paved highway, it's one of the most frequent ports of entry to the Aysén region. A great many expeditions (including Captain Robert Fitzroy's British expedition for which Darwin served as naturalist) visited this area in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, some in search of a protected passage to the Pacific. In the early 1870's, Chilean Navy officer Enrique Simpson made the most thorough mapping survey of the area up to that time.

**Thursday, November 17, 2005 – Castro de Chiloe**

*A journey is a person in itself, no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policies and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. -* John Steinbeck (1902-1968)

Emblematically *Chilote* (belonging to the Island of Chiloé), thanks in large part to the vernacular architectural distinction of its waterfront *palafitos* (stilt houses) and their crafted *tejuelas* (shingles), Castro is the capital of Chiloé province. Founded in 1567 by Martin Ruiz de Gamboa, the town languished through colonial and early republican times. When Darwin visited in 1834 he found it "a most forlorn and deserted place...". Castro overcame the economic depression of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century through its most conspicuous attraction - the bright and incongruously painted Iglesia San Francisco, dating from 1906.