

Deep South

The First Welsh Sailing Expedition
to
Patagonia S. Georgia and Antarctica
1999 - 2000

Aims

Deep South is a two year expedition to Chilean Patagonia, the Beagle Channel, Cape Horn, S. Georgia and Antarctica combining exploration with an educational program for primary school students. Geographically these areas are the last great unspoiled maritime wildernesses that exist on earth. The first season, spent exploring Chilean Patagonia, was highly successful and provided a good start to the educational program. We intend to expand on this when the expedition resumes in October 1999 from Valdivia, S. Chile.

The Route

Initially we shall head south to the Gulf of Penas and then enter the Mesier Channel that leads, eventually, to the Magellan Strait, the Beagle Channel and Cape Horn. A distance of some 600 nautical miles. This is a very rugged area of mountains, glaciers and fjords battered by westerly winds and storms that drop huge amounts of rain and snow on the seaward slopes of the Andes. The area is largely uninhabited and the scenery magnificent. After reaching the Magellan Straits we head south to explore the Beagle Channel and will reach our temporary base, the port of Ushuaia the world's southernmost city, in mid December 1999. At Ushuaia we shall take on sufficient fuel and provisions for up to two months in Antarctica before going to the Chilean Naval base at Puerto Williams to obtain our onward clearance to Cape Horn. Drake Passage separates Cape Horn from the Antarctic islands of the South Shetlands and the distance to our landfall at Deception Island is some 550 miles across some of the roughest waters in the world. It will be a passage taking just under four days and before crossing we shall wait, near Cape Horn Island, for a favourable weather "window". Recent Antarctic Treaty legislation requires that all persons and craft on expedition to Antarctica have a permit. These are only issued when the authorities are satisfied that the expedition meets the required standards of safety and experience. Antarctica is a vast continent, larger than the USA and Western Europe combined. About 99% of it is permanently covered in ice which is 2800 meters thick at the South Pole. It is estimated that 70% of the earth's fresh water is frozen in Antarctica. The first yachtsman to visit Antarctica was the explorer and mountaineer Bill Tilman aboard "Mischief" in 1966. Later exploration was carried out by Jerome and Sally Poncet who are, probably, the most experienced Antarctic yachting crew and who have

carried out film work for BBC Television. Film work for American television has been carried out by Skip Novak with his yacht "Pelagic". The Antarctic Peninsular comprises Palmer Land in the southern part and Graham Land to the north. Many of the scientific stations are situated here simply because during the austral summer access is possible by sea when the pack ice breaks up. It is this area that the Deep South Expedition will explore. The subantarctic islands of South Shetland are considered as part of Antarctica and it is here that we shall commence our exploration. We intend to spend several weeks amongst the hundreds of offshore islands that are among the world's richest breeding grounds for seabirds, seals and penguins. Heading further south we shall land on mainland Antarctica then continue to Anvers Island and the Bismark Strait. The southerly limit of our exploration will depend on ice conditions existing at the time. We shall then return to King George Island before making the passage back to Cape Horn and our base at Ushuaia. After restocking, the final part of the expedition continues to the Falkland Islands and the very remote island of South Georgia. South Georgia is a large , approximately 170 kms. by 40 kms at it's widest point and for the first half of the 20th.century was the centre of the huge Southern Ocean whaling industry. Our aim is to follow in the footsteps of Shackleton, who for many, was the supreme polar explorer. In 1916 he made the greatest voyage ever undertaken in a small boat when, after leaving Elephant Island in Antarctica, he landed in S. Georgia after 16 horrific days at sea. It was an amazing feat of navigation and endurance and was a part of his successful attempt to rescue all the fellow members of his Endurance Expedition.

Education

An interesting side of the expedition has been the educational aspect involving 10 year old primary school children in Wales who have commenced an inter-active e-mail question and answer forum with the expedition. In addition, the students received a dispensation to change from the set curriculum and to study the geographical, sociological , environmental and wildlife aspects of the expedition. They have been involved in a number of additional studies with help from local businesses. For example the students are building, with help from a theatrical company, a 1m 60 long model of Express Crusader. We have tried to concentrate on students in less privileged areas to help in their obtaining future skills in the area of Information and Communication Technology via the Internet.

The Yacht

She is the famous Express Crusader, a 53' Gallant Class designed by Ricus van de Stadt and built by the SOS yard in Southampton. She was sailed by Naomi James when she made the first female single-handed circumnavigation of the world around all the great Capes.. Express Crusader, originally named Spirit of Cutty Sark, has also completed two single-handed transatlantic OSTAR races and has

been owned by such well known names as Les Williams, Chay Blyth and Naomi James.

The Crew

Are the highly experienced Jim and Noelle Corbett . Jim has captained yachts and commercial vessels for over 40 years and has over 300,000 miles of experience as captain in most parts of the world. His wife, Noelle, has close to 50,000 miles as captain and has sailed two single-handed transatlantic races including the 1988 OSTAR in a radical water-balasted monohull. She, also, has sailing experience in many parts of the world.

Also aboard is Roland Herbert Evans, a popular Swansea school teacher who has been described by the Sunday Times as an "Expert Yachtsman"; as such 'Herbie' is expected to play an invaluable role during the expedition.

Sponsors

Fortress Anchors, Raytheon, Yamaha Outboards, Apex Inflatables, Mustang Survival Equipment, Patagonia Clothing, West Marine, Fisher Panda Generators, Rich Beers Marine Refrigeration, Macay Communications, M. R. Grimes Marine, Luke Brown Associates, Crowley Marine.