

With guest lecturers:
Dr. Dee Boersma,
Dr. Sue Moore, and
Dr. Nigella Hillgarth

SKEPTIC
The Skeptics Society

VOYAGE TO **ANTARCTICA,** **SOUTH GEORGIA &** **THE FALKLANDS**



Gentoo penguin, Antarctica

Aboard the New Expedition Cruise Ship *VEGA*
January 19 – February 7, 2024

SKEPTIC

The Skeptics Society

Dear Friends,

While there are many captivating places in the world, few can compare to Antarctica, the islands of South Georgia and the Falklands for awesome beauty and remarkable wildlife. The images that greet you in these remote and unspoiled places are simply overwhelming: Icebergs as blue as a clear summer sky; jagged mountains laced with a snowy white mantle; and thousands upon thousands of penguins stretching as far as the eye can see. Next January, join us on our voyage to this incomparable part of the earth aboard the new state-of-the-art 152-guest expedition cruise ship *Vega*.

Sailing from Argentina's Ushuaia, located at the southernmost tip of South America, we will retrace the sea lanes navigated by storied explorers, including Amundsen, Scott, and Shackleton. Our expedition will take place during the austral summer, when the days are long and relatively mild and the wildlife is at its peak.

We will first explore the Antarctic Peninsula, a narrow finger of land that separates the ice-choked waters of the Weddell and Bellingshausen Seas, and surrounding islands. As *Vega* sails through scenic waterways, witness a breathtaking panorama of icebergs, blue glaciers and jagged snow-capped mountains, and explore penguin rookeries, see other wildlife, and look for minke, humpback and orca whales that frequent the icy, food-rich waters of Antarctica.

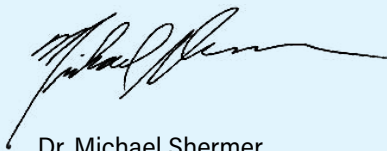
We will visit South Georgia, the spectacular remote island in the South Atlantic with its glacier-clad mountains, craggy peaks, and vast numbers of king penguins as well as other penguin species, large colonies of albatross, fur seals and elephant seals. Before ending our voyage of discovery, we will spend two days in the Falkland Islands, an archipelago that harbors an amazing concentration of wildlife that boasts over 200 bird species, including several that are endemic to the islands.

Built in Finland and launched in July 2022, *Vega* was designed specifically for polar exploration. Enjoy the luxurious amenities of this new state-of-the-art expedition cruise ship that accommodates a maximum of only 152 guests in elegant and spacious staterooms and suites. The ship's size; limited guest capacity; superb accommodations and public spaces, facilities and services; advanced and eco-friendly technical and mechanical systems; and a complement of experienced officers and crew make *Vega* the ship of choice for exploring remote parts of the world in safety and comfort. A fleet of Zodiac landing craft will bring you into intimate contact with the incredible places we will explore.

We are most fortunate to have as our expedition guest lecturers, three outstanding scientists. The lectures, presentations and discussions of **Dr. Dee Boersma**, **Dr. Sue Moore**, and **Dr. Nigella Hillgarth** will provide depth and meaning to our exploration.

We hope you will join us on this once-in-a-lifetime travel adventure.

Warm regards,



Dr. Michael Shermer
Executive Director
The Skeptics Society

P.S. 7% of your cruise fee will be a tax-deductible donation to The Skeptics Society – a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization.

EXPEDITION GUEST LECTURERS

DR. DEE BOERSMA



Dr. Dee Boersma is the Director of the Center for Ecosystem Sentinels in the Department of Biology at the University of Washington and holds the Wadsworth Endowed Chair in Conservation Science. She has worked on Galapagos penguins for 50 years, Magellanic penguins in Argentina for nearly 40 years, and Fork-tailed storm-petrels in Alaska for a decade. Dr. Boersma pioneered the use of seabirds as environmental sentinels. She has determined the reproductive success of penguins, their foraging locations, population dynamics, and the effects of climate variation, pollution, and how their behavior and physiology influences their survival. Dee holds a B.Sc. with honors in Biology from Central Michigan University, a Ph.D. in Zoology from Ohio State University, and an honorary doctorate in Science from Central Michigan University. She was President of the Society of Conservation Biology, received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Ohio State University, holds the 15th Heinz Award for the Environment and is an elected fellow of the American Ornithologists Union and the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Washington State Academy of Science.

DR. SUE MOORE



Dr. Sue Moore is a research scientist and Affiliate Professor at the Center for Ecosystem Sentinels in the Biology Department of the University of Washington. She has 40 years of research experience focused on the ecology, bioacoustics, and natural history of whales and dolphins, with most of her work directed toward cetaceans in the Pacific Arctic region. Sue worked for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for 20 years, where she served as the Director of the NOAA National Marine Mammal Laboratory and as a Senior Scientist for the NOAA Fisheries Science & Technology Marine Division. From 2008-2012, Sue served as Chair of the Environmental Concerns Working Group of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Scientific Committee. In March 2020, Dr. Moore was honored to receive the IASC Medal in recognition of her Outstanding Achievement in Understanding Marine Mammals as Ecosystem Sentinels and How Climate Change is Influencing the Phenology of Arctic Species. IASC Medals are given for exceptional and sustained contributions to the understanding of the Arctic. She currently serves as a Science Advisor to the U. S. Marine Mammal Commission, the NOAA Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Event (UME) Working Group, and the Washington State Academy of Sciences.

DR. NIGELLA HILLGARTH



Dr. Nigella Hillgarth is a research scientist and Affiliate Professor at the Center for Ecosystem Sentinels in the Biology Department of the University of Washington. Dr. Hillgarth served as the Executive Director of the Birch Aquarium, the outreach arm of Scripps Institution of Oceanography, from 2002 to 2014. Among other achievements, during her tenure, Nigella developed one of the first major exhibits on climate change in the US. Prior to her work at Birch Aquarium, she served as Executive Director of the Tracy Aviary in Salt Lake City, the largest bird sanctuary in the country, where she collaborated on conservation efforts for marine birds in the Galapagos islands, Peru and Argentina. From 2014 to 2017, Dr. Hillgarth served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the New England Aquarium, where she raised the profile of the Aquarium's global conservation and research work by founding the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life, as well as developing a vision for the future of the Aquarium and the surrounding Boston waterfront. In 2019, Dr. Hillgarth was the Climate Art Fellow for the Climate Science Alliance, and worked on visualizations of ocean-atmosphere interactions and climate with the National Science Foundation Center for Aerosol Impacts on Chemistry of the Environment at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. An avid photographer of the natural world, Nigella received a Bachelor's degree in Zoology from Oxford University in the UK, as well as a PhD in Evolutionary Biology. She has conducted research on behavioral ecology and evolution of birds, including penguins, in many parts of the world, including Britain, India, Thailand, the Arctic, South America, and the United States.

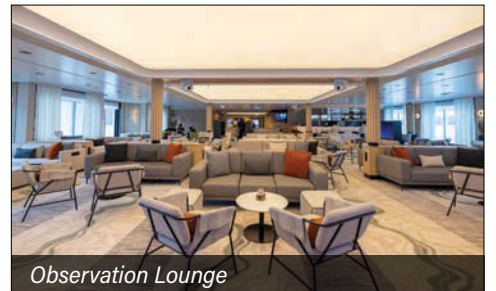
THE NEW 152-GUEST EXPEDITION CRUISE SHIP VEGA



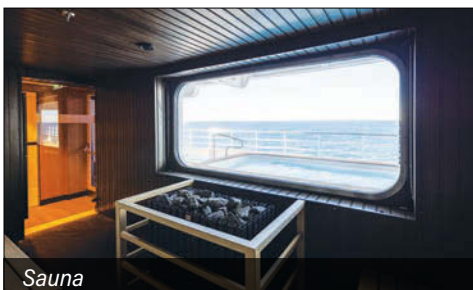
Oceanview Stateroom



Balcony Suite



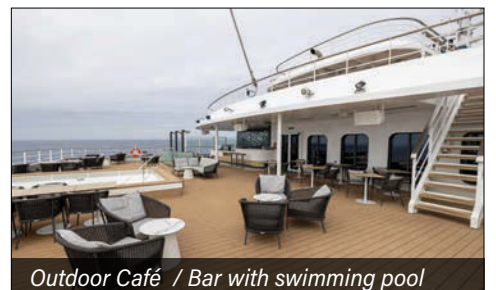
Observation Lounge



Sauna



Club Lounge



Outdoor Café / Bar with swimming pool

Built in Finland and launched in July 2022, Swan Hellenic's *Vega* is a new-generation expedition cruise ship. Although at 10,250 tons the ship is large enough to accommodate more than 250 passengers, *Vega* will accommodate a maximum of 152 guests in 76 spacious staterooms and balcony suites. The low guest density results in one of the most generous indoor and outdoor space-to-guest ratios among cruise ships.

Featuring the latest advances in technology and engineering, *Vega* is among the world's first environmentally responsible ships. Equipped with hybrid engines, a system of powerful batteries, and a unique water filtration system, *Vega* leaves a minimal footprint. For cruising in Polar regions, the ship meets the stringent requirements of the new Polar Code with its high PC5 Category A ice-strengthened hull and other advanced features. A computer-controlled Dynamic Positioning System allows the ship to maintain position without anchoring. Operated by a complement of 120 experienced European officers and international crew members, *Vega*

will carry a fleet of Zodiacs, versatile landing boats, and kayaks. Powerful stabilizers provide a smooth ride.

Vega's interior spaces exude sophisticated elegance, with most rooms opening to panoramic views of the sea. All staterooms and suites face outside and are equipped with private facilities, climate control, TV, Wi-Fi and USB connections, and other amenities. Of the ship's 76 staterooms, 60 have balconies. Public areas include a spacious observation lounge equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for lectures and presentations; a club lounge; a restaurant that accommodates all guests at one seating; an outdoor café/bar that surrounds the heated swimming pool; a wellness area with gym, spa, and sauna with an adjoining outdoor jacuzzi; library; beauty salon; and an infirmary that is attended by a full-time doctor and nurse. The ship also features expansive open-deck areas. Two elevators connect all decks. Attentive service is provided on a 24-hour basis. The outstanding cuisine is complemented by fine wines at lunch and dinner.

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL **THALASSA JOURNEYS** TOLL-FREE AT **866-633-3611**

ITINERARY



FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2024

DEPART THE US

Depart the United States for Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Saturday, January 20

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Arrive in Buenos Aires, the beautiful capital of Argentina. Transfer to the *Sofitel Buenos Aires Recoleta*. In the evening, meet fellow

travelers, your guest lecturers and trip director at an evening cocktail reception.

Sunday, January 21

BUENOS AIRES/USHUAIA/SHIP EMBARKATION

Transfer to the airport for the group flight to Ushuaia, claimed to be the world's southernmost city, located in Argentina's Tierra del Fuego, between the famed Beagle Channel and the mountains. On arrival, transfer to the pier to embark *Vega*, which will begin cruising this evening. As the ship navigates the Beagle Channel, enjoy spectacular vistas of glaciers and misted mountains. (B, D)

MONDAY, JANUARY 22 & TUESDAY, JANUARY 23

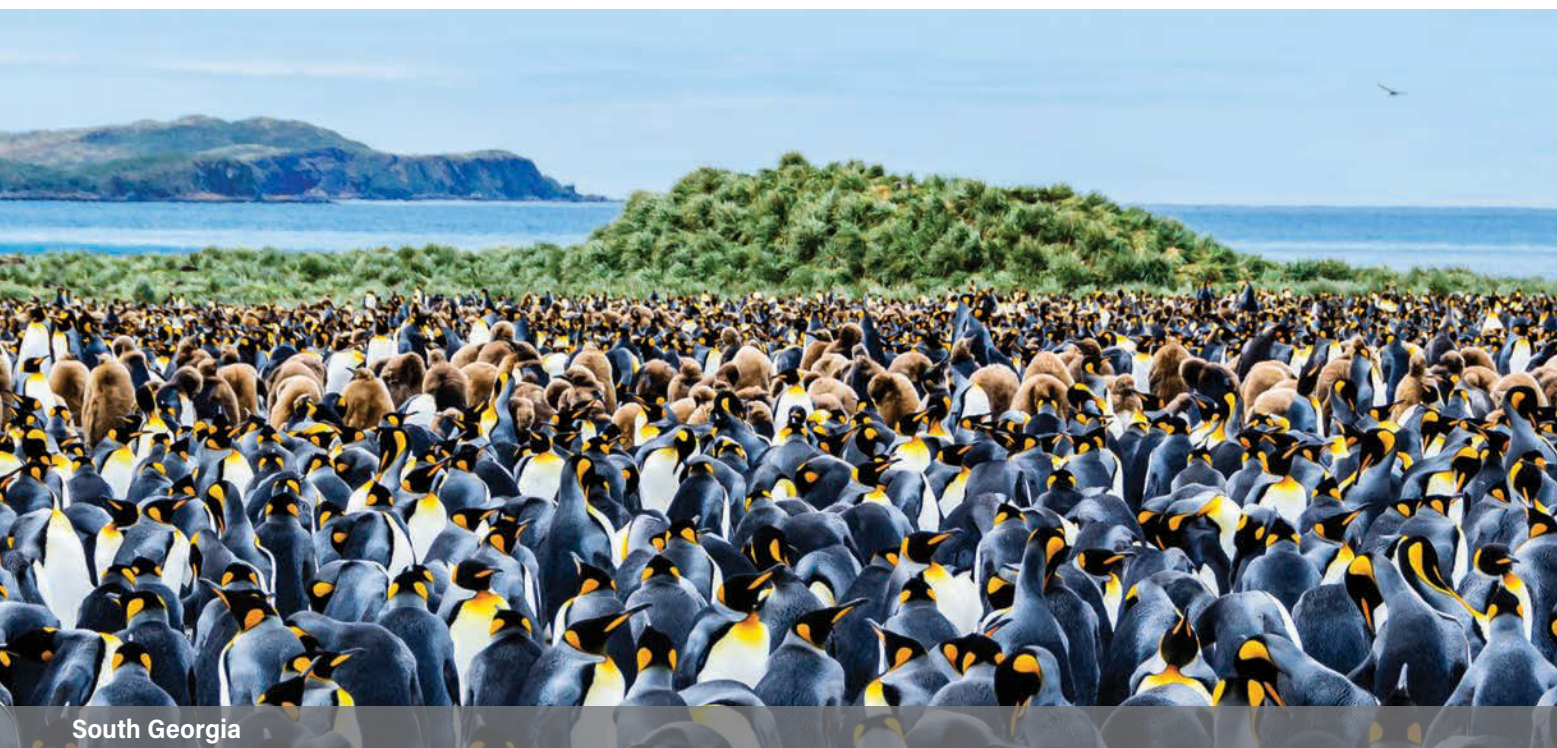
AT SEA

Attend lectures and enjoy the ship's facilities as *Vega* cruises through the Drake Passage to Antarctica. Look for albatross, Cape petrels and whales that may accompany the ship on its passage. (B, L, D)

Wednesday, January 24-Saturday, January 27

EXPLORING ANTARCTICA

Explore the pristine wilderness of Antarctica and its surrounding islands. As *Vega* cruises through scenic waterways, witness a breathtaking panorama of icebergs, blue glaciers, and jagged snow-capped mountains. Aboard the ship's Zodiacs, cruise among ice floes and explore penguin rookeries. Although the itinerary varies according to local ice and wind conditions, we plan to land at such places as Petermann Island, the habitat of Gentoo and Adélie penguins, and where humpback and minke whales are often sighted offshore; Paradise Harbor, the habitat of Chinstrap



South Georgia

and Gentoo penguins and Weddell seals; and Deception Island, known for its volcanically-heated hot springs. Navigating through the magnificent Lemaire, Errera, Neumayer and other protected channels is also planned. (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28 & MONDAY, JANUARY 29

AT SEA

Follow Shackleton's rescue route as *Vega* cruises to South Georgia. (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30-THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1

SOUTH GEORGIA

Mountainous and magnificent, the remote, crescent-shaped island of South Georgia is renowned for its rich wildlife, its stunning natural beauty and its vital role in the history of Antarctic exploration. First claimed in 1775 by the ubiquitous Captain Cook, the island has hosted such explorers as Larsen and Shackleton as well as a long succession of sealers and whalers. South Georgia's more regular visitors include four species of albatross, eight species of penguin, and a million of southern fur and elephant seals. We have three days to explore this extraordinary island. At the Bay of Isles we will discover a truly amazing site, a rookery of 3-foot-high king penguins that numbers some 75,000 birds. We will search the grassy slopes for nesting wandering albatross with 12-foot wingspans, view other bird colonies and stop at Grytviken to see the abandoned whaling station and the grave of Sir Ernest Shackleton. (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2 & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3

AT SEA

Cruising toward the Falklands. (B, L, D)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4 & MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5

FALKLAND ISLANDS

Spend two days in the Falkland Islands, consisting of two main islands and some 200 small ones, which are mostly rugged, rocky moorlands. Located in the exceptionally rich waters of the southern Atlantic, they harbor an extraordinary concentration of wildlife, including over 219 bird species and the world's largest numbers of black-browed albatross and Rockhopper and Gentoo penguins. Explore Stanley, the quaint capital of the islands; Westpoint Island, where we will enjoy a walk across the moors to a busy rookery of Rockhopper penguins; and Saunders Island, whose dramatic beaches harbor large numbers of Magellanic and Gentoo penguins, cormorants and black-browed albatross. (B, L, D)

Tuesday, February 6

AT SEA

Enjoy closing lectures and the ship's amenities as *Vega* cruises back to Ushuaia. (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

USHUAIA/USA

Disembark in Ushuaia. Transfer to the airport for the group flight to Buenos Aires to connect with flights to the United States. (B)



Albatross, South Georgia



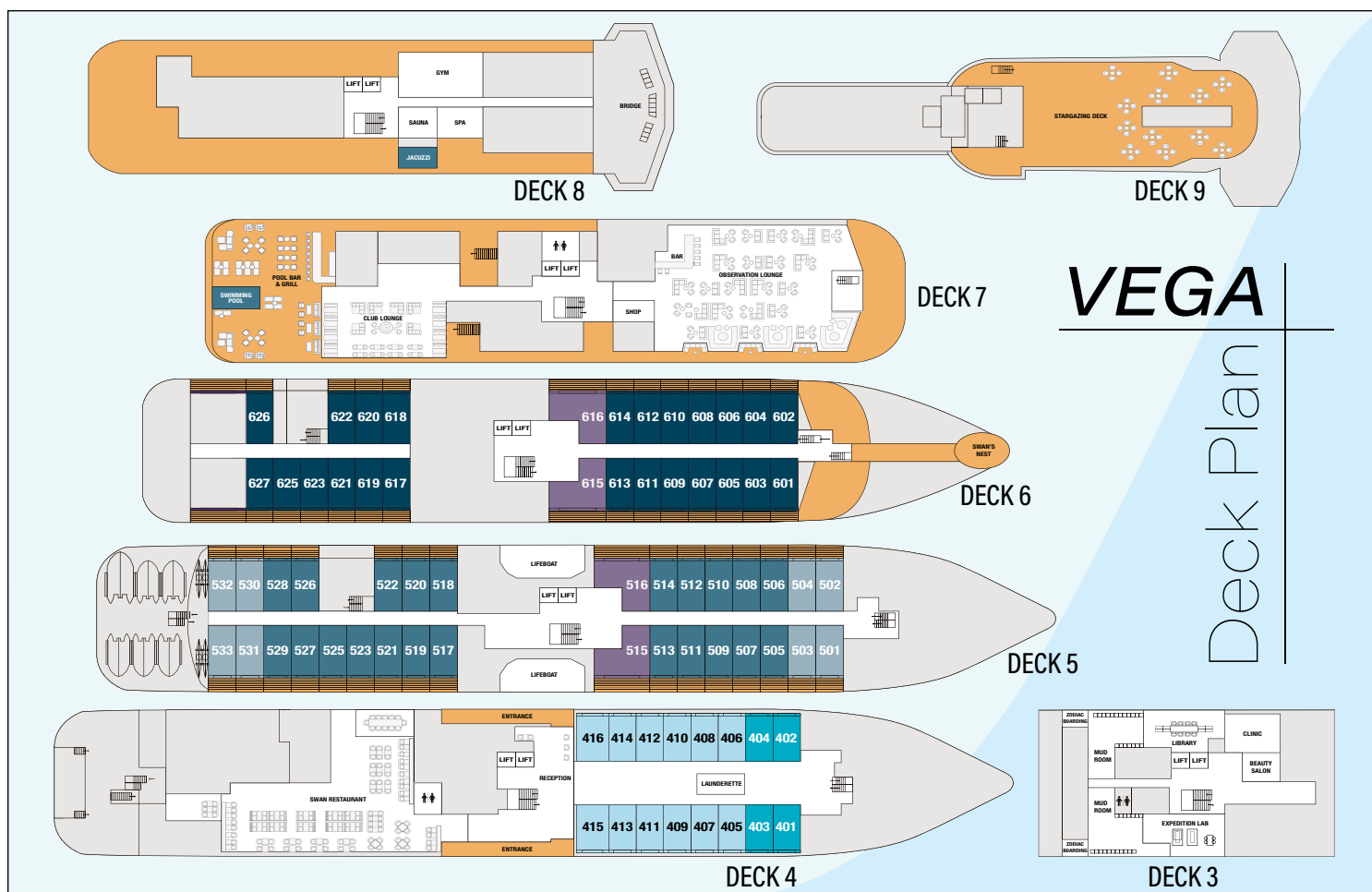
Exploring by Zodiac in Antarctica



Weddell seal, Antarctica



Antarctica



All accommodations aboard *Vega* are spacious staterooms and balcony suites. They are elegantly decorated, face outside, affording sea views, and include a queen-size bed that can be arranged as two twin beds, a spacious bathroom, mini-refrigerator, safe, ample closet space, climate control, telephone, TV, Wi-Fi, and USB connections, as well as other amenities.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	RATES PER PERSON / DOUBLE OCCUPANCY
E	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval window. Deck 4. 206 sq. ft. Staterooms 401- 404.	\$ 18,450
D	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. Deck 4. 206 sq. ft. Staterooms 405- 416.	\$ 19,390
C	Suites with balcony & living room area. Deck 5. 300 sq. ft. Suites 501 - 504, 530 - 533.	\$ 20,990
B	Suites with balcony & living room area. Deck 5. 300 sq. ft. Suites 505 - 514, 517 - 529.	\$ 21,990
A	Suites with balcony and living room area. Deck 6. 300 sq. ft. Suites 601 - 614, 617 - 627.	\$ 23,590
AA	Suites with large balcony, separate bedroom & living room. Decks 5 & 6. 440 sq. ft. Suites 515, 516, 615 & 616.	\$ 27,990

SPECIAL BENEFIT

Book this cruise program and receive a

5% SAVINGS

on your next cruise with
The Skeptics Society
and Thalassa Journeys.

If you book your next cruise within
30 days after you return from
*VOYAGE TO ANTARCTICA, SOUTH
GEORGIA & THE FALKLANDS*,
you will receive an
ADDITIONAL 5% SAVINGS.

FOR SOLO TRAVELERS

A limited number of cabins are available for single occupancy in categories D to B at no additional charge. Additional single cabins are available at a supplement of 50% of the per person double occupancy rate, instead of the normal 70% supplement.

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PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

The rates are all-inclusive. There are no hidden costs and no additional charges such as shore excursions or embarkation and port charges. Other than the international airfare and expenses of a personal nature, all else is included. Specifically, the rates include:

- One night at *Sofitel Buenos Aires Recoleta* (or similar).
- Round trip group flight between Buenos Aires and Ushuaia.
- Welcome cocktail reception at the hotel.
- Cruise aboard the *Vega*, as described in the itinerary.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage.
- Complete program of shore landings and activities organized by the expedition leaders and naturalists.
- All meals aboard the ship, with a selection of wines, beer and soft drinks during lunch and dinner.
- Welcome and farewell cocktail receptions aboard the ship hosted by the captain.
- Open bar with select alcoholic beverages.
- Coffee, including espresso and cappuccino, tea and soft drinks throughout the day and night.
- 24-hour room service.
- Gratuities to the ship's crew, porters and drivers.
- Basic Wi-Fi aboard the ship.
- The services of an experienced Thalassa Journeys trip director.
- All local taxes and service charges, including port and embarkation taxes.
- Lectures by the guest lecturers, expedition leaders and naturalists.
- Use of rubber boots for shore landings.
- Expedition parka yours to keep.
- Complete pre-departure material.

NOT INCLUDED: International airfare; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any items not mentioned in the itinerary or the above inclusions.

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Stanley, Falkland Islands



Rockhopper penguins, Falkland Islands

GENERAL INFORMATION

SKEP 24V-0119

PAYMENT SCHEDULE: A deposit of \$1,500 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Payment can be made by personal check or charged to a credit card.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: All cancellations are subject to a \$300 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received 61-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 60 days of departure are subject to 100% cancellation penalties. Requests for cancellations must be made in writing. No refunds will be made for any part of this program in which you choose not to participate.

INSURANCE: We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement.

ITINERARY: The itinerary, accommodations and arrangements are subject to change at the discretion of Thalassa Journeys.

RESPONSIBILITY: Please read carefully the following terms and conditions, which constitute the sole, legally enforceable agreements between the traveler and Thalassa Journeys. Thalassa Journeys acts solely as agents for the traveler with respect to all transportation, hotel and other tour arrangements. In that capacity, we exercise all reasonable care possible to ensure the traveler's safety and satisfaction, but, we neither assume nor bear any responsibility or liability for any injury, death, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity arising in connection with the services of any ship, airplane, train, automobile, motor coach, carriage or other conveyance, or the actions of any third-party, involved in carrying the traveler or in affecting these tours. We are not responsible for damages, additional expenses, or any other losses due to cancellation, delay or other changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, civil disturbances, acts or threats of terrorism, travel warnings or bans, termination or suspension of war risks or other carrier insurance, quarantine, acts of God or other causes beyond our control. All such losses must be borne by the traveler, and tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. In the event of cancellation, delay or rescheduling mandated by any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by us, or else, receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as we are able to recover on the traveler's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc., but, we shall not have any obligation or liability to the traveler beyond the foregoing. We reserve the right to make alterations to the tour's itinerary and to substitute hotels, transportation methods, or lecturers if this is required. We reserve the right to cancel, delay, or reschedule any tour prior to departure, and, so long as this is not due to any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall be entitled to a full refund of all monies paid to that point if he/she so desires. No refund shall be made for any unused portion of any tour. By forwarding their deposit(s), the traveler certifies that he/she and/or their dependents, minors or others covered thereby do not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that could create a hazard for them or other travelers. We reserve the right to decline to accept or to decline to retain any person as a member of any tour should such person's health, condition or actions adversely affect or threaten the welfare or safety of other travelers or impede the tour. Baggage or valuables brought on the tour shall be transported, handled or stored at the traveler's risk entirely, and, we shall bear no liability or responsibility for any damage or other loss thereto. Resolution of any disputes arising hereunder shall be affected exclusively in the state or federal courts presiding in Florida, pursuant to applicable Florida law.

RATES: Tour costs are based upon current airfares, tariffs, and currency values. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed prices, they are subject to change.

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