

TRIED & TESTED by CORNELIA MARIOGLOU in CRUISES — MARCH 2017

Antarctica with EYOS Expeditions

An eye-opening odyssey by sea opens up the icy Antarctic like never before. Cornelia Marioglou embarks on a weeklong journey of discovery



The Hanse Exp

Cruising Antarctica aboard the purpose-built, steel-hulled Hanse Explorer is a real adventure, but with captain Jens Koethen and his crew, alongside experienced naturalist and EYOS Expeditions leader Richard White, we explored the seventh continent in great comfort, surrounded by ever-changing nature and wildlife over 7 unforgettable days.

Day 1

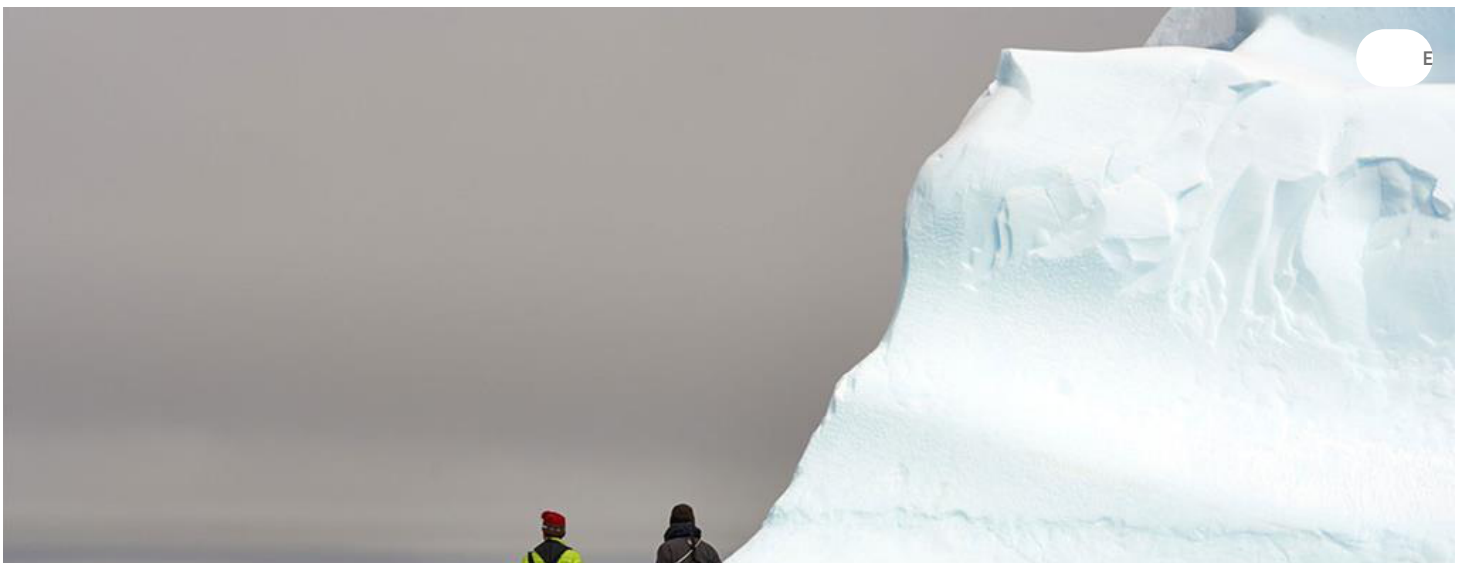
Our journey begins in Punta Arenas, Chile. From here, we're whisked away; our 90-minute Antarctic Airways flight lands on the natural airstrip at Chile's Presidente Eduardo Frei Montalva base. A Zodiac takes us to the Hanse Explorer, where Richard White welcomes us. Before we know it, we're off. We're finishing dinner as we make our first wildlife encounter: a fur seal, who greets us as we approach Half Moon Island, a desolate, 171ha landmass just north of Burgas Peninsula.

Day 2

We're awoken by an otherworldly sight: colossal icebergs all around. We're sailing the Antarctic Sound, off the northeastern part of the Antarctic Peninsula. After lunch, we make our way towards Brown Bluff, where we get a glimpse of a surprisingly loud colony of thousands of Adélie penguins, accompanied by their chicks. A jaunt to Fridtjof Sound, separating Andersson and Jonassen Island, gives way to awe-inspiring views of carvings and ice formations all around.

Day 3

We're en route to Spert Island, passing fantastical ice formations in stunning shades of blue along the way. We dock at Mikkelsen Harbour, on the southern coast of Trinity Island, where we witness a sizable gentoo penguin "highway", a trail formed as the animals move up and down from the water to their colonies. A three kilometre-long beach is an eerie graveyard for whalebones and the abandoned remains of a shipwreck. From there, we head for Gerlache Strait.





Day 1 – First ride with the Zodiac Photo: Reeve Jolliffe

Day 4

The next morning, we approach Lemaire Channel, a steep-sided strait, 11 kilometers long and – without ice blocking the way – just 1,600m wide. Today, icebergs crowd the photogenic passage dubbed the “Kodak Gap”, but we manage to navigate our way through. We disembark at the Ukrainian Vernadsky Research Base where the scientists showed us around and explained how life really is on the base. Later we paid a visit to the Wordie House, a museum with more than 500 artefacts curated by the Antarctic Heritage Trust. Crashing through the ice at Grandidier Channel is great fun, and demonstrates just how strong the vessel really is. After dinner, we trail a pod of feeding humpback whales with our Zodiacs.

Day 5

Entering the Lemaire Channel from the other side is an equally breathtaking sight. After breakfast, we hop in our kayaks to explore Paradise Bay, passing a penguin colony and witnessing an avalanche as we make our way to Neko Harbour. Here, we’re treated to a spectacular, panoramic vista, though it was our next experience – a polar plunge into the water at -0.5°C – that really gets our adrenaline pumping. From there, we head straight for the Errera Channel, where we once again take to the Zodiacs to admire humpback whales swimming against the sunset.





Day 4 – Lemaire Channel a.k.a. "Kodak Gap" Photo: Reeve Jolliffe

Day 6

At Lindblad Cove – a strait filled with icebergs in all manner of sizes – we take the Zodiacs to Astrolabe Island to catch a glimpse of seals of the crab-eater, fur and leopard variety at play. Our last dinner together, prepared by chef Luis Galego, is a superlative one: we start with a puff basket and goat's cheese salad, then move on to beef tenderloin Tornado in red wine sauce, served with steam beans and potato gratin; it's all crowned by a delicious cake – a fabulous way to end an extraordinary trip.

Day 7

It's an overnight cruise back to King George Island, where we pack, then bid adieu to the captain and crew. On our flight back to Punta Arenas, my sea legs are already missing the Hanse Explorer and its team. Indeed, it's been the journey of a lifetime.

For more information and to book, visit the [Eyos Expeditions website](#)

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THE DETAILS

M/Y Hanse Explorer

Built 2006 at Fassmer, Germany

Cabins: 6 on main deck, 1 on owner bridge deck

Crew: 15

LOA: 47.76m

Beam: 10.4m

Draught: 4.40m

Top Speed: 13kn

Range: 8,000 nm at 10kn

Classification: German Lloyd

Ice Class: GL E3 (Finnish ice class A1)

AT A GLANCE

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