

Antarctic trip diary, Part 9

1/7/07

The seas did calm down in mid morning but then picked up again as the afternoon wore on. It was fun sitting in the observation lounge on deck 7 watching the spray occasionally douse the windows in front of us as the ship plunged through the swells which were now coming in off the bow quarter. Both Sandie and I have colds from all the dry air so the day was spent mostly with various combinations of napping, gazing at the ocean, napping, attending lectures and then napping. It was a truly lost and lazy day but we all needed it to recover from colds and transition from the Antarctic experience back to the real world. We did see an albatross in the morning which is supposed to be good luck. We'll see how much good luck it brings us as we are now headed to Cape Horn and will attempt a landing, weather willing.



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The weather wasn't willing. As soon as they tried loading people into the boats, it was apparent that it was too choppy to safely proceed so the landing had to be cancelled. One of the crew told us this was a charmed trip as we only had to cancel this one landing; three or four cancellations is more typical. Plus we got the trip into the Weddell Sea which is most unusual so while I'm disappointed, I realize we've had a good run. From here on in, the trip will be more conventional with landings at real piers instead of offloading onto the Cirkel boats.

1/8/07

Last night we landed for a couple of hours at Porto Williams, Chile on the Beagle Channel. It's a bustling community of 2000 people which seems to have two reasons for existence: it's a base for the Chilean Navy (a couple of gunboats) and it's on the south shore of the Beagle Channel (Ushuaia is on the north shore) which makes it the southern-most permanently established human settlement. Being Sunday, most of the stores were closed but I don't think we missed much based on our limited window shopping. I do want to get an albatross pin to commemorate our Patagonian visit but we have other ports we will be visiting.



Except for Porto Williams last night, yesterday and today were mostly at sea days cruising through the Beagle Channel and Straits of Magellan. Today was again spent napping, attending lectures gazing at the scenery and napping which is helping to shake these colds. We're both going to have to do some serious diets when we get home. Our expectations on food were that it would be adequate but it turned out to be excellent. Particularly the desserts - their dessert chef is a national treasure. Sometimes hard choices are necessary to limit oneself to just three desserts at the lunch buffet. Adding to the temptation, they have an always open self service café where you can go for coffee, tea and your choice of more wonderful desserts. It's like a European sidewalk café in that you go, grab a table and see who you end up visiting with.



Tomorrow is a long day. We leave for Torres Del Paine National Park at 7:30 AM and will be back for supper. Pictures I've seen of it are spectacular so I expect to give the camera another good workout.

