

## Messages in port in Cape Town

On 3/11/20, Leticia Barbero - NOAA Affiliate wrote:

Dear all,

Some of you have been contacting me with questions about coronavirus, so I'd like to provide the most updated information I have.

First of all, if any of you feels unsure about traveling, and would rather cancel their participation, we leave this entirely up to you, just please let us know as soon as possible. With regards to the cruise itself, GO-SHIP A13.5 is still scheduled to depart as planned on March 19th. The ship arrived today to Cape Town.

Per my most recent communication with the ship from earlier this morning, loading is still scheduled to start on Monday March 16th.

NOAA Health Services is tracking the travel of all cruise participants and, where appropriate, asking participants to report any flu-like symptoms they might experience. Any participant whose travel goes through any of the restricted countries (including while on transit to Cape Town) will not be cleared to sail on the ship.

If you need to reach me, I have a South Africa local number where I can be reached (please keep in mind time zone differences).

For people calling from the US: +27 83 638 8101

For people calling from South Africa: 083 638 8101

Best regards,

Leticia

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3/11/20 Message #1

All-

This is a re-assurance that, as of now, GO-SHIP cruise A13.5 will take place and depart Cape Town on March 19. Everyone is closely monitoring the situation with respect to COVID-19 and are applying proper risk-assessment on a day-to-day basis. We will let you know immediately if there is additional guidance or changes.

We are aware of some institutions not allowing their employees to travel internationally, and we have encouraged those to talk to their superiors about making this a personal decision. We were forwarded the sage advice of one of the department

heads who had personnel going to meet the cruise in Cape Town:

"trips were confirmed before we had institutional guidance. My position is that if the employee would like to come home now and skip the cruise, they should, and we will fully support that decision. If they want to do the cruise, they should be aware of the all the risks including that it may be difficult to get back to the US."

Participants will be asked by the ship to provide information on their whereabouts in the prior two weeks and no one should board with flu-like symptoms. Cooperate with the medical officer on the Brown if/when more medical details are needed. CAPT Les Cruise, Director Marine Medicine of NOAA is fully engaged.

At this point we cannot send replacements for those who end up not participating so if the cruise is short-staffed we will need to ask all to pitch in, to assure that the level-1 GO-SHIP measurements are accomplished, even if it means that your favorite measurement cannot be done in full. For instance, in the AOML CO2 group is anticipating having to forego our discrete pCO2 campaign.

Feel free to get in touch with me if questions or concerns (my phone # is 305-361-4379: leave a message and I'll get right back to you). I will be able to deal with many of the questions and issues, and give Leticia and others already in Cape Town some respite. Leticia has my Whatapp number and will contact me promptly with any pertinent information.

Please do not reply to this general e-mail as there is a risk of more confusion and anxiety.

Lets stay healthy and calm,

Rik W.

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On 3/12/20 message #2  
All-

A quick update regarding A13.5. The schedule for the cruise remains unchanged with a departure from Cape Town on March 19. Several participants cannot join the ship but the "A-team" is in

Cape Town ready to sail.

That said the situation remains very fluid. All in charge are actively assessing the situation and taking into account all directives and the evolving spread of the virus. The highest levels in OAR and NOAA are appraised and there is active dialog with NOAA OMAO, CDC, UNOLS, Dept of State, the embassy in SA, and other important decision makers and stakeholders using up-to-the-minute information.

That said, and as mentioned all along, if participants (and their supervisors) do not feel comfortable traveling to South Africa and joining the cruise due to concerns about COVID19 they should not feel pressured to do so.

Participants who have not left should avoid traveling via Europe as additional screening will be necessary with the possibility of not being able to sail.

I will provide daily updates around this time if situation is unchanged, and right away if there are changes in the cruise.

Stay healthy and calm,

Rik W.

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On 3/13/20 message #3

All-

There are no updates on the status of GO-SHIP cruise A13.5. We've updated the cruise participant list on our website to indicate changes who will be sailing.

[https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/ocd/gcc/A13.5\\_2020/](https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/ocd/gcc/A13.5_2020/). The ship is currently in Cape Town undergoing repairs but there has been no communication that this will delay departure. All reasonable "what if" scenarios are duly being considered (and many crazy ones as well) by all parties involved, including at high levels in NOAA, OMAO, CDC, and State.

Most scientists who are participating are in Cape Town. Replacements will wait till Tuesday to travel in case of changes.

Early next week we will discuss changes to operations on the cruise and will hold a telemeeting with all interested parties regarding how the cruise will operate with fewer participants.

I do not expect status to change over the weekend and will not send out any messages, unless something noteworthy occurs wrt. GO-SHIP A13.5

We appreciate the support from all during this challenging situation.

Stay healthy and calm,

Rik W.

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On 3/15/20: message # 4.

All-

An "all is well and under control " message. Leticia is in touch with all scientists and with the ship. The schedule remains unchanged.

Personnel are arriving in Cape Town without too many issues and a few are en route such that we have a reasonably good idea of the number of scientists sailing. We will have a telecon with principals in Cape Town and on shore tomorrow to discuss possible changes in operations of the cruise in light of several cruise participants (7 at last count) not being able to join. We are keeping the number of call-ins limited to avoid telecommunication issues but if you feel you need to attend the telecon and have not received an email with the Gotomeeting information let me (Rik W.) know

There are some repairs being made on the ship's cranes and the motors have been taken to a local shop for servicing with a possibility that they will not be fixed by Thursday but at this point we are working under the assumption of a March 19 departure.

We will provide a routine update # 5, including a summary of our operations telecon tomorrow PM, unless there is exciting news before then.

Stay healthy and calm

Rik W (on behalf of Chief Scientist, Leticia Barbero)

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On 3/16/20 6:11 PM, Rik Wanninkhof wrote:  
message #5.

All-

The cruise remains on schedule. There are several issues that need to be addressed, and new travel restrictions and regulations are causing challenges and anxiety for those in Cape Town and the last several scientists leaving the US for Cape Town tomorrow. There is good contact with the US consulate that is keeping us apprised. Support from everyone on ship and shore has been great, and there are no "showstoppers" at this point.

The shore-based lead PIs had a good telemeeting with the science leads on the ship today where changes in duties and options for executing the cruise with less participants were discussed. Spirits with participants in Cape Town are high.

Stay healthy and calm

Rik W (on behalf of Chief Scientist, Leticia Barbero)

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On 3/17/20 message #6.

All-

Seventeen (of the scheduled 27) scientists have reported to the Ronald H Brown, and this will be the final count as South Africa is closing its borders for travelers originating from the USA (and many other countries) tomorrow. Two scientists en route had to turn around today based on guidance from the US Dept of State. The adjusted list of scientists can be found [https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/ocd/gcc/A13.5\\_2020/participants.html](https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/ocd/gcc/A13.5_2020/participants.html). We are working with all groups and shoreside PIs on plans to execute the cruise with the personnel at hand and there is a great amount of good-will and adaptability by all on ship and shore, willing to pitch in and adjust their work duties to fulfill most of the core objectives. We are particularly pleased that the most experienced person in the world regarding executing [GO-SHIP] cruises, Jim Swift has offered to be shoreside advisor/consultant for this challenging

endeavor. The ship is waiting on some spare parts and finishing up repairs but scientists are on board setting up gear and testing equipment. The mood in Cape Town is upbeat and more tranquil than in the US.

Stay healthy and calm

Rik W (on behalf of Chief Scientist, Leticia Barbero)

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On 3/18/20 message # 7.

All-

A short message that big changes are afoot regarding the GO-SHIP A13.5 cruise:

1. The ship will not depart before Saturday March 21 due to finishing repairs on cranes and waiting shipments from the US.

[This will provide all a bit of time to digest the following:]

2. The ship has been ordered to sail back to the US. The command is not opposed to performing science operations on the way back but any possibilities will be determined by the marine center in consultation with OAR headquarters.

3. Minimizing the chance of officers, ship, and science personnel acquiring or spreading OVID-19 remains a primary concern.

4. We are discussing different science scenarios with a changed sailing plan that we'll share with those in charge but final decisions will not be made by us.

5. I hope that decisions about the scenarios will be made today

6. All know that repatriation of the scientific party is a distinct possibility. Also, all personnel know they can return by own choice at any point

I spoke with Leticia this morning and all are in good spirits and are continuing preparations during these uncertain times.

I can be reached at 305-361-4379 (I've turned the ringer back on and will answer if I'm in)

Stay healthy and calm

Rik W (on behalf of Chief Scientist, Leticia Barbero)

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3/19/20, message #8

Note, the distribution list has been culled. These messages are informational only.

All-

Based on a conversation with Leticia this morning, things are coming together for a Saturday March 21 departure. A replacement pump is scheduled to arrive late today or tomorrow and no other show stoppers are foreseen at this point

The ship and land-based decision makers are receptive to having the scientists sail back to the US and execute a scaled down science plan. We are particularly keen on occupying stations and deploying several BGC Argo floats in the subarctic Southern Ocean and occupying a section of the originally scheduled A13.5 line. Some scenarios are being worked out with input of land-based PIs and shipboard scientists, and will be presented to the command. We should know more tomorrow.

Everyone in Cape Town are enjoying their last day on shore and are eager to get out to sea.

Stay healthy and calm

Rik W (on behalf of Chief Scientist, Leticia Barbero)

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3/21/20, message #9:

This will be the last with this distribution list. Updates will be provided directly from the ship to a wide distribution along

with blogs and other communications. All will be posted or linked on [https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/ocd/gcc/A13.5\\_2020/](https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/ocd/gcc/A13.5_2020/)

All-

The ship left Cape Town around 2 PM local time today. Their transit instructions from shore were received 11 PM last night that the ship should stay within 4 days of Cape Town for the next 7 days of self-monitoring for COVID-19, and if all clear, proceed directly to Norfolk. The ship is currently heading southwest hoping to get South of the Subtropical Front to deploy the BGC Argo floats and some validation casts. Then, unless we can get a deviation from the orders, it will be a long steam back with surface sampling. We are still digesting this information but needless to say A13.5 will not occur this year. Getting this far and this close has been through the dedication and perseverance of all on the RHB. There will be scientific returns but not at the level and scope hoped for.

Rik W.