



Science on board *Le Commandant Charcot*: a unique in the world commitment



Last September, PONANT inaugurated *Le Commandant Charcot*, the first high polar exploration hybrid-electric vessel powered by liquified natural gas. The launch does not stop there: by putting scientific research at the heart of its project, the company has designed the first cruise ship to accommodate teams of scientists, providing them with dedicated work areas.

On route for Science with PONANT

PONANT's involvement in the study of the regions it explores contributes to improve scientists' knowledge of these ecosystems and works towards protecting the planet. *Le Commandant Charcot's* state-of-the-art specifications have not only revolutionised navigation capabilities, they also offer a remarkable tool to the international scientific community. Moreover, they play a pivotal role in making PONANT a key research partner, on which scientists can rely while leading their research independently.

A robust and lasting commitment to academic science

The resources provided by *Le Commandant Charcot* are an extension to actions already taken by PONANT to facilitate research. Analysis of coral reefs for the University of Oxford, recording cetacean sounds for bio-acoustician Michel André or observing the behaviour of humpback whales with the NGO Conservation International, are just a few examples.

But the novelty lies in the unique features on *Le Commandant Charcot* which allow researchers specialised in polar regions – such as biologists, geographers, climatologists, and ethnologists – to access unexplored or rarely covered places and extend the duration of their polar campaigns on a repeat basis. The ship also offers science facilities with two research laboratories (including one with openings on to the sea) as well as autonomous measuring instruments.

The EPHE (École Pratique des Hautes Études), the University of Washington, and IFREMER (French Institute for Research and Exploitation of the Sea), are already involved in this program. Several scientists have already been on board *Le Commandant Charcot*, including Ted Cheeseman (Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia), Johan Etourneau (Unité Mixte de Recherches Environnements et Paléoenvironnements Océaniques et Continentaux, EPOC, Bordeaux), Hanne Sagen (Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center, NERSC, Bergen, Norway), and Camille Lique (IFREMER). The latter, an oceanographer, explains why: *“We were able to immerse instruments to obtain data on temperatures, salinity and water properties from the surface to the depths. We have also deployed instruments that remain in the Arctic collecting data in the years to come. Le Commandant Charcot offers incredible opportunities for cutting-edge science”*.

Citizen science activities

Alongside the academic science project, PONANT commits to offering its guests an opportunity to take part in the many projects led on board. Workshops and scientific protocols are animated by the naturalist experts on board, enabling the guests to get actively involved and feel they are making a tangible contribution to science. It was with this in mind that a partnership was set up with The Polar Citizen Science Collective, an association running and coordinating this type of workshop. Data collected for projects like the marine species census, cloud cover observations, or phytoplankton sampling are all being fed into programmes such as Happywhale, Globe Clouds, FjordPhyto and Seabird Surveys. The scientists on board also give lectures on the concerns behind their various missions.

Issues that Hervé Gastinel, CEO of PONANT, puts at the heart of the company’s commitments: *“For us, putting our technical and human resources at the service of science to create opportunities for research is a logical extension to raising our guests’ awareness of issues related to protecting the planet. With Le Commandant Charcot, and in the heritage of her eponymous explorer, our commitment to science is officially anchored as an integral part of our identity”*.

A commitment that reinforces PONANT’s unique concept of travel, and through which it is forging a lasting bond with a planet that still has so many mysteries to reveal.

ABOUT PONANT

Founded in 1988 by French Merchant Navy officers, PONANT offers a new style of cruises under the French flag with its own concept of sea travel and commitment to promoting sustainable and responsible tourism. Centred around sailing to exceptional and unusual destinations aboard refined design yachts, where lifestyle and excellent cuisine take pride of place, the promise of a voyage with PONANT is that it will be truly unique and authentic. For more information: www.ponant.com

Press contacts | Laure Foulatier +33(0)4 88 66 64 38 | Justine Fraticelli +33(0)4 88 91 35 56 | presse@ponant.com

#PONANT / #LECOMMANDANTCHARCOT / #BEYONDEXPLORATION

© Photo credits: PONANT – Daniel CRON

