

The Antarctic

with The Antarctic Company



The Antarctic
ALBUM

Cape Town 2011

Welcome to Antarctica...



...a magical continent of massive glaciers, pristine snow, sparkling blue ice-caves, howling blizzards, beautifully rugged mountains, without a permanent human population far away from crowded, bustling cities, home to penguins and seals - one of the last real wilderness areas of our World.

Antarctica is unlike any other place on Earth: a vast desert of ice, hostile and remote but the same time attractive and stunningly beautiful. The Antarctic Company invites you to a pictorial journey to the great white desert. Get to know more about this unique continent and our activities and find out why people fall so easily under Antarctica's spell.



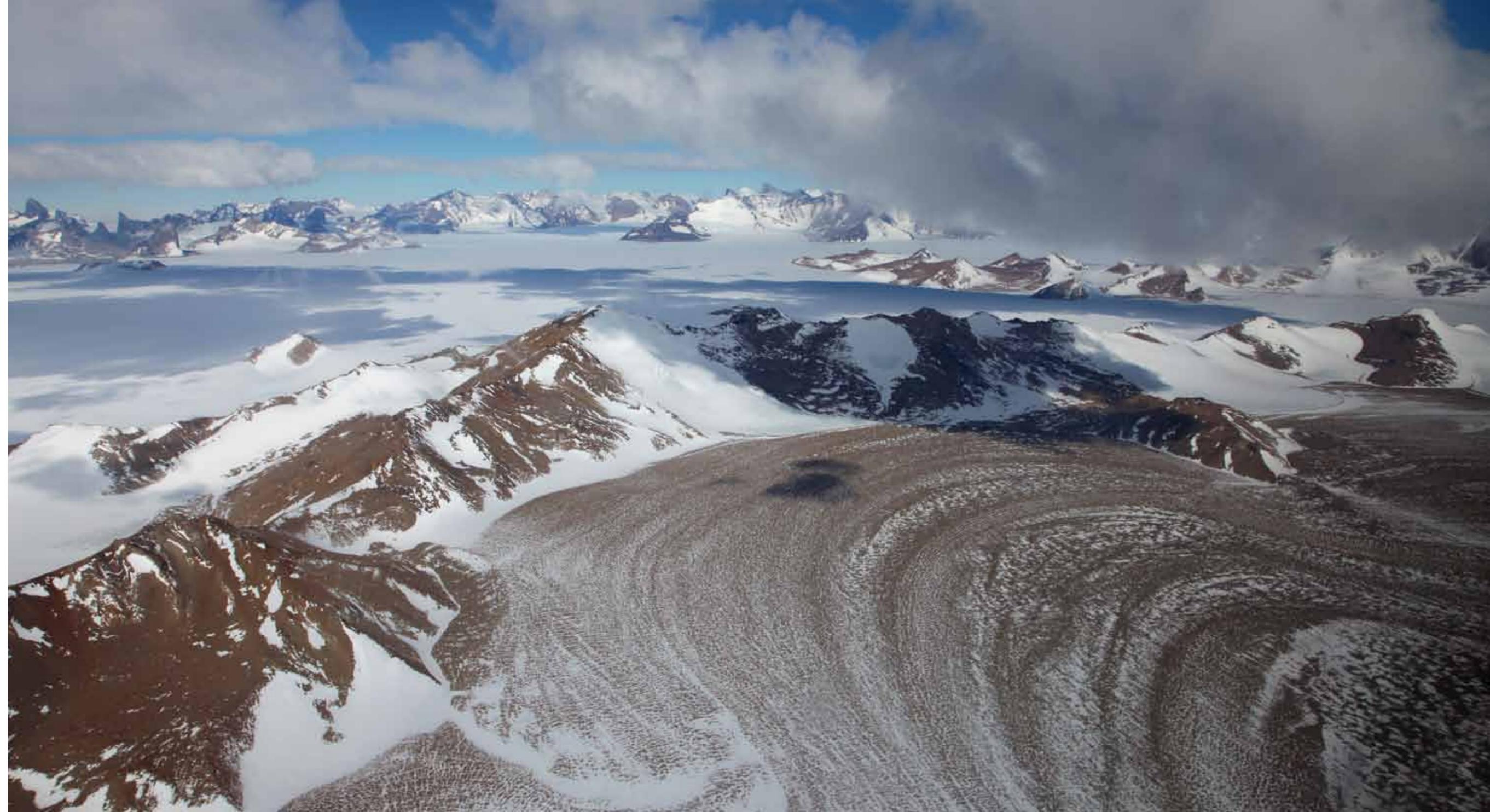
Antarctica's remote location and challenging environment always inspired people to new adventures, made them undertake journeys fraught with perils but with rewards of new discoveries and memories of the Antarctic beauty.

The Antarctic Company (TAC)

makes it possible to experience the wonders of Antarctica in safety and comfort and makes sure that every Antarctic trip or expedition will be a hassle-free, spectacular, once-in-a-lifetime adventure. From the TAC main office in Cape Town we plan and co-ordinate all our trips and expeditions. Our guests will have the great opportunity to experience within a few hours the difference between a sunny, warm, lush, colorful, bustling African city and the cold, pristine, sparkling, vast ice-desert of Antarctica.

Even nowadays with detailed knowledge of the polar environment and all advantages of modern technology, Antarctic travel is still potentially dangerous but the vast experience of TAC's personnel and their deep understanding of the polar environment ensure highest safety standards and reduce the risk to a minimum. A well established search and rescue and medical evacuation system allows fast and efficient response in the unlikely event of an emergency.

To protect the sensitive Antarctic environment with its fauna and flora and to keep it in its pristine state is of paramount importance for us. One of our major aims is to educate our guests and raise awareness of the fragility and uniqueness of the Antarctic ecosystem. All our operations are carried out in accordance to the regulations of the Antarctic Treaty, the Environmental Protocol and related agreements. The Antarctic Treaty is an international agreement which entered into force in 1961 and now has 48 member countries representing about 80% of the World's population.



Many additional agreements and regulations were implemented to protect Antarctica and its wildlife. The most important of all is the Environmental Protocol (Madrid Protocol) to the Antarctic Treaty which was adopted in 1991 and designates Antarctica as a “natural reserve devoted to peace and science”.

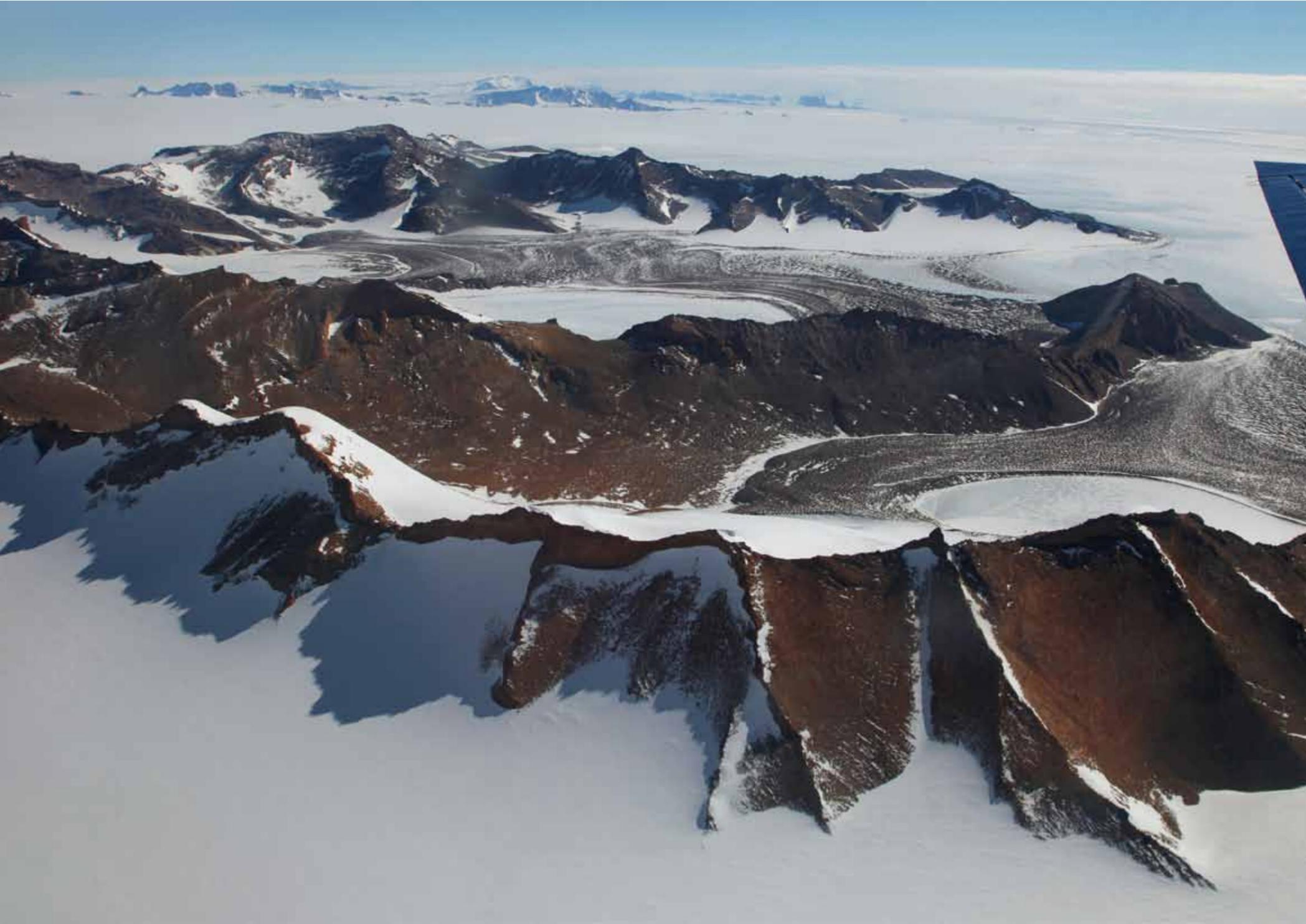
TAC is also a member of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) which advocates, promotes and practices safe and environmentally responsible travel to the Antarctic.

At TAC we like to share our passion for adventure combined with the love for the polar environment. We strongly believe that you have to know, respect and love something in order to protect it. We want to bring Antarctica closer to the people, we want to help our guests to discover its beauty and uniqueness, we want you to TOUCH THE UNKNOWN and get to know more about this wonderful continent and its inhabitants.





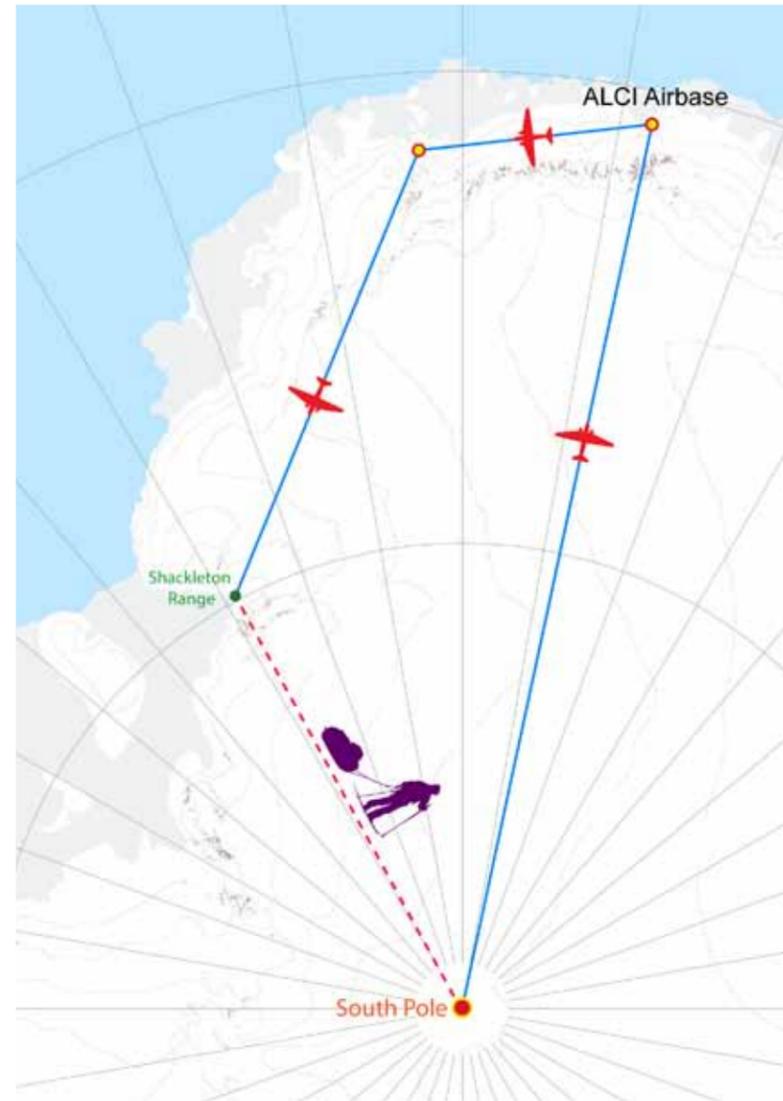
Private Expeditions
Logistics Support



Opening a new route to the South Pole

During 2007-2008 Antarctic season Doug Stoup, a prominent American explorer and his team mate Richard Dunwoody, racing jockey champion from England, trekked nearly 1,100 kilometers over 48 days to establish a new route to the South Pole, based on the original course planned by Ernest Shackleton for his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914-1917).





The team departed from Cape Town for Antarctica on November 29, 2007 on board of IL-76 plane. After several days of preparation at the ALCI airbase they continued their route to the start point close to Shackleton Range on the Filchner Ice Shelf. The Antarctic Company took care about all flight logistics of this expedition, making sure that the team was safely delivered to its starting point and picked up at the South Pole after accomplishing the route. Their journey was full of hazard, determination and deprivation as they braved crevasses (one of treacherous crevasses nearly claimed Doug in the early phase of the expedition) and whiteouts on the trudge up to the 3,000 meters Antarctic Plateau.

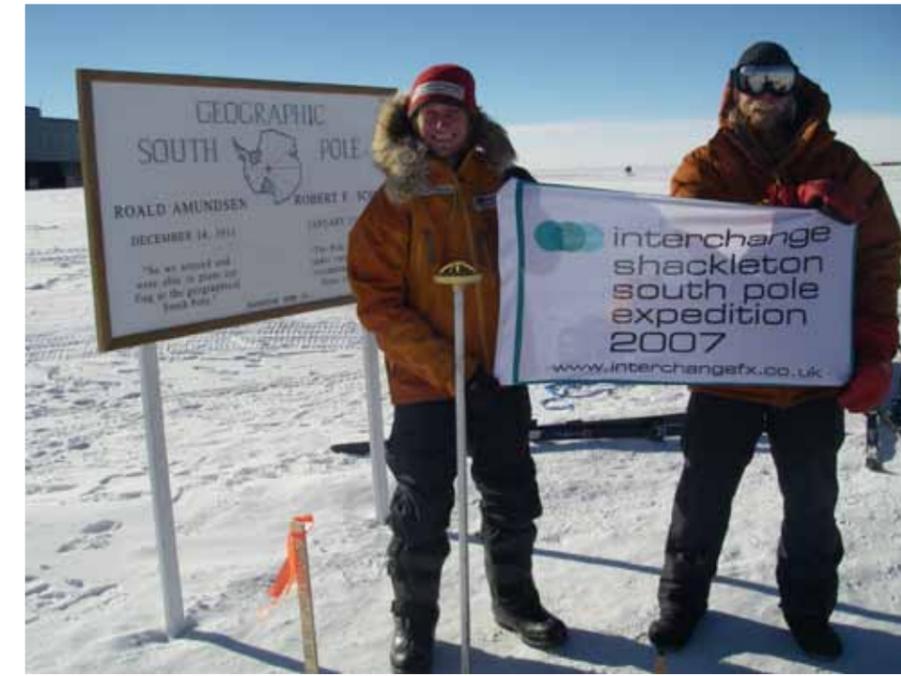


Team member James Fox had to abandon the expedition on day 24 due to mental and physical exhaustion, leaving the remaining two behind time and having to put in 30km days thereafter to make up for lost time and bad weather. TAC organized the pick up of James from the Polar Plateau and flew him back to Cape Town.

Pushing to the limit, and relying entirely on their own stamina and resources, the remaining two team members reached the South Pole ahead of schedule despite injuries, eye-pain (in Doug's case) and general exhaustion.

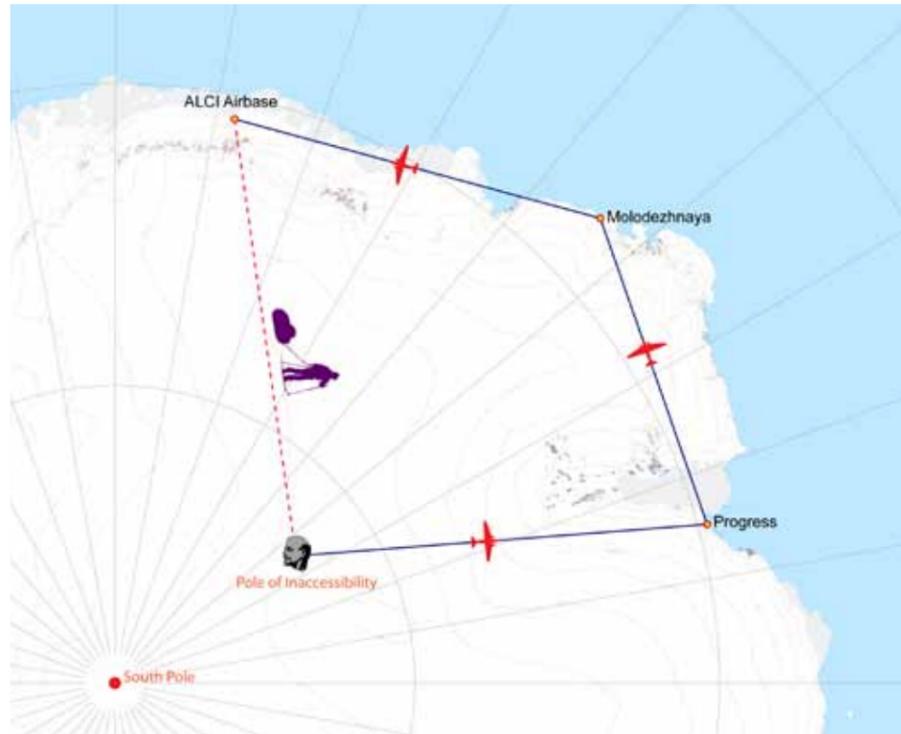
Doug and Richard arrived at the South Pole on January 18, 2008. That was a great day of their life. After this achievement an elated Richard said: "This has been the hardest thing I have ever undertaken, both physically and mentally with every day a 12 hour slog, often uphill, on skis and pulling cumbersome sleds (17 stone at the outset) that just seemed to get heavier as we got lighter ... To arrive is indescribable and I am simply ecstatic in spite of my extreme fatigue."

After arriving at the South Pole they were flown back to the ALCI Air-base and further north to sunny and warm Cape Town.



Guinness World Records – Pole of Inaccessibility

During 2006- 2007 Antarctic season Rory Sweet, Henry Cookson, Rupert Longsdon and legendary polar explorer Paul Landry attempted an ambitious and unique expedition.



The team departed from Cape Town on a 4,200 km flight by Iljushin 76 to the blue-ice runway of the ALCI Airbase situated close to the edge of the Antarctic Continent. That was the start point of the expedition. After several days of preparation the team was ready to drag their 120 kg pulks over 1800 km across the Antarctic wasteland in temperatures as low as -50°C (it never gets warmer than -30°C at their destination, even during high summer!!). Their route took them up through glacier and crevasse fields to an altitude of 3,500 meters onto the polar ice plateau where they headed for their main objective, the little known Pole of Inaccessibility. This is the exact center of the Antarctic continent, the point furthest from the Southern Oceans. It has only been reached previously a handful of times, the first being in 1958 by a two year long Soviet expedition using a convoy of 35 tons tracked vehicles. No one has previously attempted to reach the POI by non-mechanical means.

To cover these vast distances the team used a combination of traditional man hauling and kite skiing. The logistics and preparation for such an expedition were immense. The team had been preparing for this trip since December 2005 and made a two week, kite skiing training trip on the Greenland ice cap.



During their time in Antarctica the position of the team and their status was closely followed by personnel of the Antarctic Company. There were days when the team had to sit in their tents waiting for the wind to start blowing to use kite otherwise the task would have been impossible. On the other hand there were days when the guys progressed 200 -250 km per day and this was amazing!

On January 19th 2007, the members of Team N2i entered the Guinness World Records by being the first people to reach the Pole of Inaccessibility on foot. It took them 49 days to realize their dream – exactly as it was planned!

On their arrival they were greeted by a statue of Vladimir Lenin raised above the ice plateau that had been left there by the 3rd Soviet Antarctic Expedition back in 1958.

They were flown out to the Russian research base Progress using a Basler Turbo 67 propeller-plane which had to do a 3500km round trip for the pick up. “We had fantastic hospitality at Progress which will forever remain special to us,” said Henry after visiting the Russian Antarctic Station. They then flew to the Russian research base Molodezhnaya to go aboard a Russian vessel that was ready to sail through the notoriously rough southern ocean back to Cape Town.



Expedition to the Geomagnetic South Pole

When he first reached the Geographic North Pole in 2000, Frederik Paulsen, a Swedish entrepreneur, immediately started thinking of a trip to the Geographic South Pole. This goal was successfully completed two years later in 2002. Standing at the South Pole Frederik was already dreaming about new adventures. The idea of being the first adventurer to reach all 8 poles of the globe came to his mind.

Both of the Earth's hemispheres are characterised by 4 Poles each:

- The Geographic Poles, being the antipodal points where the axis of the Earth meets the surface,
- The Magnetic Pole, the point on the surface at which the Earth's magnetic field points vertically,



- The Geomagnetic Poles, the antipodal points (if we consider the Earth to be a perfect magnet), where the axis of this theoretical dipole intersects the surface.
- The Poles of relative Inaccessibility, being in the Arctic the point farthest from any land mass and in the Antarctic the point farthest from the coast of the Continent.

When, in 1957, the Soviets decided to establish stations in the interior of the Antarctic continent, they've chosen to locate one of them at the Pole of Inaccessibility and another one at the Geomagnetic Pole (Vostok station).



Since then, the Geomagnetic South Pole moved 150 km and is now located at 80°S 108°E.

In January 2010, Frederik Paulsen came to Antarctica again together with 10 international guests to reach the former and the recent Geomagnetic Pole. He asked The Antarctic Company and the Antarctic Logistics Centre International to provide logistics for this laborious journey.



After landing on the blue-ice runway of the ALCI Airbase the adventurers, while waiting the weather to improve in the area of Vostok Station, spent several days in the nearby Schirmacher Oasis where they had the opportunity to visit the Russian Novolazarevskaya and Indian Maitri station. They also made a short flight excursion to Holtanna Mountain where a French-Swiss team was climbing and BASE-jumping.

At last the weather cleared up and the team took off on board of a Basler Turbo 67 airplane to reach the Russian Station "Progress" and then fly further to their goal.

Two days later, on January 16th, after a 5 hours flight from Progress Station, the ski-equipped Basler landed at the Geomagnetic Pole, in the middle of nowhere. The temperature was minus 45°C, altitude 3350 m, wind 4 m/s from South. After a vodka toast and the traditional photo session, a short flight brought the expedition members to Vostok Station where they were cheerfully greeted by the Russian polar men. The timing was perfect and they were invited to see the extraction of a wonderful 1,3 meter ice core coming from 3641 meters below the glacier surface. In spite of a strong headache, caused by the lack of oxygen at high altitudes, which affected part of the team, it was hard to depart from Vostok and its friendly occupants. Most expedition members left Vostok with a deep respect for the people of the station who had been working in such a harsh environment and isolation over the last few month.

Returning safely back to Cape Town via the ALCI Airbase Frederik Paulsen had now been at 7 out of the 8 poles, but surely this Geomagnetic Pole expedition will be remembered as one the most exclusive and memorable.



Driving to the South Pole - cars in Antarctica

Antarctic overland transport reached a new level with the introduction of specially modified Toyota Hilux 4x4 vehicles. The cars were developed by Arctic Trucks in Iceland - a company with a wide experience in modifying 4 wheel-drive vehicles for the use in rough environments. It was not the first time Arctic Trucks provided vehicles for extreme polar environments. Already in 1997/1998 the Swedish Polar Institute used their vehicles in Antarctica and modified vehicles were used to cross the Greenland icecap in 1999 and driving to the Magnetic North Pole in 2007.

The Antarctic Company established a close working co-operation with Arctic Trucks in 2008 during the planning period of the Amundsen Omega South Pole Race, which was organized by a company called Extreme World Races. Four Toyota Hilux AT44 vehicles were used to support 5 competing teams on skis and to carry camera teams, which filmed their race to the Pole for the BBC documentary "On thin Ice". In the end the Norwegian team won the race but all participants performed very well, met all physical and mental challenges and reached the Pole tired and exhausted but safe. Also the vehicles met the extreme demands of this trip. They covered around 4600 km from the Schirmacher Oasis to the South Pole and back with minor technical problems, coping with freezing temperatures as low as -50°C , soft snow, crevasses and areas covered with zastrugi. The way back from the Pole to the coast was accomplished in just 8 days and 16 hours - a new Antarctic record.





In 2009 the vehicles assisted in an airdrop at 83° South. Fuel drums on wooden platforms with parachutes were dropped out of an Iljushin 76 airplane in order to support logistics of expeditions, flights to the South Pole and research projects on the Polar Plateau. A specially designed crane and a winch at the front of the car made it possible to collect and transport fuel drums and equipment more efficiently. One year later a second fuel depot was established in 20 km distance from the South Pole. A specialized ground-penetrating radar system for crevasse-detection was introduced to increase the safety of overland travel.





In December 2010 two more expeditions went by vehicles from the Schirmacher Oasis to the South Pole. One expedition was organized again by Extreme World Races. This time they supported a film team, which filmed the ski race to the Pole between a German and an Austrian team. Additionally to the 4WD vehicles, modified Toyota Hilux 6x6 were used for this expedition. The advantages of these newly introduced vehicles are a higher load capacity, a larger fuel tank, a bigger towing capacity and the possibility to install different modules to carry people and/or equipment on the large deck.

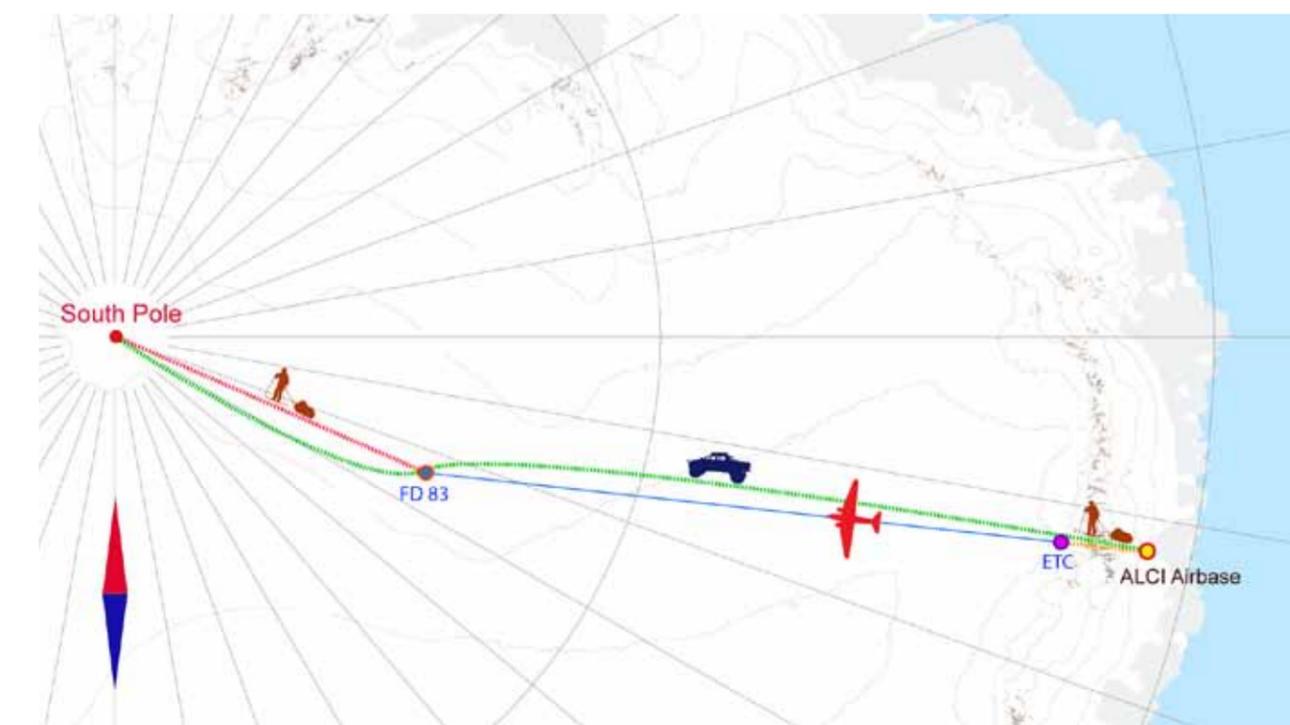
The second expedition was organized by the Kazakh Geographical Society and consisted of 2 Kazakh members as well as an Icelandic driver-mechanic and one TAC guide. They made a new speed record driving with their 2 Hilux 4x4 vehicles from the South Pole back to the Schirmacher Oasis in just 3 and half days. The aim of trip was to test the vehicles and equipment for a scientific expedition of the Kazakh Geographical Society planned for December 2011.





Over the last years the vehicles proved to be extremely useful for various operations of The Antarctic Company. They are not only utilized in supporting expeditions on the Polar Plateau but also to transport passengers and cargo over short distances in the area of the Airbase, the Schirmacher Oasis and the Wohlthat mountains. Some of the vehicles are on standby for search and rescue operations in the area. They proved to be very useful in a crevasse rescue operation when an injured person could be safely pulled out from a 15 m deep crevasse with the winch and crane of the car.

The vehicles are an environmentally friendly alternative for light cargo and passenger transport because they are more economical on fuel in comparison to the track-vehicles used in Antarctica and the big tires have a low impact on surface structures, does not matter if snow, ice or soil.





With good driving skills and a correct maintenance program the vehicles proved to be very durable and reliable. A team of specialized diver-mechanics from Arctic Trucks teaches Antarctic drivers how to drive the vehicles correctly and make sure that the vehicles are serviced regularly and are in a good working order. Some of the vehicles brought to Antarctica in 2008 covered the 4600 km return way from the Schirmacher Oasis to the South Pole already three times and are still in a good shape.







The obvious advantages of the vehicles make them not only interesting transport option for private expeditions but also for scientific projects of national Antarctic programs. In November 2010 after seeing the vehicles working successfully in Antarctica, the Indian National Centre of Antarctic and Ocean Research carried out their first inland scientific expedition driving from Maitri Station to the South Pole and back doing measurements and taking ice and snow samples on their way.

The modified vehicles make it easier to cover huge distances overland in a short time. Before most overland expeditions were done by heavy track-vehicles, which needed weeks to cover the same distance but can carry much more weight. Other options to reach the South Pole or other areas of the Antarctic interior are to fly by plane or to ski or ski-kite for weeks, facing extreme mental and physical strain and dangers like crevasses, blizzards and freezing temperatures. The successful introduction of vehicles to Antarctica opened many new possibilities for lightweight travel but it requires a careful use and good management in order to avoid any negative environmental impacts and not to demystify Antarctica's originality and remoteness. The Antarctic Company intends to use the same routes for all car expeditions and trips in the area, which reduces not only the environmental impact and increases the safety but also leaves other areas untouched and gives "traditional adventurers" the possibility to explore new undiscovered areas without being overtaken by cars.





Skydiving at the South Pole

To jump with a parachute out of an airplane at the bottom of the Earth was always the dream of this group of Russian skydivers and it took 10 years of planning and preparation to make this dream come true.

On the 18th of December 2009 at 10.00 a.m. local time, the BT-67 airplane left the runway of the ALCI Airbase heading south with 13 people onboard: 4 Canadian crew members, 3 accompanying TAC representatives, 3 Antarctic travellers, including a woman, and the 3 members of the skydiving team: Alexandr Voloshin, Alexandr Yepanechnikov and Yevgeny Bakalov. 13 people including one woman onboard seemed a lucky number to the skydiving team.





After a long flight over the mountains of Queen Maud Land and the vast Polar Plateau the aircraft landed on the runway of the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station. Standing at the South Pole everyone was in high spirits, even so the main goal of the expedition had not been reached yet.

Since the American Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station is a large research site with various aeri-als and instruments the skydivers needed to land in a place indicated by the representative of the National Science Foundation. To mark the landing ground, the team flew to a site 20 km off the station. The weather was excellent - no wind and blue sky. The skydivers turned on the automatic activation devices on their parachutes and held a skydiving training session for the entire team. After take-off, ascending to 1500 m above the landing ground and the technical engineer of the aircraft had opened the hatch of the airplane, came the long-awaited signal "GO" and the three skydivers were in the air. The parachutes performed very well and three colorful dots hung in the dark blue Antarctic sky beneath them the endless white desert. After landing Yevgeny Bakalov said, "We are standing on the 3 km thick ice, hands up in the air, full of joy and happiness. We've made it!" Later, inside a tent the three skydivers shared their joy with the rest of the team. The group safely returned to the ALCI airbase after this successful adventure and flew back to a sunny South African summer day.





Queen Maud Land – Climber's Paradise

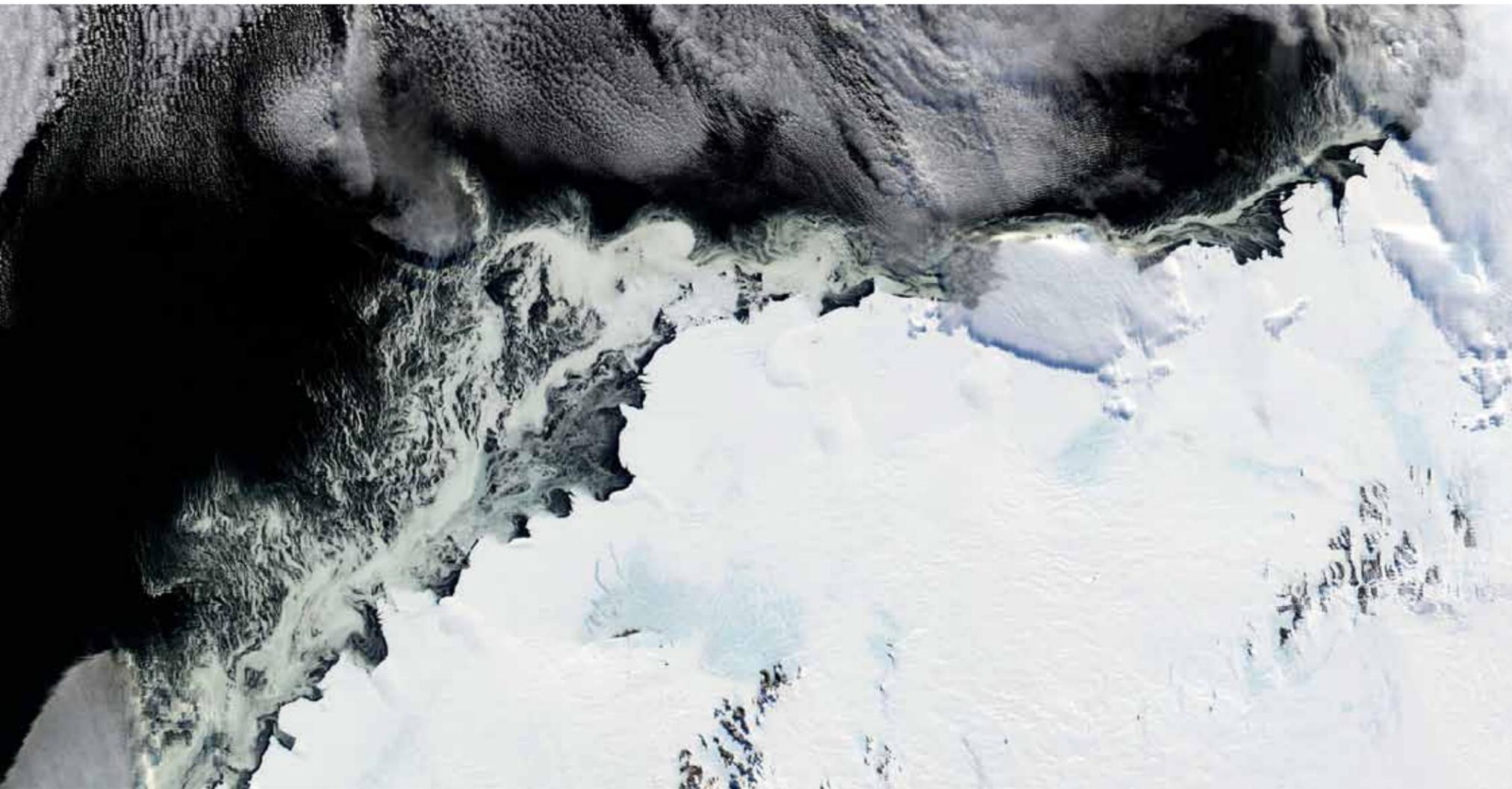
In the heart of Queen Maud Land big, warm coloured mountains are piercing through the smooth, sparkling surface of ice and snow. They form a magnificent, mesmerising landscape found nowhere else in the World that will always have a special place in the hart of the few people who already have had a chance to see and climb some of these wonderful and unique peaks.

“To find the most remote and bizarre mountains on the planet, one must travel to the end of the world: Antarctica. Beyond the consciousness of most people, lies the mysterious and mountainous world of Queen Maud Land. Antarctica is a land of extremes: the most southern, coldest, windiest and driest continent, and the most remote and deserted. For many it may sound like a hellish nightmare. For others, however, it is like finding Eden... “

Christoph Höbenreich, the Austrian polar specialist, UIAGM-qualified mountain guide and PhD-geographer

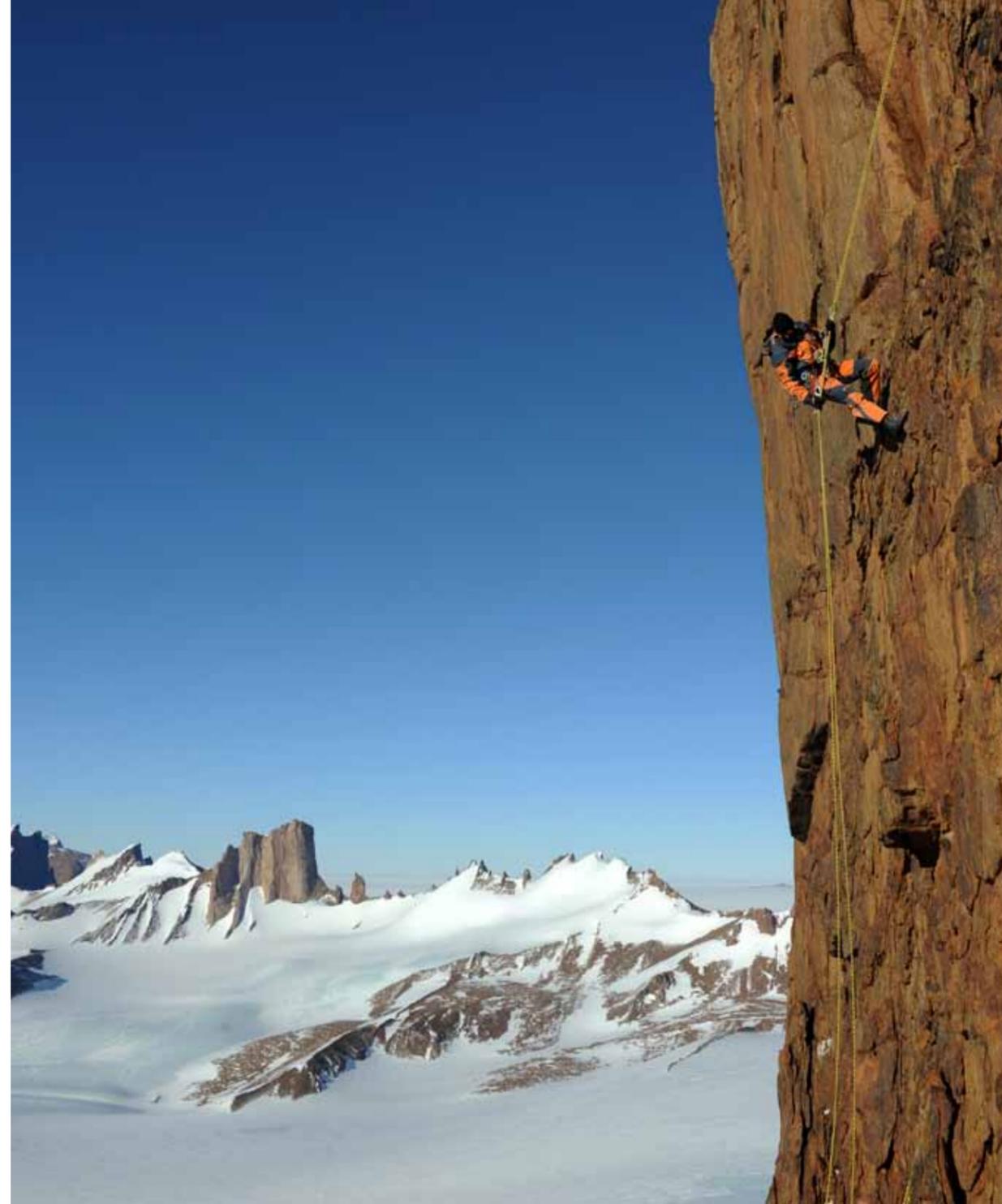
” It all started a decade back in Ellsworth Mountains on Antarctica. I met a climber who had done a first ascent in Queen Maud Land. He said it is “The most spectacular climbing area in the World!” They had climbed an 800 m vertical wall on a mountain called Rakekniven (“shaving razor” in Norwegian). He was full of enthusiasm. Later that year back home in Finland I spotted the same guy on the cover of National Geographic magazine sitting on a mountain in Queen Maud Land. I bought the magazine and looked at the pictures. He was right. It was a lost paradise in one of the most remote and harsh areas in the world. We got possessed of this magic place, and after that moment Queen Maud Land was on our minds day and night for two years...”

Patrick Degerman, Finnish explorer, “Speaker of the Year 2006”



“But Antarctica has a special sort of tug on my heart strings. It’s the last true wilderness left on the planet, in my opinion. There’s just so much to do there. Nearly every corner you look around in Antarctica has uncharted climbing territory to be explored. It’s just phenomenal. When we went to Queen Maud Land in ‘96, it was the most dramatic landscape I’ve ever seen. One of the things that strikes me is the simplicity. It’s just these grand spires that are absolutely vertical in the otherwise absolutely horizontal flat land of ice. It’s unbelievable! There are no foothills, just these amazing spires that penetrate through the 5,000 foot ice cap, which sort of begs the question of how big they really are...”

Jon Krakauer “On the Edge of Antarctica: Queen Maud Land,” National Geographic magazine, February 1998





The 1st BASE-jump in Queen Maud Land

On 13th December 2009, a Swiss-French expedition accomplished the 1st BASE-jump in Queen Maud Land, Antarctica. For this team of one woman and 3 men a dream was born more than 10 years ago: to climb up and fly down from the peaks of Holtanna range in the Fen-riskjeften region.

The team consisted of experienced mountaineers, ski specialists and BASE-jumpers: Géraldine Fasnacht from Switzerland and Sam Beaughey, Sabastien Collomb-Gros and Manuel Pellissier from France.





They all had realized several projects around the world, but this was the first time they have been isolated for two months in one of the most remote areas in the World at 1800 meters on a high glacier plateau with temperatures around 35°C below freezing.



The capricious Antarctic weather and the strong katabatic winds coming from the Antarctic Plateau could have destroyed their dream but luck was on their side and they were able to achieve their 2 main objectives: the first Basejumps from the Holtanna and the Holstinnd. The Holstinnd, towering 1000 meter over the Syginnbryn glacier, is one of the highest vertical cliffs of the southern continent.





To make the BASE-jumps from the summit of Holtanna and Holstinnd, they had to ascent first. Sam and Manu decided to deploy the 24 hour day light of the Antarctic summer season and used a very light climbing technique without resting to reach the summit as long the weather conditions were still favourable. For their first jump they needed more than 10 hours non-stop camp to camp climb following the Norwegian route on Holstinnd and 27 hours camp to camp climb for the Belgium-French-Swiss route on the Holtanna South-East ridge to accomplish the second jump.

At the top Sam and Geraldine put on their wing suits and jumped off the cliff. There were only 20 seconds and absolute freedom and happiness to fly down... This great achievement and unique adventure will probably remain a magic moment in the life of these four explorers.

After waiting for a blizzard to pass, they went free riding the steep 45° face of the Kintanna and finally skied back 180 km to the ALCI Airbase using kites on their way. With the logistic support of the Antarctic Company they had the chance to realise their dream and discover a small part of this white paradise.





The spires of Dronning Maud Land

In November 2006 Ivar Tollefsen, Stein-Ivar Gravdal, Trond Hilde and Robert Caspersen spent forty days in Queen Maud Land climbing and exploring. It was a third expedition to Dronning Maud Land mountains for the most of the team members. "It was my first trip to Antarctica- said Stein-Ivar Gravdal - and I frantically scurried back and forth between the airplane windows to get the best view. Not to say that Ivar Tollefsen, Robert Caspersen and Trond Hilde, who had pioneered the climbing in this area in 1994, were sitting calmly in their seats solving crosswords.





We all acted like a bunch of teenagers fighting to get a glimpse into the girls' locker room. Among the myriad peaks emerging on the horizon, Ulvetanna (Wolfs Tooth) stood out like a giant fang. Its 1200-meter east face was our main objective.” It took sixteen days climbing capsule style with four camps, to reach the summit. The team was fortunate to have mostly good weather apart from one 48-hour snowstorm (60cm on the ground), that they waited out in a portal ledge halfway up the face. After completing their main objective the team skied eastward with pulks and light climbing gear to the Holtedahll mountains 30 kilometers away. They summited six distinct peaks, each around 2200-meters high (Store Gruvletind, 2254m; Kubbestolen, 2079m; and four summits with no name, ca. 2200m). All six had fairly easy climbing, requiring only short sections of roping up. They believe those were first ascents since there were no traces of other activity. The only person who visited this area was Mike Libeck, who climbed solo two summits here earlier.



They then continued to ski east for thirty kilometers, where they climbed the freestanding Sandneshatten (2200m); they then returned to the Fenriskjeften and the Ulvetanna area where we did some smaller climbs. The most notable was a route on the west face of Stetind, first ascended via the south ridge in 2003 by Alain Hubert and Andre Georges.

The words of Ivar Tollefsen show the great appeal these beautiful and unique mountains have with visitors to this wonder-world of snow, ice and rock:

“Queen Maud Land, and especially the mountain kingdom of Fenriskjeften, with Ulvetanna as the Queen of all queens, is the most beautiful place I have ever visited. Vertical mountain faces, rising more than a thousand meters out of the snow covered glaciers. Midnight sun and little wind. Cold but not impossibly cold. Unforgettable and strong memories through three expeditions. So beautiful that I never want to leave. The warmest and closest friendships I have ever had...”



Our 2006 climb of the north face of Ulvetanna was beautiful. Mostly good weather and a very direct and esthetic line – a completion of what we started in 1994. 22 days of close companionship with my three best friends. After that exciting traveling and summiting in areas we had never visited before.

I hope I will return again and again. And maybe one day stay through the winter...”

Base Jumping in Antarctica-‘I felt like an astronaut in outer space’

In December November/December 2010 The Antarctic Company supported the expedition of Valery Rozov - a Russian climber and one of the best BASE jumpers in the World. Hitherto he had accomplished more than 8,000 jumps all over the World, just not in Antarctica.



Valery cherished the idea of a BASE-jump in Antarctica for several years and at last he got the chance to come with his team to Queen Maud Land to make jumps from several granite spires of the famous Fenriskjeften range. The team was specially selected by Valery to support his jumps and filming them as perfect as possible in these extreme conditions. They were: Alexander Ruchkin and Sergey Krasko; three Turkish extreme cameramen Selim Kemahli, Cengiz Tanc and Oytyn; two extreme photographers Thomas Senf from Switzerland and Predrag Vuckovich from Serbia.





The 2,931 meter high Ulvetanna (Wolf fang) mountain which Red Bull (Valery's sponsor) had chosen for the jump was an enormous challenge. It loomed frighteningly large above the frozen surface as Valery Rozov and his team approached it. After two weeks of preparation, Valery climbed the face of the Ulvetanna together with his climbing colleague, Alexander Ruchkin, and mountain photographer Thomas Senf. The film team and photographers took their positions on different points around the peak and with his wing-suit on, Valery flew for 45 seconds down the face of the mountain before opening his parachute and landing safely. "It was like a journey to another planet," Valery said after landing. "It's deeply satisfying and has given me a long and lasting feeling of happiness. I felt like an astronaut in outer space..."





The main task of the expedition was accomplished and the team climbed some more mountains including Tungespissen and Holtanna mountain that had been used for BASE jumping by a French-Swiss team one year before. Professionals like Valery or the French-Swiss team before him showed how experience, good preparation, determination and deep respect for Antarctica's challenging and potentially dangerous environment make adventurous activities like BASE-jumping possible.





Into the Unknown - Finnish Climbing Expedition

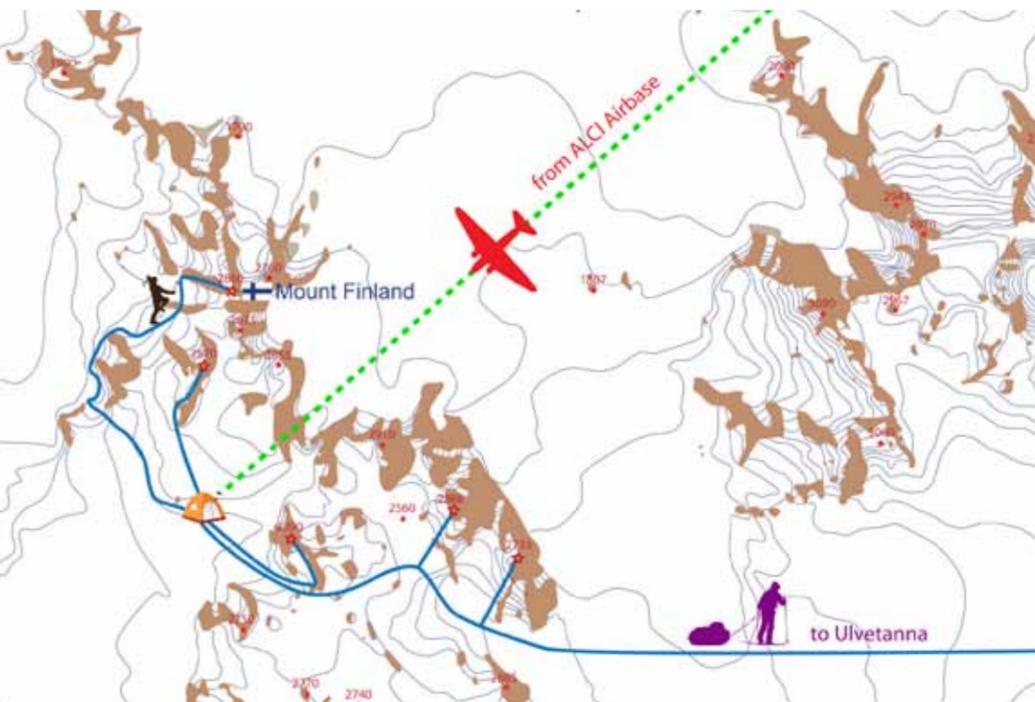
In December 2006 the two Finnish climbers Patrick Degerman and Pekka Holma went on an expedition to the magnificent mountains of Mühlig-Hofmann Fjella. The Antarctic Company provided all logistical support for this expedition. Patrick describes their first ascent of a mountain they named Mount Finland:

The temperature was crawling down to -26°C . The icicle below my facemask was growing one centimeter every hour. Now it was ten centimeters long and we weren't even half-way up the mountain ridge. The wind was blowing a steady 15m/s straight in our faces. An hour ago we could see our route, but now it was down to a few meters. We continued like robots. At some point I stepped down into a hole and fell to my knees. The visibility was down to zero. The wind started to howl around our goggles and I could barely see my friend one meter behind me. He tried to scream something, but I didn't hear him because of the roaring wind, so we just continued to walk uphill. At some point my facemask almost blew off, so I collected the rope between us until my friend, Pekka, was right next to me. I pointed towards our camp and made a sign of drinking something. He nodded. I was thinking of hot lemon tea, but maybe he was thinking of Finlandia vodka. I didn't care which at that moment.





Then one morning we woke up to a beautiful sunshine. This was the moment we had been waiting for a long time. We packed our climbing gear and headed towards the mountain. It was harder and longer than we thought. Our feet hurt and later on in the tent 15 out of 20 toenails dropped off. It did not matter. We still enjoyed every single minute of it for the next 23 hours. Finally we stood under the summit pyramid of this unclimbed mountain without a name. It was a beautiful mountain with a high vertical wall on one side and a ridge crawling up on the other side. Only three more pitches of rock climbing and then some scrambling to the top. An hour later we enjoyed a view from the top of the mountain no one had ever experienced before.



We were happy to reach our goal, but at the same time we felt very small and privileged. You cannot say we conquered that mountain. You don't conquer any mountain on Antarctica. You just wait until the weather is good and then you give it all you got. We named it Mount Finland.

During my years of exploring the polar areas, remote mountain ranges, different jungles and deserted islands, Queen Maud Land have always been the brightest star on the list. Is it the remoteness or the strange looking mountains? I don't know. But one thing I DO know. It is highly addictive. Once you have been there, you want to return.

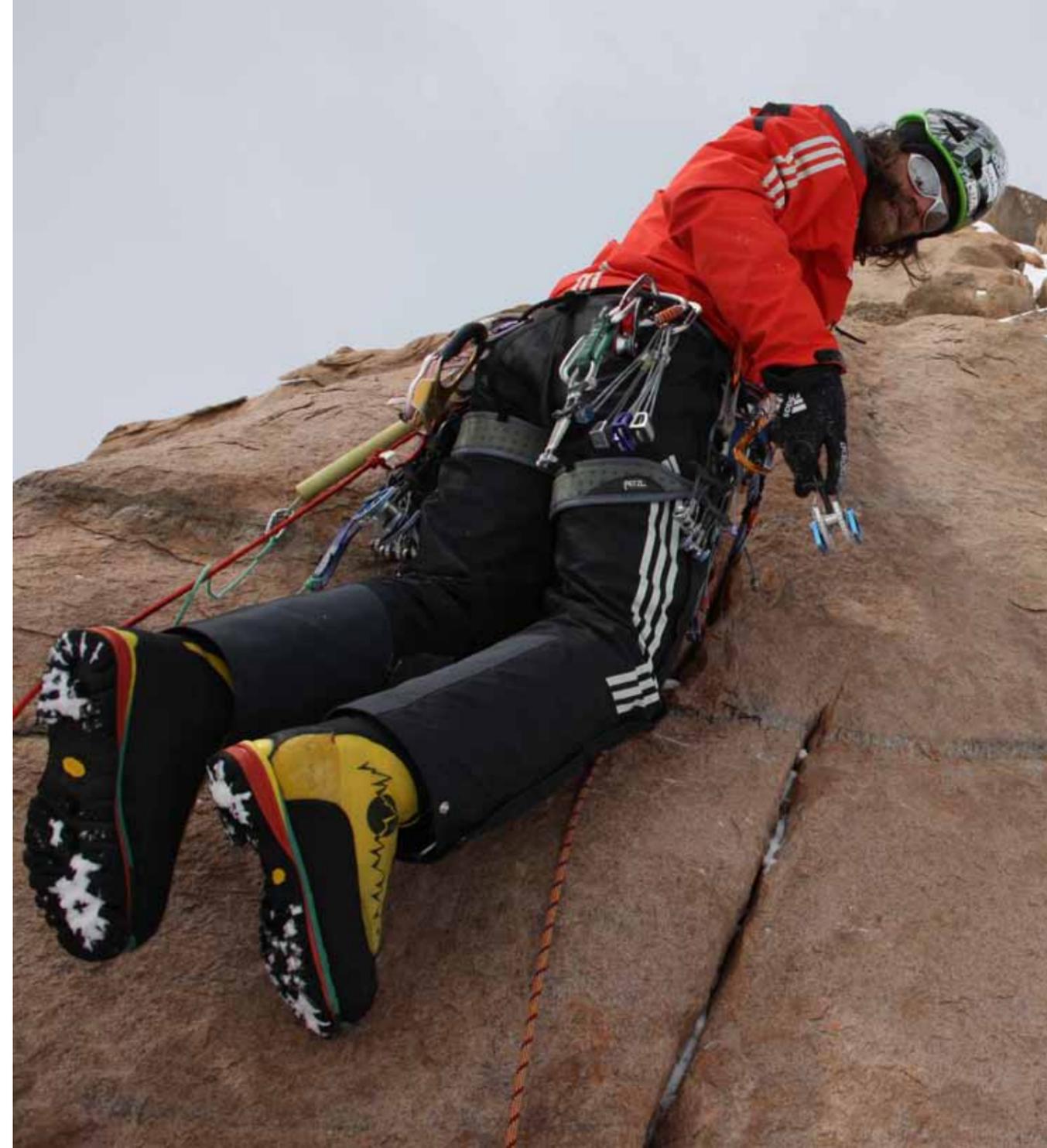




Rock climbing in the eternal ice – “Expedition Antarctica”

In November-December 2008, Alexander and Thomas Huber, better known as the ‘Huber Brothers’ from Bavaria, Germany along with Stephan Siegrist from Switzerland and a German cameraman Max Reichel traveled to a spellbinding realm of Queen Maud Land.

Six weeks in the eternal ice. Temperatures as low as -30°C, heavy storms, 24-hour day light. Sleeping in a tent for more than a month. For many this goes already beyond all imagination. Climbing a 800-meter high vertical granite wall under such circumstances, preferably in a free manner, is a setting that gave Thomas and Alexander Huber the necessary motivation to come to The Antarctic Company office in Cape Town to ask for a logistical support of their new adventure.



Like nowhere else in the Antarctica, Queen Maud Land hosts some of the most dramatic landscape features : towering knife-edged spires and sculptured fins of crystalline basement rock thrust through the Antarctic ice cap, forming a tapering wedge of jagged peaks soaring over 1200m above the featureless white plains and flanking an elongated enclosed ice tongue. The earliest Norwegian survey expedition to explore the region between 1956 and 1960, found this awe-inspiring array of fang- like peaks so evocative that they named the massif Fenriskjeften-”The Jaw of Fenris”, after the ravening wolf of Norse mythology.



The highest and most impressive mountains in Queen Maud Land are the 2931-meter high Ulvetanna (Wolf Fang), one of the most difficult mountains in the world, and the slightly lower Holtanna (Hollow tooth) 2650 m with its West Face, one of the steepest and most difficult faces of the Antarctica.

„It's an extreme Big Wall, 750 metres high, altogether more than just vertical, in the iciness of the Antarctica“, Alexander Huber describes the challenge.

The Huber Brothers ascended the 750-metre high West Face, but had to put their free climbing ambitions on hold due to the glacial temperatures. „It was very, very cold“, Thomas Huber says, “but despite these extreme conditions our first ascent of the West Face was a gem: “Eiszeit” (“Ice Age”), 24 pitches, difficulty up to 5.10+ and technically up to A4”.



Only one week later, however, the extreme climbers were able to claim the first free ascent of Holtanna via its North Buttress. “Even though the difficulties were fairly moderate, the beauty of the route „Skywalk“, 7-, cannot be unmatched”, raves Thomas Huber.

The three alpinists had their sights on yet another great goal. “Towards the end of our Antarctica expedition we were once again lucky with the weather”, the Huber Brothers recount. “So within two days we ascended the Ultanna via its Northwest Buttress. The first ascent of “Sound of Silence” 5.11-/A2 was the cherry on the cake of what we think is our most beautiful expedition to date. Judged from the outside we might have not been able to realize our goal - a difficult free climb amidst the Antarctica - one hundred per cent, but with an air temperature of -20°Celsius a seven becomes a nine and a nine becomes virtually impossible. And most of the time it was even colder than that! We have tried everything, we have managed everything and we are very happy!”

Austrians Discover the Unknown Dreamland

In Queen Maud Land imposing rock pillars and towers break through the mighty ice sheets of Eastern Antarctica. Some spires jut more than a half kilometre vertically out of the icy landscape. Few mountains bare name, and still fewer have been climbed to this date. So far, only a handful of alpinists have ventured into the barren Queen Maud Land. Consequently, for expedition leader Christoph Höbenreich it was „a real challenge to organize the first Austrian mountaineering- and ski-expedition to this dreamland in the Antarctic and to explore its virgin mountains and peaks“.



In the southern hemisphere's summer of 2009 The Antarctic Company and Antarctic Logistic Centre International safely delivered the expedition team from Capetown via ALCI Airbase to its starting point in the Drygalski/Orvin Mountains. Beyond the well-known summits of the Ulvetanna and Holtanna, the „Austrian ski route“ led deep into a region no skiers or alpinists had penetrated before. The Austrian team, made up of Christoph Höbenreich, Karl Pichler and Paul Koller, successfully crossed more than 150 kilometres on skis while pulling sleds, and summited no less than 15 peaks, mountains and nunataks. Out of the fifteen, eleven were first ascents.



Expedition leader Christoph Höbenreich declared, „We named the summits that we climbed, „Tiroler Spitze“ (Tyrolean Peak), „Österreichspitze“ (Austrian Peak), „Steirerturm“ (Styrian Tower), „Gipfel der Stille“ (Peak of Silence), „Galileogipfel“ (Galileo Peak), „Kamelbuckel“ (The Camel’s Hump) and „Turtschinspitze“ (Turchin Peak)”. Throughout their adventure, the mountaineers faced a number of challenges that involved ski mountaineering, high alpine ice climbing as well as various grades of rock climbing.



Detached from civilization, pulling all of their own gear and equipment and only sleeping in a small but sturdy expedition tent, the three explorers experienced the fantastic and supernatural beauty of the Antarctic mountain wilderness of Queen Maud Land in a deep and personal way: „Our curiosity and fascination of the area couldn't be satisfied, and due to never-ending light from the midnight sun, we were able to ski and climb around-the-clock. We never had to fear the onset of darkness. It was an awesome and liberating feeling to be the only human beings within thousands of square kilometres and to be completely independent in this hostile desert of ice.“ While temperatures crept as low as -36°C the expedition team experienced nearly perfect weather conditions during the three weeks. They were only hit with one day of bad weather in which a catabatic polar storm blasted them with winds of more than 100 km/h and „pummelled our poor tent like a tethered dog being pulled off its post.“



Höbenreich's partners were also deeply moved by the experience. Paul Koller was amazed by the “vastness, diversity and richness of the area – it was much more than I had ever expected. It was especially impressive how exposed and small we felt in this expansive world. Yet, with the proper planning and organization, we were able to ski and climb free of any worries in the middle of nowhere.” Likewise, Karl Pichler returned from the Antarctic ice with new perspectives on life: “The sheer, endless expanse of ice and near perfect and majestic silence of this ancient landscape left me with intense and lasting impressions.” While the Austrian team can feel confident and successful that they made numerous first ascents, they achieved much more. Christoph Höbenreich enthusiastically describes, “we likely visited the most exotic and spectacular mixture of ice and rock scenery on earth ... and I discovered countless new mountains to climb.” Like any true mountaineer, he is already dreaming of his next expedition: a return to the dreamlike mountains of Queen Maud Land.

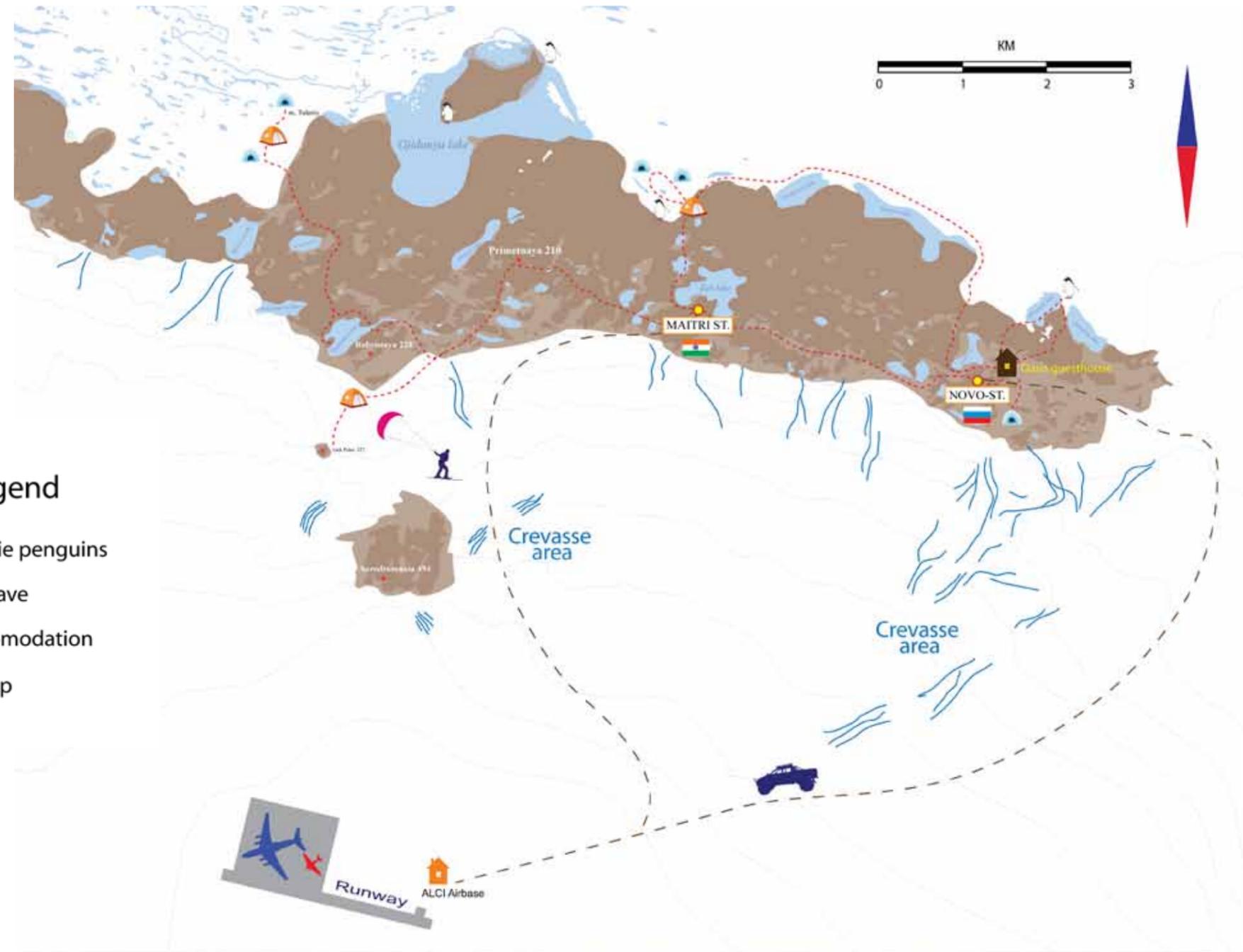




TAC Programs

Oasis





- Legend**
- Adelie penguins
 - Ice cave
 - Accomodation
 - Camp



The Schirmacher Oasis

The Schirmacher Oasis in the heart of Queen Maud Land is a good place to get an impression of the uniqueness of the Antarctic continent. The Schirmacher Oasis was named after the German aircraft captain Richard Schirmacher who first flew over the area during the Schwabenland expedition in 1939. This German Expedition was the first large-scale arial mapping in Antarctica 600,000 sq km of Queen Maud Land area were surveyed and 11,000 photos were taken. Most people associate the word “oasis” with a lush, green area at a spring of clear freshwater, shadowed by palm trees, surrounded by endless hills of hot, dry sand. A paradise for every traveller coming from the desert.





The Schirmacher Oasis is quite different to that: a rocky area in a desert of ice with frozen lakes, snow fields, a flora consisting of tiny lichens and huge glacier-walls at its edge. Nevertheless the Oasis has its special appeal with nature-lovers, photographers, adventurers as well as scientists.

The Oasis lies at the edge of the Antarctic continent and is characterised by the absence of a continuous ice cover not only during the austral summer but also during winter. Vast glaciers embrace the 20 km long and 1 to 5 km wide Oasis from south and to the north the Lazarev Ice Shelf stretches to the horizon looking like a huge silver platter on overcast days.

Warm coloured rocks and boulders form a stunning contrast to the clear blue ice of frozen lakes and perfectly white snow fields. The dark rocks absorb the solar radiation and during a sunny summer's day, temperatures often rise above freezing. Its mild temperatures and wind-sheltered location make the Oasis an excellent area for hiking and other outdoor activities. Partly open lakes and melt water rivers crossing the Oasis in late summer and on warm, calm days one can enjoy a sunbath on the rocks at the glacier edge.





However like anywhere in Antarctica weather can change quickly and blizzards with freezing temperatures are common. North of the Schirmacher Oasis lies Aerodromnaya mountain. It is the perfect spot to get an overview of the Oasis with its rocky hills and more than 180 lakes. Between Aerodromnaya and the Oasis, the “Paletz” nunatak (Finger nunatak) pierces through the sloping surface of the glacier creating a perfect playground for more adventurous hikers and climbers. The Schirmacher Oasis and its surrounding areas are not only a paradise for Antarctic travellers and explorers but also a place of science. Currently two research stations are situated between the rocky hills of the Oasis - the Russian Novolazarevskaya Station (short Novo) and the Indian Maitri Station. Research is conducted in the fields of meteorology, glaciology, geophysics, geology, air chemistry and biology.



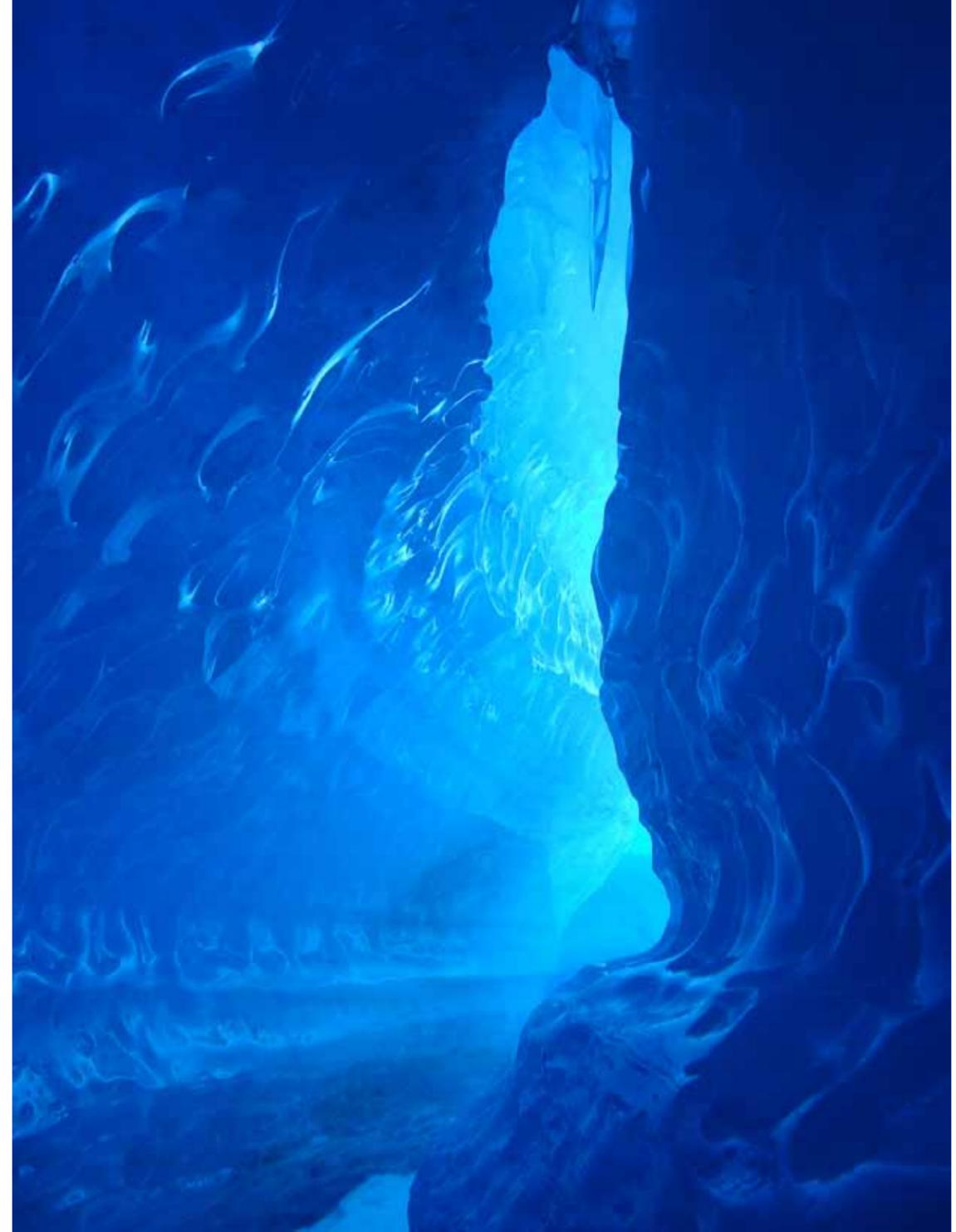
A small station of the former German Democratic Republic was built in 1976 close to Novolazarevskaya. After the reunion of Germany it was decided to close Georg Forster station and all buildings were dismantled and transported out of Antarctica in 1996. Nowadays visitors to the Oasis just can find a plaque on a rock that reminds of the former station. The complete removal of the abandoned station is a good example for a successful ecological cleanup program in Antarctica.



Visit to Scientific Station



A visit to Novolazarevskaya gives our guests a great possibility to get an inside view of life and work in Antarctica. While talking to scientists, visitors can see how interesting but also challenging it is to conduct science in such a remote place. In order not to disturb the work at the station, guests have to announce their visit well in advance and confirm the time and duration of the visit with the station-leader before going to the station.



Ice Formations

The Schirmacher Oasis and its surroundings are characterized by different ice formations. Together with TAC's experienced guides, visitors to the Schirmacher Oasis have the opportunity to explore in safety and comfort an unique world of snow and ice.

At its northern edge the Oasis is bounded by huge rutted ice walls with ice boulders at their base and overhangs covered with curtains of gigantic icicles sparkling in the sun. They give a small impression of the immense thickness of the Antarctic ice sheet. Ice caves covered with sparkling crystals can be found at the glacier edge. On a quiet day the air is filled with cracking sounds of the glacier flowing northwards like a gigantic river of ice.





On the other side of the Oasis the otherwise flat shelf ice surface forms huge ice waves and pressure ridges. This landscape with all the ice hills, frozen rivers and lakes is the perfect setting for an unforgettable hiking experience - a sensational trail characterized by glittering ice, fresh, cold air and utter silence just broken by the scrunch of crampons on the ice or the call of a lonely Adelie Penguin. The highlights of the area are ice tunnels and channels carved by melt water streams. These tunnels can be up to 100 m long and 5 m high. To walk in such a tunnel with its smooth, brilliant blue walls feels like entering another world and creates an everlasting memory.

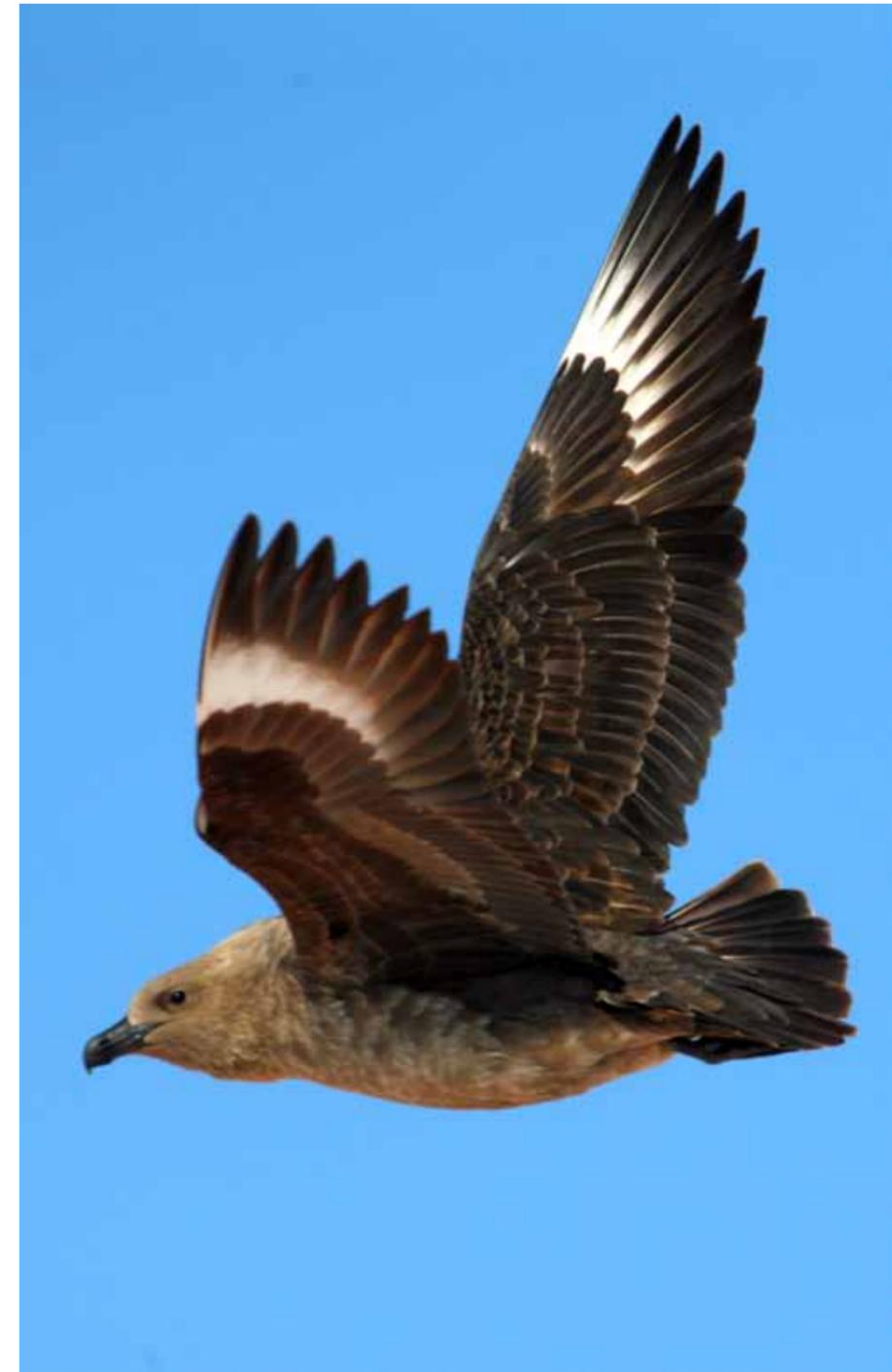
The Schirmacher Oasis is spotted by more than 180 lakes most of them frozen all year round but some are partly ice free during summer allowing daring visitors a refreshing plunge into the clear Antarctic water. The ice of the lakes can be absolutely clear or crossed with cracks and lines of air bubbles. In windy valleys the snow carves little bumps and ridges into the smooth surface of some lakes giving the impression that the wavy, windswept water frozen in a split second.

With changing light, the colours and reflections of the ice change, giving the Oasis a completely different appearance which allows new impressions every day and photographic opportunities dependent on the weather and the time of day.



Wildlife of the Oasis

Although the Schirmacher Oasis is no wildlife paradise, it is possible to see some Antarctic species in their natural environment. Visitors can observe South Polar Skuas circling high in the sky or defending furiously their breeding territory, small Storm Petrels flying bat-like between the rocks at night or fairy-like snow petrels gliding along the glacier edges.





The most popular inhabitants of the Schirmacher Oasis are the Adélie Penguins. They are named after the wife of the French Antarctic explorer Dumont d'Urville. These purely black and white prototypical penguins are a common visitors to the Oasis even the open sea is about 90 km away. At the steep rocky slopes near the shelf ice some pairs often build nests made of small pebbles. Like most Antarctic wildlife Adélie Penguins are not afraid of humans, which gives visitors a good opportunity to observe these unique birds closely. It is an unforgettable, highly amusing experience to watch these vivid little fellows improving their nest in adding small stones, snoozing in the sun, carefully turning their eggs, noisily squabbling with the neighbours or starting their long walk to the open sea to hunt for fish and krill.





The Oasis guesthouse

The Oasis guesthouse lies the western part of the Schirmacher Oasis sheltered from the wind by rocky hills and with a great view to a nearby lake and the shelf ice. The three wooden houses offer all comfort needed in Antarctica. A wooden deck in front of the main building tempt to relax in the sun and enjoy the view. All three buildings are connected with wooden walkways which makes is easy to move in between them.





The cozy, heated bedrooms of the central building are equipped with single or bunk beds and accommodate 1 to 6 people. The warm and quiet rooms give tired Antarctic travellers the possibility to have a rest after adventurous tours and expeditions. Shared bathrooms in every building and a hot-water shower are available. Two fully equipped kitchen and fresh products from Cape Town ensure excellent catering. Tea, coffee, cool-drinks and small snacks are available at any time.

Two lounge areas and a small bar invite to spend a relaxed evening together with fellow travelers and guides to enjoy a glass of wine while exchanging the impressions of the day or listening to traditional Russian songs performed by Vladimir, the guesthouse manager. During the evenings Antarctic presentations, books or videos allow our guests to broaden their knowledge of the polar environment and history.





Waiting the blizzard to pass

In Antarctica the weather can change very quickly and even in summer days strong winds and snowfall are common. During a strong blizzard, ice crystals cut exposed skin and penetrate every tiny hole in the outer clothing soaking the layers below or forming a crust of ice, the wind makes breathing nearly impossible and visibility is sometimes reduced to a few centimeters. One can get lost just meters away from buildings or tents. In such weather the Oasis Guesthouse is like heaven - a safe and warm refuge from the raging storm and bitter cold. Games, movies and books shorten the time of heavy storms and blizzards.





New approach to Antarctic camping

Tents are widely used by Antarctic expeditions to remote areas without living containers or huts nearby, which is basically everywhere in Antarctica. These expedition tents are usually designed to be low in weight, easy to set up, efficient and durable - a shelter from the harsh Antarctic climate. Luxury, style and coziness are of minor importance. 'White Desert', a company which works in close co-operation with the Antarctic Company took camping in Antarctica to a new level. Their camp at the southern edge of the Schirmacher Oasis is quite different from the usual picture people have in mind when they think of camping:

"At White Desert, we wanted to create a luxury safari style camp that was run on strict ecological guidelines. And over the last 6 years of operations, we have slowly established just that. 'Whichaway Camp' now sits on top of a 200ft ice fall looking out over some of the most spectacular scenery on earth. We have three main domes tents, which are heated and spacious. One is a library and relaxation area, the second a dining tent for our chef's three course meals, and finally, a kitchen and satellite communications tent.





All are furnished in the kind of materials used by the old explorers, with leather, brass and wood. But despite this old world veneer, the camp is actually very high-tech, using the latest in solar panels and wind turbines to power it and, there is even wireless internet for those that want to stay connected. There are 6 sleeping tents, each heated and snug, and then a shower tent and ablution tent”, says Patrick Woodhead the managing director of ‘White Desert’.

This luxurious approach to Antarctic camping, close to nature with maximum comfort, offers visitors new possibilities to experience Antarctica and its magnificent nature.

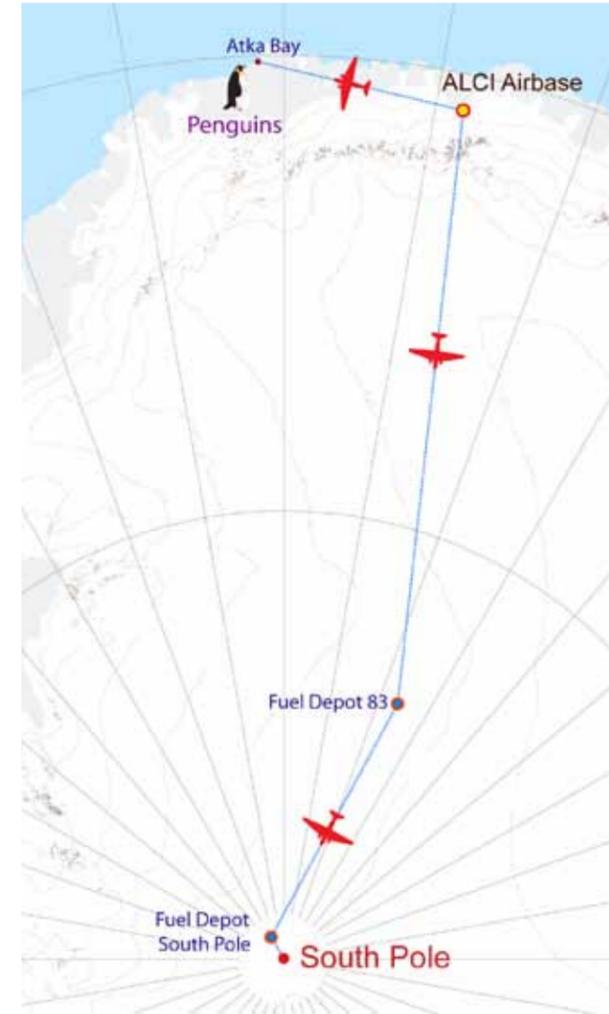


TAC flying to the South Pole

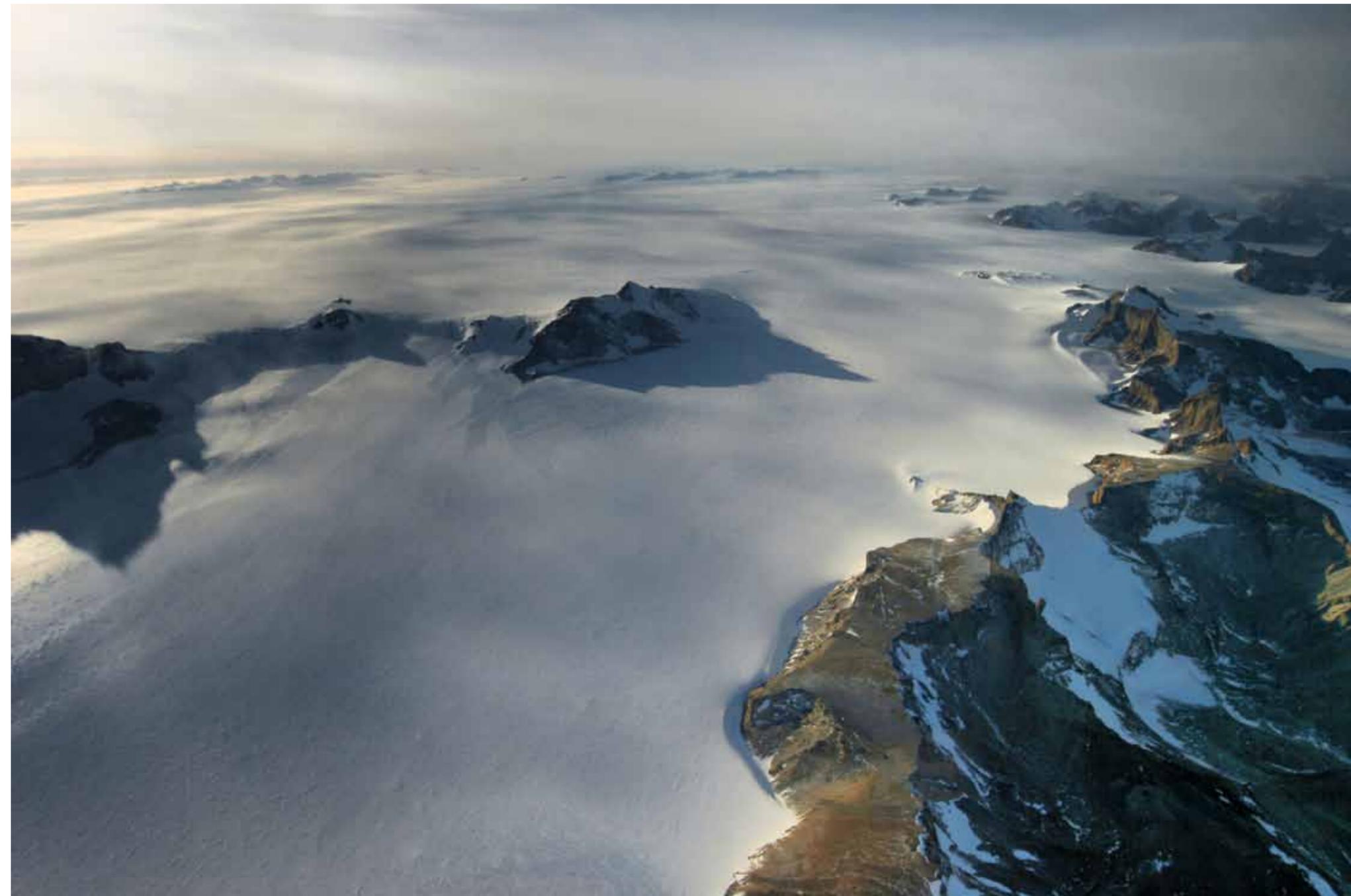
100 years have passed since the first explorers set foot at the South Pole. This victory was achieved through incredible hardship, endurance and courage, and at a very high price; Captain Scott's team perished during their return journey. And even today an expedition to the South Pole is not an easy task.

“People do not decide to become extraordinary. They decide to accomplish extraordinary things.”

Sir Edmund Hillary



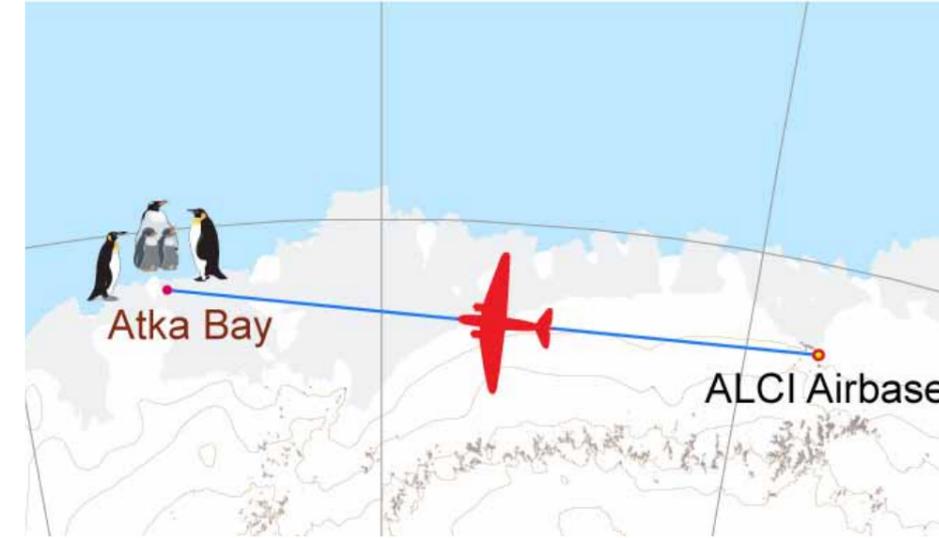
Join us for an extraordinary adventure and discover the Geographic South Pole and fantastic Queen Maud Land! The most remarkable event of this expedition is an airborne expedition to the Geographic South Pole. Participants of this trip should be reasonably fit and understand the effect of mountain sickness. Although South Pole lies at 2,800 m above seas level, one feels like being at 3,500 m in usual mountains because air in Antarctica is less dense. The distance to the South Pole from ALCI Airbase is about 2,140 km. After boarding of all passengers the Basler Turbo propeller-plane and takes off from the blue ice runway and heads directly South first passing the mountains of Queen Maud Land and afterwards flying above the vast emptiness of the Antarctic Plateau.





At a fuel depot at 83 degrees South the pilots land for re-fueling which takes about 40 minutes and passengers have time to get out of the plane and stretch legs. It is still 800 km (or 3 hours flight) to the Pole from here. During 7-hour flight travelers see the Antarctic Continent from the air, getting a rare appreciation of its immense scale and beauty. At the South Pole the airplane lands on the runway of the American Amundsen-Scott South Pole research station. The station takes its name from the first explorers to reach the South Pole: Norwegian Roald Amundsen and British Capt. Robert Falcon Scott. The group is met by a representative of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and taken on a guided tour of the station where they get an impression of the life and work at the bottom of our World. There is a souvenir shop at the station and a post office where guests can send postcards and buy patches, sweaters, T-shirts, glasses, stamps and other souvenirs. A visit to the bottom of our world is definitely a challenging but also unique and memorable adventure a lot of people are dreaming about but only a few can ever experience.





Visit to Emperor Penguins

Because of the remote location of the Emperor Penguin's breeding grounds, only very few people ever get the possibility to see these majestic birds.



The trip starts with a 2.5 hours flight in a small propeller plane to Atka Bay, the location of a huge Emperor Penguin colony. The flight offers a great opportunity to get an overview of the natural habitat of these unique birds - vast fast ice with castle-like icebergs trapped inside, bordered by the edge of the Eckström ice shelf. The colony is well visible from air - huge dark patches below the blue cliffs of the shelf ice or in between icebergs where the birds are sheltered from the wind. Often it is possible to have a glimpse at the open sea or at areas of open water within the fast ice, also called polynias, which offer good access to the hunting grounds of the penguins.





After landing at some distance from the colony in order not to disturb the birds, a short, easy walk takes the visitors close to the colony. Emperor Penguins are the biggest of all penguin species. They can reach 122 cm in height and 40 kg in weight. With their upright way of walking they look like people of short stature from a distance. Guests are often welcomed by a small delegation of penguins waddling towards them and looking at them with interest which raises the question who came to observe whom.



In November, the time of our visit, the colony itself consists mainly of cute, fluffy chicks waiting for their parents to return from the Ocean with a fresh meal consisting of fish or krill. The chicks are the result of a months-long sacrifice from their fathers and a perfect, well timed cooperation of both parents. Unlike other birds, Emperor Penguins breed during the long Antarctic winter. The male incubates the egg 65 days in darkness, icy temperatures and blizzards without returning to the sea to eat, balancing the single egg on its legs and covering it with its brood pouch.





Meanwhile the female is foraging on the sea to build up fat reserves and collecting food for the chick. The female returns to the colony between mid July and beginning of August, a few days after the chick hatched. After the return of the female, the male can leave for the ocean to feed. Later both parents take turns in hunting and looking for the chick. When the chicks are old enough they form so called kindergartens which are guarded by a few adults and both parents go to the sea to hunt.

It is a once in a lifetime experience to see this vast amount of Emperor Penguins from a close distance, to observe long lines of adult penguins marching to the sea, couples reunite greeting each other with long trumpeting calls, chicks begging for food and parents feeding their chicks, chicks huddling against other chicks, marching around in a small group or snoozing in the sun. A tent near the colony invites to have a break, warm up or eat a small snack. Since penguins are very curious, they often come close to the tent and even have a look inside.





Before or during the trip our guides issue instructions how to approach penguins without disturbing them, give an introduction to penguin behaviour, provide interesting facts about penguins and other Antarctic wildlife and will answer all questions which might occur.

Visitors to the Emperor Penguin colony usually return home with unforgettable memories in their mind, thousands of pictures and hours of footage on their cameras and a deep respect for these amazing birds in their heart.



Seal Watching

The coastal fast ice around Antarctica is also home to Weddell Seals. These big, friendly-looking seals are the most southerly breeding mammals in the world. They can be found near tidal cracks in the fast ice or at breathing holes which they cut into the ice with their incisor teeth. While several females share one breathing hole, male Weddell seals defend an aquatic territory beneath these entry points driving away other males in order to monopolise several females.

Weddell Seals often can be found close the Emperor Penguin colony, dependent on the fast ice conditions in Atka Bay. In case a group of seals is in walking distance to the colony, our guides will find a safe route avoiding cracks and breathing holes which might be hidden beneath the snow.

Against the magnificent backdrop of beautifully jagged, blue icebergs, visitors can observe female seals and their pups. With their dense, soft fur and big, soft eyes these cute fellows usually win everyone's heart right away.





During the nursing period of the pup, female Weddell Seals do not go to the water to feed, losing 100 to 150 kg of weight until the pup is weaned 7 to 8 weeks after its birth. During this period the weight of the pup increases three to fourfold from about 25 to 30 kg at birth to over 100 kg when weaned.



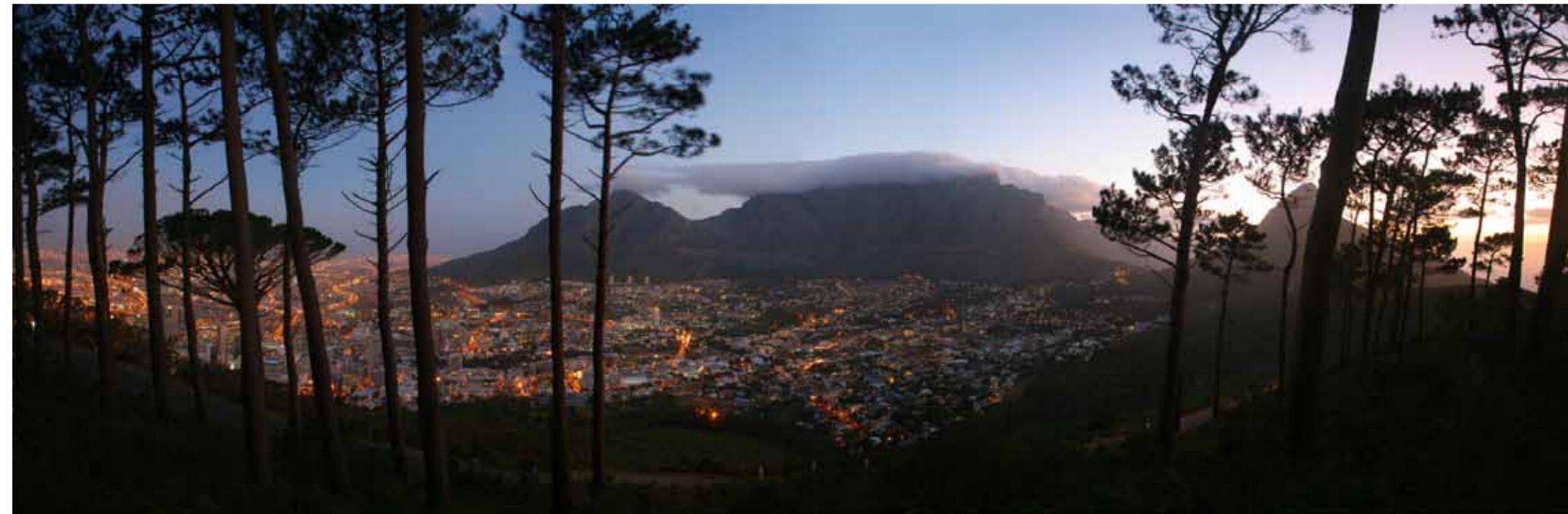
Antarctic Logistics -
reliable technology
in a challenging environment





Ilyushin 76

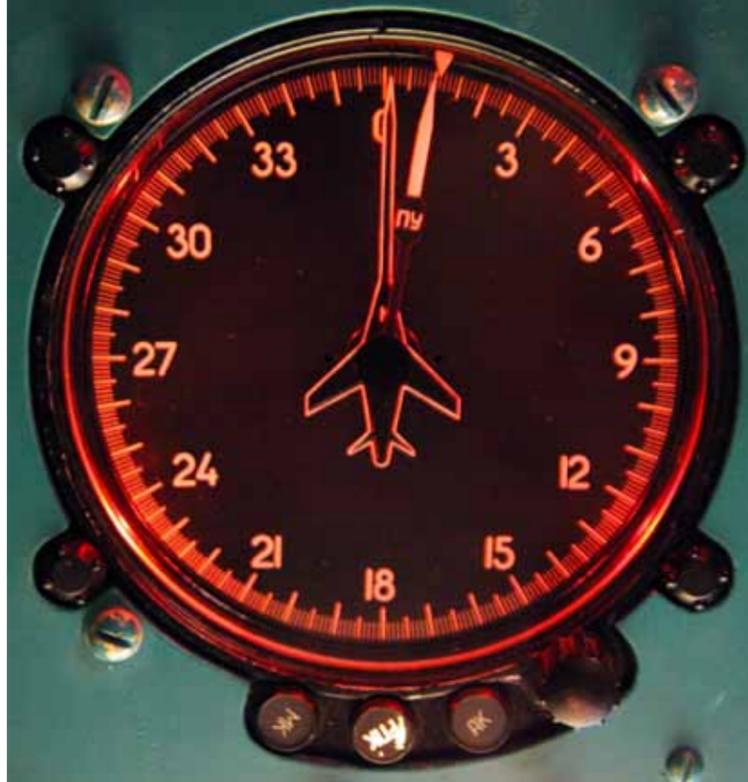
Usually a trip from Cape Town to Antarctica starts onboard an Ilyushin 76 airplane which is utilized to cover the 4200 km to the ALCI Airbase in central Queen Maud Land.



Up to 80 passengers or up to 20 tons of cargo in total can be transported by this Russian-designed, four-engine heavy cargo plane.

The versatile, robust and reliable IL76 proved itself in variety of conditions all over the world and is the perfect choice for challenging Antarctic operations. The 6-hours flight is performed by a highly experienced Russian crew of the Flight Testing Centre of the Civil Aviation State Research Institute in Moscow, ensuring maximum safety and reliability for the start of every Antarctic expedition.

Sitting in this rather unusual airplane together with fellow travellers, scientists, workers and technicians most of them in joyful anticipation of the unknown white continent, gives most Antarctic visitors a feeling of adventure.



Cape Town International Departures			
Flight#	Destination	Scheduled time	Status
SW 745	Windhoek	08:00	✈ Departing
SW 853	via Walvisbaai	08:00	✈ Departing
B2 Y9173	Antarctica	08:00	✈ Departing
SA1721	Walvisbaai	10:00	✈ Boarding





Boeing 727

November 2009 first time a Boeing 727 was used for the flight from Cape Town to Antarctica. This rather unusual trip with a B727-200 REW in VIP configuration gave Antarctic travellers a feeling of luxury while flying to one of the most remote places on Earth. The interior gave the passengers the impression not to sit in an airplane but in an african-style lounge with cozy leather seats, tables, a bedroom and even a shower. The big windows allowed great views to the Southern Ocean with its huge icebergs and the vast ice shelves and glaciers of the Antarctic continent. Unlike to the flight-operations with a sturdy Iljushin76, absolutely perfect weather-conditions are needed to land a B727 airplane in Antarctica. The South African pilots did a great job and all passengers and crew could spend a wonderful sunny and calm day in Antarctica.





Gulfstream II, III & IV

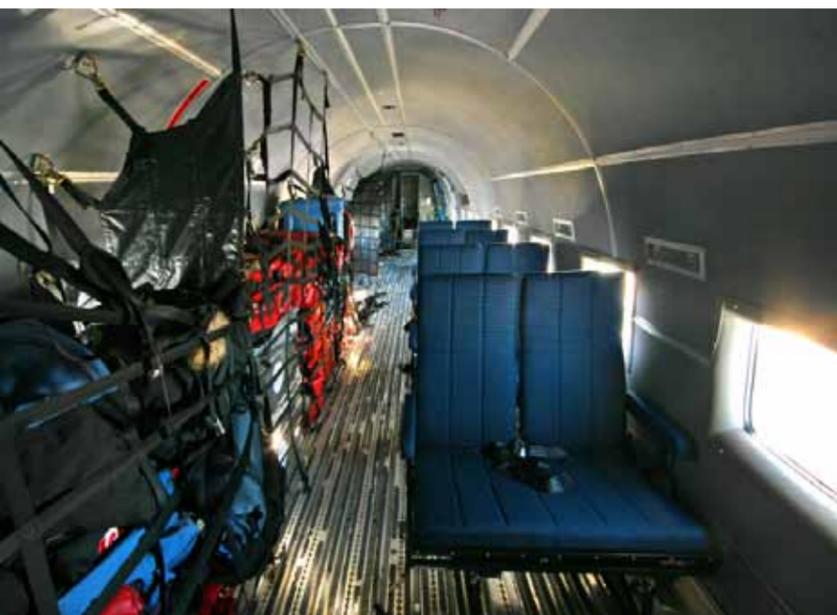
The air-bridge between Cape Town and Queen Maud Land was serviced several times by Gulfstream II, III & IV. Up to 16 passengers can enjoy the privacy and comfort of this small business jet while mentally preparing for their Antarctic adventure ahead or relaxing and wallowing in memories after a wonderful and exciting time in this world of snow and ice.





Basler Turbo 67

All flights within Antarctica are carried out by small propeller planes. Ski/wheel equipped Basler Turbo 67 airplanes - an upgrade of the legendary Douglas DC-3, are commonly used for flights to the South Pole, the mountains of Queen Maud Land, the Emperor Penguin colony of Atka Bay and to remote entry and exit points within the Queen Maud Land region . It combines excellent short airstrip capability with mission versatility in passenger and cargo transport. Up to 18 passengers or up to 2.5 t of cargo can be transported by these sturdy planes.





Twin Otter

Another airplane widely used in Antarctica is the smaller De Havilland Twin Otter which is also known for its short takeoff and landing performance and reliability. Flights with these small airplanes give Antarctic visitors unique opportunities to get an impression of the vastness and beauty of the Antarctic landscape. Low cruising altitudes offer great views to vast glaciers, deep crevasses, pristine snow fields, rugged mountain ridges, blue shelf-ice cliffs and huge icebergs.

The Blue Ice Runway of ALCI Airbase



The blue ice runway at the ALCI Airbase is the first arrival point in Antarctica for most expeditions and trips supported by the Antarctic Company. Located 15 km south from the Schirmacher Oasis, the Airbase is the main hub for all flight operations within Queen Maud Land and flights to the geographic and geomagnetic South Pole. The nearly 3 km long blue ice runway needs permanent maintenance requiring heavy machinery and special skills of the runway team.





Ground Transport



The absence of paved roads and difficult surfaces such as deep snow or slippery ice require specialized ground transport.

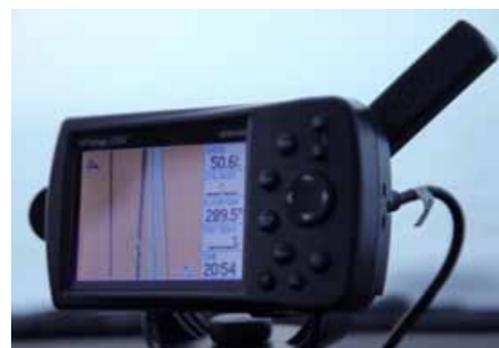
Snow mobiles (Ski-Doo) and track-vehicles are commonly used to transport cargo and passengers over short distances. A network of designated routes, highly trained personnel as well as the efficient and economic use of vehicles increase the safety of overland transport and minimize the impact to the environment.

In 2008 the introduction of specially modified Toyota Hilux 4x4 vehicles made it possible to travel large distances overland. Satellite phones, VHF radio, GPS-units and a specialized radar system for crevasse-detection ensure maximum safety standards. Over the last years the cars proved to be a reliable, fast, fuel-efficient, eco-friendly and comfortable way of transport to cover short routes in the area of the Schirmacher Oasis as well as large distances on the Polar Plateau.



Communication and navigation

A well established communication and tracking system is of paramount importance for all Antarctic operations. Satellite phones and internet as well as HF and VHF radio allow a quick and hassle-free information transfer between all involved parties in Cape Town, at the Air-base and in the field.





Real-time tracking of all airplanes, fixed communication schedules with all expeditions and dedicated communication personnel which is on standby 24 hours a day, seven days a week ensure high safety standards, efficient logistic planning and short response times in case of an emergency.



Paradropping - expedition support in remote areas

An efficient and sometimes the only way to supply expeditions is to drop equipment out of an airplane. A specialized team prepares platforms on parachutes loaded with fuel drums and other equipment, load them to the Iljushin 76 and push them out of the airplane at the requested site. This procedure does not only require expertise and good physical condition of the paradropping-team but also excellent skills of the pilots. The ground support team collects the items and store them safely in a well marked place. TAC established two depots with fuel and other equipment in order to improve logistic support for expeditions to the Antarctic interior. One is located at 83°S and the other just over 20 km from the South Pole.



We hope that these pictures and words from the white continent could convey the remoteness, beauty and uniqueness of Antarctica to you and we could share some of our love and enthusiasm for this frozen paradise. Most of the people who have visited this last wilderness fall for it and come again or want to come again. Once you have seen the vast glaciers, the pristine snow, the impressive mountains or the majestic Emperor penguins, Antarctica will always have a place in your heart and mind...



...TAC invites you to the Antarctic continent!..



...You have to see Antarctica by your own eyes!

Acknowledgements

A book of this scope is a work of many people who brought an idea to life and participated in its creation. We express our gratitude to all those who generously contributed the images from their collections, who wrote the texts or translated them into English, who published the book.

This book would have been nothing without them.

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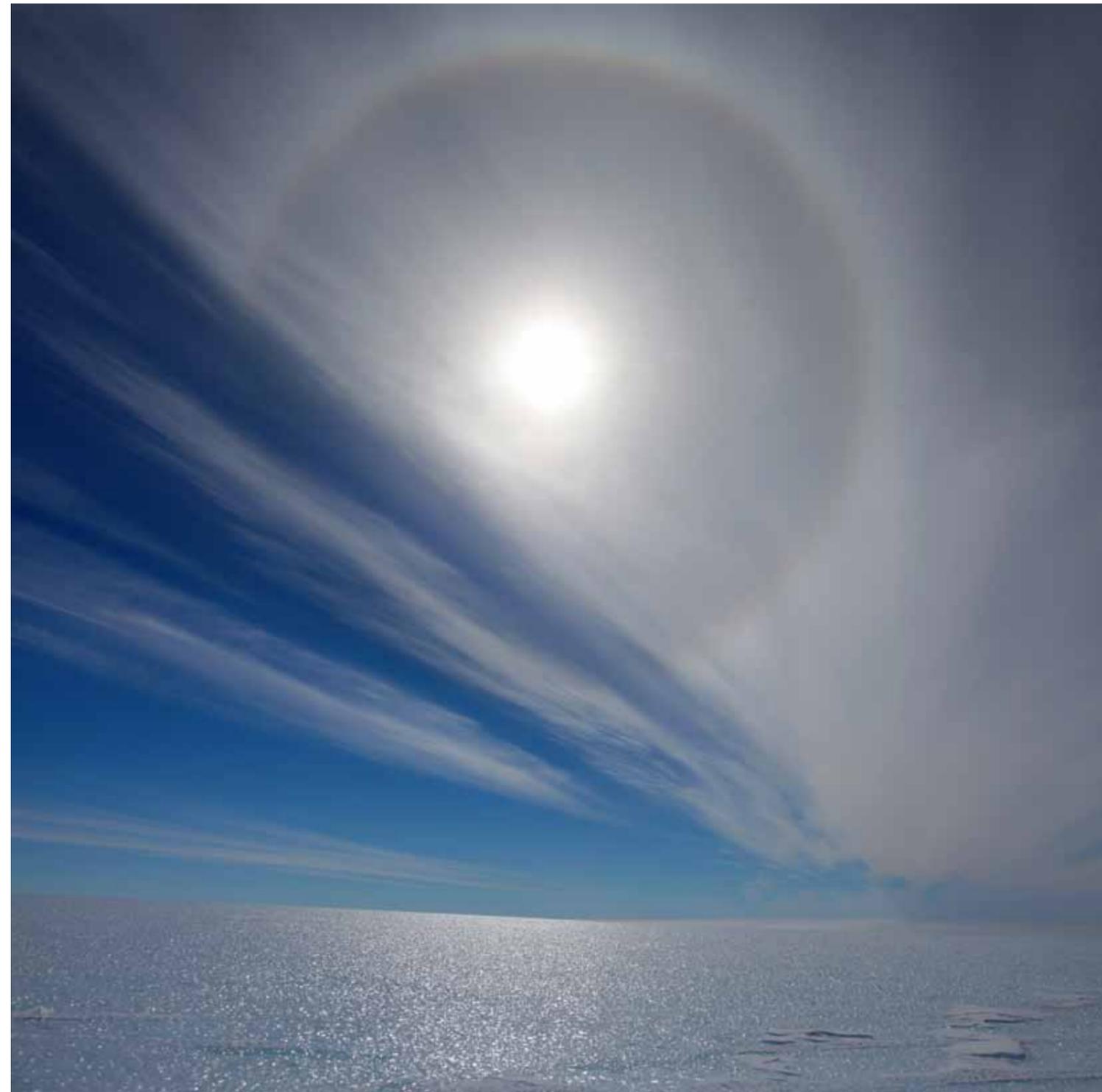
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