

Oceana



**Antarctic Small Ship Expedition
(adventure cruise)
10 days, from \$5,995,
Adventure Life, adventure-life.com,
800-344-6118**

Photo: Adventure Life

When I tell people that I am going to Antarctica about half of them look puzzled and ask why and the other half get dreamy expressions on their faces and want to hear more. Since I've been to Antarctica twice and am heading there again for my third trip this year, it's clear in which half I fall.

For the dreamy expression group, Antarctica is a "bucket list" trip. I can't say exactly what the appeal is. Maybe it's the raw, pristine beauty. Antarctica can only be described in superlatives. The colors are more vivid, vistas more dramatic and feelings of awe more awesome. This is not a place of man

but of the gods. In Antarctica, you can see things and have experiences you can't have anywhere else in the world.

Then, of course, there are the penguins. You can have your YouTube videos of kittens, puppies and babies. In my opinion, these endearing creatures win the Super Bowl of cute hands down. Many of my favorite photos from the trip are of penguins waddling, diving, hanging out, and, yes, having sex.

But for me, the most important reason is what I can only call a connection with the infinite. I am not a very spiritual person. I've tried

meditation and fallen asleep and gone to temple on the High Holy Days to similar effect. But Antarctica is where I sense that I am part of something bigger and enduring outside the confines of my own head. It's a cliché to talk about feeling small, humble and insignificant in the presence of wild, untouched nature. I have used that cliché often myself, always sincerely. But in Antarctica it is writ large in every way possible.

See the article "*Touching the Cosmos*" and my blog post under, you guessed it, "Antarctica" for more information.