



The HENDERSON'S take on **ANTARCTICA**

"Antarctica?" Then a pause, and the question "What are you going to do down there?"

I couldn't really answer that without sounding a little silly at first. "Well, just look at things. Penguins and icebergs, I guess."

But Antarctica held an allure. Why not go see the penguins and icebergs? What I didn't realize then, was that describing the trip would be like trying to capture a completely different world with mere words.

We boarded the Silver Cloud in Punta Arenas, Chile, which was the landing place of Magellan just 500 years before. A monument on the shore commemorated that landing. We sailed through the Strait of Magellan and headed south for a day's sail to cross the Drake Passage. This body of water is in the "Furious Fifties" and is nicknamed either "Drake Lake" or "Drake Shake" by frequent visitors. Ours was estimated to be about a 5, on a scale of 10. It wasn't too bad, but I can imagine the early sailors had some bad days.

Livingston Island, in the South Shetland Island group, gave us our first view of Antarctica. We were unable to land Zodiacs because of ocean swells, but we sailed around, for a good view. The emotional impact of seeing that mass of snow and ice was unforgettable, and it was just a preview

of the journey ahead. We explored the protected bay of Deception Island, one of the whaling centers of the early days, where the ground was warm from volcanic activity below.

Our first landing on a snowy shore was Trinity Island. The crew had gone ahead to prepare a trail for us, and snow steps where needed. Our waterproof gear was great protection from the spray during the zodiac trip, and expedition leaders were always nearby to help. We got our first glimpse of penguins padding along on their own "penguin highway", which we were advised to step over, but not disturb. The little gentoos seemed unbothered, and a little curious, about these strange "orange" creatures.

An afternoon zodiac tour through sea-ice fields on Christmas Day brought views of chinstrap penguins, cormorants, icebergs in fantastic shapes, and Santa coming alongside our zodiac with his elves. He had traded his sleigh for a zodiac, and he met each zodiac to share champagne and/or hot chocolate. What a special Christmas Day!

We were able to make landing on the Antarctic Peninsula itself, completing the Seventh Continent goal of many passengers. The landscape was simply overwhelming to



of moss and lichen, seeing new growth on “The White Continent”.

Nearing the end of our 15-night cruise we sailed past Elephant Island, and desolate Point Wild, where the Shackleton Expedition spent 4 months waiting for rescue. We had heard a captivating lecture on board about the Expedition, and this brought the drama to life.

Our last stops brought us to the Falkland Islands, where we saw several more species of penguins, continuing our love affairs with the engaging little birds. How many times we heard “Oh look at the penguins!”

Yes, it was worth the trip to Antarctica to see the penguins and the icebergs. I’d do it again in a minute. You won’t see any polar bears, though. The Arctic is the place for that.

A note: if you would like to read Mike’s trip blog about the trip, go to: www.mikeandjudytravel.com

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see, and each day brought more beauty. One afternoon our zodiac operator cut the engine, in a very icy sea, and we bobbed silently through slushy broken ice called brash ice, just listening to the soft rubbing as it touched our craft. We were at the ends of the earth, in silence and majesty.

The enormity of the mountains and ice fields was hard to comprehend. It changed from moment to moment. Each day was different, and more magnificent. Iceberg shapes encouraged the imagination to run wild. One zodiac tour brought us close to rocky headlands to see ancient growths

