

Baffin Babes expedition to South Georgia.

The team of three scandinavian girls spent a wonderful 15 days on South Georgia. The expedition plan was changed before departing, which we clarified with the Governor of South Georgia and the Falkland Island. The changing of the plan was due to lack of time on South Georgia. We didn't want to rush in order to cover a longer distance, instead having time to enjoy the mountains and the magnificent wildlife on the island. The expedition was successful and we had a wonderful time in South Georgia, skiing parts of the island.

Expedition members:

Emma Simonsson, Sweden.

Vera Simonsson, Sweden

Kristin Fosland Olsen, Norway.

Diary of events:

14/10: Left Port Stanley with the vessel Icebird.

19/10: Dropped off on the south side of Right Whale Bay. Clear skies, camping close to where we were dropped off at Right Whale Bay. Clear skies and sunshine.

20/10: Walking up to cross the Corner Crag mountain in order to get over to the other side and reach Tawny Gap and Ryan Glacier. Strong winds, almost blowing us off from the top of the ridge. Quite a steep passage to get down from Corner Crag. Lots of changing weather during the day and hardly any snow, so walking the whole day with the pulkas on our backs. Due to heavy winds we had to go back again from the beginning of Ryan glacier in order to find shelter from the storm during the night. (S 54 01.935, W 37 35.918)

21/10 :Storm. We tried to get on the Ryan glacier but the winds were too strong so we had to go back again. Staying at the same camp spot.

22/10: Storm. We got up several times during the night in order to see if we could get a weather window and get going, but the winds were still too strong, so with no luck. Same camp spot.

23/10: Finally the wind calmed down and we could walk to Ryan Glacier and finally put our skis on and get going. Good conditions on the glacier, once going up on Brunonia a bit more crevasses. Skied roped in. We tried to go through a pass over to Price Glacier but due to three days of storm the steep terrain had high avalanche risk so we decided it was too dangerous and that we instead would get picked up by Icebird the next day in Sunset Fjord. Camping up on the glacier on a ridge. The only night during the whole trip with calm winds and wonderful stars! (S 54 04.509, W 37 29.325)

24/10: Skiing down to Sunset Fjord, roped in for parts of the day. Picked up by Icebird late afternoon. Sleeping on the boat anchored outside Salisbury Plain.

25/10: Dropped off at Salisbury Plain. Walking up to the beginning of Lucas glacier to set up camp on snow, spending time on the beach, amazed by the wildlife. Snow and rain.
(S 54 04 328, W 37 19.142)

26/10: Salisbury Plain. Raining and snowing, hanging out on the beach. Same camping spot as the night before. Stormy night.

27/10: Skiing from Lucas glacier to the beginning of Murray snowfield. Good visibility until mid day and wonderful views over King Haakon Bay. Stormy in the afternoon and at night. Camping close to some nunataks on the beginning of Murray snowfield. Good day of skiing. (S 54 08.818, W 37 10.474)

28/10: Skiing over Murray snowfield in good conditions and some hours of sunshine! Once coming close to the Trident the visibility was all gone. White out. Managing to walk down with the pulkas on our backs, throwing a rope a head of us to see the steepness of the slope. Roped in. Due no visibility we sat camp early, in the beginning of Crean glacier just under the Trident. (S 54 09.009, W 37 04.541)

29/10: Some minutes of visibility in the morning, then it was all gone. Skied roped in over the Crean Glacier, heavy storm and complete white out. One broken binding close to the Cornwall peaks. Continued to get down to Fortuna Bay, roped in the whole day and no visibility at all. Some crevassed areas that were quite hard to navigate in complete white out and strong

winds, once getting down to Fortuna Bay. Camping on a snow field just down from the glacier on the west beach in Fortuna Bay.

30/10: Fortuna Bay. Waiting for the vessel to come, but it never showed up. Camping at the same spot. Wonderful wildlife on the beach!

31/10: Still waiting for the vessel, due to bad weather the day before, they picked us up first in the afternoon. Changed the broken ski, and wanted to get going again. But due to a storm the captain didn't want to anchor in Fortuna Bay, so we had to go to Leith Bay in the evening. Sleeping on the boat in Leith Bay. Since we realised the captain wanted to leave earlier than we first thought for the Falkland Islands and the days waiting in Fortuna Bay, we had to change our plan of continuing, due to lack of time. Instead we decided to do some ski mountaineering in the area of Stromsnes.

1/11: Dropped off in Stromsnes Bay, set camp up on a snowfield. Skied up in the Schackelton Valley and the surrounding mountains. Hardly any visibility and strong winds.

2/11: Stromsnes Bay. Strong winds. Skiing a peak close to Stromsnes, gust winds knocking us off the ground. Ordered by the captain of the boat to get picked up in the evening to start the return voyage to Port Stanley. Slept on the vessel in Lieth Harbour.

3/11: Starting the sailing back to the Falkland Islands.

8/11: Arriving in Port Stanley with two broken sails!

Safety Plan:

We had no accidents. We were well prepared, have good experience and were well equipped. We had daily contact through Satellite Phone with the vessel who gave us weather reports and we always gave them our GPS position. Everything worked well. We always skied roped in over the glaciers with crevassed areas, found good camping spot sheltered for the wind, or making a proper "windwall" with blocks of snow. Made good decisions of not pushing it while the avalanche danger were to high.

Equipment:

We had all the sufficient equipment with us. Having rebuilt special pulkas that we could attach to our backpacks worked really well and allowed us to switch easily between skiing and walking with the changes in the terrain and with the different snow conditions. The double poles in the tent were a must since we had a lot of storms during our stays. Apart from one broken ski binding we had no other problems with the equipment.

Environmental plan:

We followed our environmental plan and all the recommendations from the SGIG. We cleaned our equipment before departing, and also when coming back to the vessel and going ashore again. We camped on snow covered ground, except for one night on gravel in Right Whale Bay. We dug a hole for human waste that after each camp where dug over. We left no rubbish or food waste, everything was brought back to the Falkland Island. We didn't disturb the wildlife.

Comments for coming expeditions:

South Georgia truly is a magic place. We would have liked to stayed longer and our time on the island was shorter then we planned, due to not leaving from the Falklands the time we thought, having to wait for a pick up, and for having to leave the island much earlier then we expected. When we made our plans we counted for 21 days on the island, but in the end it turned out to be 15, which of course made us having to change plans. Make sure you clarify with your boat/vessel how many days they want for the crossing from and to the Falkland Islands. Its different from how long it might actually take.

Also it should be clarified that even though you payed the expedition application fee, you have to pay a visitors fee at Grytviken thats additional.

Thanks:

Special thanks to The Governor of South Georgia, Crag Jones, Pat Lurcock and Richard McKee and everyone else who helped us along!

Emma Simonsson