

# travelweek

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**CRUISE  
SPRING 2023**

**Ponant's Le Champlain**

## LUXURY SMALL SHIP CRUISING

**AMAKRISTINA  
ON THE RHÔNE**

**CELEBRITY BEYOND  
AND NORWEGIAN  
PRIMA LAUNCH**

**SILVER ENDEAVOUR  
SAILS IN ANTARCTICA**



# AUTHENTIC ANTARCTIC EXPEDITIONS

By Toby Saltzman



**W**HEN NATURE CHILLS your plans, forcing a spontaneous change of course, your journey can turn more spectacular than anticipated. That was the scene south of the Antarctic Circle when *Silver Endeavour* delivered experiences beyond its guests' dreams.

By then, on the maiden Antarctic voyage of Silversea's newest expedition ship, we had seen how expedition leader Marieke Egan's instinctive decisions and Captain Niklas Peterstamm's skillful maneuvers of the highest-rated PC6, ICE-1A-Class polar vessel would enable landings on the White Continent for thrilling encounters with penguins, seals and other sea life.

From the start, *Silver Endeavour's* Antarctica expedition program emphasizes the value of every day to maximize experiences. Guests fast-track two days by flying the two-hour 'Antarctica Bridge' from Punta Arenas over the typically turbulent Drake Passage to



King George Island. Upon arrival – already attired in Silversea's complimentary, pre-delivered, waterproof gear – we boarded Zodiacs for a quick jaunt to the ship.

It was immediately evident the world's most luxurious expedition ship – this 200-guest, 200-crew vessel built in 2021 – is designed for a sumptuous cruising lifestyle.

Elegant lounges are perfect for après-adventure camaraderie. The cushy Observation Lounge offers panoramic views of glacial landscapes while the long fireplace in the Arts Café evokes the atmosphere of a grand ski resort. Popular places onboard include the glassed-in solarium where The Grill eatery surrounds its indoor pool, an outdoor whirlpool, state-of-the-art gym and Otivm Spa.

The all-balcony-suites are indulgent sanctuaries of calm, featuring personal butler service and luxe details including a bar stocked with fresh water, choice spirits and liquors.

As on all Silversea ships, the line's four signature restaurants offer superb dining experiences with fresh produce, cheeses, meats, wines and chocolates sourced from Chile's Puerto Williams. La Dame serves classic French cuisine; Il Terrazzino, Italian dishes; The Grill, steakhouse fare, and The Restaurant prepares continental favourites plus Chilean-inspired delicacies.

The first morning, the Explorer Lounge buzzed with excitement as we cruised past gleaming snow-clad mountains toward Danco Island. Said Silversea executive Conrad Combrink: "*Silver Endeavour* is a game changer in Antarctica and her beauty is more than skin deep." The hull's shape makes it stable and swift up to 20 knots. With dynamic positioning, the ship can linger in place or quickly turn.

Marieke explained the need to be flexible with spontaneous changes in case of unpredictable weather, winds or ice shifting at the landing sites.

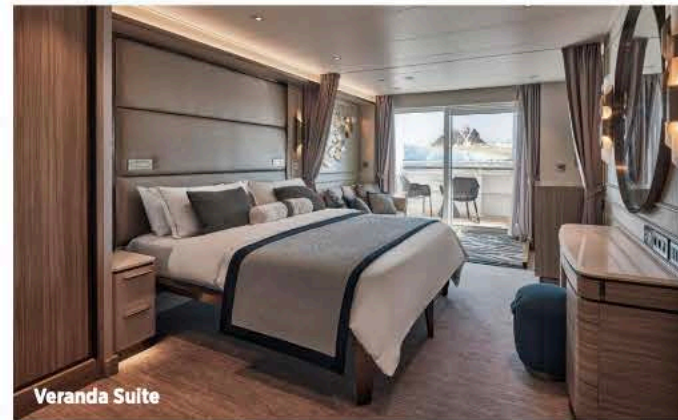
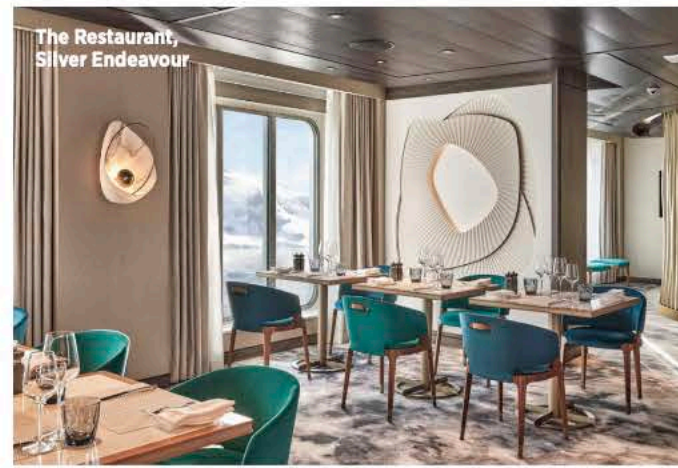
"In Antarctica," she said, "Mother Nature dictates, and humans obey."

Detailing the expedition team's experience and skills, Marieke noted that daily briefings would include lectures on the region's wildlife, science, geology or history. She gave strict rules to distance from animals and avoid penguin paths, jokingly predicted that we might catch "Polar Fever," an unabashed love for Antarctica.

Deep in the heart of the Antarctic Peninsula, Danco Island is home to a huge colony of Gentoo Penguins. By the time our Zodiacs reached the rocky landing, the team had marked safe walking routes right up to the summit. As the first humans to arrive so early in the spring, we attracted the fearless penguins, many of whom threw their heads back to emit loud, trumpeting sounds, as if announcing our presence. Notable for the white stripe on their head, their orange-red bill and pink feet, the Gentoos waddled carefree, their long, spikey tails sashaying side to side. Watching their antics as they flirted, chased, fought and cuddled, we quickly realized that mating season was in full swing. They waddled in line, as if in a vertical parade up the snowy hill, their quest seeming incredible, until we learned these smart birds knew the peak melts first, creating optimum rookeries for nests, far from predator seals and whales.

En route back to the ship, our guide deftly navigated the Zodiac around mammoth icebergs to show how various surfaces suggest their age and state of melt. He explained that chunky flat surfaces show where they calved from a glacier, while smooth or pebbled surfaces mean the iceberg rolled over in the ocean.

Nearing the icebergs' sapphire grottos, we heard the gurgling sounds of air bubbles popping as ice melted. Along the way, we laughed at four penguins leaping like porpoises in and out of the water as they swam to shore.



Back in my suite, relaxing with Champagne and caviar delivered by my butler, I felt the first surge of 'Polar Fever.'

Misty skies greeted the morning as *Silver Endeavour* reached Cuverville Island. Brilliant white after a fresh snowfall, the massive mountain is home to the Antarctica Peninsula's largest breeding colony of Gentoo species. With 6,500 penguins, it's a haven for seabirds, particularly predator Southern Giant Petrels that devour eggs and chicks.

After determining that mist would hamper safe landings, Captain Peterstamm repositioned, passing icebergs towering like floating cathedrals, and headed to the breathtaking enclave of Orne Harbour. Surrounded by a semi-circle of peaked mountains that reflected blue skies and sunshine, this area is populated by Chinstrap Penguins, recognizable by a white





While *Silver Endeavour* drifted in Neko Harbour, a crucial bird and biodiversity area, many guests kayaked or rode Zodiacs around ice floes, watching huge Weddell Seals bask on ice and penguins swim in groups.

stripe under the chin. After the team cleared a path through knee-deep snow, some guests hiked to the peak for views. I preferred mingling with the wildlife.

Like Gentoos, Chinstraps approached us curiously, though judging by their flirting, chasing, cooing and pecking, most were intent on courting mates. Calm waters gave kayakers the chance to explore Orne's shoreline and see sunbathing seals.

The next day brimmed with nature delights. At Petermann Island, sightings of humpback whales, seals, seabirds and thousands of penguins, including spunky Adélies, enthralled each guest whether they kayaked, hiked or lingered ashore. In Pleneau Bay – dubbed Iceberg Graveyard for its colossal formations – waters teemed with seabirds diving for food.

On deck early next morning, we cheered as we crossed the Antarctic Circle. Upon arriving at Detaille Island, a crucial British outpost during WWII, the expedition team cleared a landing but soon declared it unsafe after winds blew in.

Said Marieke: "This is true expedition cruising. We will sail further south to Marguerite Bay, to a place where few people have been."

The agile *Silver Endeavour* sailed into Marguerite Bay where we experienced the authentic suspense and joy of expedition cruising. When moving ice made the first-choice landing at Jenny Island impossible, Captain Peterstamm quickly changed course to Pourquoi Pas. On this protected island, Adélie penguins scur-

ried forward, extending flippers as if in fond embrace.

Later that afternoon, when waters calmed, we returned to Jenny Island. After the team pushed ice aside, guests climbed to a ridge for close views of elephant seals lounging on the shore. In the evening, as we sailed north through scenic Lemaire Channel, we gathered on deck to watch humpback whales spraying and breaching near glacier walls.

The next day was even more exhilarating. While *Silver Endeavour* drifted in Neko Harbour, a crucial bird and biodiversity area, many guests kayaked or rode Zodiacs around ice floes, watching huge Weddell Seals bask on ice and penguins swim in groups. When a Southern Giant Petrel suddenly swooped down, it scared smaller sea birds away. The biggest thrills, however, came when we approached Wilhelmina Bay. Finding the entrance blocked with massive sea ice twice as wide as the ship, Captain Peterstamm was able to test *Silver Endeavour's* ice-breaking capabilities. After successfully cutting through to create a wide pocket of calm water, he invited guests to take the polar plunge. Sixty people dared to jump for this Antarctic bragging rite. Not I.

On the last night of the voyage, after the captain thanked us for our flexibility and cheerful, adventurous spirits, Marieke added, "The Antarctic never ceases to amaze. You never know what you are going to get, but whatever you get is fantastic." Her words certainly rang true for our authentic Antarctic expedition. 10