



A yacht-based expedition to **The Antarctic Peninsula** January 5 – February 2 2016

**Multiple summit possibilities for experienced ski-mountaineers.
Introductory snowshoeing, ice-climbing, sea-kayaking
and wildlife-watching for the sailing support team.**





BACKGROUND

In 2013, after five expeditions to the sub-antarctic island of South Georgia, I finally got to the actual Antarctic mainland, with Skip Novak, the owner of the 74 foot yacht *Pelagic Australis*. Together we led a nine person team making ski ascents on the western side of the Peninsula. I enjoyed the trip so much that I immediately booked *Pelagic Australis* for the next available slot on the Peninsula – January 2016. Now I need eight keen people to fill the boat and make the expedition happen.



Ice arch near Hovgaard Island

COMPOSITION OF THE PARTY

Although all the places could be taken by experienced climbers, the more likely scenario is a team of three or four climbers, with an additional sailing support team of people keen to enjoy the fabulous scenery of Antarctica, but with less strenuous excursions ashore. As on my recent South Georgia expedition, the two teams will spend much of the time together with the crew.

MOUNTAINEERING TEAM

Every team member needs to be a competent off-piste skier who can handle all types of snow and terrain. He or she must also have alpine experience of mixed and snow-and-ice climbing to around grade AD (alpine ‘assez difficile’). In other words, everyone needs to be able to move competently and efficiently through all types of difficult glacier country. During the main climbing/skiing phase we could spend up to ten days ashore, travelling on ski, towing all our camping gear in pulks.

SAILING SUPPORT TEAM

Not everyone has the experience or inclination for arduous mountaineering, pulling a heavy sledge and spending several nights camping on a glacier. However, many people dream of sailing in a small boat amongst the fabulous islands and channels of the Antarctic Peninsula, seeing whales and penguins, making short snowshoe or ski excursions ashore, sea kayaking and perhaps enjoying a



The skipper doing his first ever ice climb, near Vernadsky Base

day's introductory ice climbing. Apart from good health and a willingness to live for four weeks at fairly close quarters with up to fourteen people, no special qualifications are required. Pelagic crews are always extremely experienced and pride themselves on organizing interesting shore trips.

PELAGIC AUSTRALIS

Pelagic Australis is probably the best-known commercial yacht operating in the Southern Ocean, purpose-built for expedition support work, with ample storage space for mountaineering equipment, comfortable accommodation, a large convivial saloon, excellent galley, lavish larder and well-stocked wine cellar. She also has a powerful motor to supplement the sailing rig and ensure that no-one ever misses his flight connections on the journey home. The voyage from the Beagle Channel normally takes three days, and once we reach the channels on the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula *Pelagic Australis* makes a perfect floating

base camp, with an inflatable zodiac for going ashore.



Everyone on board *Pelagic Australis* is encouraged to get involved with the running of the boat (and cooking!). For anyone with even just a passing interest, this is a perfect opportunity to get some experience of ocean sailing.

For detailed specifications and the full story of the Pelagic fleet, visit <http://www.pelagic.co.uk>

WEATHER AND CONDITIONS

We will be sailing in early January – high summer in Antarctica, when all the channels on the west side of the Peninsula should be clear of sea ice, and the weather is generally very good. On the 2013 trip we had mixed weather initially, but that was followed by a week of unbroken sunshine. At sea level the temperature can often be well above freezing during the day; in 2013 it was so fine one day that we all went swimming. (Well, I managed three strokes before getting out). Snow



conditions in 2013 ranged from immaculate powder higher up to perfect spring snow at sea level.

Kayaking in the Argentine Islands, near Vernadsky

PROVISIONAL EXPEDITION TIMETABLE

This is only a very **rough guide** to our schedule, based on the 2013 expedition. The exact programme we eventually follow could be completely different, depending on weather, and on the composition and ambitions of the party. This merely a suggestions of possibilities, based on what worked well in 2013.

Jan 5	Arrive Puerto Williams from Punta Arenas. Board <i>Pelagic Australis</i> .
Jan 6 – 8	Sail from Puerto Williams to Port Lockroy.
Jan 9	Visit Port Lockroy museum. Ski ascent of south summit of Jabet Peak.
Jan 10 - 16	Mountaineering team ashore on Anvers Island. Climb Mt Français. Sailing Support Team explore area around Neumayer Channel and/or Paradise Harbour.
Jan 17	Sail down Lemaire Channel. Mountaineering Team ski over Hovgaard Island.
Jan 18	Wildlife, sea-kayaking etc around Hovgaard Island.
Jan 19	Mountaineering Team climbs Mt Scott.
Jan 20 - 27	Mountaineering Team makes further ascents around Penola Strait. Sea kayaking, whale-watching, ice climbing etc possibilities for Sailing Support Team in Argentine Islands, Waddington Bay etc
Jan 28 - 29	Return north to Port Lockroy. Mountaineering Team climb Luigi Peak.
Jan 29 - 31	Return voyage across Drake Passage
Feb 1	Spare day in Beagle Channel
Feb 2	Return to Puerto Williams
Feb 3	Leave <i>Pelagic Australis</i>



MOUNTAINEERING OBJECTIVES
This is a short list of possible, achievable objectives. They all have the advantage of lying within a fairly small area, realistic for a comparatively short three weeks period. Needless to say, there are countless other peaks we could attempt. The possibilities are endless.

Jabet Peak 545m, Wiencke Island
This little peak above Port Lockroy is perfect for a first day afternoon warm-up. Stunning views east to the Wall Range and west to Mt Francais.

Luigi Peak 1415m, Wiencke Island
The highest peak on Wiencke Island. A fairly straightforward ski approach leads to a final steep ridge bedecked with giant rime mushrooms reminiscent of Patagonia. A full day's excursion from Port Lockroy.

Mt Francais 2825m, Anvers Island
Named after the expedition ship of the French explorer Jean-Baptiste Charcot, Mount Francais is the highest mountain in the whole of the northern Antarctic Peninsula. It is a fantastic objective for a one week excursion, landing at the southern end of Anvers Island, then skiing for two days across the immense Marr Ice Piedmont to a camp beneath the Menelaus Ridge. From there, in good conditions, it is a long day to climb both Mount Agamemnon and Mount Francais, finishing with a 2500 metres of wonderful ski descent. On the return journey to 'Access Point' there are further possibilities for beautiful ski ascents on several neighbouring peaks.



Looking from Mt Scott up the Lemaire Channel to Mt Francais



Booth Island

The summits of Booth Island and the peaks on the other side of the famous Lemaire Channel offer exciting possibilities for hard technical first ascents, *if* we end up with people on the team with the experience and inclination for that kind of climbing.

Mt Scott 880m

This beautiful multi-summitted peak dominates the landwards side of the Penola Strait. There are some interesting technical routes on the seaward face, while the ‘normal’ route makes a perfect day ski-tour with one of the finest summit views I have ever seen.



Crevasses on Mt Scott



Mt Shackleton 1300m

Another peak named after a famous explorer, this one bigger and further from the coast, requiring a couple of overnight camps.

Demaria 635m

This spectacular wedge of a peak rises above Waddington Bay. Perfect for a short stiff climb followed by 635 metres of uniformly steep descent straight back to the boat.

Luigi Peak

Lumiere Peak 1050m

This beautiful cone-shaped peak rises further inland from Demaria and would require at least one camp, with a complex approach across heavily-crevassed glaciers.

Hovgaard Island

The traverse of this little island peak makes a very nice afternoon ski tour, descending to a beautiful anchorage.



FOOD AND SUPPLIES

Pelagic expedition contracts include all food on board and ashore, throughout the charter, plus all wine and beer. Expedition members may contribute their own spirits if they wish. Everyone normally helps with cooking and washing up in the well-equipped galley.

SAILING WATCHES

Pelagic Australis is run by a professional skipper and crew, but everyone is encouraged to help with the sailing, and all team members do watches on sea passages (three hours on; six hours off).



INLAND TRAVEL FOR THE MOUNTAINEERING PARTY

We will travel on ski wherever possible, as this is the fastest, safest, most enjoyable way of getting around. On multi-day trips we will tow pulks. Pelagic Expeditions has a variety of pulks, so everyone can tow their own kit, plus a share of communal gear and supplies – infinitely preferable to carrying a heavy rucksack. We will take two large Terra Nova tents, each with reinforced flysheet, double poles and spacious cooking/storage porch each end. These tents are well tried and tested. However,

even the strongest tents have been known to succumb to Antarctic blizzards, so we always carry a steel spade and snow saw for digging emergency snow-caves.

From temporary bases – and on day trips – we will be able to travel more lightly, without pulks, switching from skis to crampons on steeper terrain.

NON-MOUNTAINEERING DELIGHTS

An expedition to Antarctica is much more than a mere mountaineering trip. For everyone on board – and in particular for the sailing support party – there are many other fascinating attractions: sailing through the Beagle Channel to cross Drake Passage; the unique heritage of the old British Antarctic Survey bases; the chance to sail amongst orca, whales, albatrosses and dolphins; kayaking past icebergs to visit Adelie penguins; mountains rising up to 2825 metres straight out of the ocean ...



THE LEADER

Stephen Venables has been climbing for 40 years and has made first ascents all over the world, including a new route up Mount Everest without supplementary oxygen. In the far south he has made one expedition to Tierra del Fuego, one to the Antarctic Peninsula and six to South Georgia. This will be his sixth expedition aboard *Pelagic Australis*.

<http://www.stephenvables.com>

Please note that although Stephen Venables has extensive experience leading polar ski-mountaineering groups, he is not certified mountain guide.

Price: £12,800 per person

This is a special group expedition rate based on a party of 8 paying members for 28 days on board *Pelagic Australis*. (The advertised group charter rate on the Pelagic website is actually higher – £12,500 per person for just 21 days).



Included:

Four weeks charter of *Pelagic Australis*.
All food, wine and beer on board and ashore in Antarctica.
Specialist foul weather gear on board.
Communal mountain camping, cooking and climbing equipment, including pulks.

Not included:

Travel to and from Puerto Williams.
Food and accommodation en route to Puerto Williams (probably a night each way in Punta Arenas).
Insurance.
Personal clothing and equipment.
(Full equipment list and advice provided on signing up for the expedition).
Optional personal internet communications on boat.

NB Price the same for Mountaineering Team and Sailing Support Team members.



Descending Mt Scott





Booking conditions:

Your contract will be with Pelagic Expeditions, and the payment schedule is:

On booking:	£4,000
1 June 2015:	£4,000
1 December 2015:	£4,800

For full terms and conditions see the Pelagic website: <http://www.pelagic.co.uk>

I do hope that you will be able to join us on this wonderful adventure. And please get in touch if you would like to discuss our plans in more detail.

Stephen Venables
stephenvenables@btinternet.com

29th September 2014