

## South America/Antarctic trip: Notes from Kay Winburn Seale's Journal

*(Although there are many quotes used below, I had to give up on using quotation marks.)*

The only way we can describe how lovely this trip was is to provide you with photos taken along the way.



*Rich and Kay at Amalia Glacier*

Our amazing journey began on January 15, 2009—day of my 66<sup>th</sup> birthday. We left Denver at 2:00 PM and arrived at Dulles at 7:00 PM. We left Dulles at 9:49 PM and arrived in Buenos Aires the next day at 11:05 PM. We had flown a total of 6,669 miles and through three time zone, with many hours of visiting airports in between.

At the end of our cruise we debarked at Santiago, Chili and took flew on an Argentinean airline to get back to Buenos Aires where we began our return flight.

Buenos Aires is quite a bit like other large cities. However, one amazing difference is that every structure in Buenos Aires has a water cistern atop the roof. It is a clever idea, but makes the skyline look a little peculiar. On our second day in Buenos Aires we visited Our Lady of Pilar Basilica and the Del Pilar Cloisters. We were also able to visit a small ethnic marketplace before boarding the ship.

There are quite a few pictures of us getting off and on the ship as well as pictures of tug boats. I really enjoy seeing those huge tugs maneuvering the ships into little tight spaces. On one of our adventures we were rushing to the ship to get money to rush back to the pier to buy a little jacket for Stephanie and then back to the ship again before it sailed. We did all of that in about 40 minutes. Since we were about the only ones on the tender going over to the port we decided

to sit on the top deck. We hadn't noticed that the wind was blowing and there were very choppy waves we had to go through. We immediately got sprayed with water and more than once. You can bet the tender captain got a kick out of seeing that. I'm sure he knew what would be happening when we went up there, but didn't tell us! When you board a tender you are not allowed to stand or move around so we sat it out the whole way. We sat below going back.

Our first port to visit was Montevideo, Uruguay. "Montevideo is a charming city made up of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Beaux Arts buildings, parks, and historical monuments"

Next, Stanley, Falkland Islands. Our ship held more people than lived on Falkland Islands. When we arrived we more than doubled the number of people there. Stanley is such a very small town, with one grocery store, one police officer (the chief), two gift stores, a church, a café, travel shop, insurance office, an entertainment centre—next to the supermarket has home entertainment, stationery, books, magazines, etc., visitor center, Goose hotel that was being renovated and had 18 guest rooms. Best thing about it...it is located in the center of Stanley!

Stanley is a hilly little area that is very small and old houses line the few streets. Lawn mowers aren't used in Stanley, but instead the sheep take care of cutting the grass. A few years ago, a herd of reindeer was imported to see how they would take to the islands. Before long the herd grew so large that they became a source of meat for the Falklanders. Only one survives today and he is the lawn mower for at least one area of grass in town. Strange to see a reindeer on an island. Falkland's economy is based on sheep farming, but the farmers are financially supported by the sports fishing industry.

When we were near Stanley the cruise director instructed the passengers to wear nothing with an insignia related to Argentina out of respect. The conflict between Britain and Argentina was in 1982 and has left the island with a number of unexploded ordinances, including land mines. We paid attention to the warnings "DANGER MINES." Falklanders hate Argentineans and between the two they are still "fighting the war" like the North and South are here. We were constantly being reminded by the citizenry that Argentina lost "so many troops" and Stanley only lost something like seven in the one month conflict.

Health care in the Falklands...a young man was injured so badly in Stanley that the medical thought he might lose his leg. Since there is no hospital in Stanley a Lear jet picked him up and took him to Santiago. Now that's service and it was completely free. Education in the Falklands...kids who do well in school by the age 14 or 15 are sent to Great Britain to attend college at no cost to them. Most of the students return to Falkland Islands to live out their lives.



*Introducing my friends*

We went on a tour to Bluff Cove Lagoon to see the penguins via a four-wheel vehicle. What a trip! The wind was blowing at gale force and you could smell the birds long before you saw them. It didn't get any better as you got nearer! A small English tea house, Sea Cabbage (actually a single wide trailer), was an extra bonus that was run by the wives of the Land Rover drivers. We had high tea out in the middle of nowhere.

My very favorite stop was in the most southerly city in the world, Ushuaia. "It serves as the gateway to this wilderness where snow-capped mountains plummet to the icy waters of the Beagle Channel," named for the ship that carried Charles Darwin on his voyage of discovery in 1831-36. Behind the coastline city stretch the Andes and they are magnificent. The first thing about Ushuaia was how to pronounce its name which is much easier than it looks...oo shoo-AYE-ah. It is an Indian word meaning "a bay penetrating westward." I still can't say it!



*Ushuaia – most southerly city in the world*

Punta Arenas “lies atop rolling hills, looking out over the Strait of Magellan.” This city is the gateway to Chilean Patagonia, a maze of fjords, rivers, steppes, and mountains to the north. To the south lies the great frozen mass of Antarctica.

Amalia Glacier, Chile, “located north of the central area of Southern Ice Fields. Its long silhouette seems to be hanging between the peaks of the mountains. Its ice towers and colorful contrast touch anybody seeing this. It is approximately 1 km wide (1/2 mile) and 40 m high (approx 100 ft).” Its ice mass is mainly supplied by intense snowstorms throughout the entire year. It is considered to be the third largest fresh water reserve in the world and is one of the forty-eight glaciers that make up this Ice Field. Because of its immense weight, the oxygen has been pressed out of the ice, giving it an amazingly beautiful crystalline appearance. Probably the most exciting adventures that tourists may be able to enjoy through their entire lives. The silence means beauty, but is also true that the noise of the ice blocks falling into the sea tingles the senses. If I remember correctly the blocks falling is called calving.



*Amalia Glacier, Chili*

Cruising Antarctica 2009. 1/23/09 visited Elephant Island (has no permanent human residents and has never had an indigenous population. Only cold-adapted plants and animals survive there, including penguins, fur seals, mosses, lichens, and algae). 1/24/09 visited Esperanza Station (home to colonies of Adelie penguins), and 1/24/09 visited Admiralty Bay. 1/25/09 visited Neumayer Channel. 1/26/09 visited Deception Island. At one point we were 80 miles from the South Pole. At another point we saw the most southerly light houses.

One of the most interesting commentators aboard ship was Captain Bob Parsons who retired from the Coast Guard after 40 years stationed in Antarctica. His experience included managing Ice Breakers in Antarctica. He was our ship’s authority on ship safety through our icy trip. He had many humorous and interesting stories about his travels and most of them included penguins.



*Penguin Pals*

Cape Horn was rather anticlimactic since the seas were calm and smooth. We didn't get to experience the strong winds, large waves, and icebergs that we had been looking forward to as we approached the most southerly tip of South America. It marks the northern boundary of the Drake Passage.

Arctic birds in abundance were always visible no matter where we were. There were Royal Albatross, Black browed Albatross, Wandering Albatross, Prion, Snow Petrel, etc., and the King Penguin, Chinstrap Penguin, Adelie Penguin, and Blue eyed Shag and Gentoos Penguins. Penguins are all different sizes and have quite different appearances most of the time.. Those penguins are a whole story in themselves.



*King Penguins*

Arctic mammals we saw were the Humpback whales and Sea Lions. We also saw Dolphins that swam along next to our ship at different times.

Antarctica is the coldest place on Earth. It is a frozen desert with little precipitation. Temperatures reach a minimum of between  $-112$  degrees F and  $-130$  degrees F in the

interior in winter. Sunburn is often a health issue as the snow surface reflects almost all of the ultraviolet light falling on it.



*Iceberg*

While cruising in Antarctica we were provided information from The Office of the Secretariat of IAATO. Protocol applies to tourism and non-governmental activities, as well as governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area. Ongoing experiments are conducted in this area by more than 4,000 scientists of many nationalities and with different interests. All experimental sights are always available to all other scientists for inspection and retrieval/sharing of the latest findings.

Arctowski Polish Antarctic Station is a research station in Admiralty Bay on King George Island and is managed by the Polish Academy of Sciences. The station is near colonies of three different types of penguins (Adelies, Chinstraps, and Gentoos) and has been designated a site of Special Scientific Interest. Weather permitting (and it did for us) a scientist from this base boarded Star Princess and gave a talk live from the Navigational Bridge. Wow!



*Sea bird in flight*

Finally, our ship reached Valparaiso, Chili. We were quickly shuttled to Santiago to begin our flight home. On the two-hour drive to Santiago, there was a very charming young man that told us about the scenery. He said one of the cutest things I heard on the trip..."Falklanders hate Argentinians. Columbians hate Chileans because there is a little strip of land at the north end of Chili that the Columbians feel belongs to them. It provides passage from Columbia to the ocean. Now Chili doesn't mind a hoot if the Columbians use it, but will not relinquish the land. Therefore, the Columbians hate the Chileans. Now...this is the great part. Chileans don't hate anybody! They love visitors, have the lowest crime rate in South America, have a great economy, and welcome you back at any time.

Does that make you feel wanted or what?