



“Women of the Poles”: discover the polar regions with renowned female explorers



The explorers Laurence de la Ferrière, Tiina Itkonen and Kate Leeming, accompanied by Laurent Mayet, President of Le Cercle Polaire think tank during the polar expedition on board L’Austral in Antarctica beginning of March

PONANT unveils its “Women of the Poles” initiative led by French think tank Le Cercle Polaire. Laurence de la Ferrière, Tiina Itkonen and Kate Leeming have been invited to talk about their exploits and vision of women’s polar expeditions on board L’Austral, which recently sailed in the Antarctic. The company’s support for “Women of the Poles” is for the long-term, with another explorer invited for the ship’s voyage to the Arctic in August 2023 and for a themed exploration on Le Commandant Charcot in August 2024.

“Women of the Poles” pays tribute to polar adventurers from all over the world

Renowned for being extremely arduous, polar expeditions are also a symbol in the fight for gender equality and against all forms of discrimination towards women. In this unimaginably tough environment, so long appropriated by men, many women are now writing their own pages in the history of discovering polar lands and their inhabitants.

As explorers, photographers and polar scientists from across the world, these women are achieving exploits that more than match those of their male counterparts. It is to help promote them that the association Le Cercle Polaire launched the “Women of the Poles” campaign to which PONANT is a partner.

The United Nations Agenda 2030 considers gender equality as a “*necessary condition to ensure a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world*”. To contribute to this 5th Sustainable Development Goal, “Women of the Poles” asked 50 polar adventurers to give first-hand accounts of their exploits and the spirit in which they were undertaken. All will appear in a digital booklet that will soon be online and available to everyone. Their testimonies can also be found on Facebook and on Le Cercle Polaire’s website.

Three outstanding women aboard for expedition to the Antarctic

Aboard *L’Austral* that recently sailed from Tierra del Fuego to the Antarctic Peninsula, were three renowned explorers who shared insights into their approach to expeditions at talks and discussions with guests:

Explorer, mountaineer and lecturer **Laurence de la Ferrière** is the first French woman to reach the South Pole and the only woman in the world to have crossed the entire Antarctic continent alone. A former director of the French Dumont-d’Urville research base in Adelie Land, she says: “*Today all my energy is devoted to furthering knowledge of Antarctica, a continent of unrivalled beauty that is ultimately so vulnerable*”.

A world-renowned photographer, the Finn **Tiina Itkonen** has accumulated over 1,500km of expeditions by dog sled, fishing boat, sailboat, helicopter, etc. along west Greenland’s coast. What motivates her is that “*as a female explorer, I try to capture elements of Arctic beauty with my photos to raise public awareness of how fragile the polar regions are now*”.

Australian **Kate Leeming**, who has already cycled a distance totalling more than twice the Earth’s circumference, is preparing for her next challenge: to be the first to cycle across the Antarctic continent. “*In addition to the physical challenges, polar exploration remains a battle of mental resilience. This is where I think women may have an advantage,*” she believes.

“Women of the Poles” continues...



In August 2023, another themed voyage aboard *L’Austral* along Greenland’s west coast will welcome another women explorer, **Reena Dharmshaktu**. An experienced mountaineer having climbed several Himalayan peaks, Reena is also the first Indian woman to reach the South Pole on skis without assistance, as part of the Kaspersky Commonwealth Antarctic expedition, in the company of six other women selected from 800 applicants.

In August 2024, *Le Commandant Charcot* hosts another “Women of the Poles” expedition on a voyage between Svalbard and Iceland. Guest speakers will be announced soon.

Expedition to the Thule Region

Kangerlussuaq - Kangerlussuaq, on *L’Austral*. 10 to 26 August 2023, 17 days – 16 nights

From €21,240 [Find more about this voyage](#)

The Geographic North Pole and Scoresby Sound

Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen - Reykjavik, on *Le Commandant Charcot*. 26 July to 11 August 2024, 17 days – 16 nights

From €36,200 [Find more about this voyage](#)

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 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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