

My impressions of Antarctica from this magnificent CC trip!

By Ann Pfeifferberger O'Neill '83

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First of all, it is difficult to get there. But none of us knew when, individually, we flew to Buenos Aires how tough it was going to be for our particular group! Our original ship we were scheduled to be on, called the Clelia II, was cruising with another group of tourists on Dec. 26, 2009, when it met an unfortunate fate of running aground and broke it's propeller. It made its way back across the Drake Passage to Ushuaia, Argentina, but it would not be taking us on our journey, which was due to embark out of Ushuaia on Dec. 29th. Fortunately, our entire CC group was able to be accommodated instead onto the Corinthian II, and we departed Dec. 31st. Even in this era of 2009-2010, great things -- great adventures come with difficulty and risk, and being flexible to "go with the flow" often reaps even better rewards. We ended up with a spectacular expedition to Antarctica! Our crew was outstanding, and we had Travel Dynamics' best Expedition Leader, named John Frick, plus we got to see more of the Ushuaia area -- located in Patagonia -- Tierra del Fuego -- Fin del Mundo!!!

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What's Antarctica like? You know -- it's really simple -- it's rock, ice, water, penguins and a lot of nothing. Antarctica is tons of ice, sea ice and glacier ice -- what looks like snow-covered mountains are actually glaciers covering the rock and mountains -- and then when there is open rock and shore -- there are penguins. Where we were -- the Antarctic Peninsula -- there are predominantly 3 types of penguins -- Gentoos, Adelies and Chinstraps. Penguins rule! When you visit a rookery of penguins, it's unbelievable - thousands and thousands of penguins feeding their young or sitting on their nests at this time of year. They are fascinating to watch and not afraid of humans. Quite a spectacular site.

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What struck me about our trip is that we were truly the most international group of tourists and crew I've ever experienced -- the people on our Corinthian II journey were American, Australian, Canadian, Russian, Polish, Irish, South African, English, Austrian, Romanian, Hungarian, Indonesian, Fillipino(sp?), French, Scottish, Argentinean, Brazilian. We represented mankind from all corners of our planet - and each and every one of us came with a curiosity and fascination about Antarctica. This last, vast wilderness of our planet truly brings out the best in humankind -- we want to explore it and we want to learn from it. We want to see it's vast nothingness, and we want to witness its long days of Austral Summer when the sun barely sets -- and before you know it it's back up again. We want to listen to it's silence. We want to hear its few sounds of thunderous glaciers calving -- and experience the noises of squawking penguins fighting over territory. We want to go where few of us have been before -- the age-old desire to discover and explore carries us to travel to Antarctica! For some of us -- we wanted to reach our 7th continent (this was my husband, Michael's 7th continent visited!). We want to photograph it, touch it, breath it in. And thank goodness, we want to contribute to its protection and preservation. I was struck -- the rugged, inhospitable, natural wilderness of Antarctica forces mankind to behave at its best! Perhaps Antarctica exists for this very purpose -- to force mankind to save itself from ourselves?

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Ann Pfeifferberger O'Neill, CC Class of 1983 traveled on this trip with my husband, Michael O'Neill. It was Michael's 7th continent visited in his lifetime! Ann's 6th continent!