

## **A Journey to Antarctica Courtesy of Scenic Eclipse**

My journey began with being chauffeured from home in Dundee to Edinburgh Airport. The BA check-in went well but my seat for the onward flight to Buenos Aires was not available. No worries, BA knew I was on my way.

After a good flight and a slightly early arrival at Heathrow, but at a different stance than normal, I headed for 'transfers' only to be told this was a different terminal. Checking-in, BA recognised me but indicated there was a seating problem thanks to 'over-booking'. A mad dash followed to a different terminal, to find the right gate and join the queue. Called to the head of the queue, a BA rep told me I had been downgraded to Premium Economy but sweetened the pill with a credit card worth £200, telling me to make a full claim later.

At least with a seat, albeit not as comfortable as expected, it was more important to arrive on time at Buenos Aires, where a Scenic representative met passengers for the transfer to our Sofitel Hotel. This was well-located. The weather was not great so I settled down in a nice bar / restaurant called La Briella and was happy. The racing driver, Juan Fangio, was apparently a regular in this bar which has many pictures and pieces of memorabilia associated with him. All the staff were dressed in white shirts and black aprons and the bar is worth sampling for its décor and style. A 3.30 am transfer to the airport for the flight to Ushuaia meant an early-to-bed evening.

Ushuaia airport is small but serviceable and our transfer to the ship took in the sights of Ushuaia with various photo stops. Embarked on to the "Scenic Eclipse" and settled into my cabin, there was time to walk back into town for some window shopping in the rain.

Our cruise began with navigation of the Drake Passage, before we dropped anchor next day off Half Moon Island, in the South Shetland Islands. Our first excursion, by zodiac, took place that afternoon and included a walk in the snow and the chance to take pictures of the penguins and seals - a great first experience of what Antarctica had to offer.



A day later, we arrived at Brown Bluff on the Arctic Peninsula for our first walk on the continent. This is an important geological site demonstrating how the volcanic rocks had been expelled to create hexagonal structures which, with time, had been shifted from vertical to almost horizontal. A number of Adele and Gentoo penguins were sighted. The afternoon was spent on Devil Island. The following day was spent exploring the Weddell Sea around James Ross and Seymour Islands followed by Snow Hill. We saw various penguins, and Weddell and leopard seals – all followed by a helicopter trip on a bright clear day, giving fantastic views of parts of island, sea ice and the ship at anchor.



A day later we landed on Astrolabe Island, then anchored off Lindblad Cove between Almond Point and Auster Point in Charcot Bay, in the afternoon. On then to Neko Harbour for our second mainland landing in Andvord Bay. In the afternoon we landed at the Almirante Brown Argentinian Antarctic Station. It appeared not to be occupied at the time.

Our penultimate day saw a morning visit to Spert Island and afternoon landing at D'Hainaut Island in Mikkelson Harbour. That evening there was a trip in a submersible to a depth of 140m to see the seabed with some different starfish. We spotted one ice fish and later had an encounter with a large jellyfish. This was not good for the jellyfish as parts of its tendrils were caught in the propeller and chopped off. Fortunately, the main body appeared unaffected and drifted away. As we rose, we avoided all contact with another large jellyfish.

On Deception Island we saw the remains of a station before sailing to Livingston Island for a With no further landings planned, we returned Passage to see Cape Horn and back to



former whaling further landing. via Drake Ushuaia.

With three landings on the mainland of Antarctica and several landings on various islands, one helicopter flight and a dive in a submersible, what more could one ask for?

Well it doesn't stop one! Remember my downgrade? Having contacted BA about the further compensation, I was informed that since my booking was through a "third party agent" they would have to lodge the complaint. Scenic's ticketing section took up my case and I received handsome compensation. Ample enough to have a break in some sunnier clime at an off-peak period!