Ocean travelers need to take precautions to prevent motion sickness. In our experience, a small percentage of people get sick on any trip and most of these people are fine after a day or so at sea. If you feel that you are particularly susceptible to seasickness, it is a good idea to discuss it with your doctor prior to the trip. Having said that, I can also say that I may have more experience with mal de mer, than many others—33 years at sea!

Several important things to keep in mind. First, our route is set in the following manner: Falklands, South Georgia, & Antarctic Peninsula. For a good portion of our voyage, we will be traveling with the prevailing seas, making the trip much easier. On my first voyage in 2001, we did this route from the other direction. I can assure you that there is a difference. Second, our small ship is very stable and handles the seas better than most. Many ships with the “stablizers” do not use them today, as they increase the amount of fuel needed. Third, we will only have a few days where we will be “at sea.” Many an Antarctic adventurer has heard about the “dreaded Drake” passage, but few have heard about the “Drake lake”! I have experienced a very calm Drake on more than one occasion! Most of our days will be along the inshore coasts of islands, where waters are much calmer and easier to deal with. Finally, you will be spending as much time as possible on land!

Much can be done to prevent motion sickness. And, prevention is the key! If you have concerns, please contact me, and I will send you the “Preventing and Treating Seasickness” brochure printed by Alaska Sea Grant, Marine Advisory Program, www.alaskaseagrant.org. Most of the following is printed in their brochure, or from the Shearwater Journeys’ web site, www.shearwaterjourneys.com. Here goes:

BEFORE YOUR TRIP: Get plenty of sleep the night before departure. Your hotel in Ushuaia is included in your cruise fare. Use it to your advantage! Sleep well! Eat and drink, especially alcohol, moderately. Eat breakfast and lunch, avoiding greasy foods. Board the ship promptly at 4 p.m. and immediately get your luggage unpacked, and stored in your cabin! You will have an hour or two to do this before the boat sets sail. It will be a lot easier on you to have everything settled in your cabin. Store your empty luggage under your bed. Store all belongings as if they are prepared to fall off the shelf at some point in time. Use the ample drawers. Take a OTC seasick prevention pill by 5 p.m. (And, you can betcha! I’ll be doing the same!) When the ship is ready to set sail, come out on deck and enjoy the ride up the Beagle Channel, or exploring the ship to learn where things are located. You will be briefed about any meetings, and our “Welcome Aboard” meeting. Go easy on drinks. Eat, but do not overeat. A full stomach is less likely to betray you. Personally, I think chocolate is a no-no, including hot chocolate drinks, both in preventing motion sickness and easing it, if you should get
sick. You might want to take motion sickness meds before retiring. Get a good night’s sleep. Keep your cabin on the cool side. Too warm a cabin can cause seasickness. Do not read in bed. If the Expedition Leader announces that he/she recommends meds, follow that advice.

**FIRST MORNING:** Eat breakfast, avoiding greasy foods. Go easy on the coffee and tea. Following the directions on your meds, take another dose. Dress yourself to get outside, but do not put on your outer coat until you get to the door. Carry it with you, that way you will not overheat while going up or down the stairs. If conditions are good, get out on deck, on the bow. Always take care when on the bow, as there are things that one can trip over. Keep at least one hand on the ship at all times, and not in the door jambs. Think of all the great wildlife that you are about to encounter! Relax. After the first full day, you will gain confidence with your new life at sea. If you should encounter problems, be sure to consult the doctor, or a staff member.

**ALTERNATIVE, FOLK & NATURAL REMEDIES:** Many people do not want to use drugs to prevent seasickness. Most of the alternatives, such as ginger do not work. One alternative that I have seen that does seem to work is an electronic device that resembles a wristwatch and sends mild, user-variable, electric current into the wrist. These cost about $150. (They are not the same as the cheap wrist bands). I have seen a very small number of people use these devices on one day trips. They always worked. I’m not sure how they would be on a 19 day voyage.

**PRESCRIPTION DRUGS:** The transderm scopolamine patch, sold by prescription, is very popular among many people. It lasts up to three days. I always recommend putting on a patch and checking it out on land first, just to see how you handle this drug. Personally, I am very drug sensitive, and cannot use this drug. Everyone is different, and I have seen a great many folks use patches on ships, and do just fine.

**OTC DRUGS:** Most over-the-counter drugs for prevention of motion sickness are based on antihistamines. They are effective for many people. Drugs based on meclizine (Bonine, Antivert, Dramamine II) cause less drowsiness than the old standard drug, dimenhydrinate (original Dramamine, Triptone, Gravol).

**USING DRUGS EFFECTIVELY:** Most dimenhydrinate and meclizine-based drugs are sold as pills or chewable tablets. They should be taken at least two hours before boarding so that the drug can go through the digestive system and into the bloodstream. A person already nauseous or vomiting will get no benefit because the drug will be expelled in the next bout of vomiting. OTC drugs are useful and perfect for some people, if used effectively.
LET’S TALK ABOUT IT: PREVENTING SEASICKNESS

FAITH: Another component of drug effectiveness is faith in the drug. Studies have shown that as much as 40% of all seasickness can be alleviated by the belief that the drug is effective, even if the patient has taken a sugar pill (placebo) instead of the real thing! Keep your faith!

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR: All motion sickness prevention products, prescription or OTC, can have side effects. It is always best to check with your own personal doctor first.

I cannot guarantee that no one on board will suffer seasickness, but it is possible to take many steps to prevent it. By using a few common sense prevention techniques, most people will avoid mal de mer.

— Debra Shearwater