

# Hercules Bay/ Grytviken, South Georgia

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The Norwegian Lutheran church stands in the foreground with the whaling station at Grytviken Harbour in the background.



The sandstone in Hercules Bay makes an ideal nesting sight for light-mantled sooty albatrosses, like the ones hidden amongst the tussock grass above this cave.



This nudibranch, *doris kerguelensis*, crawls across the substrate feeding on lichen, and is one of many species found here in South Georgia.



The Dias and the Albatros, two former whaling vessels, now live out the rest of their days beached just outside the Grytviken museum.



The beach just in front of the museum at Grytviken is not only littered with old machinery from when the whaling station was in full operation, but also large bones of the whales that were processed here.



“Sea smoke” blows across the water as we pulled out of Grytviken Harbour. The wind gusts measured in excess of 50 knots as we departed.

We awoke from a quiet evening at anchor while the ship navigated to our destination this morning at Hercules Bay. Although the wind was a bit breezy outside, the bay offered ample protection to explore the area via our Zodiacs. The Cumberland sandstone and metamorphose sandstone that form this part of the bay provided the perfect perch for many albatrosses to build their nests and raise their chicks before heading back out to the open ocean for the winter. And while some of us were enjoying the wildlife on the beaches and the cliffs, the dive team opted to explore the kelp beds that lined the edges of the shoreline.

After lunch we headed to our second location for the day, which also happens to be the only inhabited spot in South Georgia, Grytviken Harbour. It was once a thriving whaling station that now serves not only as a museum and gift shop, but also as a research station and government entry point for vessels that wish to visit the island. We toured the old station and visited the museum and got to exercise our credit cards. Some of us walked up behind the station along the meadow for a panoramic view of the harbour. And before we departed, we paid our respects to The Boss, Earnest Shackleton, and the other whalers who occupy the gravesite with a toast and some scotch. And with the wind building, it was time to leave the harbour and find more protected anchorage for the evening.

## **About the Author**

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**Robert Alexander**· Naturalist/Expedition Diver

Robert Alexander has quenched his thirst for exploring the world's flora and fauna by captaining, interpreting natural history, and conducting research aboard ships. He particularly developed a passion for the marine life below the water's surface while attending the University of Oregon and becoming involved with their diving program. The rich waters of the Pacific Northwest led Robert to change career paths, and locales, as a SCUBA Instructor based primarily out of Maui. Utilizing any means of floating vessel, from kayaks and catamarans to small passenger boats and Zodiacs, Robert became a captain as he explored the behavioral patterns of the captivating marine megafauna throughout the world. In between being a captain and naturalist, he strives to conserve and preserve all forms of life- be it our very own species as a firefighter and EMT, assisting in shark-tagging projects for NOAA, or researching hawksbill turtle populations with the Hawaii Wildlife Fund.