

The following blog was written by one of the Fram's Scientists & posted each night on the Internet

Sunday, 13 December 2009 Ushuaia, Beagle Channel



This morning we woke up in Ushuaia, where we were greeted by an exceptionally calm and sunny day. Our passengers disembarked before 8:00 am and as is usual during our port days, all crew and staff frantically labored to get the ship back in shape for our next batch of passengers.



Passengers started arriving around 1:30 pm, were checked into their cabins and they were free to explore the ship. We set sail at 8:30 pm, and shortly afterward the Captain Hansen hosted a meet-the-staff-and-crew presentation in the



observation lounge on deck seven. People stayed around the observation lounge late into the night, as the Fram sailed down the scenic Beagle channel en route to the Drake Passage.

Monday, 14 December 2009 Drake Passage

The Drake Passage has two moods – the Drake Lake or the Drake Shake. Today we enjoyed the first. Surprisingly, despite the beautiful weather outside, lectures were very well attended, and included topics such as Antarctic ecology, glaciology and history.



In the afternoon, people were out on deck observing the seabirds that followed the vessel. We were accompanied by several wandering and black-browed albatrosses, pintado or cape petrels, fulmars, giant petrels – and the occasional whale,



which breached the surface of the water so fleetingly that nobody –as far as we know – managed to capture them on film.

Tuesday, 15 December 2009 Drake Passage and Deception Island



Awoke to calm seas yet overcast skies. The lecture schedule continued, including tours of the ship's bridge where we learned about the inner workings of our ship. Peter and Karin conducted IAATO briefings concerning our conduct on shore. We also learned about our life vests and how to properly embark into and out of the Polar Circle

boats.

Chinstrap penguins swimming in the water welcomed us as we arrived at our first landing of the trip, Deception Island. The Captain steered our ship through the narrow opening called Neptune's Bellows and dropped anchor in the caldera of this still active volcano.



We landed on the black volcanic sand beach. Some passengers elected to explore the ruins of the old whaling station and British base while others chose to climb a hill and marvel at the surrounding landscape. Some brave (or crazy?) people accepted the challenge for a quick swim at the landing site. All told, it was a fun first landing of our cruise.

Wednesday, 16 December 2009 Wilhelmina Bay and Neko Harbour



The morning found us in Wilhelmina Bay. We could not really see the beautiful mountains around us, because it was raining hard and the fog was rather thick. This did of course not prevent us from doing something exciting: we did Polar Cirkel boat cruises with our

passengers, who enjoyed getting close to the intensely blue icebergs.



In the afternoon we made a landing on the continent proper, at Neko harbour. We also had a nice time here, with things small and big to wonder at. In the big scale, people that climbed the hill beside the imposing glacier had a beautiful view of Andvord Bay, where several icebergs were floating in the sunlit water. On the small scale of things, patient observation of the penguins allowed freezing the precise

moment that enabled... the return of the pooparazi!!!

Thursday, 17 December 2009

Jougla Point, Port Lockroy, Lemaire Channel and Petermann Island



That is correct – we managed to squeeze in a lot of good things this day! We started in Jougla Point, where we were able to see the many whale bones scattered around this islet. We were also happy to see the first gentoo penguin chicks of the season, peeking from underneath their parents, still sporting the eggtooth with which they broke the shell.

Port Lockroy was interesting, because it brought an historical perspective to our journey – we learnt what it was like to live and work in the Antarctic in the 1940s through the 1960s. Oh, and we had a chance to send postcards and buy stuff!!



and giant petrels trying to

Thirty lucky passengers had the opportunity to cruise in our Polar Circle boats on the southward leg of the Lemaire channel – this is a very nice way to see the imposing walls of this scenic spot, which we have been offering as an extra to our passengers.



We closed the day with a beautiful landing at Petermann Island, the southernmost point of our journey. There we saw Adélie penguins, which also had some chicks – include the former in their supper menu!

Friday, 18 December 2009 Yankee Harbour and Half-moon island



This morning we traversed the Bransfield Strait heading to the South Shetland Islands. The sea was calm and a bit foggy, but we could make out the rocky outcrops of Deception Island and had a wonderful view of Livingston Island as we sailed past.

We landed at Yankee Harbour, a long spit of gravel that reaches into the sea from Greenwich Island. It was a fabulous landing for experiencing wildlife: we saw two giant petrels feeding on a dead fur seal, a bunch of juvenile elephant seals huddling on the beach against the cold wind, several Weddel seals, and, naturally, yet more gentoo penguins!

We closed the day in Half-moon Island, where passengers were delighted to finally see their third penguin, the chinstrap. Skuas maintained vigil overhead as we left this, our last landing of the trip.

Saturday, 19 December 2009 Drake Passage



We caught a final glimpse of an iceberg in the morning: a whitish dot low on the horizon. Our memories are rich with the things we have seen and experienced and we have made many new friends.

Farewell to Antarctica as we bound for the continent of Ushuaia. The seas were calm layer. The day was a quiet one as well as tours of the bridge questions about our floating



set off across the dreaded Drake Passage South America and our final port of call, and the sun actually broke through the cloud at sea: lectures continued on various topics where the Captain answered a myriad of home.



The evening was rounded off by the Captain's dinner where the gallant officers and crew and intrepid staff gathered in the dining hall to wish us safe journeys

Sunday, 20 December 2009 Drake shake



Yes, this morning we experienced the wilder side of the Drake Passage: at dawn we were awoken stormy winds that our beds! We had a Beaufort scale, which to gusts of wind of up of 9-12 metres. In storm.



by the violent thrust of almost threw us out of respectable 10 in the means we were treated to 100 km/h, and waves other words, a decent

Luckily, in the course of the day the seas calmed a lot, and by noon the sun came out – and with it, everybody on board MS Fram. Indeed, people were happy to be able to venture out to the open decks and get a bit of fresh air after the jumpy ride of the morning. And yes, we were accompanied by the ever fascinating birds that roam these waters.



At the end of our voyage of discovery we approached Tierra del Fuego on a wonderfully sunny afternoon.