

From the National Geographic Explorer at Sea



Minke whales

Drake Passage

The Southern Ocean circulates around and isolates Antarctica. Tierra del Fuego, the southern tip of South America, juts into the ocean's path funneling the ocean's course. In addition, low weather fronts regularly blow through. These factors combine to make the Drake Passage one of the most notorious bodies of water in the world.

Today, our transit of the Drake has been benign. Drake Lake. We have gentle seas with following winds and swells. Our progress is swift. The weather is delightful for sitting on deck and for wildlife watching.

Naturalist Richard White gave a presentation about seabirds and their adaptations, focusing on the birds that we hope and plan to see on our expedition. After the talk many of us went outside to see what we could find. We were well rewarded. Wandering albatrosses, pintado petrels, white-chinned petrels and southern giant petrels were among the birds keeping us company on our journey south. As we watched, three Minke whales appeared just off of the port side of the ship. These sleek, fast moving baleen whales stayed with us for a few minutes before disappearing.

Our photo team, National Geographic photographers Sisse Brimberg and Cotton Coulson and Lindblad photographer Mike Nolan, made their first presentation of the voyage. Guests with equipment ranging from "point and shoot" cameras to sophisticated SLRs participated.

Geologist Jason Kelley laid the foundation for our understanding of Antarctica with his talk, followed by Expedition Leader Tim Soper, who prepped us for our coming adventures on the White Continent.

After another fine meal and an enjoyable evening we headed to bed with dreams of ice and penguins.

Larry Prussin, Naturalist; Photos by Mike Nolan, Photo Staff

