BIRDING DOWN UNDER

DISCOVER THE SUBANTARCTIC ISLANDS OF NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA, AND THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

EXPEDITION DOSSIER
2 – 18 DECEMBER 2026

HERITAGE EXPEDITIONS

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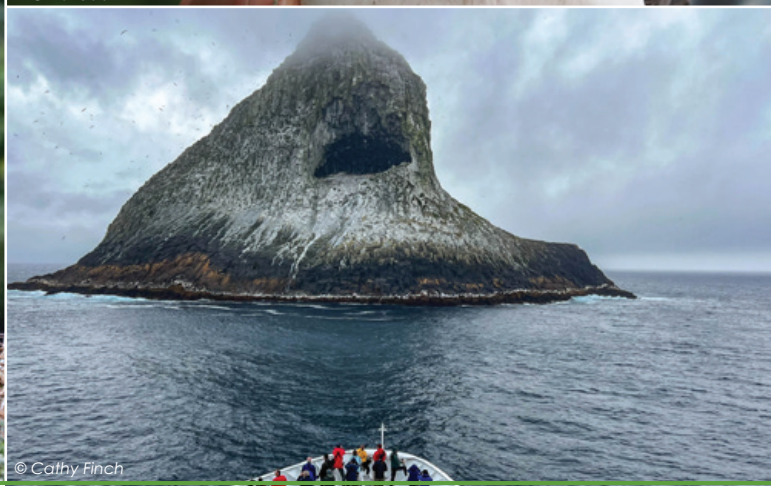
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Listen to the names: Snares, Bounty, Antipodes, Auckland, Campbell, Macquarie and Chatham Islands. They are music to the ears of 'Birders'. Apart from the Chathams, these islands are probably more isolated now than they were when they were discovered in the late 1700s and early 1800s and were regularly visited by sealers, whalers and government steamers searching for castaway sailors. While it is relatively simple to get to the Chatham Islands, opportunities to visit the others are rare.

This expedition, as featured in *Condé Nast Traveler's* influential 'The 25 Best Places to Go in 2025' list, and one of a number operated each year by Heritage Expeditions, is the only one to include all of these islands. The islands occupy the tempestuous latitudes of the Roaring Forties and the Furious Fifties, but they are also known as the Albatross Latitudes and with good reason. Ten of the world's albatross species breed in the region; five of them nowhere else but here! In fact, this zone, where the air is never still, hosts the most diverse collection of seabirds in the world. More than 40 species breed here – that is at least 11 per cent of the entire world's seabird species.

With the exception of the Chathams, the islands are all designated UNESCO World Heritage sites and are afforded the highest conservation status and protection by the Australian and New Zealand governments, so passage to their shores is not granted lightly. There are also islands that we visit within the Chatham Islands' Archipelago with similar status and protection.

This expedition has huge appeal to pelagic enthusiasts, penguin fanatics and those interested in island endemics. Though you don't have to be a keen birder to enjoy this voyage. People interested in islands and island ecology, botany, geology and an increasing number of photographers have enjoyed this trip immensely, as have those interested in the history of southern ocean discovery and exploration.

Heritage Expeditions is the most experienced Southern Ocean operator and the only Australasian family-owned and operated cruise company. We have been exploring the Subantarctic Islands for more than 35 years and this is one of our 'signature expeditions', ensuring you will benefit from our unrivalled knowledge and expertise of the region.

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ITINERARY

Day 1: Queenstown

Guests should make their way to the designated hotel where we will spend the first night of the expedition. This evening there will be an informal get-together at the hotel for dinner; an excellent opportunity to meet fellow adventurers on your voyage and some of our Expedition Team.

Day 2: Port of Bluff

Today we enjoy breakfast in the hotel restaurant and have the morning free to explore Queenstown before returning to the hotel for lunch and departing for the Port of Bluff to embark *Heritage Adventurer*. You will have time to settle into your stateroom or suite and familiarise yourself with the ship. You are invited to join the expedition team in the Observation Lounge and up on the Observation Deck as we set our course to The Snares and our adventure begins.

Day 3: The Snares – North East Island

The closest Subantarctic Islands to New Zealand, they were appropriately called The Snares as they were once considered a hazard for sailing ships. Uninhabited, they enjoy the highest protection as Nature Reserves. It is claimed by some that these islands are home to more nesting seabirds than all of the British Isles together. We plan to arrive early in the morning and as landings are not permitted we will Zodiac cruise along the sheltered eastern side of the main island if weather conditions are suitable.

In the sheltered bays, we should see the endemic Snares Crested Penguin, Snares Island Tomtit and Fernbirds. There are hundreds of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters nesting on The Snares; the actual number is much debated.

Day 4: Auckland Islands – Enderby Island

The Auckland Islands group was formed by two volcanoes which erupted some 10-25 million years ago. They have subsequently been eroded and dissected by glaciation creating the archipelago as we know it today. Enderby Island is one of the most beautiful islands in this group and is named after the distinguished shipping family. This northern most island in the archipelago is an outstanding wildlife and birding location and is relatively easy to land on and walk around. The island was cleared of all introduced pests in 1994 and both birds and the vegetation, especially the herbaceous plants, are recovering both in numbers and diversity. Our plan is to land at Sandy Bay, one of three breeding areas in the Auckland Islands for the Hooker's or New Zealand Sea Lion, a rare member of the seal family. Beachmaster bulls gather on the beach defending their harems and mating with the cows shortly after they have given birth to a single pup.

© Lindsay Thorpe

During our day ashore there will be several options, some longer walks, some shorter walks and time to enjoy the wildlife. The walking is relatively easy, a board walk traverses the island to the dramatic western cliffs from there we follow the coast on the circumnavigation of the island. Birds that we are likely to encounter include the following species: Southern Royal Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Auckland Island Shag, Auckland Island Flightless Teal, Auckland Island Banded Dotterel, Auckland Island Tomtit, Bellbird, Pipit, Red-crowned Parakeet, Yellow-eyed Penguin and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. There is also a very good chance of seeing the Subantarctic Snipe.

Day 5: At Sea

As we make our way south through the Furious Fifties also known as the Albatross latitudes, the birding especially south of the Auckland Islands should be good. We will have a series of presentations on the biology and history of the Subantarctic Islands. We will also prepare you for our visit to Macquarie Island. Species that we may see include the Wandering Albatross, Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Northern and Southern Giant Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Little Shearwater. There should be plenty of prions including Fairy, Fulmar and Antarctic, identifying them is not easy – but we should get some great views. Other species to be on the lookout for include the Soft-plumaged Petrel, Mottled Petrel, White-headed Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-petrel, Wilson's Storm-petrel and Black-bellied Storm-petrel.

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Days 6 & 7: Macquarie Island

The great Australian Antarctic Explorer Sir Douglas Mawson once called Macquarie Island "One of the wonder spots of the world". You are about to discover why as we spend two days exploring this amazing Island. It was one of the first of the Subantarctic Islands to obtain World Heritage Status and that was largely due to its unique geology. It is one of the few places on Earth where mid-ocean crustal rocks are exposed at the surface due to the collision of the Australian and Pacific Plates. The island was discovered in 1810 and was soon ravaged by sealers who introduced various animals including rats, cats and rabbits. The native bird population was virtually eliminated and plants destroyed. The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service embarked on a very ambitious eradication program. The island is now predator free and both the birds and plants are responding. It is amazing to witness the regeneration and the increase in the number of birds.

Macquarie Island is home to four species of penguin, Kings, Royals, Gentoo and Rockhopper. The Royal Penguin occurs nowhere else in the world. During our visit we will land at two sites (subject of course to weather and sea conditions) and you will get a chance to see, observe and photograph all four species, although the Rockhopper is much harder to capture than the others. Macquarie also has a large population of Southern Elephant Seals. Pups are born in October and weaned in November when the breeding adults return to sea. The weaners and sub-adults lie around on the beaches. The weaners go to sea sometime in January, running the gauntlet of Orcas or Killer Whales who are waiting offshore. We plan a landing at the Australian Antarctic Research Base at Buckles Bay where we hope to meet with scientists and base staff. The original base was established in 1947 and the island

has been 'manned' since then. It is one of the longest continuously occupied bases in the Subantarctic.

Day 8: At Sea

At sea en route to Campbell Island there's time to unwind after the adventures of Macquarie Island. Look for cetaceans and albatross, join a lecture or catch up on your photos and journalling.

Day 9: Campbell Island – Perseverance Harbour

Today we explore Campbell Island, New Zealand's southernmost Subantarctic territory. Its history is as rich and varied as the other islands we have visited. Discovered in 1810 (by the same sealing captain who discovered Macquarie Island) it too was soon occupied by sealers who introduced rats and cats which have since been eradicated. The vegetation which the great English botanist, Sir Joseph Hooker described in 1841 as having a "Flora display second to none outside the tropics" is now flourishing and is nothing short of spectacular.

A number of options here will enable you to explore via extended walks towards Northwest Bay and an easier walk to the Col Lyall Saddle. All of these options allow you the opportunity and time to enjoy the Southern Royal Albatross which nest here in large numbers. We also visit areas of the island which contain outstanding examples of the megaherbs for which the island is renowned. Other birds which we will search for include the teal and snipe, and the endemic shag can be seen on the harbour. Other birds we should see include Light-mantled Sooty

© Cathy Finch

Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Southern Skua, Red-billed Gull, Black-backed Gull, Antarctic Tern, Redpoll, Dunnock and New Zealand Pipit.

Day 10: At Sea

At sea en route to the Antipodes, it is a day for pelagic birding. Species commonly seen in this area include Wandering Albatross species, Southern Royal Albatross, Campbell Island Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, Grey-headed Albatross, Northern and Southern Giant Petrel, the Sooty Shearwater and the Little Shearwater. This region of the Southern Ocean is one of the few places where the Fairy Prion, Fulmar Prion and Antarctic

© Cathy Finch

Prion occur together, providing a good opportunity for comparison. Other species to be on the lookout for include the Soft-plumaged Petrel, Mottled Petrel, White-headed Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-Petrel, Wilson's Storm-petrel, Black-bellied Storm-petrel and the Common Diving-petrel.

Day 11: Antipodes Islands

The Antipodes group of islands is the most isolated and perhaps the least known of New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands. Sealers lived here in the decades immediately after their discovery in 1806. The islands are of volcanic origin, but are heavily eroded especially the western shoreline. The largest of the group is Antipodes Island. Landings are not permitted so we plan to cruise, along the coastline by Zodiac where we have a good chance of seeing the Antipodes Parakeet, the largest of New Zealand's parakeets. This species has an entirely green head. We will also look for the Reischek's Parakeet. We also see the Antipodes subspecies of the New Zealand Pipit. Good views of both Erect-crested and Rockhopper

Penguins can be expected along the coast where they breed in mixed colonies.

Day 12: Bounty Islands

We arrive at the incongruously named Bounty Islands, the remote northernmost of the five New Zealand Subantarctic groups. They were discovered by Captain Bligh just months before the infamous mutiny. Here inhospitable granite knobs, tips of the submerged Bounty Platform, are lashed by the Southern Ocean. They are home to thousands of Salvin's Albatross, Erect-crested Penguins, Fulmar Prions and the endemic Bounty Island Shag – the world's rarest. We plan to arrive in the early morning and if conditions are suitable we will cruise by Zodiac around the granite outposts to take a closer look at the birds which breed there. New Zealand Fur Seals which were almost hunted to extinction in the Subantarctic Islands are present in large numbers.

Sailing towards the Chatham Islands there are opportunities to see a good selection of birdlife en route, including Wandering Albatross, Northern Royal Albatross, Mottled Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Broad-billed Prion, White-chinned Petrel and Black-bellied Storm-petrel. Other possible sightings include White-capped Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Antarctic Fulmar, Sooty Shearwater, Little Shearwater and Grey-backed Storm-petrel. We will also start to keep a lookout for the Chatham Island Petrel.

Day 13: Pyramid Rock and South East Island

As we continue toward the Chatham Archipelago, there are excellent opportunities for pelagic birding today. In particular, we will look out for the Chatham Island

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Petrel which has been seen on this leg of the voyage before. In the past we have observed the very rare Chatham Island Taiko in this area. Endemic to the Chatham Islands, the Chatham Island Taiko – also known as the Magenta Petrel – is among New Zealand's most endangered species. It is one of the world's rarest seabirds with a population estimated to number less than 150. This morning we will cruise around spectacular Pyramid Rock, a basalt outcrop south of Pitt Island. This is the only breeding place of the Chatham Island Albatross.

During the afternoon we arrive at South East Island. This has to be one of the world's greatest nature reserves and landings are not permitted. However, we should obtain good views of the very rare New Zealand

© Mike Sylvia

Shore Plover and Chatham Island Oystercatcher from the Zodiacs as we cruise along the coast. We should also see the Pitt Island Shag which nests on the island. This evening we cruise back along the south coast, this is where the only known population of the Taiko breeds and also where they are attempting to establish a new population of the Chatham Island Petrel in a predator free area. We have seen both Taiko and Chatham Island Petrel in this area on previous expeditions.

Day 14: Chatham Islands – Waitangi

The Chatham Archipelago consists of one large island and numerous smaller islands and rocky islets. Only two of the islands are inhabited. They represent New Zealand's eastern most territory. The islands were originally settled by East Polynesians. In the 1400s the population became isolated and interestingly developed its own distinct culture. The islands were discovered by Europeans in the 1790s. Sealers and settlers followed and then in the 1830s Māori from New Zealand invaded killing and enslaving many of the indigenous people. The impact of the original settlers, the Europeans and later the Māori people on the native flora and fauna was disastrous. Introduced animals, hunting, fires

and land clearing wiped out many species of endemic birds. Fortunately a number survived on the offshore islands in the archipelago.

With a new generation has come a new awareness and a willingness to be part of a concerted conservation effort. A number of private reserves have been established, a lot of replanting has taken place and predators are being controlled. Today we will visit one of the original private reserves established by a local family on the south coast of the main island where there is a very good chance to see the endemic Chatham Island Pigeon and Warbler. The pigeon was close to extinction until recently, and is now in good numbers. The road takes us through developed farmland where we will undoubtedly see numerous introduced species and possibly the Weka. Near our landing in Waitangi there is a good chance of seeing the endemic Chatham Island Shag.

Days 15 to 16: At Sea

En route to Bluff we will cross the Chatham Rise, a large, relatively shallowly submerged part of the Zealandia continent that stretches east from near the South Island of New Zealand. Nutrient-

© Oscar Thomas

© Steve Bradley

rich waters from the south mix with warm northern waters and there is an overlap between northern pelagic species and birds from southern latitudes, so we can expect great pelagic sightings. Species we expect to encounter include Wandering Albatross, Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, White-capped Albatross and Salvin's Albatross. Petrel species we should be able to identify are the Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel, Westland Black Petrel, White-chinned Petrel, Great-winged Petrel, Grey-backed Storm-petrel, White-faced Storm-petrel, the Diving-petrel and Cook's Petrel.

Additional birdlife will include species of shearwater seabirds. These tubenose birds fly with stiff wings and use a 'shearing' flight technique to move across wave fronts with the minimum of active flight. Photographic opportunities can include Flesh-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater and Little Shearwater. Small petrels on the horizon and close by include Fairy Prion and Broad-billed Prion. We will recap the highlights of our expedition and enjoy a farewell dinner on the second night as we complete the last few miles of our journey.

Day 17: Invercargill/Queenstown

Early this morning we will arrive in the Port of Bluff. After a final breakfast and completing Custom formalities we bid farewell to our fellow voyagers and take a complimentary coach transfer to either Invercargill or Queenstown Airports. In case of unexpected delays due to weather and/or port operations we ask you not to book any onward travel until after midday from Invercargill and after 3pm from Queenstown.

Note: During our voyage, circumstances may make it necessary or desirable to deviate from the proposed itinerary. This can include poor weather and opportunities for making unplanned excursions. Your Expedition Leader will keep you fully informed. This tour offers a variety of activities and excursions. Your personal interests will determine which of these you wish to join. Please note that some activities and excursions will run at similar times, and it will not be possible to participate in both. Accordingly, refunds for excursions and missed landings are not available. Voyages are planned and scheduled pending final regulatory approval. Landings at the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand are by permit only as administered by the Government of New Zealand. No landings are permitted at The Snares, Antipodes and Bounty Islands.

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DISCOVER THE SUBANTARCTIC ISLANDS OF NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA, AND THE CHATHAM ISLANDS

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HERITAGE ADVENTURER

Heritage Adventurer is a true pioneering expedition vessel of exceptional pedigree often referred to as the 'Grande Dame of Expedition Cruising'.

Purpose built for adventure in 1991 at Finland's Rauma shipyard and specifically designed for Polar exploration, *Heritage Adventurer* (formerly known as *MS Hanseatic*) is 124-metres long, boasts the highest passenger-ship ice-class rating (1A Super) and an impressive history of Polar and remote region exploration making her perfect for Heritage Expeditions signature experiential expedition travel.

Originally designed to accommodate 184 guests, we now welcome just 140 expeditioners to create a spacious, comfortable on board experience and continuation of the exceptional, personalised expedition experience synonymous with the company. While a fleet of 14 Zodiacs ensures all guests are able to maximise their expedition experience. On board, enjoy stylish, sophisticated accommodations spanning 4 decks, visit the captain and crew in the Bridge with our Open Bridge Policy and dine on gourmet fare from leading chefs.

Watch your adventure unfold from numerous spectacular indoor and outdoor viewing locations including *Heritage Adventurer's* famed Observation Lounge resplendent with 270-degree views and join our world-renowned team of naturalists, botanists, historians and experts as they interpret the natural and human history discovered during each voyage, as well as hosting regular lectures.

And should you require a little R&R, unwind in the library, pool, gym, hot tub, sauna and steam room, indulge in some retail therapy or find a quiet place to enjoy a coffee or cocktail from the café and bar.

DATES

Voyage #HA261202
2 – 18 December 2026

PRICES USD$

Heritage Suite **$35,000 pp***
Located on Deck 6, Heritage Suites are an expansive 44m² and feature large double panoramic windows, king bed, large living area with a sofa, coffee table and chairs and grand marble bathroom with a double basin, bathtub and shower, large writing desk, floor to ceiling cabinetry for storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Worsley Suite **$22,420 pp***
Located on Deck 6, Worsely Suites are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable chaise-style lounge suite, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Single **$22,985 pp***
Superior Single Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Triple **$16,845 pp***
Superior Triple Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 5 **$19,065 pp***
Superior Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 4 **$18,535 pp***
Superior Cabins on Deck 4 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Single **$22,045 pp***
Main Deck Single Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Triple **$15,995 pp***
Main Deck Triple Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

* The price listed includes the additional local payment of US$900 (All prices are per person in US$).

PRICE INCLUDES

Local payment, one night hotel accommodation in a twin share room (incl. dinner/breakfast),transfer to ship, all on board ship accommodation with meals, house beer, wine and soft drinks with lunch and dinner and all expedition shore excursions. Programme of lectures by noted naturalists. Transfer to airport.

PRICE EXCLUDES

All items of a personal nature, laundry, drinks, gratuities. International/domestic flights, visas, and travel insurance.

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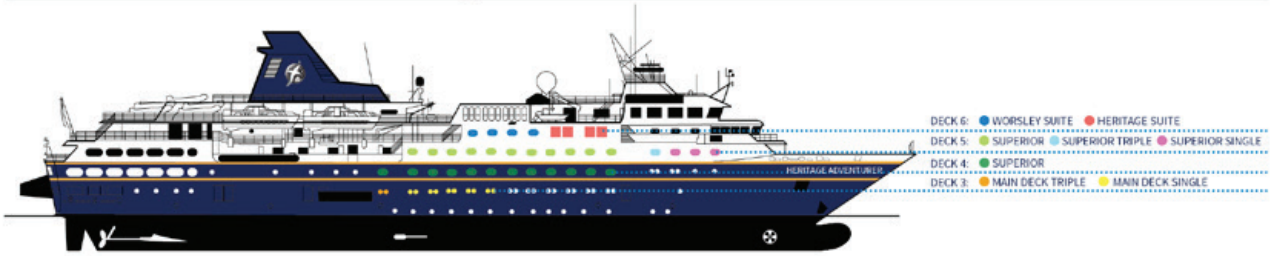
Heritage Adventurer Deck Plan



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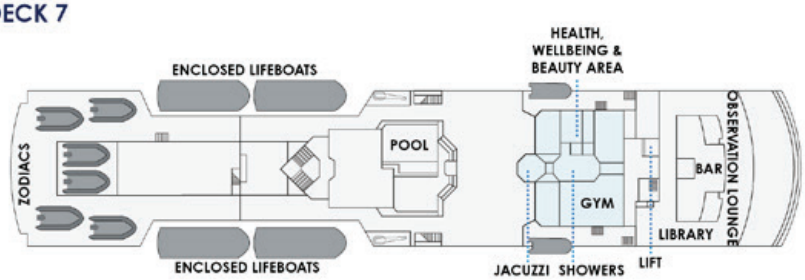

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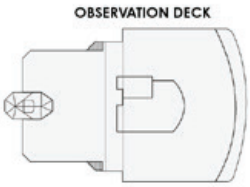

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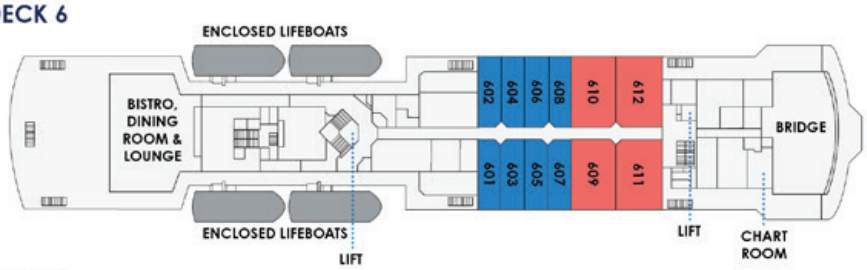

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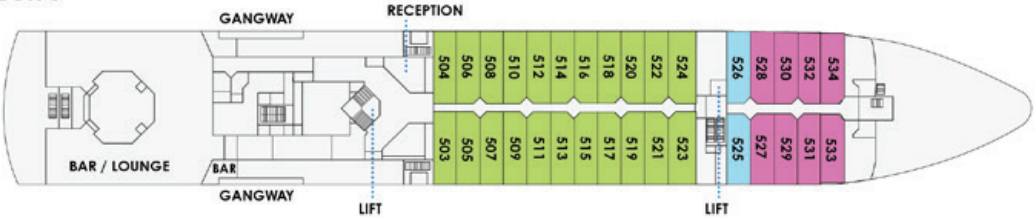

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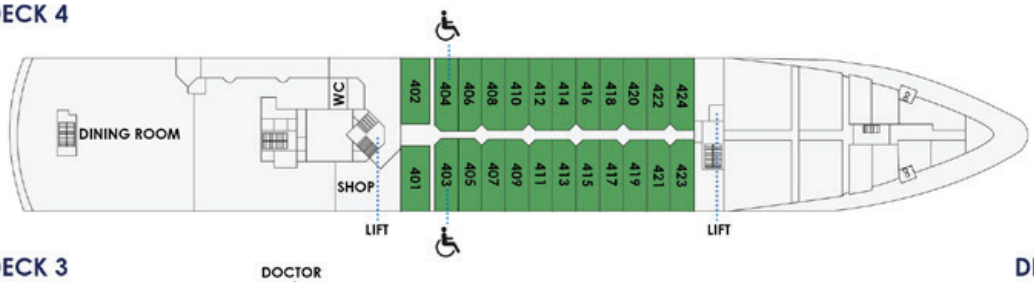

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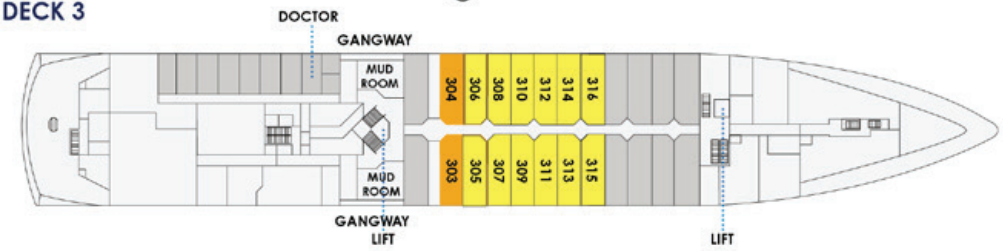

DECK 2

SUITE CATEGORIES

- HERITAGE SUITE
- WORSLEY SUITE
- SUPERIOR SINGLE
- DECK 5 SUPERIOR
- SUPERIOR TRIPLE
- DECK 4 SUPERIOR
- MAIN DECK SINGLE
- MAIN DECK TRIPLE

HERITAGE EXPEDITIONS

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