

Lindblad Cove/Bransfield Strait/Cierva Cove

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Water carved iceberg.



Leopard seal on iceberg.



Humpback whale flukes in Bransfield Strait.



Iceberg in Cierva Cove.



Iceberg in Cierva Cove. OR021118 E – Brash ice and icebergs in Cierva Cove.

Gorgeous is the word for today. We began our morning in the soft swells of Lindblad Cove. Ice sculptures dazzled our eyes with bolts of cobalt blue surrounded by mushroom shaped icebergs. The ice we saw was thousands of years old. Tossed and flipped by the constant wave action of the Southern Ocean,

these gigantic forms shape shift in the last few years of their existence before returning to the water from which they came. The salt water melt bath these icebergs travel in constantly erode the balance of the ice. Melting from beneath, the icebergs will roll again and again. The water smooths the surface of one to look like polished marble and the next iceberg is as rough as weathered wood. The Zodiacs appeared and disappeared behind the enormous moving ice as we rounded the cove. Leopard seals occasionally hauled out on the ice and rolled about in what looked like our morning stretch class.

All too soon the morning ended and we were on our way to look for whales. It didn't take long for blows, backs and flukes of humpback whales to be spotted in the Bransfield Strait. Then we were in for a real treat as we found a group of four humpbacks lunge feeding and spy hopping and rolling over in the afternoon light. Their preoccupation with feeding allowed us to get great view of them and to stand at the ready for the next time they might break the surface of the water with their huge, bumpy faces.

Tom Ritchie enlightened us about the explorers of the Antarctic Peninsula with his presentation. The names we read on the chart start to come to life as we realize that where we were kayaking was one of the sights of Nordenskjold's remarkable adventure.

Cierva Cove was next. The day was already complete, but there was more. Captain Martin Graser brought *National Geographic Orion* through yet another icy sculpture garden. Leopard and crabeater seals dotted the smaller icebergs while the large hillsides of ice reflected their shapes into the calm waters of the cove. Cameras clicked out on deck while faces smiled in delight.

We dined on delicious food with the cheerful service of the hotel staff who now feel like old friends.

The day held one more gala event. After dinner, the crew put on a show for us with singing and dancing and gobs of fun. The talent of the crew and their enthusiastic performances enlivened even the most tired among us and we all agreed the show was not to be missed.

What could possibly await us tomorrow?

About the Author



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For the past 20 years, Marylou Blakeslee has traveled the world sharing her love of wild places. She lectures on a number of topics from the bears and wolves of the Arctic, to the leopard seals and whales of the Antarctic, as well as the turtles and fishes of the Great Barrier Reef.