

Travel Journal – Volume 1 Palm Springs, CA and Buenos Aires, Argentina

Friday, November 10 to Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Hi everyone. We're traveling again after having to cancel our trip to Europe last month. Lori was supposed to go to Sardinia, Italy with Julia on a weeklong yoga retreat, and I was then going to meet Lori for visits to Paris, Lyon and Berlin. However, a bike crash at Ironman Chattanooga that left me with a broken collarbone and five broken ribs put an end to those plans. Julia still went on the yoga trip and had a great time. I had surgery to put my collarbone back together, and Lori played her role as an excellent nurse.

This weekend we traveled to Palm Springs, California for Simon and Haley Hacker's wedding. Simon is our friends Jill and Steven Hacker's son. Michael was a groomsman in the wedding. The wedding was beautiful, and we had a great time in Palm Springs. On Monday morning we made our way to LAX and flew through Atlanta and on to Buenos Aires, Argentina on an overnight flight.

Tuesday, November 14 - Buenos Aires

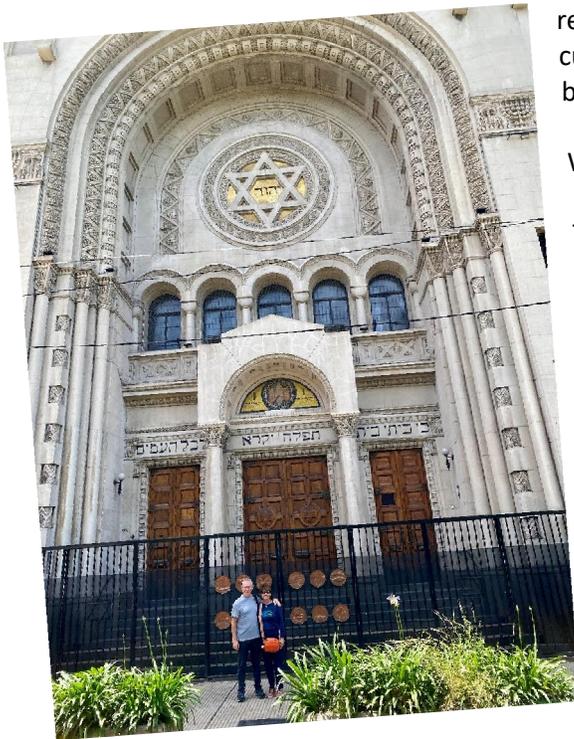
We arrived in Buenos Aires this morning. We were supposed to meet up with our friends Debi and Andy Weisman, but Debi caught COVID, and they had to cancel their trip. So we're on our own this time.

Buenos Aires is the capital and primary city of Argentina, located on South America's southeastern coast. It's known for its preserved eclectic European architecture and rich cultural life. However, Argentina is currently an economic basket case. Inflation is currently running at 140% annually and is expected to remain high for a while. The country is in a recession and GDP is contracting in 2023. Exports are suffering from a severe crop drought. And on top of that, recent elections failed to elect a president because no candidate received enough votes. For a country that used to be the seventh largest economy in the world because of its rich natural resources, great internal river system, good education system, strong agricultural base, and presence of oil, it's a mess. **WARNING:** politicians and governments can ruin a good thing if they can't get their shit together.



After dropping our luggage off at our hotel we spent the rest of the morning walking around Buenos Aires before returning to the hotel to nap. Having been studying Spanish diligently for the past four years, I now realize how little progress I've made. Even ordering a cup of coffee at a café was a challenge. What a waste of time! For dinner we ate at Don Julio, a famous restaurant known for its Argentinian steaks and at the top of every list of top





restaurants in Latin America. The steak was delicious, and so tender I was cutting it with the wrong side of the knife for the first half of the meal before realizing it.

Wednesday, November 15 - Buenos Aires

Today we toured Buenos Aires with Ernesto Yattah, who was our tour guide when we were in Buenos Aires in 2019. Ernesto is a tour guide, rabbi, college dean and historian. Of all the tour guides we've ever had on all our trips, Ernesto was the best, and he didn't disappoint today. He took us to places we didn't visit in 2019, including the Libertad Street Synagogue and Jewish Museum; the Buenos Aires Holocaust Museum; the Palermo and Belgrano neighborhoods; and the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary. Ernesto presents the history of Argentina in an interesting way, making it easy to understand the past and present conditions here. Keeping with the Jewish theme, we had dinner at Mishiguene, a popular restaurant that offers modern spins on Jewish immigrant cooking. My Spanish was much improved today, able to "converse" with waiters and taxi drivers, so I'm feeling better about that.

Thursday, November 16 - Buenos Aires

Today we were able to sleep in a little later than usual. We returned to the Palermo neighborhood and did a lunchtime food tour, visiting four different restaurants and sampling at least a dozen different foods and wines typical of Buenos Aires, including Malbec wine from the Mendoza area of Argentina at every stop. Maybe a little too much Malbec wine. In the evening we went to a Tango Dinner & Show, where we watched traditional Argentine Tango dancing, had dinner, and of course, more Malbec wine.

Tomorrow we're off to the southern tip of South America to board a cruise to Antarctica. Watch for our next journal covering the next stage of our trip in a few days.

Love, Lori and Stephen



Travel Journal – Volume 2 Ushuaia, Argentina and Antarctica

Friday, November 17, 2023 – Ushuaia, Argentina

After going to bed sometime after 1am, we woke up at 3:45am this morning to catch a 4:40am transfer to the Buenos Aires airport for a 7am three-hour flight to Ushuaia, Argentina. That's not enough sleep.

Ushuaia is located on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, the southernmost tip of South America, and because it is the southernmost city in the world, it's aptly nicknamed the "End of the World." It's the gateway to Antarctica cruises and the Tierra del Fuego National Park, where we spent the day learning about how earth, wind and fire (nature, not the R&B band from the 70's and 80's) played a role in this part of the world.

We then boarded and departed on an 11-night expedition cruise aboard the Atlas World Voyager, on which we'll cross the Antarctic Circle and visit Antarctica and the South Shetland Islands with 120 other passengers.

But first, for the next two days, we need to cross the Drake Passage, the body of water between South America's Cape Horn and the South Shetland Islands. It connects the southwestern part of the Atlantic Ocean with the southeastern part of the Pacific Ocean and extends into the Southern Ocean. The passage is named after the 16th-century English explorer and privateer Sir Francis Drake and is considered one of the most treacherous voyages for ships to make. Currents meet no resistance from any landmass, and waves can top 40 feet, hence its reputation as "the most powerful convergence of seas" on earth. In other words, it can be VERY ROUGH SAILING. We're hoping and praying for calm conditions, but we still have all sorts of motion sickness remedies including pills, patches, wrist bands and ginger chews.



This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Saturday, November 18 - Sunday, November 19
- Drake Passage Navigation

After our prayers for calm seas were ignored, we spent these two days doing the shake, rattle and roll (waves, not the Bill Haley song from the 1950's) in 10–15-foot seas. Our time was spent praying for it to be over, getting fitted for our parkas and boots, attending lectures on Antarctica, attending meetings on how our expeditions off the ship in Zodiacs will work, spotting icebergs and whales, and meeting other passengers, but mostly praying for the crossing to be over.

Monday, November 20 - Exploring Antarctica

We woke up this morning after a night of calm seas to a beautifully sunny day, with temperatures in the low 30's, and within a stone's throw of the shoreline. Since there aren't any docking facilities in Antarctica, we'll use zodiacs from our ship to explore the coast and for shore landings, hopefully coming close to wildlife including penguins and seals.

Antarctica, the southernmost continent and site of the South Pole, is a virtually uninhabited, ice-covered landmass. It's the only continent with no permanent human habitation. There are, however, permanent human settlements, where scientists and support staff live for part of the year on a rotating basis. Last year over 70,000 tourists visited Antarctica, with an emphasis on keeping the continent pristine and leaving no trace of their visit. There are no bathrooms on Antarctica, which means that every single one of those 70,000 tourists had to hold it in until they returned to their ship. This is not the place to visit if you have a weak bladder or any bowel issues.



Our first expedition was to Mikkelsen Harbor, where we took zodiacs ashore and encountered thousands of penguins, two seals lounging on the ice and an abandoned Argentinian research facility populated by penguins. We humans kept our distance from the wildlife; and the penguins didn't seem to mind us wandering around. We were able to spend one hour walking between the rookeries, where the penguins breed, nest, and raise their young.



All those little dots are penguins

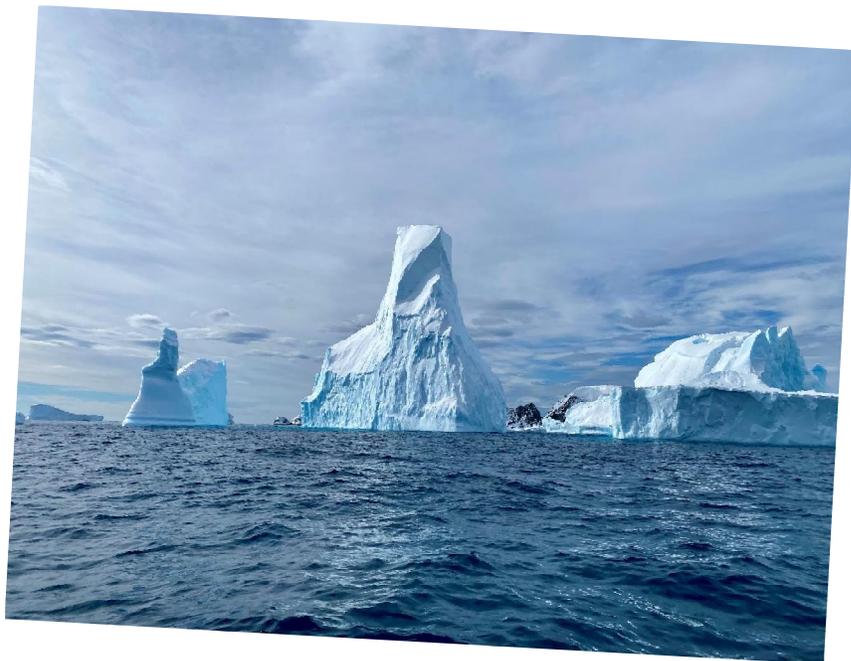
After returning to the ship and having lunch, we set off for our second expedition of the day to Spert Island, where we stayed in the zodiacs and explored the shoreline and saw some of the largest icebergs we've ever seen in our lives. They were HUGE! In fact, more than 98% of Antarctica is covered with ice. This makes it the largest ice sheet in the world, with Greenland coming in second. It is estimated that Antarctica contains around 90% of the world's ice, and if it all melted, sea levels would rise by around 200 feet. And we'd all be dead or good swimmers.



Antarctica fun fact: A total of eleven babies have been born in Antarctica, and none of them died as infants. This makes Antarctica the continent with the lowest infant mortality rate of any continent: 0%.

Thanks for reading. Look for the next journal in a few days.

Love, Lori and Stephen



Travel Journal – Volume 3 Antarctica

Tuesday, November 21 - Exploring Antarctica

There is an Inuit proverb “Sliá Sigou Tlou Nalaket” which means “Weather and Ice Are the Masters.” Flexibility has been the key to enjoying this expedition, as the weather and ice are always shifting and unpredictable in Antarctica. We were supposed to spend the morning onshore in Orne



Harbor, but when we arrived the entrance to the harbor was completely iced in, making it impossible for us to enter. So the captain diverted and headed to Patagonia



Bay, where we cruised around the bay in zodiacs, spotting one Humpback whale, a few seals lounging on the ice and a lone Gentoo penguin. That’s pretty good, considering the short notice the

animals had of our change of plans. In the afternoon we repositioned and did another zodiac cruise around the Melchior Islands, a group of islands off the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. It includes numerous small, ice-covered islands, on which we saw an Argentinian



*Antarctic Shag/Antarctic Cormoran
Moon in sky behind bird not photoshopped*

research compound that studies climate change, glaciers, huge icebergs and ice formations, a few penguins, native birds, and some seals.

As you can see from the photos, the weather has been terrific. So far, we’ve had mostly bright sunny days with calm seas, something very unusual for Antarctica. We had a storm with 80-knot

hurricane-force winds a couple nights ago while eating dinner, and it provided a bit of a show outside while we were all safely in the ship. The wind was blowing so hard the sea spray was obscuring the ice in the water, making it difficult to navigate. The only person unhappy about that was the captain, hoping to avoid a Titanic situation. We survived.

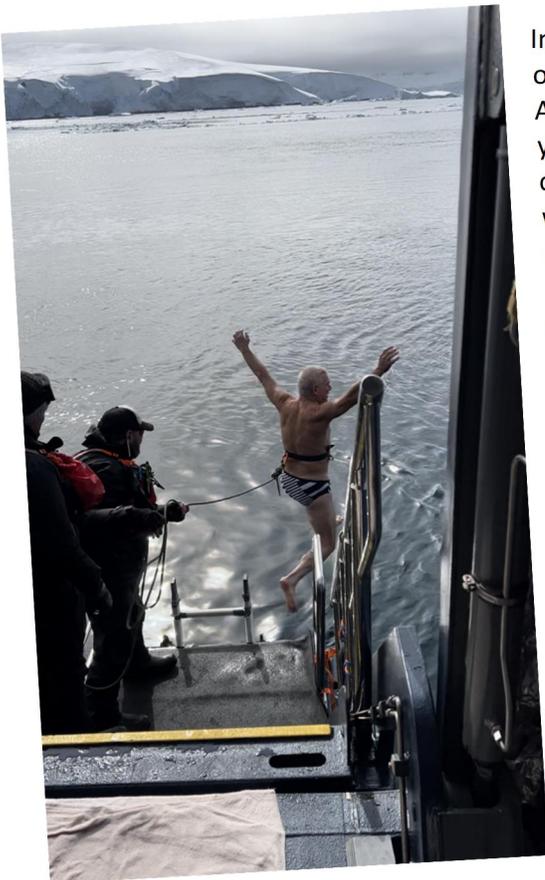


Wednesday, November 22 - Exploring Antarctica

We woke up at 6am this morning expecting to view remarkable vistas as we navigated through the Le Maire Strait. Instead, we saw the ship turning around because the path was completely blocked with ice. According to the captain, he turned around just in time, as fog descended on the area and created zero visibility. Conditions dictate where we can and cannot go, and flexibility continues to be the theme of this expedition. As we continued towards our next stop, the captain informed us that the storm from a couple nights ago had dislodged so much ice that going farther south would be impossible and that we wouldn't be able to cross the Antarctic Circle on this voyage, as we were all hoping. While that's a bit of a disappointment, he's the captain and responsible for the ship, so it's his decision. He didn't ask us what we thought.



The Antarctic Circle is the imaginary circle around the earth, parallel to the equator, that marks the point at which the sun remains above the horizon constantly for 24 hours in the summer and below the horizon constantly for 24 hours in the winter. Regardless, it's been light out all day and night. Most of Antarctica experiences 6 months of constant daylight in summer and 6 months of darkness in winter. Also, interestingly, there is no Antarctic time zone. At the South Pole the lines of longitude, which give us different time zones around the globe, all meet at a single point.



Instead of a zodiac cruise or landing today, we were all offered the opportunity to do a "Polar Plunge." That's basically jumping into the Antarctica water from a platform on the ship, then climbing out as fast as you can. Since the water was a warm 23 degrees Fahrenheit today, I couldn't pass it up. I even bought and wore a Speedo for the plunge. Lori wasn't feeling great, so she passed. HIPA laws prevent me from telling you more about her condition (nothing serious). 80 of the 120 passengers did it.

As we mark the 60th anniversary of JFK's assassination today and two weeks of traveling so far for us, I have to say it's been a pleasure not having the news and politics in our faces constantly. In 1959, in an act of global unity, twelve countries (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States) signed the Antarctic Treaty, which established that the region south of 60°S latitude remain politically neutral; no nation or group of people can claim to any part of the Antarctic as territory; countries cannot use the region for military purposes or to dispose of radioactive waste; and research can only be done for peaceful purposes. There is no official flag of Antarctica since it is not a country nor governed by any authority. That treaty lasts until 2059, and there's no telling what will be after that, so plan your visit now before we fuck it up.

Thanks for reading. Look for the next journal in a few days.
Love, Lori and Stephen

Travel Journal – Volume 4 Antarctica



Thursday, November 23 - Exploring Antarctica

We woke up this Thanksgiving morning in Orne Harbor to a beautiful 28-degree day. This is the place that we tried to go to two days ago, but it was completely iced in. As the ice is always shifting, it's cleared since then and there was no problem getting there today. We took the zodiacs ashore for our first "continental" landing. So far, we've only landed on offshore islands, but this landing was on the Antarctica Peninsula mainland. We hiked up a snowy hill to the top, where there was a beautiful view of the harbor and of course a penguin colony. After returning to the ship for lunch, we repositioned and went ashore on Danco Island and did another hike in the snow amongst more colonies of penguins.

Friday, November 24 - Exploring Antarctica

Another day, another hike in the snow to see more penguins. This morning it was at Palaver Point on the west side of Two Hummock Island, in the Palmer Archipelago, to see Chinstrap penguins, a different breed than the Gentoo penguins we've been seeing. After lunch we went to Hydrurga Rocks, lying east of Two Hummock Island. They were named by the UK Antarctic Place-Names Committee in 1960 after *Hydrurga leptonyx*, the leopard seal, one of the top predators in Antarctica and one of the most aggressive of all marine predators. This nine-foot, 900-pound animal has unusually long, sharp teeth, which it uses to tear into prey such as penguins, fish, and other seals. Hydrurga Rocks offered another hike in the snow to view Chinstrap penguins, Weddell seals, a fur seal, and different types of birds (Petrels and Shags).



Saturday, November 25 - Exploring the South Shetland Islands

We made our way north last night towards the South Shetland Islands to arrive at Penguin Island this morning. The South Shetland Islands are a group of Antarctic islands that lie about 65 nautical miles north of the Antarctic Peninsula. They are volcanic, primarily mountainous, and approximately 80 percent glaciated. Today is the last day of our expeditions before setting sail for two days crossing of the Drake Passage back to Ushuaia and our flights home.

Landing conditions on the shore of Penguin Island were too rocky, and there were penguins and seals near the landing site, so we instead went for a



zodiac cruise along the shoreline so we wouldn't disturb the wildlife. We observed Adelie penguins (a third species for us), Elephant seals, and various birds. Due to deteriorating weather conditions with winds starting to blow at 40 knots, our afternoon expedition was cancelled, so we headed towards the Drake Passage back to Ushuaia this afternoon. We're expecting similar conditions on the way back, with seas reportedly having 10–15-foot waves. I already put my seasickness patch behind my ear last night because I was starting to feel the waves then.



If you've been paying attention, you'll know that we saw penguins everywhere. They're all over the place. There are an estimated 70 million penguins in Antarctica with 18 different species. They take over a place with their colonies. They're loud and shit everywhere. Their shit stinks up the place. If anyone was living nearby, these flightless birds would be run off or slaughtered. Greta Thornberg would start a "Save the Penguins" campaign. But this is Antarctica, and no one lives here. Penguins would be a nuisance anywhere else. **Here they're the**



main attraction. Yes, it's beautiful in Antarctica, but if there weren't any penguins here, no one would visit. It's cold, far away, there's no cell phone service and you must sail through the most treacherous water in the world to get there. On top of that there's a hole on the ozone layer which makes it very dangerous for your skin. All just to see those adorable penguins.

Sunday, November 26 and Monday, November 27 - Drake Passage Navigation

I'm writing this journal entry as we cross the Drake Passage today and tomorrow. The sea was so rough last night that people were confined to their cabins for fear that they'd be seriously hurt walking around or washed overboard if they

ventured onto the outside deck, then strapped to their beds to not be thrown into the ceiling while sleeping. Everything on the deck that wasn't bolted down was washed overboard. No food could be served because the waves were so violent nothing could be placed on the tables without being thrown across the dining room. Everyone, including the crew and even the captain was seasick. Water was coming in through the windows. It was crazy...I'm just kidding. It's bad, just not that bad. Seas are 10-18 feet with swells to 25 feet. Plates and glasses are flying off the tables in the dining room and it's impossible to walk in the straight line. We'll be attending some lectures on Antarctica presented by the expedition leaders and hanging out with some new friends we met on the cruise. We arrive in Ushuaia Tuesday morning to catch our plane back to Buenos Aires, then an overnight flight back to Miami.

We had a terrific time in Antarctica. The land is beautiful and unspoiled, and we got to see penguins and seals and birds in their natural habitat. We would highly recommend Atlas Ocean Voyages if you're looking for an active expedition vacation. Their crew and expedition leaders are excellent, and the food and accommodations are first-class. I hope you enjoyed reading about our Antarctica expedition as much as we enjoyed taking it. We've enjoyed sharing it with you.

Until our next trip,
Lori and Stephen