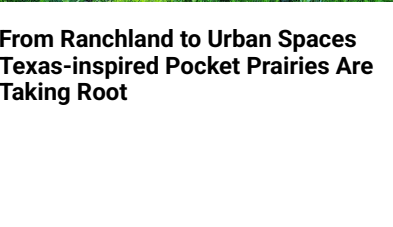




The Scenic Eclipse is passing through the Lemaire Channel. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

# Unveiling Antarctica: A Journey Beyond the Frozen Horizon with Scenic Eclipse II

TOP STORIES



From Beachhead to Urban Space: These Hoped Procter Profiles Are Making Head

ADVENTURE

The first time an iceberg floats by in open water it's as if Antarctica is suddenly in focus, offering adventures that few other worlds can offer. You have been to and seen fewer landscapes. Every hour's interaction with the continent is new, and it's a sensory feast of exhilaration and wonder. Visitors must arrive and leave as if they've never been there at all.

ANETRA HARMPAR  
MAY 26, 2024



We want to publish your stories. Send us your ideas that highlight adventure, outdoor recreation, or environmental initiatives.

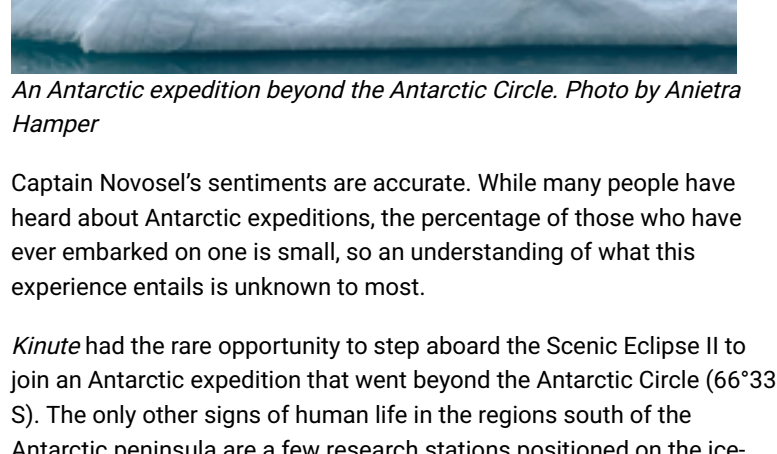
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Antarctica is a continent defined by the extremes of weather, landscape, wildlife and climate, and for all its unpredictability, change is its one consistency.

The uninhabited ice-covered continent is more than 1.5 times the size of the United States with some of the most unrelenting conditions on the planet. This makes just getting there difficult and exploring its landscape challenging even under the most controlled circumstances.

Antarctica's glaciers and icebergs are in a perpetual cycle of evolution as they melt, drift, and calve in different patterns, each time readjusting to a new equilibrium.

"Antarctica is a feeling," said Captain Roberto Novoa to his full expedition guests on board the Scenic Eclipse II Discovery yacht. "You can't understand it without experiencing it."

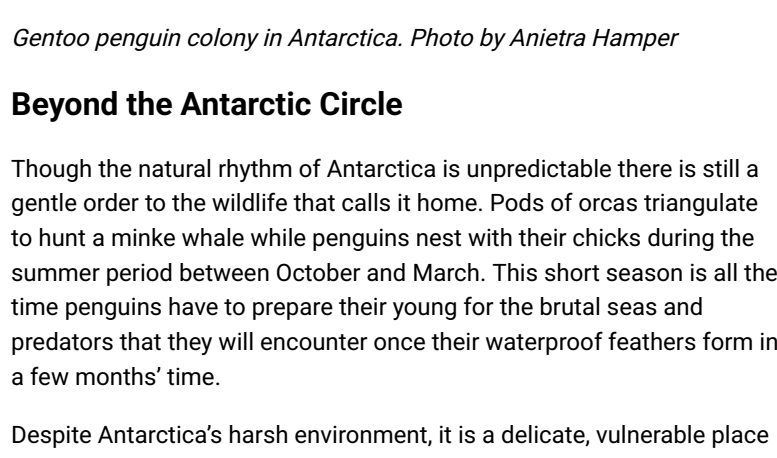


An Antarctic expedition beyond the Antarctic Circle. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

As Antarctic expeditions beyond the Antarctic Circle have become more common, Captain Novoa's sentiments are accurate. While many people have heard about Antarctic expeditions, the percentage of those who have ever embarked on one is small, so an understanding of what the experience entails is unknown to most.

Although the rare opportunity to step aboard the Scenic Eclipse II is just an Antarctic expedition that went beyond the Antarctic Circle (50° S). The only other signs of human life in the region south of the Antarctic Peninsula are a few research stations positioned on the ice-covered mountains.

John Kiefer is an unforgettable journey as he breaks down the experience of a true Antarctic expedition in one of the harshest and most beautiful environments on Earth.

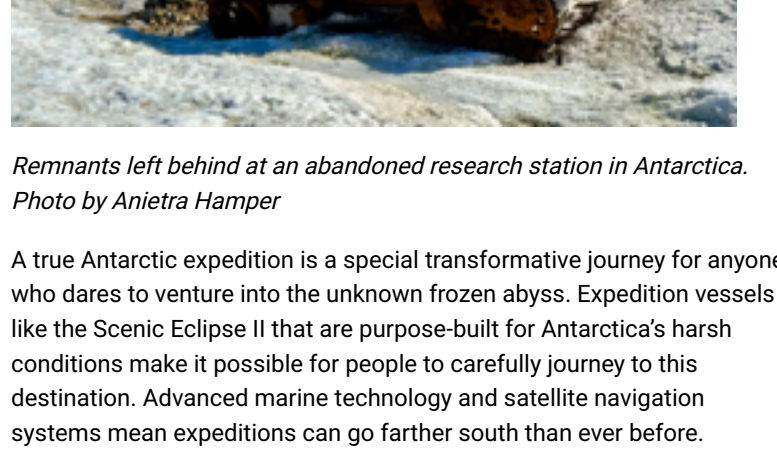


Gentoo penguin colony in Antarctica. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

## Beyond the Antarctic Circle

Though the natural rhythm of Antarctica is unpredictable there is still a gentle order to the wildlife that calls it home. Pods of orcas hang out in the water while penguins nest with their chicks during the summer period between October and March. The short season is all the time managers have to prepare for the influx of tourists and predators that will encounter once their waterproof footwear forms in a few months time.

Despite Antarctica's harsh environment, it is a delicate, vulnerable place worthy of being protected. So while the concept of an expedition, complete with expeditions, is a long-standing tradition, we really do need to be more careful. Every human interaction with the continent by land, or sea, is carefully monitored and managed, visitors must arrive and leave as if they've never been there at all.



Researcher left behind at an abandoned research station in Antarctica. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

A true Antarctic expedition is a special transformative journey for anyone who dares to venture into the unknown from above. Expedition vessels like the Scenic Eclipse II that are purpose-built for Antarctica's harsh conditions make it possible for people to carefully journey to this destination. Advanced marine technology and satellite navigation systems mean expeditions can go further south than ever before.

"Most ships go to the edge of the Antarctic Circle and go home," said Jason Fisher, director of expeditions for Scenic Eclipse. "The Scenic Eclipse is the only ship that goes to the edge of the Antarctic Circle and spends time there where it's a warm environment."

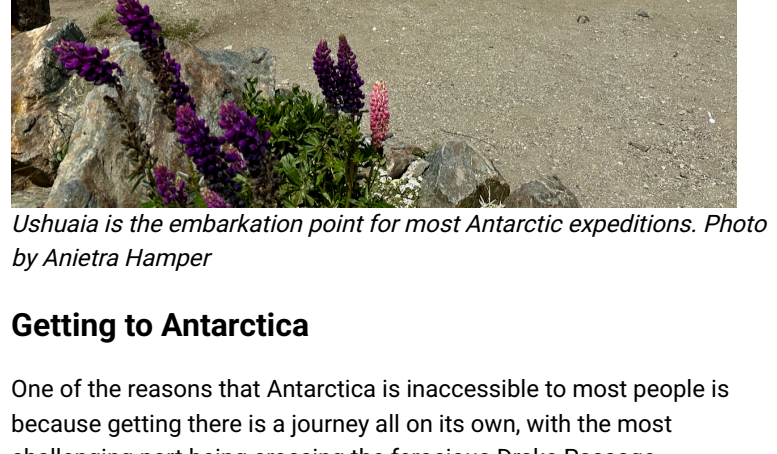
"It's more incredible geology with old research bases and mountains. We want guests to see more, the different penguin species, whales and we can do that by being one of the only ships that can go that far south."



Penguin colony nesting on a beach. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

In these regions, visitors see Adelia penguin colonies, comarctic cormorants, albatrosses, and other birds. Some penguins are seen out as close as 100 meters to the water. Fisheries and other marine resources are protected and monitored to ensure the health of the ecosystem.

An Antarctic expedition offers a lifetime of memories while it's underway. Thinking of any moment you have there, from your own existence on the planet and their responsibility of caring for it.

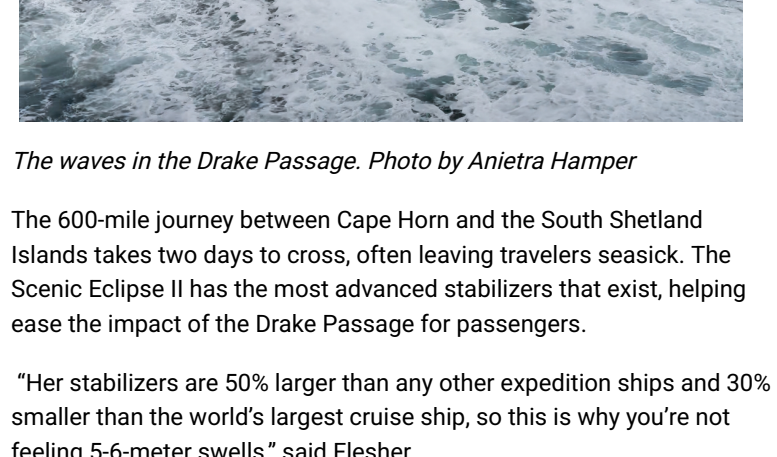


A helicopter landing in Antarctica. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

## Getting to Antarctica

One of the reasons that Antarctica is inaccessible to most people is because getting there is a journey all on its own, with the most challenging part being crossing the treacherous Drake Passage. Guests who embark on the journey start in Ushuaia, Argentina, the most southerly city in the world.

The Drake Passage is a notoriously unforgiving section of water between the southern tip of Argentina and the Antarctic Peninsula. It's named in reputation from the violently churning water where the Atlantic and Pacific oceans collide.

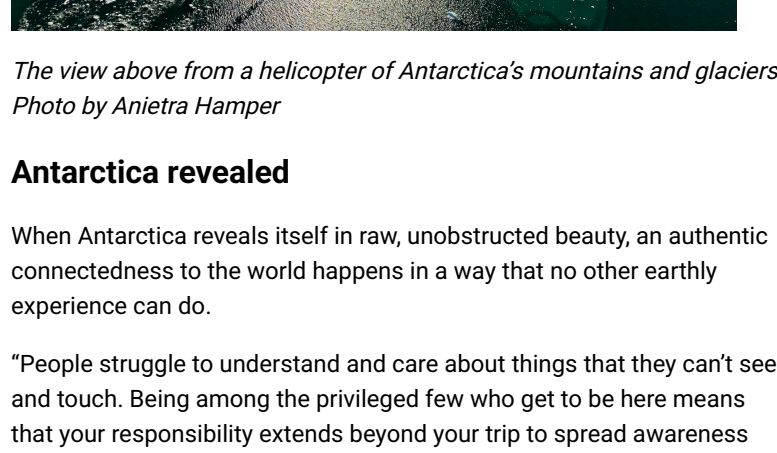


The waves in the Drake Passage. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

The 600-mile journey between Cape Horn and the South Shetland Islands takes two days to cross, often leaving travelers seasick. The Scenic Eclipse II has the most advanced stabilizers that exist, helping ease the impact of the Drake Passage for passengers.

"The stabilizers are 50% larger than any other expedition ships and 50% smaller than the world's largest cruise ship, so this is why you're not being 50 miles sick," said Fisher.

Once through the Drake Passage the scenery becomes one out of an Amazonian photograph where colors look like vibrant shades of white and grey. The first time an open sea leads to open water it's Antarctica's door opening to gently ease adventures into the frozen world that few have seen and even fewer understand.



The view above from a helicopter of Antarctica's mountains and glaciers. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

## Antarctica revealed

When Antarctica reveals itself in raw, unadorned beauty an authentic wilderness to the world happens in a way that no other earthy experience can do.

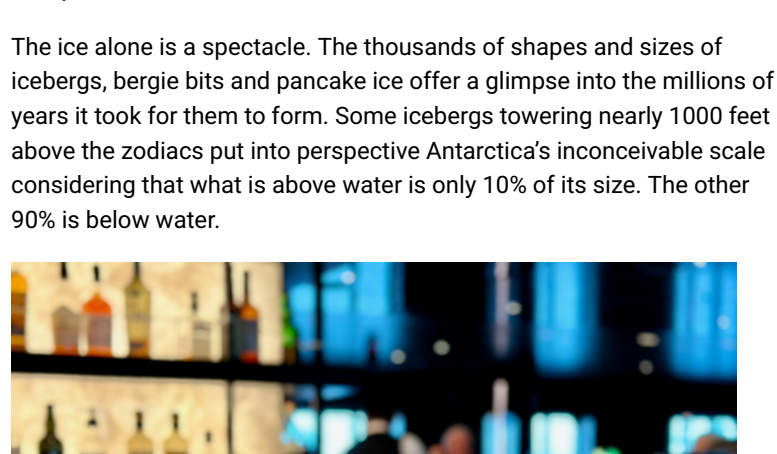
"People struggle to understand and care about things that they can't see and touch. Being among the privileged few who get to be here means that you're really trying to understand beyond just the natural beauty and knowledge about what you've experienced - not just how beautiful it is, but that there is a purpose, a mission, and a responsibility."

said Jon Fuhrman, Discovery leader on board Scenic Eclipse II.



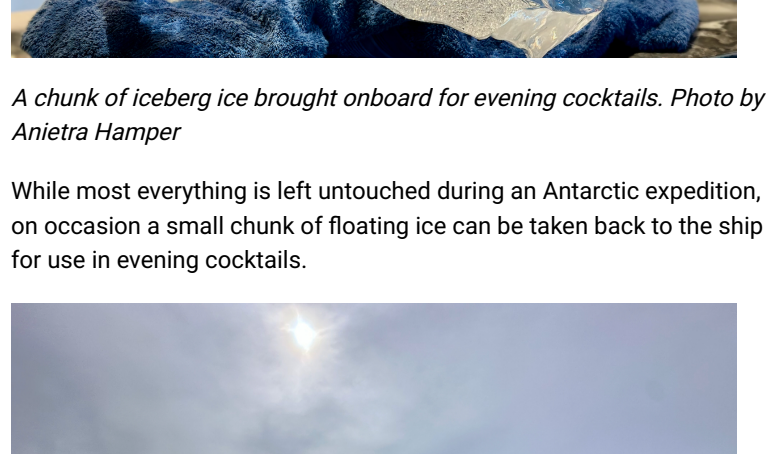
A pod of humpback whales make their way through icebergs. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

Visitors become part of the wild environment as the back on board by floating icebergs eventually penetrate through layers of clothing and they are taken into a quiet corner by the ship's crew. The sound of floating ice bar beneath the pod's. Observing the mountain peaks by helicopter and watching humpbacks whales breaching and frothing on the surface are humbling, emotional and impactful moments.



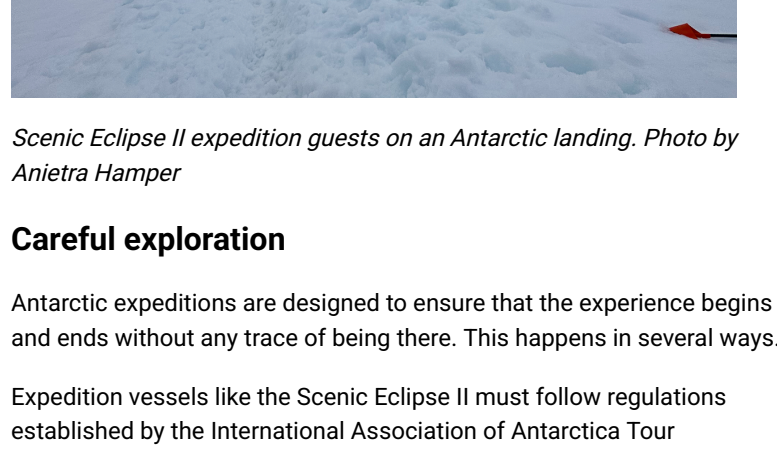
An iceberg emerging nearly 1000 feet above the water. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

The ice above is a spectacle. The thousands of shapes and sizes of icebergs, some like old pyramids, offer a glimpse into the millions of years a look for them to form. Some icebergs towering nearly 1000 feet above the surface are the remnants of ancient mountains. It's incredible to consider that what is above water is only 10% of its size. The other 90% is below water.



A view of icebergs brought onboard for evening cocktails. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

While most everything is left unattached during an Antarctic expedition, on occasion a small chunk of floating ice can be taken back to the ship for use in evening cocktails.



Scenic Eclipse II expedition guests on an Antarctic landing. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

## Careful exploration

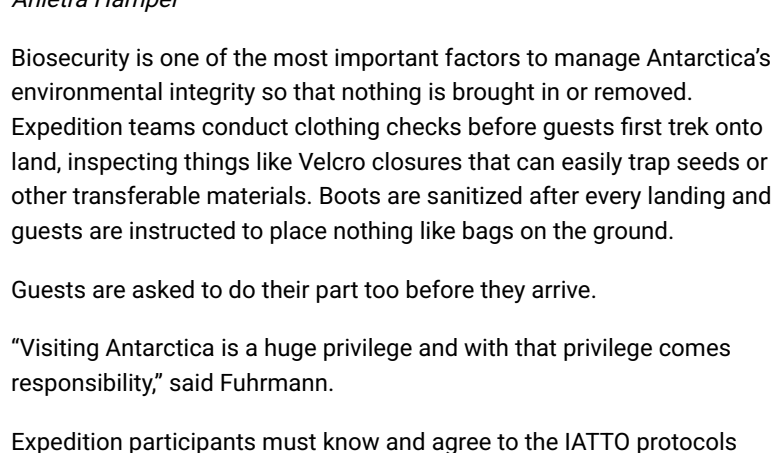
Antarctic expeditions are designed to ensure that the experience begins and ends without any trace of being there. This happens in several ways.

Expedition vessels like the Scenic Eclipse II must follow regulations established by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO). The self-governing body sets rules that enable operators to offer expeditions while minimizing their impact on the environment.

IAATO regulations dictate how many people can be on land at any given time, the distance from which wildlife must be observed and protocols for protecting the continent from litter and invasive species.

The regulations apply to every method of exploring including landing, ashore, complete bushwalking, paddling, kayaking, snowshoeing and submarine dives. Jason Fisher who manages the logistics for Scenic Eclipse has completed 150 voyages to Antarctica and admits that these expeditions are logistically challenging.

"It is a beautifully coordinated ballet," said Fisher. "It's not about how to be in the activity, but how to do it in a way that doesn't harm the land, the sky, the water, the birds, the ice, the snow, the glaciers, the icebergs, the whales, the penguins, the seals and the icebergs."



A view of icebergs brought onboard for evening cocktails. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

Before ascending after a landing as part of discovery protocols. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

Recently one of the most important factors to manage Antarctica's environmental integrity is that clothing is brought in or removed. Expedition teams conduct clothing checks before guests first set foot on land, inspecting things like shoes, clothing, and gear for any seeds or other non-invasive materials. Shoes are cleaned after every landing and guests are instructed to avoid walking on the ice on the ground.

Guests are asked to do their part too before they arrive.

"Visiting Antarctica is a huge privilege and with that privilege comes responsibility," said Fuhrman.

The regulations and protocols are designed to ensure that the IAATO protocols that govern the entire expedition, including the knowledge about Antarctica, and coming prepared with proper clothing for going ashore or being outside for any extended period.

Part of the reason expeditions make such an impact on those who do them is because guests become such an organic part of the process to help Antarctica gain.



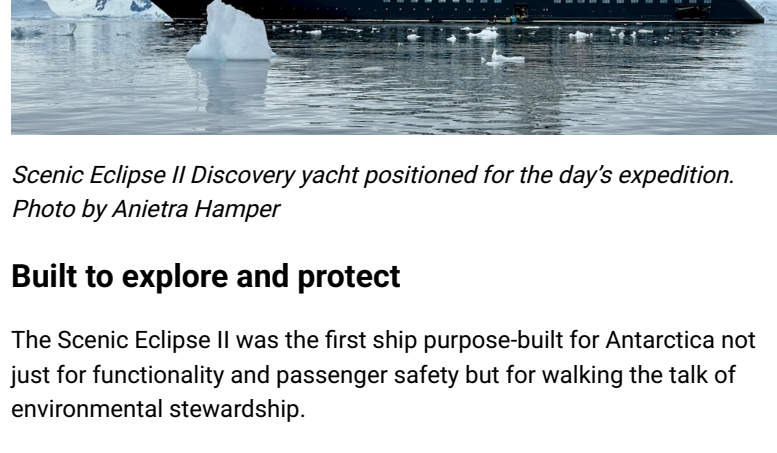
A Scenic Eclipse II expedition guests between land and the ship. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

## Changing conditions and planned expeditions

While every expedition is carefully planned, Antarctica's unpredictability ensures that all plans are subject to change.

Elements unique to the polar region like Antarctic winds and sea ice are some of the real threats that can change the game plan in a minute.

"Catastrophic winds are powerful winds that form at the top of the ice sheets where cold air sinks down and gets funneled through glacial valleys that cut onto the ocean," said Fuhrman.

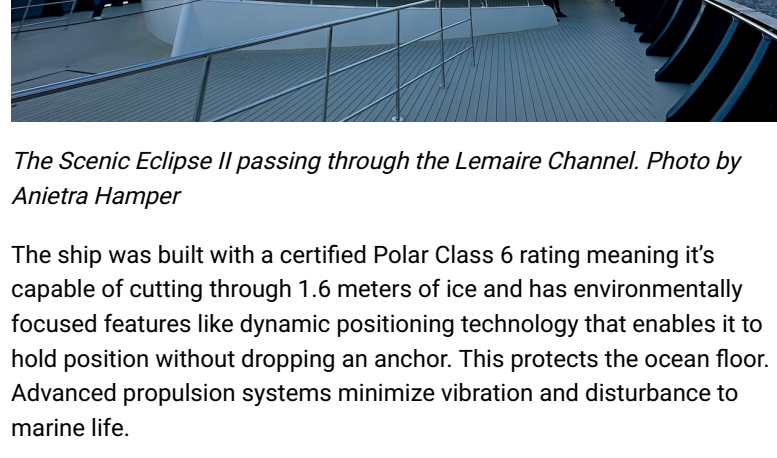


A view of icebergs brought onboard for evening cocktails. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

## Build to explore and protect

The Scenic Eclipse II was the first ship purpose-built for Antarctica not just for functionality and passenger safety but for walking the talk of environmental friendliness.

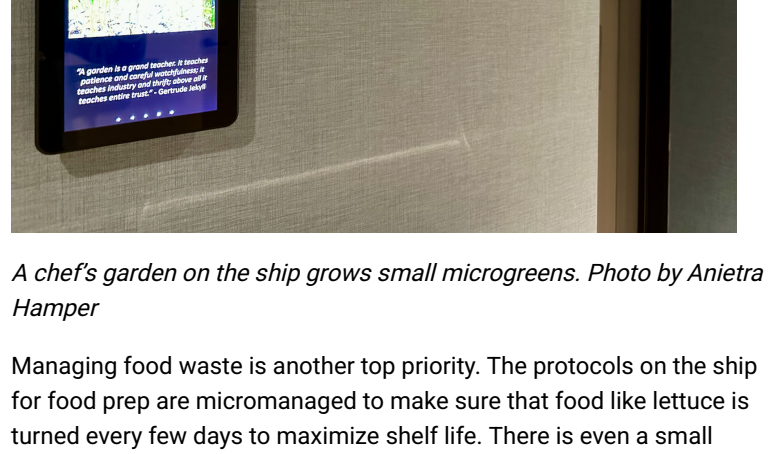
The ship and crew operate under a set of Greenish Planet initiatives that help minimize human impact on Antarctica's already pristine environment.



The Scenic Eclipse II passing through the Lemaire Channel. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

The ship was built with a certified Proton Grade 16mm meaning it's capable of getting through 1.5 meters of ice and has environmentally friendly features like dynamic positioning technology that enables it to hold position without dropping an anchor. The ship's ocean floor, advanced propulsion systems minimize vibration and disturbance to marine life.

Wastewater on the ship is treated before being discharged and a ballast water treatment system ensures that no invasive species are transferred. Everything on the ship including the furniture is purchased from certified green companies and both the Scenic Eclipse and the Scenic Eclipse II are on track to become carbon-neutral by 2025.

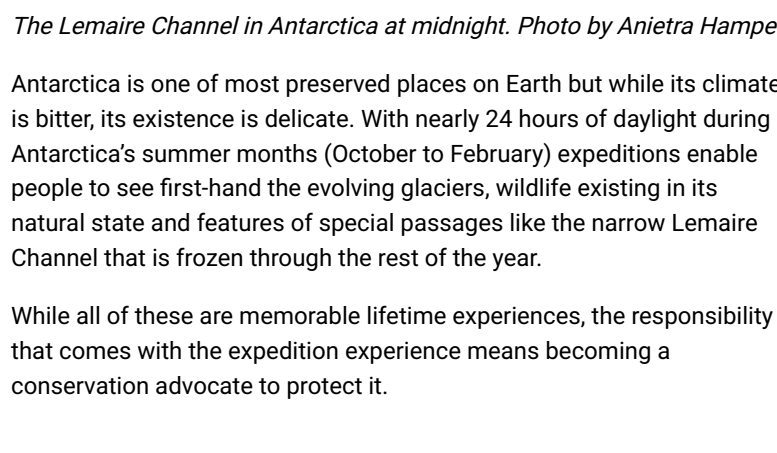


A night's guests on the ship grown under microscopes. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

Managing food waste is another top priority. The protocol on the ship for food prep and consumption is designed to ensure that no waste is left behind. Only food that is necessary for the crew is kept. There are even small microplastics gaskets onboard to give guests and help.

"Planning a trip" isn't just about booking a ticket, it's about understanding the conditions for Scenic Eclipse II. "We plan up three to four months ahead especially for being in those remote areas and for things like produce that have a limited shelf life."

The ship's environmental officer oversees culinary logistics that are necessary for keeping expeditions that are aligned with the company's commitment to come and go without any trace of being there.



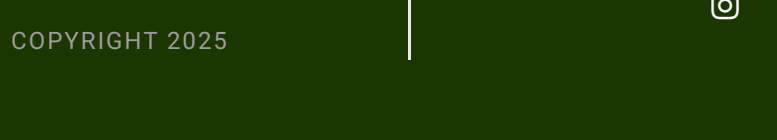
A view of icebergs brought onboard for evening cocktails. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

The Lemaire Channel in Antarctica at midnight. Photo by Anetra Harmpar

Antarctica is one of our planet's most precious places on Earth but while it's remote is better, its existence is delicate. With nearly 24 hours of daylight during Antarctica's summer months (October to February) expeditions enable people to see first-hand the evolving glaciers, wildlife watching in its natural state and features of special significance like the narrow Lemaire Channel that is frozen the rest of the year.

While all of these are memorable lifetime experiences, the responsibility that comes with the expedition experience means becoming a conservation advocate to protect it.

## RECOMMENDED



Book Talk: 'The Art of Ship Talk' with James Paul  
Book Talk: 'The Dawn Patrol' with James Paul  
Book Talk: 'North American Odyssey' with Amy and Dave Freeman

By HEATHER RIVERLIN

By KERRY JAY

By HEATHER RIVERLIN