

Welcome to Antarctica

No place on Earth compares to this vast white wilderness of elemental forces: snow, ice, water, rock. Antarctica is simply stunning.

Adventure

Antarctica's surreal remoteness, extreme cold, enormous ice shelves and mountain ranges, and myriad exotic life forms invariably challenge you to embrace life fully. Everyone – scientist, support worker, government official and tourist – who comes to this isolated continent, must 'earn' it, whether by sea voyage or flight. Ice and weather, not clocks and calendars, determine the itinerary and the timetable of all travel here. Today, it's even possible for visitors to climb Antarctic peaks or kayak icy waters. But there is nothing quite like the craggy crevasses of a magnificent glacier or the sheer expanse of the polar ice cap.

History

The names of explorers and their sovereigns and benefactors are written on Antarctica's shores. Renowned explorers from Cook to Amundsen and Scott all tried to penetrate this vast, mysterious land: each with varying degrees of success. Visitors can follow in their footsteps and imagine what it was like to forge through the pack ice on a creaking wooden boat or to haul sledges across the polar plateau. Some of the historic huts actually remain, preserved frozen in rime ice, to tell the story of adventures long past.

Wildlife

Preserved by the Antarctic Treaty, Antarctica is home to some of the world's most extraordinary species. Some, such as the enormous whales, migrate from afar, while others, including the Weddell seal and emperor penguin, remain close to the continent. Millions of seabirds skim the Southern Ocean, the world's most abundant, and species such as albatrosses and petrels circle the waters. Wildlife is generally unafraid of humans: visitors usually elicit no more than an uninterested yawn from seals and penguins focused on their young.

Inspiration

Antarctica possesses an unnameable quality. Call it inspiration, call it grandeur...it is simply the indescribable feeling of being a small speck in a vast, harshly beautiful land. A land where striated ice towers float among geometric pancake ice, literally untouched mountains rear from marine mist, and wildlife lives, year in and year out, to its own rhythms, quite apart from human concerns. To let our minds soar in a place nearly free of humankind's imprint: this is magic.



Why I Love Antarctica

By Alexis Averbeck, Writer

Preserved for peace and science, this ice-crowned continent rewards the traveler with inspiration, adventure and perspective. There's nothing quite like seeing ice shimmering in all directions, reflecting sunlight through each season, or the blazing twinkle of a velvet blanket of stars in winter. Wildlife roams freely, with penguins, seals and seabirds unafraid of human visitors. Sea ice groans and crackles, and icebergs crash off vast blue glaciers into the ocean, while whales breach beside your ship. This is the end of the Earth (as we know it). It's the trip of a lifetime.

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Above: Tabular iceberg