

MEN'S JOURNAL



Credit: Getty Images

The South Atlantic sea roiled and churned and threw 30-foot waves in our path. The storm had hit ten on the Beaufort Scale and the [National Geographic Explorer](#) was pushing against the current toward the protection of [Tierra del Fuego's](#) Beagle Channel. The ship gave a shudder each time hit a trough and began the next climb. Passengers made their peace with the motion, vomited, or tried to stay positive. It was a rough day, but nothing unusual. If you want to sail to the [Falklands](#), South Georgia Island, or Antarctica, you've got to go through heavy seas.

This is how Lindblad Cruises (in partnership with National Geographic) will celebrate the centennial of [Ernest Shackleton's ill-fated Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition](#), which began in 1914 and ended in ignominiously in 1916. Books and movies have kept the story of frozen heroism alive, but there is nothing like wall of white water to provide perspective.

Shackleton was one of those restless, irrepressible explorers who could not stay away from the Antarctic. On the 1914 expedition, he gathered a crew of 28 and 70 sled dogs and headed south in the beautiful sailing ship *Endurance*. Frank Hurley, a cinematographer and photographer was also aboard to document the journey. The *Endurance* became stuck in ice in the Weddell Sea in January 1915 and was finally crushed 11 months later as the men watched from an ice floe.

Fourteen months after the shipwreck, the men sailed to Elephant Island in the two whalers (boats) rescued from the ship. There they lived on seals and seabirds, and it became clear that no one would ever find them. Shackleton, his navigator, and four other men took one of the 23-foot long whalers – the *James Caird* – and began what would be an 800-mile journey to [South Georgia Island](#), the site of several whaling stations. Miraculously they found South Georgia and made landfall, but they were on the wrong side of the island. Over the next 36 hours they traversed 35 miles up and over mountains and across glacial ice fields to the old whaling station of Stromness. Cut to a few months later and the crew – minus a few frozen digits – were back in jolly old England.

Today, travelers arrive at the polar regions in style. Passengers benefit from on-board lectures during cocktail hour and can spend hours on the bridge or the decks birding with enthusiastic naturalists who will always readily identify the species of what look like a whole lot of white birds flying near the ship.

The highlight for all the passengers are the trips to shore. South Georgia has 10,000-foot jagged mountains, glaciers spilling into the sea, and numerous coves – perfect for the 148-passenger *National Geographic Explorer* to tuck into and set anchor. On shore are immense colonies of King penguins, fur seals, and albatross – a photographer's delight. Who needs a long lens when the animals surround you?

Shackleton-themed highlights include visiting two former whaling stations: Stromness where Shackleton appeared "as a ghost" after being presumed lost for over a year, and Grytviken, where Shackleton is buried. A visit to the grave is mandatory and surprisingly moving. Traditionally, visitors lift a wee glass of Jameson to the determined sailor. Afterwards, they retire to the comfort of their rocking ship and steady their stomachs with a few more.

More information: Lindblad Expeditions is offering three different trips to [celebrate the Shackleton centennial](#). Two head all the way to Antarctica and one stops at South Georgia. The longest trip is 24 days and costs a little less than a \$1000 a day, roughly the same as the 14-day shortest trip. Each of the itineraries will be on offer through 2016.