



Windstar Announces Impressive Roster of Signature Expeditions Team Members for Alaska 2018 Cruise Season



Talented and Passionate Experts Will Sail with Guests on Each Alaska Cruise in 2018

Seattle, WA, January 10, 2018 – [Windstar Cruises](#) recently announced its brand-new *Windstar Signature Expeditions* program – an enriching and immersive experience debuting on the small ship cruise line’s all-suite *Star Legend* sailings in Alaska this spring and summer.

Today, the company is pleased to reveal members of its **Signature Expeditions Team**, which was hand-picked by *Windstar’s Expedition* Captain James Griffiths to sail with guests on each cruise leading various classes and excursions from glaciology to photography, marine biology to evergreen botany. Each of Windstar’s cruises in Alaska (starting in May) will feature six expert guides with a deep understanding of geology, marine biology, history, photography, botany, and more. And they won’t just be joining in select ports. These team members will travel on board for the *entire* cruise providing insight, education, and commentary – tailoring tours, conversations, and lectures to specific guest interests – so guests can truly engage themselves.

“I’m very proud to have helped design these unique voyages, and even more delighted to have such an excellent team to lead them,” said Griffiths. “Windstar has some of the best guides and brightest minds to lead our guests on these adventures, but perhaps even more importantly, these are people you want to spend time with and get to know. They are truly passionate about the flora, fauna, and local cultures that make Alaska so unique and they have fascinating stories to tell. Their enthusiasm is relatable and positively contagious. Whether an up-close kayaking journey on Alaska’s rugged natural coastline or a topical presentation on the ship, the Windstar Signature Expeditions Team gets guests closer, shows them more, and sends them home with once-in-a-lifetime memories.”

The highly skilled and knowledgeable Signature Expeditions Team will lead tours aboard small watercraft and expedition kayaks, as well as guiding guests on scenic hikes.

For example, team members will conduct a full-day outings in remote locations like Kenai Fjord, Misty Fjords, and Tracy Arm/Endicott Arm, or take guests on an interpretive nature hike on the Mt. Dewey Trail in Wrangell to see towering spruce and a fantastic view of the bay below. These activities will be interspersed with complimentary enrichment classes, one-on-one discussions, and direct topical presentations on board throughout the cruise.

More details on the Signature Expeditions can be found here: www.windstarcruises.com/voyage-plan/signature-expeditions.

Meet the *Windstar Signature Expeditions* Team

Justin Hofman, Expedition Leader

With a lifelong passion for the ocean, Justin has spent his career observing and documenting wildlife both above and below the water. As a university student, Justin first honed this focus by obtaining a marine biology degree and continued this pursuit in his post-graduate scientific illustration study. More recently, Justin has traveled extensively aboard expedition ships as a naturalist, photographer, and dive master. Justin utilizes his extensive knowledge of ecology, conservation, and animal behaviors to enhance guests' travel experiences and create his own unique illustrations and photography. In this role, he's worked alongside preeminent wildlife photographers. In addition to his photography focus, Justin's scientific illustrations have been featured in several U.S. collegiate textbooks. From humpback whales in Alaska to white sharks in Africa, Justin has traveled to every continent in search of wildlife. He has extensive experience in the polar regions, where he has explored the wonders of the Arctic and Antarctic both above and below the water.

Alberto Montaudon, Expedition Leader

Alberto has been in love with nature since he was a young child. Raised in Tampico, Mexico, he spent most of his childhood exploring its multiple lagoons and rivers looking for wildlife. His father taught him from a very early age to understand, love, and respect nature. As a result of his upbringing, Alberto studied biology and began a career as a naturalist. Alberto's passion to share the natural world with others has taken him from Antarctica to the high Arctic. Teaching photography, working as a naturalist, expedition leader, or underwater videographer, Alberto has guided in Alaska, Arctic Norway, Greenland, the Amazon, Galápagos, Baja, and the Caribbean. When not at sea, he resides in Colima, Mexico, where he and his wife own a small farm and practice aquaculture and sustainable agriculture while raising horses, chickens, and ducks. One of Alberto's primary ambitions is to preserve the pre-Columbian agro-ecosystem known as Milpa, and one of his many projects is the rescue of ancestral varieties of corn to continue the tradition of planting valuable varieties that are in danger of extinction.

Sarah Betcher is a naturalist, guide, and a Greenpeace award-winning ethnographic documentary filmmaker. She has a BA in education, a BS in conservation ecology, and a MA in cross-cultural studies. Since 2005, Sarah has spent extensive time in some of the most remote land and water locations in Alaska. Her formal education background gave her the foundation to teach about ecology and indigenous traditions; however, the knowledge she shares mostly comes from first-hand experiences guiding with other expert naturalists on ships and living in remote villages learning from Alaska Native elders in the coastal arctic tundra and the islands of southeast Alaska. Sarah has traveled the world studying traditional ways of life and specializes in the study of the traditional use of wild plants for food and medicine. Sarah spends as much time kayaking as she does hiking, cycling, and sailing. She has developed expert knowledge on how to safely navigate kayakers through large icebergs near active tidewater glaciers and landscapes traversed by few or none.

Scott Edgerton was born and raised in southeastern Pennsylvania. He spent every summer until the age of 14 barefoot and exploring the Pine Barrens of southern Jersey at his parent's summer camp. It was his early childhood that began a lifelong love of nature and exploration that continues to this day. Following high school, Scott ventured west. He received a degree in outdoor recreation management and a minor in forestry from the University of Idaho. He then spent the next 10 years working in varying wild, outdoor settings as a wilderness ranger and trail crew for the U.S. Forest Service in the winter and guiding whitewater rafting trips in the summer. In the late 1980s he discovered a life at sea when he began working onboard expedition cruise vessels. Since then, he has worked in just about every geographical area imaginable from the poles to the tropics as a Zodiac driver, kayak master, and expedition leader.

Jessica Farrer graduated with a degree in evolutionary biology from Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. Since graduation she has worked in fisheries management on commercial fishing vessels in the Bering Sea, counted sea lions from cliffs in the Aleutian Islands, and operated a remote field camp in the northwestern Hawaiian Islands working with the endangered monk seal. She spent four seasons in a retrofitted refrigerator container on the sea ice near McMurdo Station Antarctica working on a long-term population study of Weddell seals. Here she worked closely with various research teams on the sea ice and gained a broad understanding of the ecosystem and the controversies surrounding its status as a protected area. This experience, in combination with her other fieldwork, fostered a strong desire to become more involved in

outreach. She believes that there needs to be more transparency between the scientists conducting research in the field and the interested public. To that end, she has contributed video and photographic work to assist the projects she works with in their outreach goals. She has also been privileged to work with the BBC's Natural History Unit while filming for *Frozen Planet* in both Antarctica and Alaska.

Simon Hook began wondering about the natural world at a young age, wandering among the sequoia and redwood trees of northern California. He grew up near the ocean, and its wildlife inspired his curiosity of the natural world and created a desire to understand things unknown, from the tiniest plankton to the tectonic plates that make mountains. Simon followed the opportunity of adventure to Alaska more than a decade ago and now calls Sitka home. In addition to his passion for wildlife and earth science, Simon is handy with a camera, winning several awards for photos of Alaska's wildlife and landscapes.

Larisa Manewal was born and raised in Sitka, Alaska, but she has traveled to the far reaches of the globe throughout her life. With a passion for photography and teaching others, she earned a degree from the Art Institute of Boston and a master's degree in secondary education from the University of Alaska. She also studied with renowned Tlingit and Haida masters learning carving and basketry among other skills. Larisa recently published a fine art photography book in collaboration with her father, who is also a photographer. *Southeast Alaska: A Photographic Passage* can be found regionally in gift shops and bookstores. She has spent the past six years as an expedition leader on various small vessels showing others the wonders of Alaska.

Paul Murray started guiding by land and by sea when he was 13 years old on canoe expeditions down the mighty Crow River in his home state of Minnesota. Since then, he has traveled to six continents and nearly 50 countries, guiding in many of them. His passion for adventure has led him on countless amazing journeys including a 60-day rafting trip down the Green and Colorado Rivers through the Grand Canyon, reenacting John Wesley Powell's 1869 expedition and following the epic Chilkoot Trail and Yukon River in Alaska, retracing the epic 1898 Klondike Gold Rush by foot and kayak. Paul calls Skagway, Alaska home and has been a guide in the Last Frontier for the past 15 years.

Linda Nicklin graduated from Stanford University with a degree in biology and anthropology before relocating to Alaska where she fell in love with the state while doing botanical surveys in remote wilderness camps for the U.S. Forest Service. Linda has worked as a naturalist guide, expedition leader, and itinerary planner for private yachts and expedition cruise companies worldwide. When she is not on a ship, she teaches at the University of Alaska and operates a business offering workshops for guides, docents, and naturalists designed to improve communication skills and help her students create meaningful connections between their audience and subject or place. Linda divides her year between Alaska and Hawaii, where she is involved with research, education, and development for a nonprofit studying humpback whales. With her husband photographer Flip Nicklin, she is co-author of two nonfiction children's books published by National Geographic: *Face to Face with Dolphins* and *Face to Face with Whales*.

Ian Strachan has been working on expedition vessels since graduating from college and uses his knowledge of the natural world from pole to pole to enrich the experience of those on board. Born in mid-coast Maine but raised in the far northeast coast of Australia, he benefited from an adventurous childhood in the outdoors. His interests and specialties are diverse, from alpine forests to coral reefs. His main passions include photography and animal behavior, which invariably results in both camera and binoculars slung over a shoulder. Whether it's on land, by Zodiac, or underwater, Ian is eager to share the wonders that await discovery in the wild and wonderful corners of the globe. When he's not talking about himself in the third person or zooming around in inflatable boats, Ian will be out on deck or on the Bridge searching for wildlife or clicking away with a camera.

James Griffiths, Expedition Captain

Griffiths is responsible for the development and implementation of the Signature Expeditions program. Griffiths joined Windstar in 2014 as captain of the MSY *Wind Spirit*. Prior to that he worked for many years in the expedition industry operating ships at senior management levels in some of the most remote areas of the world. Griffiths was made captain of the 212-passenger MV *Star Legend* during her 2015 inaugural season, the same ship that will debut the Signature Expeditions program in Alaska in May of 2018. Griffiths was educated in the U.K. and holds multiple degrees and designations from the Warsash Maritime Academy in Southampton, Middlesex University, the Nautical Institute in London, and Lloyds Maritime Academy in Kent. Griffiths is a native of South Wales, where he resides when not traveling for work or leisure. Griffiths operates from the fleet and at Windstar's headquarters in downtown Seattle.

Expedition Captain Griffiths worked with [Expedition Voyage Consultants](#) in order to help source these highly specialized new team members. The consulting firm concentrates on putting together expert expedition teams suited to the geography and planned operations of cruise lines around the globe.

For more on Windstar's cruises in Alaska, visit www.windstarcruises.com/destinations/alaska.

For additional information on private yacht-style cruising with Windstar, contact a travel professional or Windstar Cruises by phone at 877-958-7718, or visit www.windstarcruises.com.

###

About Windstar Cruises

Windstar Cruises operates a six-ship fleet of small sailing and all-suite ships visiting approximately 270 ports in 2018 sailing throughout Europe, the Caribbean, Costa Rica and the Panama Canal, Asia, Alaska, Canada and New England, and cruising year-round in Tahiti. Windstar's fleet is the market leader in small ship cruising with a total of 1,242 passenger berths calling on off-the-beaten-path and popular ports in over 60 countries. The boutique cruise line carries fewer than 310 passengers on its small ships and takes travelers on cruises that are 180 degrees from ordinary. They are known for their immersive and authentic experiences, unique, port-intensive itineraries, exceptional award-winning service, and innovative culinary program as the Official Cruise Line of the James Beard Foundation. Windstar Cruises is a part of Xanterra Parks & Resorts®, known for "Legendary Hospitality with a Softer Footprint."

Follow the Windstar Yachts:



Contacts:

Mary Schimmelman, Director of Public Relations and Social Media
Mary.Schimmelman@windstarcruises.com, 206-733-2970

Sally Spaulding, Percepture
sspaulding@percepture.com, 970-986-9063