



AMBASSADORS **Skip's South Georgia diary**

February 2010 – For more than two decades, Raymarine ambassador Skip Novak has run Pelagic Expeditions, conducting full-on, action-packed expeditions in the Southern Ocean area each September to June.

Raymarine equipment has played a vital part in the expeditions on board *Pelagic Australis*. Skip says, "Durability and reliability of our equipment is fundamental. The Raymarine package of sailing instruments, radar, plotters and autopilot systems has been one of the keys to our success."



Last Winter, Skip wrote a diary of Pelagic Expeditions' 28-day expedition charter to the sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia to show just what is involved.

It included a nostalgic visit by eight members of the South Georgia Association, many of whom were British Antarctic field researchers in the 1970s. Also aboard with Skip were two of his climbing mates, Julian Atwood and 'Crag' Jones. They were dropped on shore for a week with a mission to climb Mt Nordenskjold, one of the last unclimbed big mountains on the island.

Skip's diary entries read:

11-16 October

Pelagic Australis and her crew of 14 depart Stanley in the Falkland Islands, bound for the northwest tip of South Georgia, 750 miles to the east southeast. Radar watch at night becomes critical on Day Two when the possibility of encounters with icebergs becomes real. But we are disappointed! There are only two icebergs on the way into the island.

More.

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17-29 October

Pelagic Australis drops off the climbers in Cumberland Bay and steams to the south end of the island to visit wildlife and historic sites of interest. Every day, the team is deployed ashore with cross country skis, snow shoes or trekking boots for extensive nosing around the coastal margins. Four from the group hike from Fortuna Bay to Stromness to complete the last day of Shackleton's famous trek across the island in 1915. Meanwhile, the climbers are blown off the mountain on an ill-fated attempt on Mt Nordenskjold. Later, they retreat from Camp 2 after a major snow storm poses avalanche risk. Arriving exhausted after 30 hours, they are eventually re-embarked on *Pelagic Australis*, their mobile base camp. We now head north and are on standby for the difficult upwind return to Stanley.

30 October

The climbers make a one-day dash up the glacier for a beautiful unclimbed peak above the Bay of Isles. On the summit of Mt Ashley, (pictured right) the clouds momentarily clear for superb views down into King Haakon Bay on the south coast – where Shackleton landed after his epic sail from Elephant Island in the Antarctic in the open boat the *James Caird*.



31 October-5 November

With a favorable weather window, *Pelagic Australis* makes her getaway from the island at first light, in a snow storm. Once around the northern tip of the island, we immediately encounter ice – big tabular bergs. Later, we sail along an iceberg band that extends for 50 miles – dozens of bergs from the Weddell Sea, big stuff that has broken off from the ice shelves on the Antarctic Peninsula. There is no better evidence that the ice sheet is giving up to global warming.

More.

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5 November

After racing in a Force Nine storm due to hit the Falklands, we dock safely in Stanley completing a very satisfying expedition on all fronts. Now for the pub...

For the full, illustrated story, visit the Pelagic web site www.pelagic.co.uk and click on 'News.'

* Skip featured in an hour-long BBC programme in the Autumn, as he took three famous adventurers sailing on the high seas.

Former Raymarine YJA Yachtsman of the Year, Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes and veteran war correspondent John Simpson starred in *Top Dogs: Adventures in War, Sea and Ice* series on BBC2 in the UK.

Skip took the three friends on a gruelling eight-day sail along the Beagle Channel on board *Pelagic*, including a wild ride around the Cape Horn. Always understated, Skip took the role of crew and chief bottle washer.

At one point, Sir Robin asked if anyone wanted ice with their whisky and calmly hacked off a lump from the freezing sea. In the three-part televised series, each of the men, who are all in their 60s, challenged the others to share in their adventures.

Ends.