

A Tall Ship, A Bold Mission, and a New Generation of Conservation Heroes: DARWIN200 Docks in Cape Town Cape Town

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, April 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- History has unfurled its sails in Cape Town's harbour this week with the arrival of the majestic Dutch tall ship, [Oosterschelde](#), a century-old maritime marvel now serving a far more urgent purpose than cargo: saving the planet.

The Oosterschelde is the flagship of [DARWIN200](#), a daring and visionary global voyage retracing the route taken by Charles Darwin aboard the HMS Beagle nearly 200 years ago. But unlike Darwin, who was cataloguing life, these modern-day explorers are trying to protect it.

Having embarked from Plymouth, UK in August 2023, the Oosterschelde has already sailed an astonishing 36,250 nautical miles in 607 days, navigating the Atlantic, Pacific and Southern oceans on a two-year journey designed to spotlight conservation challenges and success stories across the globe. At every port, a new group of young "Darwin Leaders" boards the vessel - bright, passionate environmentalists under the age of 25 from across the world - tasked with tackling urgent local ecological issues through science, collaboration and sheer grit - Now, it's Cape Town's turn.

From April 16 to 29, Oosterschelde becomes a floating classroom and conservation hub as a new cohort of Darwin Leaders joins the mission. Representing countries across Africa - Tunisia,



Oosterschelde DARWIN200



Oosterschelde DARWIN200 Photograph Josh Clarke

Uganda, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Madagascar and more - these young conservationists will work alongside South African NGOs to address some of the country's most pressing environmental challenges.

In partnership with Two Oceans Aquarium, leaders will rehabilitate endangered sea turtles. With CapeNature, they will help monitor endangered Cape Vultures and contribute to the ongoing success of Bontebok antelope conservation - one of South Africa's most inspiring species revival stories. They'll also work with Marine Dynamics and the Dyer Island Conservation Trust, investigating the alarming disappearance of great white sharks, supporting the rescue of African penguins, and studying whale populations along the coast.

Projects also include studying baboon-human conflict in Cape Town with ICWild, understanding the decline of carnivorous plants in the fynbos biome, and assessing invasive species impacts on freshwater systems in GroenVlei.

These aren't just field trips - they're immersive, hands-on science experiences designed to equip Africa's next generation of environmental leaders with the tools, connections and courage to change the world.

Stewart McPherson, DARWIN200 Director "South Africa stands as a beacon of conservation success and resilience. Witnessing the dedication of our Darwin Leaders here - working alongside local experts to protect species like the bontebok and restore fragile ecosystems - fills me with hope. It's a powerful reminder that, even amidst global challenges, positive change is not only possible but already underway."

Their passion is personal. Their science is rigorous. And their message is clear: conservation needs bold leadership, global cooperation, and urgent action.

The arrival of the Oosterschelde and the Darwin Leaders also marks a celebration of Charles Darwin's profound influence on science. A programme of public events - equal parts enlightening and entertaining - has been lined up to coincide with the ship's stay in Cape Town and Simon's Town.

In Cape Town, the public is invited to step aboard the Oosterschelde on April 24 (14:00–17:00)



Oosterschelde DARWIN200 Josh Clarke
King Penguins

during an open day at the V&A Waterfront. That same evening, the Two Oceans Aquarium will host a conservation presentation by the Darwin Leaders, offering an inspiring glimpse into their work and discoveries. Meanwhile, the Art@Africa gallery will exhibit a collection of Darwin and evolution-themed artworks throughout April, with an official opening on the evening of the 24th.

On April 19, the Oosterschelde will round the Cape of Good Hope and sail into Simon's Town, where the celebrations continue. Highlights include a powerful theatrical performance, "Darwin: A Curious Mind", at the Galloway Theatre and Simon's Town Hall, and the much-anticipated unveiling of a new bronze bust of Darwin on the jetty - cementing the city's place in the global Darwin200 journey.

"This voyage is more than symbolic," says Gerben Nab, the Oosterschelde's Director and Captain. "It is about passing the torch. The same curiosity that drove Darwin is now driving a new generation - not to explore, but to protect."

Built in 1917, the Oosterschelde has sailed through storms, war and change. Once a humble cargo ship, she is now a restored floating monument to Dutch maritime excellence - recommissioned in 1996 by Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet of the Netherlands and still going strong. Over her five "lives," she has welcomed presidents, pop stars, royalty and explorers aboard. She was also the first Dutch commercial tall ship to brave both poles and round the notorious Cape Horn. Now, as the heartbeat of DARWIN200, she is carrying the weight of history, and the hopes of the future, in her sails.

South Africa, with its staggering biodiversity and deeply rooted conservation heritage, is a fitting stage for this chapter of the DARWIN200 voyage. It is a country that knows both the beauty and fragility of nature - and the cost of inaction.

It reminds us that the fight for the planet is a shared responsibility. That knowledge and empathy can cross oceans. And that hope can be found, not just in grand speeches or international treaties, but in the determined footsteps of young leaders hiking through the fynbos, tagging vultures, rescuing turtles, and rewriting the future, one project at a time.

So, this April, when you see the tall ship moored in the harbour, know that you are witnessing something rare: history, heart, and heroism, under full sail.

[DARWIN200 PRESS KIT](#)

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