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in Essaouira

The cuisine of the
Caucasus

Back to the 80s
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8 unique places to lay your head

A local leader's take on Vietnam





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WINDING DOWN IN ESSAOUIRA

By Eleanor McDonald

Stepping off the bus from Marrakech, the contrast hits me at the same time as the persistent Atlantic winds. The spaces look a little wider, the air feels a little clearer, and life is ticking by just a little bit slower. If someone dropped me in Essaouira blindfolded, it would only take seconds to realise I was by the sea – the unmistakable scent from the fish market by the port is hitching a ride into the city on the salty ocean breeze.

Essaouira once attracted a different kind of visitor. Phoenicians and Romans travelled here in the 7th century BC to collect purple dye, pulled from molluscs, and the king of Portugal built the city's fort in the 16th century, using the site as a trading post for spices, gold and slaves. The city was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2001, and today its main draws are wind sports, seafood and a free-spirited vibe.

Coloured by an endearing mix of battered blues and wind-worn whites, I get the feeling that there's nothing here that can't wait until tomorrow, and after a frantic week in Marrakech, I soon let myself slip into this coastal city's languid pace. Two days here should be just enough time to blow away my worries and unwind, which is really all Essaouira asks of you.

I find the best way to get to know somewhere is to walk its streets. Navigating the winding alleyways within the rampart walls, I see one image recur – Jimi Hendrix. After some digging, I discover Hendrix famously visited Essaouira in 1969, and despite only staying for 11 days, his face adorns the city, from the walls of cafes to the sides of orange carts. When I ask the locals about his legendary visit, they all have a story to tell – “I saw him”, “he ate in my restaurant”, “my uncle met him”.

Not much has changed since then, and while Essaouira has gained a reputation as a popular escape from the rush and racket of Morocco's main cities, there's a distinct lack of chain hotels and restaurants, and the town has managed to hold on to its authentic, laidback atmosphere. In fact, there's very little to suggest it's not still 1969 and Jimi Hendrix isn't around the corner chatting to someone's uncle.

Aside from idols of rock and roll royalty, the city walls also contain an old medina, spilling over with silver jewellery, brightly dyed scarves and colourful ceramics. Sticking out as a foreigner always comes with its concerns, but I'm happy to receive no more than hellos and curious smiles.



Just outside the medina I come upon a row of stalls selling fresh fish and decide to follow the locals' lead. Point at fish. Bag 'em up. Pay six dirhams. Take to restaurant. Get fish grilled. Enjoy. Never did I imagine I'd be gleefully sitting in a smoke-filled restaurant tearing the heads off sardines with my bare hands – this is one meal I know I'll never forget, and not just because of the smoked fish smell I can't shake from my hair.

Day two rolls around as peacefully as day one left and I'm sitting with a coffee in Place Moulay Hassan, the city's main square, fringed with cafes and governed by a charming pack of short-legged dogs. A dreadlocked man at the table next to me leans over and asks about the book I'm reading. I learn his name is Redouane, a local surf instructor, and he asks if I'd like to learn how to surf. The honest answer is no, but I feel compelled to say yes – I am on an adventure after all.

They don't let the wind go to waste here. As I wait in my wetsuit like an apprehensive seal, kite-surfers flick over waves with grace I can only pray for. Camels in saddles strut by, glamorous horses canter into sand dunes and the closest thing to a sunbather is me floundering on my front trying to master the "pop up" technique. The beach is alive with activity, and after a comical surfing lesson I conclude the best way to appreciate it is from an ocean-front bar.



Before I leave, I take one last dip into the medina. Walking past a stall selling leather wallets, I make eye contact with its proprietor. He stares at me earnestly and says "London". I laugh a yes in his direction before he narrows his eyes and says "Brixton". Amazed, I ask him how he knows not only which city I'm from, but the exact neighbourhood I live in. He shrugs and smiles and I walk off thinking magic might exist in Essaouira, until the man at the next shop stops me – "he says that to everyone, he'll be happy he finally got it right".

Despite this gentle duping, I decide magic exists in Essaouira after all. It's not found in psychic market vendors, but in the subtle moments of everyday life. In the old men gathered in cafes, in the jokes thrown between hawkers of sardines and dory, in the legends of Jimi Hendrix and the joy found in the wind. There's no divide between tourists and locals – you share stories, walk the same streets and dine side by side. You don't have to look very far to discover the real Essaouira.

Discover the magic of Morocco on an Intrepid Premium small group tour. Get in touch with your Globetrotter Travel Agency for more details - **0848 000 844** or globetrotter.ch/termin





8 UNIQUE PLACES TO LAY YOUR HEAD AROUND THE GLOBE

By Eleanor McDonald

While some people are of the opinion that a bed is just a place to sleep at night, we can't help but disagree. And if you're the type of traveller who loves seeking out interesting accommodation, from the slightly quirky to the downright unforgettable, an Intrepid Premium adventure might just be for you.

Handpicked by local experts to give travellers a deeper appreciation of the local culture, Premium accommodations provide a glimpse into a destination's history and architecture before you've even rolled out of bed in the morning.

Environmentally conscious, locally owned where possible and with an average rating of 4 stars, these hotels, lodges and resorts are as big an attraction as the destinations they cater to.

Discover the world on an Intrepid Premium small group tour. Get in touch with your Globetrotter Travel Agency for more details - **0848 000 844** or globetrotter.ch/termin



1. A CONVERTED MADRASAH IN UZBEKISTAN

Glittering turquoise tiling and a dramatically lit façade are just a few of the reasons why the Orient Star in Khiva, Uzbekistan, is one of the most stunning places you'll ever rest your head. The largest madrasah in Central Asia has been converted into a premium hotel, with renovated rooms that were once the student quarters when this was a functioning Islamic school. Madrasahs historically taught calculation, grammar, poetry, history, literary subjects and arithmetic in addition to the Qur'an and sacred law. While the setting allows you to soak up the religion and culture of the region, the rooms have been upgraded to include modern conveniences such as wi-fi, air conditioning and a flatscreen television.

2. A GORILLA LODGE IN UGANDA

The Nkuringo Bwindi Gorilla Lodge is set high up on the Nteko Ridge, meaning you have incredible views of the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, which is famous for being the home of half of the world's 800 mountain gorilla population. The lodge is solar powered, carbon neutral and the owners work closely with the local communities to provide optional guided walking safaris to guests. The eco-friendly cottages are built with locally sourced materials, and Ugandan fabrics and carvings decorate the walls, giving you a taste of the local culture. Each room has a fireplace and a terrace overlooking the forest canopy. In an effort to reduce and discourage single-use plastic, all water in the lodge is provided in jars and travellers are encouraged to refill their own water bottles each day before heading out.



3. A CAVE HOTEL IN TURKEY

Cappadocia in Turkey is known for its stunning fairy-chimneys that are popularly viewed from the sky in hot air balloons, but if you go the other direction and head underground, you'll find the Splendid Cave Hotel. Built into the stunning natural volcanic rock, this cave hotel offers you the sort of utterly unique stay that you'll remember forever. The hotel features a bar, restaurant, garden and terrace and somehow the televisions in your room manage to get satellite channels and wi-fi! If you're an early riser, you'll have the chance to enjoy a front-row seat when the hot air balloons sail over the hotel and away down into Pigeon Valley.

4. A WETLANDS RESORT IN BORNEO

If you make your way down the Lower Kinabatangan River in Borneo, tucked away in the freshwater swamps and mangroves, you'll find accommodation that is a nature lover's paradise. It's a resort (but not like any you know), located within internationally important wetlands, where a number of rare, endangered and threatened species live, such as the Sumatran rhinoceros, proboscis monkey, Borneo pygmy elephant, Oriental darter and rhinoceros hornbill. Splash out and stay in the deluxe chalets, which include hot showers, LED televisions and even wi-fi, all powered by solar energy. As well as falling asleep to the sounds of the wetland at night, you'll have exclusive morning, afternoon and nighttime safaris, both on foot and by boat, included in your stay.

5. A SUSTAINABLE JUNGLE LODGE IN PERU

The Posada Amazonas jungle lodge gives travellers the opportunity to immerse themselves in the natural and cultural wonders of the Tambopata jungle, within the Amazon rainforest in Peru. The lodge is located inside the private reserve of the Ese Eja Native Community of Infierno and many Ese Eja community members work there. Each year, most of the money made by the lodge is shared amongst the community's households, making it a true community-based tourism venture. The Ese Eja community are passionate about preserving their rainforest home and teach travellers how to co-exist peacefully amidst the flora and fauna of the region. The comfortable rooms all have an open wall to the rainforest, meaning you get to drift off to sleep to the sounds of the jungle – but don't worry, there are mosquito nets and even wi-fi, so you won't be roughing it despite the remote location.

6. A MING-ERA HERITAGE HOUSE IN CHINA

Staying at Weiyan house is like stepping back in time, except with modern comforts. This house was the childhood residence of Zhu Zhishan, one of the great poets and intellects of the Ming dynasty some 600 years ago. The renovations stayed true to Huizhou architectural style and traditional Chinese garden design and the house and gardens are surrounded by a maple forest and nearby river, which makes for spectacular scenery. The elegantly restored rooms include wi-fi, heating and air conditioning, while the property has indoor hot springs, outdoor swimming pools and restaurants.



7. A JUNK-STYLE BOAT IN VIETNAM

Halong Bay is undoubtedly one of Vietnam's natural treasures, and there's no better way to experience its beauty than by spending a night on its glittering waters. Like a private, floating boutique hotel, the junk-style boat offers traditional touches alongside modern comforts. And forget about portholes – think huge windows allowing you to take in the magic of the bay from the comfort of your own cabin. Sit back on the top deck with a cold drink in hand and watch a landscape of scattered islands and limestone outcrops unfold in front of you, then in the morning, unwind with an on-board Tai Chi class with the most spectacular backdrop you could ask for.

8. A WELLNESS RESORT IN CAMBODIA

Hidden away from the lively chaos of Siem Reap you'll find the Navutu Dreams Resort & Wellness Retreat, a tranquil oasis on the fringe of the city. Designed for maximum comfort and minimum impact on the environment, you can count on renewable energy sources, locally grown produce and community engagement. After a busy day exploring the temples of Angkor Wat you'll have the choice of three swimming pools to stretch out next to, surrounded by lush, tropical plants, or you can retire to your room and make use of a veranda, private garden and rain showers – bliss! There's also a fabulous on-site restaurant serving up healthy Cambodian recipes and a gorgeous spa if you want to go all-in on relaxation.





A LOCAL LEADER'S TAKE ON VISITING VIETNAM

As told to Tammy Burns

Local tour leader Thanh Vu began his tourism career as a street vendor in Hanoi. That was how he first found himself chatting to travellers, learning their life stories and sharing his own. The connections he made are what inspired him to return to school and pursue a bachelor's degree in tourism. He went on to become a guide with Urban Adventures and then a leader with Intrepid. In 2020, Thanh was a nominee for Intrepid's Leader of the Year.



We talked with Thanh to learn how the pandemic has affected tourism in Vietnam, and what travellers should know before they go.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH COVID-19 AND TOURISM?

I was guiding a group on an 8-day trip when the first few cases were found in Vietnam. Many tourist sites closed, and international flights were re-routed or cancelled. Some countries announced their borders would close.

Intrepid made the decision to suspend all tours globally, as safety is our priority. The whole company – management, office staff, leaders – we all worked together to get customers home.

We were surprised by how rapidly everything happened, but me and my colleagues all thought life would get back to normal after a few months. We didn't know it was just the beginning.

By April, Vietnam implemented social distancing across the country. The entire economy was paralysed. Phrases that have stuck in our minds during the last year: self-isolation, lockdown, social distancing...

The tourism industry is still frozen, especially international tourism, with flights restricted and cruise ships dormant. Hotels, restaurants and beaches are closed. Many travel companies have gone bankrupt and

millions of people have lost their jobs.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN VIETNAM?

Vietnam is experiencing its fourth wave now. The impact is not just on tourism but on almost every aspect of the economy.

If a factory with thousands of workers finds just one case of coronavirus, it will be isolated. We're aware of the danger of the disease and the limitations of our medical infrastructure, so we believe preventing community spread is the best option.

Vietnam has negotiated to buy 170 million vaccine doses, which is great, because we have a population of less than 100 million. There is also a vaccine being produced by a local medical company that is in the third phase of testing and showing positive data.

WHAT DO YOU THINK TRAVEL WILL BE LIKE AFTER THE PANDEMIC?

I think tourism will grow dramatically once the pandemic is under control and vaccines are widely circulated. People have been home too long and will look forward to being able to travel again.

However, the way people travel will be different. I think travellers will prefer tour packages with small, private groups, and destinations with safety precautions and that aren't

too busy.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT BEING A TOUR LEADER?

I feel blessed to meet people from around the globe and to share my beautiful country, its rich history and local life with them. At the same time, I get to learn about different cultures, which I find fascinating. Being a tour leader is like being an ambassador and I'm so proud of it.

I grew up in the countryside not far from Hanoi, in a small village. The only travelling I got to do in my childhood was an annual trip when my family would travel about 40 kilometres to visit my mum's hometown for Lunar New Year. We had to ride our bicycles 3 kilometres to get to a road where we could catch a bus. Because it was a holiday, buses were overcrowded, often with no seats left and we had to stand the whole way. But as a child, I looked forward to it every year.

Sometimes my groups tell me, "You work very hard", and I tell them that when you do what you love, you won't work a single day.

WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE EXPERIENCE ON A TOUR?

Every trip is a new adventure, but one of my most memorable experiences was in 2017. I was on a 20-day trip and our itinerary included a homestay in Da Bac, a Zao village (Zao are a small ethnic group in Vietnam). It was a new community-based tourism project, and we were

one of the first groups from Intrepid.

Because it was so remote, it took us five hours to drive from Hanoi and the road was quite bumpy. When we were 10 kilometres from the village, we realised the rest of the road was under construction, and we would have to walk.

It turned out to be a great experience. We walked the trails, along rice fields and villages, past chickens and buffalo and locals carrying wood on their backs. The locals came out of their houses and stood on the roadside and kept waving, speaking in Vietnamese and their language, which we couldn't understand, but it showed on their faces how excited they were to see foreigners visiting the area.

I'm sure it was the first time many of them had seen foreigners. They kept coming out and shaking hands and asking in Vietnamese, "How are you? Where do you come from?"

After about 3 kilometres, we met our host family – a lovely couple

who drove their scooter to meet us and brought a homecooked meal! We ate our lunch in a local family's yard, enjoying the green valley in front of us. It was an experience to remember. We all loved it.

WHAT IS THE ONE EXPERIENCE A TRAVELLER MUST HAVE WHEN THEY COME TO VIETNAM?

For me, food is a big part of travelling, and in bustling cities like Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, everything happens on the street. You see locals sitting on little chairs on the pavement, enjoying cups of tea or coffee and local dishes, socialising. Sometimes the best food is not found in a restaurant, but from a local family that has been serving their dishes for generations.

In Hanoi, you must walk through the Old Quarter, down alleyways, trying street food. Sit down and join the Hanoians with a glass of Hanoi Bia Hoi – the most well-known local beer in Hanoi – and watch the world go by on scooters. It's a great experience.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU ABOUT WORKING WITH INTREPID?

I'm proud to be a tour leader and so glad I found Intrepid, where everyone supports each other, and you can be yourself. It's a company that's not only committed to customers, but also to responsible travel and supporting local communities. Intrepid is the only travel company in Vietnam that's a certified B Corp.

After COVID-19, I'm even more grateful to be a part of the Intrepid family, as it's not what happens but how you react to it, and I love the way our management team handled the pandemic. They kept leaders and staff updated with how the business was doing and how we were responding to customers. That's really inspiring.

Discover the people and places of Vietnam on an Intrepid Premium trip. Get in touch with your Globetrotter Travel Agency for more details - **0848 000 844** or globetrotter.ch/termin



THE CUISINE OF THE CAUCASUS:

THE WORLD'S BEST-KEPT CULINARY SECRET

By Neil Coletta

To explore the Caucasus is to experience living history.

It is to be humbled by noble mountains and ancient seas, to be woven into a tapestry made up of some of the world's earliest known cultures. It is to discover saffron-scented alleyways while imagining the plodding of hooves from a Silk Road caravan on winding, dirt roads still in use today. It is to hear the ringing out of the coppersmith's tools wafting into the foothills of a rural village in Azerbaijan, to smell the golden yeast of flatbread hissing from a clay oven on a Georgian roadside, or to stand on a precipice amidst the stillness of an Armenian monastery.

The relatively unassuming pocket of the world known as the Caucasus, generally consisting of three countries – Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – is bookended by the Black and Caspian seas and bordered by Turkey, Iran and Russia. It is dotted by one of the world's grandest mountain chains, boasts nine of the world's eleven climactic zones, and is a cross section of Europe and Asia unlike anywhere else on Earth. While the landscapes, customs and cultures are reason enough to visit, nowhere is the true character of the region more evident than in its distinctive food traditions.





The cuisine of the Caucasus

Travellers who have enjoyed traditional Mediterranean or Persian cooking will find some familiarities in the Caucasus: a bounty of fresh produce, the harmony of savoury and sweet within meat and grain-based dishes and a deep, spiritual love of bread – ubiquitous, fragrant and essential.

Vegetarians, too, will do very well throughout the region with its grilled, stuffed and pickled vegetables, along with hearty breads, rice preparations and all manner of dairy stemming from rich, open-aired alpine pastures.

Georgia

Georgia stands out among the three countries as having the greatest variety of dishes, as well as some of the most distinct foods found anywhere.

Grilled meats and kabobs are similar to those found throughout the Caucasus, although with a greater array of condiments and

saucers. Whether made from local plums or distilled into a syrupy pomegranate drizzle, the marriage of sweet and savoury with tart undercurrents is an ever-present alchemy in Georgian cuisine.

Gathered around the dinner table, you'll likely break off dense sections of khachapuri, an iconic cheese bread, with regional variations, topped with a raw, farm-fresh egg. Or cut into a plate of khinkali, savoury pouches of Mongol-influenced lamb, beef or mushroom, encased in a soft but toothsome pastry.

Georgian wine is deserving of an article unto itself, but as the world's oldest known winemaking culture, and the birthplace of the underground practice of fermentation in clay vessels known as kvevri, Georgia is a place to experience viticultural delights that are not exported or available elsewhere.

Armenia

Travellers familiar with Turkish cuisine will no doubt recognise the omnipresence of stuffed vegetables, tolma, but also fragrant mounds of rice and cured meats such as basturma (beef). The highly prized trout of Lake Sevan is not to be missed as you wind your way from peak to peak, exploring Armenia's remote monasteries – among the world's oldest and most well-preserved.

Be sure to stop and enjoy the many roadside, woodfired corn-on-the-cob stalls. Run by local families, these stalls cook to order for those passing by. The countryside foods entail hearty preparations with peasant roots, while the cosmopolitan capital of Yerevan offers more international fare and a thriving café culture.

While Armenian wine doesn't have the same global reputation as Georgia, its indigenous grapes are no less interesting, and the local wines are an excellent complement to the deep flavours of barbecued meats and vegetables. Finish your meal with Armenian brandy, among the world's finest and largely thought to rival the finest cognacs of France.

Azerbaijan

Known since ancient times as 'The Land of Fire', Azerbaijan's natural gas and oil have cemented it over time as both a place of mysterious power and a bastion of economic potential.

A jaunt around Baku will reveal not only ancient palaces and fortresses, but also ultra-futuristic architecture that has led some to label it the next Dubai. Meanwhile, on the outskirts of the capital are expansive oil fields and extractors rhythmically working. The result is a bizarre experience for any visitor, but the warmth of the local people can help to gain a nuanced understanding of the country's past and where it's headed.

In terms of cuisine, Azerbaijan is more similar to Armenia than Georgia. This is most evident in the enormous variety of plov featured on just about any menu – platters of rice for sharing, some laced with saffron, others studded with dried fruits and nuts, still others mixed with spiced meats or bejewelled with fresh pomegranate.

The iconic national dish is a stew called piti, made of slowly cooked lamb, chickpeas, chestnuts and tart, green native plums. Piti is worth the trip to Azerbaijan all by itself, but the quality of the local bread and the quantity of fresh herbs and pickles provided at the start of each meal make for addictive mealtimes.

The traditional breakfast may remind some travellers of Spanish tapas, with small plates of eggs scrambled with tomato, butters and cheeses (of varying pungencies), pickles, jams and jellies, and, of course, more bread.



A transformative experience

A visit to the countries of the Caucasus would be transformative for anyone, from a first-time traveller to a globetrotter. Too often labelled alternately as European or Asian in essence, they are neither (or both) – and the challenge in understanding this incredible part of the world is precisely why it should be experienced first-hand.

Experience the cuisine of the Caucasus on a 15-day Intrepid Premium trip through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Get in touch with your Globetrotter Travel Agency for more details - **0848 000 844** or globetrotter.ch/termin



JAPAN

PHOTO JOURNEY

Photographs by Jo Rankine
Words by Tiana Templeman

With more than 6,000 islands and 47 prefectures to explore, Japan offers an irresistible combination of historical riches, culinary adventures, cutting-edge technology and natural beauty. While it's impossible to resist the exciting hustle and bustle of Tokyo, immersing yourself in Japan's cultural pursuits also shouldn't be missed. There's an experience to suit every type of traveller. Leave your clothes – and your inhibitions – at the door and join the locals at an onsen, experience the beauty and spirituality of Japan's temples, or spend the night at a 'ryokan', a traditional Japanese inn, where the hospitality is as warm as your comfy futon bed.

Every season brings something new to discover. In autumn, the changing colours of the leaves bathes the landscape in shades of bronze, gold, copper and crimson. This is the perfect time to head outdoors and explore Japan's picturesque countryside. Winter sees locals and visitors flock to the ski fields around Hokkaido. Spring brings with it the chance to photograph pink cherry blossoms and soak up the atmosphere in and around Japan's parks. Summer is festival season, when the country comes alive with dancing, eating, cultural celebrations and spectacular firework displays. Year round, Japan is welcoming and inherently fascinating.

Eager to explore the beauty of Japan on an Intrepid Premium tour? Get in touch with your Globetrotter Travel Agency for more details - **0848 000 844** or globetrotter.ch/termin



*Tranquil views
of Mount Kamiyama
in Hakone.*



Soak up the tranquility of a traditional bamboo forest.



Stroll the historic streets of the Higashiyama District in Kyoto, home of the Hokan-ji Temple.



Shibuya Crossing in Tokyo is one of the world's busiest intersections.



Spend the night in a traditional ryokan.

Enjoy a traditional Japanese breakfast.



World Heritage-listed 17th-century Japanese castle, Himeji-jo.

Historic gasshō-zukuri houses in the village of Shirakawa-gō.



Sake barrels at the Meiji Jingu shrine in Tokyo.



BACK TO THE 80S IN ANTARCTICA

A journey on the Ocean Endeavour

By Patrick O'Neill

Nothing compares to the excitement of throwing open your curtains and peering outside your porthole to glimpse Antarctica for the very first time. It seems impossible that the reality of what you've been dreaming about seeing for so long is even more stunning than you imagined. Who knew there were so many different shades of white and blue?

Today is about to get even more exciting. I join my fellow adventurers in the dining room where the hum of animated chatter is interrupted by a crackle from the ship's intercom, followed by the booming voice of our enthusiastic New Zealand expedition leader, Cheli.

"Welcome to Kinnes Cove! Are you ready to find out what we have planned for today?"

There's a loud chorus of "Yes!" as Cheli outlines a dazzling array of activities, including our first chance to get in a Zodiac and land on the ice. Everyone has already been divided into four groups - Albatross,

Gentoo, Leopard and Minke - as only a certain amount of people can land on the ice at one time. I'm an Albatross and already hoping I'll be flying out of the dining room in a few minutes to zip around mighty glaciers, spot leopard seals (from a safe and responsible distance), and view colonies of gentoo and chinstrap penguins.

The excited chatter continues as we eagerly wait for the intercom to crackle into action once more. It doesn't take long. "Minke and Albatross, head to the mudroom. You're disembarking in 10 minutes!" There is a moment of stillness then all hell breaks loose. Breakfasts are left at the table as people run back to their cabins to grab forgotten cameras, gloves and zoom lenses before running down the stairs to the mudroom. Everyone is decked out in thermals, cosy trousers, fleecy jumpers, neck warmers, beanies and gloves. We pull on waterproof trousers, boots and another jacket to complete our 'Antarctica look', then step into a bucket to disinfect our boots and clamber into one of the waiting Zodiacs.



The wind rushes past us on the ride to shore but the weather isn't as cold as you might think because it's 'summer'. While it's far from warm, two degrees Celsius is surprisingly comfortable when you're properly rugged up. We've been told the captain can usually find a sheltered spot for disembarkations and today is no exception. We step ashore and walk across the ice field, investigating coves while giving way to penguins bustling along the ice. Some slide down the icy slopes on their bellies; others squawk and jostle near the water's edge, tussling for position before they leap into the sea in search of today's meal.

The following morning we see plenty of seals and motor slowly past kayakers wearing grins as wide as the sky. Kayaking is one of several optional excursions like snowshoeing and ice camping which can be booked in advance. After we've stopped alongside the kayakers for a chat, our Zodiac cruises through a field of brash ice with chunky "bergy bits" that tinkle like wind chimes. Slowly, the Zodiac comes to a complete stop and our

group is together, alone. Surrounded by the vastness of the Antarctic Peninsula the ice is constantly restless; groaning, clattering, shifting, and chattering as the click and whirr of cameras add another layer to the orchestra of sound.

On the way back to the Ocean Endeavour, our guide scoops up a chunk of ice with the promise of a surprise. After an afternoon spent swimming in the heated outdoor pool while snow flurries tumble down around us, a group of us head to the bar for a pre-dinner 'cocktail of the day' made with ice that once formed part of a mighty glacier. I had always wondered what it would take to get me to drink a classic 80s cocktail. I found out in Antarctica.

Embark on your own Antarctic adventure with Intrepid. Get in touch with your Globetrotter Travel Agency for more details - **0848 000 844** or globetrotter.ch/termin



ANTARCTICA

INSIDE TIPS

Be camera smart

Learn how to use that fancy new camera before you get off the ship. If you need some help with your photography, the onboard expert is always happy to assist.

Attend every lecture

Don't limit yourself to lectures about topics you already know something about. It's often the ones you drop into on a whim which turn out to be the most fascinating.

Chill out and enjoy yourself

Embrace the thrill of the freezing spray on your face as you're zooming along in the Zodiac and the occasional bumpy ride across the sea. It's all part of the fun.

Get to know your leaders

You'll get a lot more out of your trip if you get to know your expedition leaders. Take the time for a chat in the evening to learn more about them.

Stay up and see more

You can spot animals like seals, penguins, whales and orcas long into the 'night' as the sun sets around midnight and rises again just a few hours later.



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