

# ADVANTAGE

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EMBRAER MAGAZINE  
VOL 19 ➤ 2023

**Gather In Puglia**

Masseria Pistola reveals an idyllic getaway for family and friends

**The Future Is Phenom**

The world's best-selling light jet for the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive year

**Table In The Wild**

Fine-dining in the Kalahari Desert at Klein JAN

# THE GREAT WHITE WONDER

A land of rugged beauty, millennia-old icebergs and plentiful wildlife, Antarctica delivers all that it promises, and more

“We can guarantee you’ll see ice and penguins,” said Michael Hann, an expedition leader on Magellan Explorer, a 295-foot purpose-built Polar Class 6 vessel from Chilean outfitter Antarctica21.

That’s reason enough for most of us to venture to the Great White South, the world’s iciest continent cloaked in legends and intrigue since the days intrepid explorers like Shackleton, Amundsen and Scott blazed trails across the land. In Antarctica, uncertainty reigns. Weather shifts at the drop of a dime. Quiet landscapes are whipped into a tumult by katabatic winds that can blow at hurricane speeds. The midday sun is snuffed out by unsympathetic blizzards. This uncertainty, however, is what defines the spirit of adventure of a journey to Antarctica—that edgy excitement of not being sure what the next minute will bring. You’re constantly at the mercy of Mother Nature’s humbling hand, by turns magnanimous and deadly. But the reward is commensurate. The monumental icebergs, dwarfing stone cathedrals and unadulterated wilderness spark a sense of reverence so profound it feels almost holy.

“You can’t really grasp the vastness of this place, how pristine it is and how unforgiving it can be until you’re here,” explained Hann. To get there, Antarctica21 flies its guests from the southern city of Punta Arenas to Frei Station on King George Island, eliminating the two-day (each way) crossing of the Drake Passage, notorious for its turbulent, storm-prone waters.

The ship itself is also a work of art. It was built from the ground up by international polar expedition experts working closely with engineers and naval architects, and designed by acclaimed Chilean architecture studio Enrique Concha & Co. “It is the first ship in the world

*The Antarctic ice sheet contains 90% of all the ice on the planet, making it the largest body of freshwater on Earth and an awe-inspiring sight for travelers*





Above: From October to March, about 10 species, including humpbacks, fin whales, Antarctic minkes, and orcas, travel to the Southern Ocean

designed specifically for Antarctic air cruises,” said Hann. “After the season, it goes back to Puerto Montt for reparations and upkeep, so it’s in mint condition all the time.” To reduce its environmental footprint, the vessel is also equipped with an energy-recovery system that recycles the heat produced by its engines to warm the ship and its water supply.

Another advantage is the ship’s size. The International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO)—a United Nations-founded organization governing tourism activity in the region—has strict protocols limiting tourism excursions to 100 passengers at any given time to ensure the protection of wildlife and the environment. “Our ship has a maximum of 76 passengers, so all guests are able to get on and off in one go, which means there’s more time spent exploring rather than waiting your turn.” All Antarctic cruise itineraries are weather dependent, he added, but since the Magellan Explorer is small and

nimble, it has the flexibility to quickly change course and anchor in spots that larger vessels can’t.

A classic voyage with Antarctica21 may take you to the South Shetland Islands, the Antarctic Sound, Gerlache Strait, and the Lemaire Channel. A multinational team of adventure guides specializing in mountaineering, marine biology, glaciology, and history usher guests onto zodiac boats twice a day to explore sublime panoramas on land and sea.

Antarctica is nearly twice the size of Australia, sitting at an average elevation of 6,725 feet above sea level, the highest of all the continents. Everything here feels outsized. The icebergs are colossal, glaciers hang from soaring peaks, and undisturbed vistas stretch to the horizon. In the long hours of the austral summer, colors shine with a brilliant luminescence. Wind-sculpted chunks of ice glitter like topaz gems in a cobalt sea, the sky admires its reflection

in glassy waters, and clouds don a goldish hue in the late-evening twilight. Everywhere you look, nature’s majesty is on display. Wild, raw, exalted.

Then there’s the hardy coalition of wildlife. Colonies of penguins, harems of seals and flocks of sea birds all migrate to the Antarctic Peninsula in the austral summer to fatten up on a bounty of shrimp-like krill and breed on sun-warmed shores.

Six of the world’s 17 species of penguins spend the warmer months waddling along the Antarctic coastline. Hours of entertainment are provided by the boisterous mating habits of gentoo, Adélie and chinstrap penguins in their respective rookeries. There’s a constant racket of cooing, trumpeting and honking between courting pairs so they can identify one another. Right under your nose, male penguins hurriedly gather rocks in their beaks to build sturdy nests to attract a mate. During December and January, you’ll marvel over male and female penguins incubating eggs and fuzzy newborn chicks being fed by a parent.

“If there’s not enough food to keep both chicks alive, parents will have a ‘run of the siblings,’ and whoever wins may receive the majority of the food,” explained Jeff Reynolds, a Biologist-guide from British Columbia, Canada. “It’s a tough display of survival of the fittest.”



**EMBRAER TIP**

Fly into Chile’s Presidente Carlos Ibáñez del Campo International Airport (PUQ) to embark on your Antarctica expedition. Those arriving in the Praetor family of aircraft can experience active turbulence reduction due to full fly-by-wire flight controls.



IMAGES (left page) © Mark Edward Harris, (right page top) © Tom Arban, (right page bottom) © Nora Walsh



Top: The Magellan Explorer was purpose-built for Antarctica air cruises by a group of international polar expedition experts, engineers and naval architects and designed by renowned Chilean architecture studio, Enrique Concha & Co

Bottom: Six of the world’s 17 species of penguins come to feed and breed on the sun-warmed shores of the Antarctic coastline, including gentoo, Adélie and chinstrap penguins



*“You can’t really grasp the vastness of this place, how pristine it is and how unforgiving it can be until you’re here.”*

Antarctica is also one of the world’s top whale-spotting destinations. From October to March, about 10 species, including humpbacks, fin whales, Antarctic minkes, and orcas, travel to the Southern Ocean. Weddell, elephant, leopard, and crabeater seals also make an appearance (likely dozing in the sun on a thick slice of pack ice). And a glut of sea birds, including petrels, blue-eyed shags, cormorants, sheathbills, gulls and terns, join the party every summer. Keep your eyes peeled for hunting skuas circling above penguin and petrel hatchlings, hoping to nick their next meal.

Adventures are broken up on the ship with afternoon polar naps, gourmet meals delivered with consistently impeccable service, and edifying lectures from the guides. Each evening in the observation lounge, fellow passengers bond over the day’s activities. “Due to the ship’s intimate size, there’s a special camaraderie that develops between everyone on board,” Hann noted.

It’s a camaraderie that echoes the international cooperation of global nations who jointly govern the white continent under the Antarctic Treaty. This agreement, formalized half a century ago, ensures that Antarctica is used exclusively for peaceful purposes and scientific research.



*Above: The Magellan Explorer offers citizen science excursions led by a marine biologist to assist in collecting samples of phytoplankton along the Antarctic coast for a scientific research project*

**PURPOSE-LED TRAVEL**

Antarctica21 participates in FjordPhyto, a collaborative research project between scientists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the Universidad Nacional De La Plata, polar guides, and Antarctic travelers to collect samples of phytoplankton along the Antarctic coast. Phytoplankton are microscopic, plant-like organisms that play a critical role in the carbon cycle, drawing carbon dioxide out of the ocean’s surface and storing it in the deep ocean. They contribute to more than half of the Earth’s oxygen—more than all the trees and other plants on land combined.

Marine Biologist Jeff Reynolds leads six guests on a citizen science excursion to assist in collecting data on seawater temperature, salinity, Secchi depth readings, ocean color, glacial meltwater, phytoplankton abundance, carbon biomass, and species diversity. Back on the boat, all passengers have the opportunity to join Reynolds in the science lab to identify the different species of phytoplankton using a microscope. The collected data is then submitted to a central database to monitor how phytoplankton populations are being affected by melting glaciers and climate change.



*Top: Weddell, elephant, leopard, and crabeater seals can be spotted lounging on thick slabs of pack ice*

*Bottom: A multinational team of adventure guides specializing in mountaineering, marine biology, glaciology, and history usher guests onto zodiac boats twice a day to explore remote and sublime panoramas on land and sea*

IMAGES (left page top & bottom) © Jean Paul De la Harpe Z., (right page) © Teresita Pérez

In 1991, the Madrid Protocol expanded the treaty, banning all mining activity for 50 years. Today, there are roughly 100 scientific stations where interdisciplinary research activities are collaboratively carried out by more than 30 countries.

While studying the evolution of the global climate, researchers have found that the Antarctic Peninsula’s average temperature is rising five times faster than the global mean, and if left unmanaged, it could drastically alter marine ecosystems. Reynolds notes that if glaciers along the west Antarctic ice sheet melt, it will have devastating impacts around the world in terms of sea level rise. “In this sense, visiting Antarctica is a privilege and a responsibility,” said Hann. “Our goal is to create ambassadors who will share what they’ve learned in a way that creates awareness and change.”

At some point during the voyage, one invariably realizes that it’s not the places you anchor that define your journey but rather a string of unforgettable moments. The exhilaration of spotting your first humpback whale. Sipping tea on your balcony in the shadow of towering massifs. Feeling the polar wind whip through your hair on a zodiac ride. Hearing the thunderous sound of a calving glacier. Giggling through a snowball fight. The brisk thrill of a polar plunge then relaxing in the cedar sauna. Tasting 10-year-old whisky chilled with 10,000-year-old glacial ice. Watching the full moon rise and the midnight sun set in the same crystalline sky.

“Antarctica gets into your blood,” Hann said. “It’s a magical place on the planet, and we need to make sure it stays protected for future generations.” ◀