



A guest's tale: the journey of a lifetime to Snow Hill Island on *Le Commandant Charcot*



***Le Commandant Charcot*, the world's only luxury icebreaker, was able to give her guests one of the most exclusive wildlife viewing experiences on the planet by reaching the emperor penguin colony on Snow Hill Island, in the Weddell Sea, on two unique voyages. PONANT's guests have experienced a true spectacle of nature, with the opportunity to see emperor penguin chicks born last July. For many, it has been the journey of a lifetime. The visit to Snow Hill was operated in line with guidelines from IAATO and Antarctic Treaty members, which are designed to ensure the environment and the fauna are protected at all times.**

"All I can say is WOW WOW WOW! Today has to be rated in my top three all-time wildlife experiences. We visited Snow Hill and the emperor penguins, and we reached the colony and the CHICKS! Almost a 2-hour hike in deep snow (one way!) to get there but worth every step. My legs are screaming...but my heart is singing. We enjoyed an absolutely perfect weather" raved wildlife photographer Cindy Miller Hopkins.

The first visit took place on November 21st under the captaincy of Stanislas Devorsine and the second was on December 3rd with Captain Etienne Garcia, with the Expedition Team led by Ryo Ijichi as Expedition Leader on both occasions. Located east of the Antarctic Peninsula in the Weddell Sea, Snow Hill Island is not only renowned for its emperor penguin rookery, but also for being a notoriously difficult destination to reach, as it is surrounded both by ecologically critical fast ice and dense pack ice, which usually allows only limited access by helicopter. With her unique technical features and specialist ice navigation systems, and thanks to the expertise of both captains and the expedition team onboard, *Le Commandant Charcot* was able to find a route through the pack ice, reaching the edge of the fast ice, where the guests landed.

Under a lightly veiled sky, surrounded by the most beautiful ice and small icebergs on a flat calm sea, the expedition team led a 2 nautical mile hike (about 5 kilometres) from the ship to reach the rookery, an adventure in itself. While maintaining respect for the IAATO guidelines, the guests were able to witness something quite incredible, encountering more than 10,000 pairs of emperor penguins and their chicks.

"With Le Commandant Charcot, PONANT is able to take the guests to the colony without the need to fly there in helicopters, while respecting safety regulations implemented in this area...this is a game changer both in terms of exploration, guest experience and of a more sustainable tourism" declared Ryo Ijichi, Expedition Leader at PONANT.

To all who witnessed it, it has been an incredible journey, creating lifelong memories with an expert team who perfectly managed all the challenges of safety, sailing and logistics. A story of a unique connection with Nature, just as *Le Commandant Charcot* and PONANT know how to write.

ABOUT PONANT

Explore to Inspire: explore to better understand, learn, share and protect. For 35 years, PONANT has been committed to more responsible tourism and voyages of exploration which have meaning. The French-flagged fleet comprises 13 small capacity ships equipped with state of the art environmentally friendly equipment. With PONANT, exploration is refined, authentic and a source of inspiration. For more information www.ponant.com

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