



Malizia Explorer

UNDER THE POLE AND MALIZIA EXPLORER JOIN FORCES FOR ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION TO ADVANCE SCIENCE, CONSERVATION, AND ADVOCACY



The sailing research vessels Under The Pole and Malizia Explorer are teaming up for an expedition to Antarctica. The mission brings together an international crew, including Under The Pole co-founders Emmanuelle and Ghislain Bardout, scientists Lorenzo Bramanti and Léa Olivier, and climate activists Luisa Neubauer and Camille Étienne, to the Western Antarctic Peninsula to conduct oceanographic research, and study mesophotic ecosystems (30-200m) through deep diving as part of the DEEPLIFE scientific programme, while enhancing the mission's impact on conservation and public policy.

In the Western Antarctic Peninsula, two scientific sailing vessels have joined forces to study one of the regions experiencing the fastest environmental changes on the planet. WHY, operated by Under The Pole, has been carrying out the DEEPLIFE programme since early December, and Team Malizia's Malizia Explorer has now arrived to begin a joint expedition. After departing Ushuaia and navigating the infamous Drake Passage, the two crews reunited on 11 January 2026 and have started their collaborative work in the region.

Onboard the two vessels is a diverse international team of 20 sailors, divers, scientists, climate advocates, journalists, and influential voices, including environmental activists Luisa Neubauer (Germany) and Camille Étienne (France), Tamara Klink (Brazil), Lorenzo Bramanti (France) from the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), and Dr Léa Olivier (France) from the Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI). Together, they form a collective dedicated to making the often-invisible impacts of climate change in Antarctica visible to the global public while conducting various scientific research.

During the expedition, Malizia Explorer is carrying out oceanographic research and providing logistical and operational support to the Under The Pole team, enabling deep human diving operations and scientific research throughout their three-month summer campaign. While Under The Pole's crew has been diving since December along the west side of the peninsula, down to Adelaide Island, Malizia Explorer will undertake two consecutive one-month missions, with a second voyage scheduled for early February 2026.

The scientific objectives of the expedition:

This joint mission is part of the DEEPLIFE scientific programme, a global initiative, led by Under The Pole, dedicated to studying and documenting Marine Animal Forests (MAFs) across the world's Ocean basins, from polar to tropical regions, and from shallow waters (0–30 m) to mesophotic depths (30–200 m). Recognized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable marine habitats, Marine Animal Forests (MAFs) are complex ecosystems formed by animals such as corals, gorgonians, and sponges. Much like terrestrial forests, they play an essential ecological role and could serve as refuges for marine biodiversity in the face of increasing human pressure and climate change.

These habitats thrive mainly in the mesophotic zone, an environment that remains largely unknown and unexplored. Yet, it is increasingly threatened by fishing activities, particularly krill fishing in Antarctica, and the impacts of climate change. DEEPLIFE, endorsed by the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and led scientifically by CNRS, aims to advance the conservation of deep marine ecosystems, too often overlooked. Lorenzo Bramanti, DEEPLIFE's scientific co-director and experienced deep diver, is on board the WHY throughout the three-month expedition to ensure the successful implementation of scientific protocols.

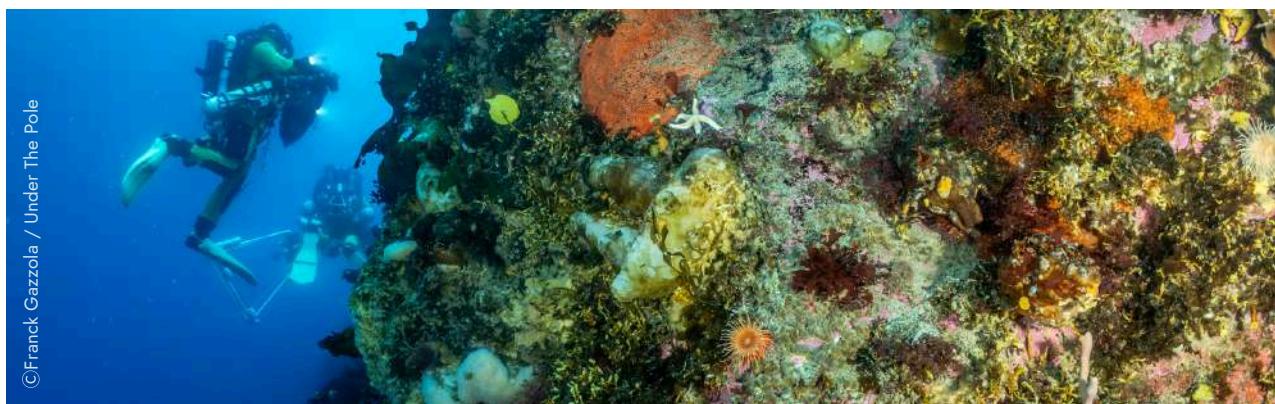
In parallel, scientific work onboard Malizia Explorer led by Léa Olivier, post-doctoral researcher in Oceanography at AWI, will focus on linking physical Ocean structure, biological activity and carbon fluxes across coastal-to-open-ocean gradients. These studies aim to close key data gaps and improve understanding of Ocean-climate interactions in the Western Antarctic Peninsula. With its two consecutive voyages, Malizia Explorer will rotate crew and host additional scientists for other research, while also providing the equipment and logistical support that enables WHY to remain in the region and carry out deep diving operations over three months.

Since their arrival in Antarctica, Under The Pole has conducted 14 dives, reaching depths of up to 100 meters, discovering ecosystems of exceptional richness. Two marine animal forests have been identified, where the scientific team has begun implementing the DEEPLIFE program protocols, while continuing to explore previously selected sites.

The advocacy objectives of the expedition:

Beyond exploration and science, the gathering of all these people in Antarctica over January was named "Global Warning" and also carries a strong advocacy and awareness mission: a dedicated campaign will be launched to highlight the importance of protecting Antarctic marine and particularly mesophotic ecosystems, with the support of influencers and public figures on board, amplifying the message to global audiences. Guided by the belief that we only protect what we know and love, the team is also leading global outreach initiatives, connecting with schools and adult audiences worldwide through live communications, storytelling, calls-to-action, and educational events.

By partnering together, Malizia Explorer and Under The Pole are contributing to help advance understanding of fragile polar ecosystems while amplifying the urgency of their protection to audiences worldwide. As the Antarctic summer unfolds, the teams will continue to combine science, storytelling, and outreach to inspire global action for Ocean conservation.



About Under The Pole:

Under The Pole is an organisation founded in 2008 by Emmanuelle and Ghislain Bardout, dedicated to the understanding and preservation of the oceans. Its work is structured around scientific diving expeditions across the globe, awareness and education initiatives for schools and the general public, and advocacy efforts within institutional and policy-making spheres. Our vision: Underwater exploration — a prodigious source of inspiration and an essential tool for advancing ocean knowledge — is a powerful driver for their protection. Labelized by the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the current research program of Under The Pole, DEEPLIFE, is focused on the Marine Animal Forests (MAFS) of the Mesophotic zone (from 30 to 200 m deep) of our oceans. This program is led in collaboration with the CNRS, and an international consortium of 24 research institutions.

Crew list onboard:

- **Ghislain Bardout** (France), captain / expedition leader / diver
- **Emmanuelle Périé-Bardout** (France), captain / expedition leader / diver
- **Lorenzo Bramanti** (Italy/France), director of the DEEPLIFE scientific program / scientist / diver
- **Jérôme Hontarrede** (France), deep diver
- **Maxime Pature** (France), deep diver
- **Florent Cado** (France), deep diver
- **Franck Gazzola** (Australia), deep diver / photographer
- **Alexandre Vigier** (France), on-board reporter
- **Florence Niemetzky** (France), doctor / scientific assistant
- **Charlie Serrano** (France), cook
- **Aurélie Mercier** (France), school teacher
- **Antoine Stefan** (France), mecanician
- **Tom & Robin** (France), Emmanuelle & Ghislain's sons

About Malizia Explorer:

The initiative is supported by key partner Reederei F. Laeisz, a German shipping company with extensive experience in operating research vessels and who are partnering with the project to advance Malizia Explorer's scientific mission. The project has also established partnerships with leading scientific institutions and coordinating organisations, including GEOMAR, the Alfred Wegener Institute (AWI), Hereon, SOOP (Shaping an Ocean Of Possibilities), OceanOPS (IOC/UNESCO & WMO), the Deutscher Wetterdienst (DWD), and the Prince Albert II Foundation. Together, they will collaborate on specific missions over the next years and contribute to equipping the vessel with a wide range of scientific instruments, and support the processing, management, and scientific interpretation of the collected data. Technical supplier partners are Gleistein, Peter Frisch GmbH – Musto, B&G, SEA.AI, and FLIN.

Crew list onboard:

- **Lucas Lanusse** (Argentina), captain / expedition leader
- **Marin-Louis Moreau** (France), first mate/co-skipper
- **Estefania Picado** (Argentina), sailor/chef
- **Léa Olivier** (France), scientist from AWI
- **Camille Etienne** (France), environmental activist
- **Luisa Neubauer** (Germany), climate activist
- **Tamara Klink** (Brazil), activist
- **Marin Le Roux** (France), onboard reporter
- **Miguel Mattioli** (France), media
- **Michael Pitiot** (France), media
- **Lola Trevinal** (France), media
- **Ségaïne Legrand** (France), media
- **Lea Wowra** (Germany), journalist

CONTACTS

Coralie JUGAN • Press officer

coraliejugan@orange.fr / 06 12 97 78 63

Mathilde BUTHIER • Communication Manager

mathilde@underthepole.com

