

WAKING UP TO ANTARCTIC - SENSORY OVERDRIVE

One would like to be a humungous sponge right now so I can absorb further all that I see, I smell, I hear, I sense and I feel.

The body is in overdrive trying to soak it all in, perhaps something like a pincushion, all the pins jabbing you with all the different amazing sights and encounters.

How does one take in such sensory overdrive and absorb it to its optimum, --believe me it's quite exhausting but I love it. I know all the crew are feeling the same.

After just returning in the RIB, I am on a high like no other, after snorkelling with two humpback whales. A large adult and a calf cruised past me in the waters outside Half Moon Island not far from Seamaster. How wonderful it is to be able to visit and share these waters with them.

So huge but graceful and quiet, they glided beneath me just a few meters below and the only sounds I heard were their spouts when surfacing plus my rapid breathing and heart pounding.

How many people in the world have been able to share such an experience. Perhaps if more had we would not still see their slaughter. How can anyone harm these glorious creatures of such grace and beauty? It's puzzling to me.

If I dwell on it right now, my mood will turn sour and to one of anger, so I will not, and just spare a brief thought for the future and our endeavours to prevent such atrocities.

Perhaps a wee poem might reflect my feelings better at this time.

Alone out here upon the sea
Mind drifts from times we've had
Till times to be
My care for you
Filled with desire
Burns through my blood
Like a raging fire.

Since arriving in Antarctic one finds it hard to sleep. It's not because the nights are so short, but more that there is so much going on around. The sights one sees are exhilarating, overawing and breathtaking. Every moment is like a new beginning and we have only just arrived and begun our travels through the region. One thinks on departure from an area, --how could you ever better that?-- but then just around the corner something even more spectacular appears or happens. When sleep does come it is usually deep.

I cannot remember how many days we have been here and truthfully haven't dwelled on it too much. The nights are short with gorgeous sunsets and the sunrise equally beautiful is only a short time after. Days seem to rush by almost like a time-lapse film sequence on a large 360-degree panoramic surround-sound movie screen. Oh, the wonderful sights and sounds.

I do not think I can do it all justice here on paper however one must try.

Since arriving, I have cruised around the magnificently sculptured ice bergs both large and small, guided Seamaster through ice flows, watched the howling winds and snow race down over us from the mountains, sat on the deck as snow flakes showered and covered the whole vessel, heard the roar and watched Glaciers as they broke away and fell into the sea, sat and listened to the wonderful sound of ice bergs cracking and bubbling in the night, dived in the clear freezing waters, sat amongst and swum with the penguins, laid on bergy-bits with the seals, had close up visits (almost like ballet dances) from the notoriously savage leopard seal and now this evening have swum with humpback whales.

I have probably missed something but you, can imagine why. Its all bit much to consume and to try and portray to our friends and supporters around the world.

As well as all this we continue with the daily routines onboard of maintaining and operating the lady that cradles us in her arms. "Seamaster". I thought she was great during the trip from New Zealand but oh what a ship she is down here. She is in her element.

To absorb all we are seeing further, our onboard cameras are always prepared and seldom leave my hands; I have captured some wonderful sights and am beginning to wonder if I have enough film left. A camera is set up for every occasion wet or dry so quick response is possible. One cannot miss the opportunity to record these wonderful events. Additionally now we have the film crew with us so if you're seeing the log, you can imagine all the fantastic footage taken every day.

We have a long way to go and many further sights to see and record before leaving these waters. As usual Peter and Don works tirelessly to complete the daily logs so it is a good feeling for me to write a few lines to assist.

I have watched over the years, the wonderful films and videos made of the Antarctic and always wanted to visit, but had never imagined how much of a paradise, an oasis in this world of ours it could be.

It is truly an amazing place and I hope we do it justice in our portrayal to the outside world. I would like to think that we can all share this beauty in harmony for generations to come.