

BIRDING DOWN UNDER

SUBANTARCTIC ISLANDS OF
NEW ZEALAND & AUSTRALIA
PLUS THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

EXPEDITION DOSSIER
12 – 30 NOVEMBER 2021



Heritage Expeditions

Antarctica • Western and South Pacific
Subantarctic Islands • Russian Far East



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Listen to the names: Snares, Bounty, Antipodes, Auckland, Campbell, Macquarie and Chatham Islands. They are music to the ears of 'Birders'.

Apart from the Chathams, these islands are probably more isolated now than they were when they were discovered in the late 1700s and early 1800s and were regularly visited by sealers, whalers and government steamers searching for castaway sailors. It is relatively simple to get to the Chatham Islands, but opportunities to visit the others are rare. This expedition, one of a number operated each year by Heritage Expeditions, is the only one to include all of these islands.

The islands occupy the tempestuous latitudes of the Roaring Forties and the Furious Fifties, but they are

also known as the Albatross Latitudes and with good reason. Ten of the world's albatross species breed in the region; five of them nowhere else but here! In fact, this zone where the air is never still hosts the most diverse collection of seabirds in the world. More than 40 species breed here – that is at least 11 per cent of the entire world's seabird population.

With the exception of the Chathams, the islands are all designated UNESCO World Heritage sites and are afforded the highest conservation status and protection by the Australian and New Zealand governments, so passage to their shores is not granted lightly. There are also islands that we visit within the Chatham Islands' Archipelago with similar status and protection.

This expedition has huge appeal to pelagic enthusiasts, penguin fanatics and those interested in island endemics. Though you don't have to be a keen birder to enjoy this voyage. People interested in islands and island ecology, botany, geology and an increasing number of photographers have enjoyed this trip immensely, as have those interested in the history of southern ocean discovery and exploration.

This is one of our 'signature expeditions' which has operated annually since 1990, so you will benefit from the knowledge and expertise gained during this time.



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ITINERARY

Day 1: Invercargill

Passengers should make their way to the Ascot Park Hotel where our group will spend the first night of the expedition. This evening there will be an informal get together at the hotel for dinner; an excellent opportunity to meet fellow adventurers and some of our expedition team.

Day 2: Port of Bluff

Today we enjoy breakfast in the hotel restaurant and take the opportunity to explore some of the local Southland scenery and attractions before heading to the Port of Bluff to embark the *Spirit of Enderby*. You will have time to settle into your cabin and familiarise yourself with the ship; we will also take the opportunity to conduct a number of safety briefings. You are invited to join the expedition team and captain on the bridge as we set our course to The Snares and our adventure begins.

Day 3: The Snares – North East Island

The closest Subantarctic Islands to New Zealand, they were appropriately called The Snares as they were once considered a hazard for sailing ships. Comprising of two main islands and a group of five islands called the Western Chain; they are uninhabited and enjoy the highest protection as Nature Reserves. It is claimed by some that these islands are home to more nesting seabirds than all of the British Isles together.

We plan to arrive early in the morning and as landings are not

permitted, we will Zodiac cruise along the sheltered eastern side of the main island if the weather and sea conditions are suitable. In the sheltered bays, we should see the endemic Snares Crested Penguin, Snares Island Tomtit and Fernbirds. Cape Pigeons, Antarctic Terns, White-fronted Terns and Red-billed Gulls are also present in good numbers. There are hundreds of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters nesting on The Snares; the actual number is much debated. The Buller's Albatross also breed here from early January onwards.

Day 4: Auckland Islands – Enderby Island

The Auckland Islands group was formed by two volcanoes which erupted some 10-25 million years ago. They have subsequently been eroded and dissected by glaciation creating the archipelago as we know it today.

Enderby Island is one of the most beautiful islands in this group and is named after the same distinguished shipping family as one of our own vessels *Spirit of Enderby*. This northern most island in the archipelago is an outstanding wildlife and birding location and is relatively easy to land on and walk around. The island was cleared of all introduced animals (pests)



© E Bell

in 1994 and both birds and the vegetation, especially the herbaceous plants, are recovering both in numbers and diversity.

Our plan is to land at Sandy Bay, one of three breeding areas in the Auckland Islands for the Hooker's or New Zealand Sea Lion, a rare member of the seal family. Beachmaster bulls gather on the beach, defending their harems from younger (ambitious) males, to mate with the cows shortly after they have given birth to a single pup. Hooker's or New Zealand Sea Lion numbers are in a slow decline, for reasons which are not obvious but most probably connected with a nearby squid fishery.

During our day ashore there will be several options, some longer walks, some shorter walks and time to spend just sitting and enjoying the wildlife. The walking is relatively easy, a boardwalk traverses the island to the dramatic western cliffs, from there we follow the coast and circumnavigate the island.



Birds that we are likely to encounter include the following species: Southern Royal Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Auckland Island Shag, Auckland Island Flightless Teal, Auckland Island Banded Dotterel, Auckland Island Tomtit, Bellbird, Pipit, Red-crowned Parakeet, Yellow-eyed Penguin and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. There is also a very good chance of seeing the Subantarctic Snipe. Other more common species we will see include the Goldfinch, Song Thrush, Blackbird, European Starling, Red-billed Gull and Redpoll. On Derry Castle Reef we will look for migratory waders which could include Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone and possibly vagrants.

Day 5: Auckland Islands – Carnley Harbour

In the south of the archipelago there is a very large sheltered harbour it is rich in human history including shipwrecks, treasure hunters, Coastwatchers and, of course, scientific parties. We plan to arrive early morning from our anchorage at Enderby Island. We enter the harbour through the eastern entrance which is guarded on both sides by dramatic cliffs and rugged, tussock-covered hills.

Our activities here today are totally weather dependent.

We have a number of options. If the weather is OK there will be an opportunity for the more energetic expeditioners to climb to the South West Cape and visit the Shy Mollymawk colony. Above the colony we occasionally see Gibson's Wandering Albatross nesting. This climb provides magnificent views in all directions, especially over the western entrance to Carnley Harbour, Adams Island and Western Harbour. For those not able to make the climb (it is reasonably difficult) there will be an opportunity to Zodiac cruise along the coast of Adams Island and Western Harbour, with landings at the latter.

Other options include the Tagua Bay Coastwatcher's hut and lookout (the former is derelict) which was occupied during the Second World War. We could visit Epigwatt and the remains of the 'Grafton' which was wrecked here in 1864. All five men aboard survived and lived here for 18 months before sailing their modified dinghy to New Zealand to get help. Two of the survivors wrote books about their ordeal. Their first-hand accounts tell us a lot about their time here. Alternatively we may visit the Erlagan clearing where a German Merchant ship cut firewood to fire its boilers after slipping its moorings in Dunedin on

the eve of the Second World War. Another potential site is Camp Cove where we can see the remains of the castaway depots established and maintained by the New Zealand government between the 1860s and early 1900s. We depart this afternoon for Macquarie Island.

Day 6: At Sea

As we make our way south through the Furious Fifties also known as the Albatross latitudes, the birding especially south of the Auckland Islands should be good. We will have a series of informal lectures on the biology and history of the Subantarctic Islands. We will also prepare you for our visit to Macquarie Island.

Species that we may see include the Wandering Albatross, Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Northern and Southern Giant Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Little Shearwater. There should be plenty of prions including Fairy, Fulmar and Antarctic, identifying them is not easy – but we should get some great views.

Other species to be on the lookout for include the Soft-plumaged Petrel, Mottled Petrel, White-headed Petrel, Grey-faced Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-petrel, Wilson's Storm-petrel and Black-bellied Storm-petrel.

Days 7 to 8: Macquarie Island

The great Australian Antarctic Explorer Sir Douglas Mawson once called Macquarie Island "One of the wonder spots of the world". You are about to discover why as we spend two days exploring this amazing Island. It was one of the first of the Subantarctic Islands



to obtain World Heritage Status and that was largely due to its unique geology. It is one of the few places on earth where mid-ocean crustal rocks are exposed at the surface due to the collision of the Australian and Pacific Plates.

Macca, as it is affectionately known by its resident ranger population, was discovered in 1810 and was soon ravaged by sealers who introduced various animals including rats, mice, cats and rabbits. The native bird population was virtually eliminated and plants destroyed. The Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service, who administer

the island, embarked on a very ambitious 7-year eradication program resulting in the island earning pest-free status in 2014. Both the birds and plants have responded and it is amazing to witness the regeneration and the increase in the number of birds.

Macquarie Island is home to four species of penguin, Kings, Royals, Gentoo and Rockhopper, with the Royal Penguin occurring nowhere else in the world. During our visit we will land at two sites (subject of course to weather and sea conditions) and you will get a chance to observe and photograph all four species, although the Rockhopper is much harder to capture than the others.

Macquarie also has a large population of Southern Elephant Seals. Pups are born in October and weaned in November when the breeding adults return to sea. The weaners and sub adults lie around on the beaches. The weaners go to sea sometime in January, running the gauntlet of Orcas or Killer Whales waiting offshore.



We also plan a landing at the Australian Antarctic Research Base at Buckles Bay where you will be able to meet with scientists and base staff. The original base was established in 1947 and the island has been 'manned' since then. It is one of the longest continuously occupied bases in the Subantarctic.

We depart for Campbell Island on the afternoon of Day 8.

Day 9: At Sea

Today is very similar to Day 6 except we are north bound and hopefully running with the prevailing weather which should make it a bit more comfortable. There will be lectures, opportunities for pelagic birding and/or simply relaxing.

Day 10: Campbell Island – Perseverance Harbour

Today we explore Campbell Island, New Zealand's southernmost Subantarctic territory. Its history is as rich and varied as the other islands we have visited. Discovered in 1810 (by the same sealing captain who discovered Macquarie Island) it too was soon occupied by sealers who introduced rats and cats.

In 1895 the New Zealand government advertised the island as a pastoral lease. The lease was taken up by an entrepreneurial New Zealand sheep farmer who stocked the island with sheep and cattle. The farming practices, which included burning the scrub, modified the island considerably. The farming lasted until 1934 when it was abandoned. Coastwatchers were stationed on the island during the war, at the end of the war the station was taken over by the New Zealand Metrological service and they maintained a manned weather/



research station on the island until 1995.

In the early 1970s the island was fenced in half and stock was removed off the northern half. The impacts of the remaining animals were monitored and they were all eventually removed in 1990. The vegetation recovered quickly and the cats died out naturally. In a very ambitious (and never before attempted on such a large scale) eradication programme the New Zealand Department of Conservation successfully removed the rats. With the island declared predator free, the way was clear to reintroduce the endangered Campbell Island Flightless Teal, which had been rediscovered on an offshore island in 1975.

Snipe, which were formerly unknown from the island but were discovered on another offshore



island, recolonised the islands themselves. The vegetation which the great English botanist, Sir Joseph Hooker described in 1841 as having a "Flora display second to none outside the tropics" is flourishing and is nothing short of spectacular.

We will offer a number of options to explore the island. There will be extended walks to Northwest Bay and possibly Mt Honey. There will also be an easier walk to the Col Lyall Saddle. All of these options will allow you the opportunity and time to enjoy the Southern Royal Albatross which nest here in large numbers. We also visit areas of the island which contain outstanding examples of the megaherbs for which the island is renowned.

Other birds which we will search for include the teal and snipe, although the later is what we would refer to as a 'luck' bird. The endemic shag can be seen on the harbour, but unfortunately the nesting colonies of Rockhopper Penguins, Grey-head, Black-browed and Campbell Island Albatross are outside of the permitted areas and we will have to look for these species at sea.

Other birds we should see include Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Southern Skua, Red-billed Gull, Black-

backed Gull, Antarctic Tern, Redpoll, Dunnock and New Zealand Pipit.

Day 11: At Sea

At sea en route to the Antipodes, it is a day for pelagic birding. Species commonly seen in this area include Wandering Albatross species, Southern Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Campbell Island Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Northern and Southern Giant Petrel, the Sooty Shearwater and the Little Shearwater. This region of the Southern Ocean is one of the few places where the Fairy Prion, Fulmar Prion and Antarctic Prion occur together, providing a good opportunity for comparison. Other species to be on the lookout for include the Soft-plumaged Petrel, Mottled Petrel, White-headed Petrel, Grey-faced Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-petrel, Wilson's Storm-petrel, Black-bellied Storm-petrel and the Common Diving-petrel.

Day 12: Antipodes Islands

The Antipodes group of islands is the most isolated and perhaps the least known of New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands. The islands are of volcanic origin, but are heavily eroded, especially the western shoreline. Sealers lived here in the decades immediately after their discovery in 1806 and two historic, and one recent, shipwrecks have been recorded here.

Mice, the only introduced animals on the main island, were eradicated during the highly successful 'Million Dollar Mouse' programme. The complex landmark conservation achievement, which spanned five-years, declared Antipodes Island predator-free in 2018.



Landings are not permitted, so if the weather is suitable, we plan to cruise, along the coastline by Zodiac where we have a good chance of seeing the Antipodes Parakeet, the largest of New Zealand's parakeets. This species has an entirely green head. We will also look for the Reischek's Parakeet, a strong subspecies of the Red-crowned Parakeet found in the Auckland Islands and on the Chatham Islands. We also see the Antipodes subspecies of the New Zealand Pipit. Good views of both Erect-crested and Rockhopper Penguins can be expected along the coast where they often breed in mixed colonies. Antarctic Terns and Kelp Gulls are often seen in good numbers.

Day 13: Bounty Islands

We arrive at the incongruously named Bounty Islands, the remote northernmost of the five New Zealand Subantarctic groups; they were discovered by Captain Bligh just months before the infamous mutiny. Here inhospitable granite knobs, tips of the submerged Bounty

Platform, are lashed by the Southern Ocean. They are home to thousands of Salvin's Albatross, Erect-crested Penguins, Fulmar Prions and the endemic Bounty Island Shag – the world's rarest. We plan to arrive in the early morning and if sea and weather conditions are suitable we will cruise by Zodiac around the granite outposts to take a closer look at the birds which breed there. New Zealand Fur Seals which were almost hunted to extinction in the Subantarctic Islands are present in large numbers.

After the cruise we depart for the Chatham Islands. There



are opportunities to see a good selection of birdlife as we sail. These should include Wandering Albatross, Northern Royal Albatross, Mottled Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Broad-billed Prion, White-chinned Petrel and Black-bellied Storm-petrel as well as Wilson's Storm-petrel. Other possible sightings include White-capped Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Antarctic Fulmar, Sooty Shearwater, Little Shearwater and Grey-backed Storm-petrel. We will also start to keep a lookout for the Chatham Island Petrel.

Day 14: At Sea and Pyramid Rock

As we continue toward the Chatham Archipelago, there are excellent opportunities for pelagic birding today. In particular, we will look out for the Chatham Island Petrel which has been seen on this leg of the voyage before. In the past we have also observed the very rare Chatham Island Taiko in this area. Endemic to the Chatham Islands, the Chatham Island Taiko – also known as the Magenta Petrel – is among New Zealand's most endangered species. It is one of the world's rarest seabirds with a population estimated at less than 150.

Late this afternoon we will cruise around spectacular Pyramid Rock, a basalt outcrop south of Pitt Island. This is the only breeding site

of the Chatham Island Albatross. Landings are not possible (nor practical – a fact you will appreciate when you see it) but great views of nesting birds can be had from the ship. There will also be hundreds of birds following the ship.

This evening we cruise towards our anchorage near Waitangi.

Day 15: Chatham Islands – Waitangi

The Chatham Archipelago consists of one large island and numerous smaller islands and rocky islets. Only two of the islands are inhabited. They represent New Zealand's eastern most territory and were originally settled by East Polynesians (either directly or via New Zealand as the evidence supports some contact there). In the 1400s the population became isolated and interestingly developed its own distinct culture. The islands were discovered by Europeans in the 1790s. Sealers and settlers followed and then in the 1830s Maori from New Zealand invaded killing and enslaving many of the indigenous people. The impact of the original settlers, the European and later the Maori on the native flora and fauna was disastrous. Introduced animals, hunting, fires and land clearing wiped out many species of endemic birds. Fortunately a number survived on the offshore islands in the archipelago.



© A Russ

With a new generation has come a new awareness and a willingness to be part of a concerted conservation effort. A number of private reserves have been established, a lot of replanting has taken place and predators are being controlled.

Today we plan to visit one of the original private reserves established by a local family on the south coast of the main island where there is a very good chance to see the endemic Chatham Island Pigeon and Warbler. The pigeon was close to extinction, though now supports a healthy population. Travelling by local bus, the road takes us through developed farmland where we will undoubtedly see numerous introduced species and possibly the Weka. Near our landing in Waitangi there is a good chance of seeing the endemic Chatham Island Shag.

This afternoon we cruise back along the south coast, this is where the only known population of the Taiko breeds and also where they are attempting to establish a new population of the Chatham Island



© L Gwynn

Petrel in a predator free area. We have seen both Taiko and Chatham Island Petrel in this area on previous expeditions.

Day 16: South East Island and Mangere Islands

Early this morning we arrive at South East Island. This has to be one of the world's greatest nature reserves and landings are not permitted. However we should obtain good views of the very rare New Zealand Shore Plover and Chatham Island Oystercatcher from the Zodiacs as we cruise along the coast. We should also see the Pitt Island Shag which nests on the island.

This afternoon we will cruise past Mangere and Little Mangere Islands before departing for Dunedin, these islands are situated to the west of Pitt Island. Mangere is known as one of only two sites in the world where Black Robin are found. We will hear the story of how this endemic species was rescued from the brink of extinction in the 1970s when the total population consisted of just six birds.

Days 17 to 18: At Sea

En route to Dunedin we will cross the Chatham Rise, a large, relatively shallowly submerged part of the Zealandia continent that stretches east from near the South Island of New Zealand. Nutrient-rich waters from the south mix with warm northern waters and there is an overlap between northern pelagic species and birds from southern latitudes, so we can expect great pelagic sightings.

Species we expect to encounter include Wandering Albatross, Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, White-capped Albatross and Salvin's Albatross. Petrel species we should be able to identify are the Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Westland Black Petrel, White-

chinned Petrel, Great-winged Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-petrel, White-faced Storm-petrel, the diving-petrel and Cook's Petrel.

Additionally we will likely encounter species of shearwater seabirds. These tubenose birds fly with stiff wings and use a 'shearing' flight technique to move across wave fronts with the minimum of active flight. Photographic opportunities can include Flesh-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater and Little Shearwater. Small petrels on the horizon and close by include Fairy Prion and Broad-billed Prion. There could well be other species, so it is a good time to be out on deck.

Day 19: Dunedin

We arrive early morning in the historic Otago Inner Harbour. After a breakfast and completing formalities with Customs and Agriculture we disembark and you will board our complimentary transfer to either a central city drop off point or Dunedin airport.

To allow time for disembarkation procedures we do not recommend booking flights from Dunedin before midday.

Note: During our voyage, circumstances may make it necessary or desirable to deviate from the proposed itinerary. This can include poor weather and opportunities for making unplanned excursions. Your Expedition Leader will keep you fully informed. Landings at the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand are by permit only as administered by the Government of New Zealand. No landings are permitted at The Snares, Antipodes or Bounties.

DATES

Voyage #SOE2161
12 – 30 November 2021

PRICES

Heritage Suite \$17,300 pp*
Large lounge area, separate bedroom with double bed and a single bed in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Large forward and side facing windows allow great views.

Mini Suite \$16,200 pp*
Separate bedroom with a double bed and a single bed or sofa in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Mini Suites have windows.

Superior Plus \$15,500 pp*
Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Superior \$14,450 pp*
One bunk (one upper and one lower berth), writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

Main Deck \$12,950 pp*
Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

Main Deck Triple \$12,050 pp*
One bunk (one upper and one lower berth) and one additional lower berth, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

* The price listed includes the additional landing fees of \$800 pp. (All prices are per person in US\$)

PRICE INCLUDES

Landing fees, pre/post cruise transfers, one night hotel accommodation in a twin share room (incl. dinner/breakfast), all on board ship accommodation with meals and all expedition shore excursions.

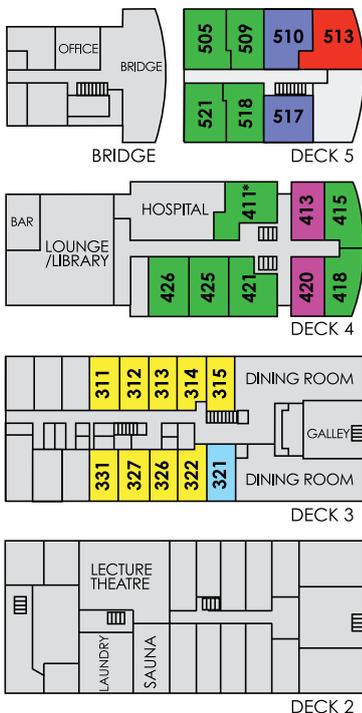
PRICE EXCLUDES

All items of a personal nature, laundry, drinks, gratuities. International/domestic flights, visas and travel insurance.

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- **Heritage Suites:** Large lounge area, separate bedroom with double bed and a single bed in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Large forward and side facing windows allow great views.
- **Mini Suites:** Separate bedroom with a double bed and a single bed or sofa in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Mini Suites have windows.
- **Superior Plus Cabins:** Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows. *Cabin 411 has a double bed with upper bunk.
- **Superior Cabins:** One bunk (one upper and one lower berth), writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.
- **Main Deck Cabins:** Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.
- **Main Deck Triple:** One bunk (one upper and one lower berth) and one additional lower berth, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.



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