



## *Le Commandant Charcot* completes a semi-tour of the southern continent: an unparalleled voyage of exploration



On 14 February 2023, PONANT has completed its first semi-circumnavigation of the southern continent aboard the world's only luxury icebreaker, *Le Commandant Charcot*. One of the most unique expeditions in the world.

In all the exploration covered 6,500 nautical miles on a truly unique and extraordinary voyage. After 28 days, 22 of which were beyond the Antarctic Circle, the world's only luxury icebreaker, *Le Commandant Charcot*, a hybrid electric vessel powered by liquified natural gas, arrived in Lyttelton, New Zealand, on 14 February 2023.

PONANT's first ever semi-circumnavigation was a complete success; a record, as it is one of the longest expedition voyages ever operated both in length and distance. And what an exploration. For a month, guests on board lived and breathed the White Continent as never before. The icy world moves to its own rhythm. But it is only with humility that we can move in harmony with the wilderness and the promises of new discovery it brings. As when *Le Commandant Charcot* succeeded in reaching Pine Island Bay, in the southeastern end of the Amundsen Sea where no cruise ship has ever ventured. A timeless moment which continued as the ship approached the earth's largest iceberg, B22.

*"It was one of the most amazingly beautiful voyages at sea that I have ever done,"* says the man in command of the ship, Captain Stanislas Devorsine. As an internationally renowned expert of the poles, Stanislas Devorsine has worked for many years with French polar explorer, doctor, and scientist Jean-Louis Etienne. *"We ventured into regions that we discovered in the true sense of the word, where apart from a few scientists about 20 years ago no-one has ever been. It was a magical moment that gave us a sense the voyage was truly an expedition"*. Other unforgettable encounters were with orcas, whales, Emperor and Adelie penguins and even a Ross seal, a rare species to observe. *"Every day we felt as if we were experiencing the most the Antarctic has to offer, and yet with the next day came another wonder,"* enthused the Captain.

This polar exploration had a very pleasant pace, allowing the guests to fully enjoy *Le Commandant Charcot*, which was precisely designed for such journeys. The second semi-circumnavigation has already begun. This time *Le Commandant Charcot* has set sail to explore Adelie Land, a vast expanse of 400,000 square kilometres discovered by Jules Dumont-d'Urville in 1840.

## PONANT polar expertise

A polar expedition pioneer, PONANT is the only company in the world offering voyages under such conditions. A unique polar odyssey made possible by PONANT's experience as an expert in the poles for over 20 years, the skills of the 201-crew and the ship's Captain Stanislas Devorsine, as well as the vessel's exceptional capabilities.

*"We were sailing Le Commandant Charcot in areas that have hardly been explored at all, where a few ships have rarely ventured. Some in areas that were only discovered in the sixties. Le Commandant Charcot is cut out for this type of journeys. The ship has an amazing capacity to perform in these latitudes while maintaining an equally incredible level of comfort,"* adds the Captain. And for good reason, as technically speaking *Le Commandant Charcot* is the world's only luxury icebreaker. Its PC2 class hull allows the ship to sail along the pack ice – or drifting sea ice. Designed to minimise its impact on the environment, it is the first hybrid-electric polar exploration vessel powered by liquefied natural gas. When the electric batteries are in operation, there are zero-carbon emission and total silence.

### ***Le Commandant Charcot: a ship of scientific opportunity***

This was not the first time PONANT has made one of its ships available to science, but with *Le Commandant Charcot*, the company has taken its commitment to another level by including dedicated work spaces from the very concept of the ship. Every detail has been thought through, from laboratories to equipment and staterooms for the scientists. For this expedition there were two teams of researchers on board.

*"The Takuvik team from Laval University (Quebec) wanted to continue their research into the presence of nanoparticles (including nanoplastics) in the polar regions. And the team from Oregon State University was there to study the carbon pump mechanism in the Southern Ocean,"* explains Daphné Buiron, glaciologist, polar regions expert and PONANT's Science Officer. The ship is equipped with powerful pumps adapted to continuously sample the sea. Thanks to them, scientists were able to take samples several times a day and obtain valuable data on regions that have been little-documented until now. Every landing on the ice was an opportunity to take other samples (ice cores, snow, sediment, meltwater, etc.).

### **Focus on the 2024 Antarctic semi-circumnavigation on *Le Commandant Charcot*:**

#### ***Unexplored Antarctica between Two Continents***

*Le Commandant Charcot* is embarking on an expedition to the ends of the known world with a semi-circumnavigation linking the southern tip of the American continent to New Zealand. This Antarctic exploration crosses the legendary Bellingshausen Sea and Amundsen Sea in an attempt to reach the Charcot and Pierre I Islands. Blanketed in ice, these shores are reputed to be impassable.

Ushuaia – Lyttelton. 7 January to 5 February 2024, 30 days – 28 nights.

From €44,240 – [Find more about this voyage](#)

#### ***From Dumont-d'Urville to Mawson: retracing Heroic Age expeditions***

In the wake of the great explorers, *Le Commandant Charcot* bears guests away to explore the southern seas. They include the world's largest marine sanctuary, the Ross Sea, where wildlife is abundant with Antarctic petrels, whales, orcas, seals and penguins. As the ship moves away from Lyttelton, the call of the White Continent resounds with legendary names like Adelie Land, Victoria Land and Marie Byrd Land, the only territory never claimed by any state. An immersion like no other into a wilderness that casts a spell over all who venture there.

Lyttelton – Ushuaia. 6 February to 3 March 2024, 27 days – 26 nights.

From €38,010 – [Find more about this voyage](#)

## ABOUT PONANT

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*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 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](http://www.ponant.com)

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