

Wake Up In Antarctica

Not all adventurers are up at dawn. Ute Junker prides herself on being intrepid – but only after a leisurely breakfast. On a recent trip to Antarctica though, she found she simply didn't have the time to sleep with so much to marvel at.

Some people say hell is other people. I say hell is five am. Five am and snowing is one of the inner rings of hell. So what am I doing at 5am on a snowy morning, standing on the deck of a boat, with a grin a mile wide on my face? I'm in Antarctica, that's what.

An Antarctic cruise is hardly your normal cruise. For a start, don't expect to sleep in. Sure, you can if you want – but why would you stay in bed when the expedition leader has announced that a pod of killer whales is frolicking off the ship's stern, or that the ship has hit pack ice? In Antarctica, every morning brings a new surprise – one that's enough to get even me out of bed.

Antarctica is everything you've ever imagined, magnified by a factor of a thousand. Wilder, more beautiful, more tranquil. Don't expect to sleep a lot – you'll be too busy soaking up the hundred and one surprises that await you every day. Immense penguin rookeries, home to tens of thousands of birds, let you unleash your inner Attenborough. Orcas spyhopping through the pack ice cause cries of excitement. The gunshot crack of a calving glacier reminds you that even on this frozen continent, nothing is forever.

And the best way to explore this wilderness, by far, is kayaking. Kayaking in through pristine bays and through towering fjords, you explore a side of the Antarctic few people will ever get the chance to see. Riding low in the water, you explore nature intimately.

Sometimes, it's delightful – when half a dozen penguins propel their solid bodies, porpoise-like, beside you. Sometimes, it's confronting – when a four-metre leopard seal circles your kayak, investigating the interlopers. Always, it's amazing.

And you get a unique perspective on some of the most spectacular landscapes on earth.

Towering walls of blue ice; surreal, Gaudiesque ice bergs in Neko Harbour; volcanic landscapes at Deception Island – all glide past as you slowly paddle through the astonishing scenery. Out there in your kayak, you have an unmatched opportunity to explore the majesty of the continent. Grab it while you can.