



# FACT SHEET

## 1. WHITE DESERT - OVERVIEW

Established by record-breaking polar explorers, White Desert Antarctica has been pioneering luxury in the interior of Antarctica since 2005, offering guests bespoke, environmentally conscious experiences that include visiting the emperor penguins and the Geographic South Pole. Travelling by private jet to a blue ice runway in Queen Maud Land, guests have a wide choice of activities, including climbing, trekking, yoga, photographic safaris and exploring ice tunnels, all from the comfort and hospitality of White Desert's camps at Whichaway Oasis and Wolf's Fang (newly launched for the 2021/22 season).

At the heart of White Desert's mission is the desire to create a positive impact on Antarctica's future through its tourism and science logistics programmes. A pioneer of low-impact practices in its operations and its eco-camps, the company has been carbon neutral since 2007 and recruits Antarctic Ambassadors to support the goals of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) to protect – and inspire the future stewardship of – Antarctica's unique environment.

## 2. WHITE DESERT ANTARCTICA - THE COMPANY

- The company was founded by Antarctic explorer husband and wife duo Patrick and Robyn Woodhead.
- White Desert offers unique, inspiring and transformational journeys for private guests travelling as individuals or as groups of up to 12.
- White Desert also supplies logistical support for international science programmes at bases in Antarctica.
- The company is the first in the world to offer a private jet service to Antarctica.
- Wolf's Fang Runway (WFR) is the only runway in Antarctica optimised for private jets; it is operated by White Desert.
- The company is UK-registered with an operating company in Cape Town, South Africa.
- The company's permit to operate in Antarctica is issued by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

### ANTARCTICA

- Antarctica is a vast landmass of 14.2m km<sup>2</sup> / 5.4m sq miles – larger than China (9.7m km<sup>2</sup> / 3.7m sq miles) and India (3.3m km<sup>2</sup> / 1.3m sq miles) combined – and is the coldest, windiest, driest and highest-altitude continent on Earth.
- It is also the only continent with no native human population.



- The continent is almost entirely covered by ice averaging 1.9 km (1.2 miles) in thickness, reaching a maximum depth of 4.5km (2.7 miles).
- It is home to 80% of the world's fresh water, yet no rain has fallen in Antarctica for more than two million years; on average, less than 10mm pa of snow falls in Antarctica.
- Nobody owns, or can claim sovereignty in Antarctica, which is governed by an international treaty signed by 54 nations. The Antarctic Treaty sets Antarctica aside as a scientific preserve, establishes freedom of scientific research and bans military activity on the continent.
- White Desert has been part of IAATO since the company's inception. IAATO creates guidelines and is a self-regulating body for all tourism operations in Antarctica.
- There are 70 permanent science bases on the continent, representing 29 countries.
- Antarctica is the only continent with no official time zone; White Desert uses UTC throughout its Antarctic operations.

## WHITE DESERT OPERATIONS

- White Desert's client season runs from November to February.
- The company has three camps in Antarctica:
  - Whichaway Oasis (WAO), situated at the Schirmacher Oasis in Queen Maud Land, approximately 100km (62 miles) from the coast, at an altitude of approximately 100m (330ft); typical temperatures in season -10 to -5°C / 14F° to 23F°
  - Wolf's Fang (WF), situated near WFR in Queen Maud Land, at an altitude of 1130m (3700ft), approximately 170km (105 miles) from the coast; typical temperatures in season -10°C to -1°C / 14F° to 27F°
  - FD83 Expedition Camp (FD83), a fuel depot and overnight stop between WFR and the South Pole, located at 83° South on the High Polar Plateau at an altitude of 2640m (1.64 miles), approximately 700km (435 miles) from the South Pole; typically -25°C / -13F° or below
- Guests fly from Cape Town International (CPT) in South Africa to WFR in 5 hours, passing into the Antarctic Circle and the continuous daylight that only Earth's highest latitudes (most northerly / southerly) experience.
- Wolf's Fang Runway is a blue ice runway and is able to land aircraft of all sizes without requiring any modifications; it is 3km (1.9 miles) long and is resurveyed and recreated each season.
- Wolf's Fang Runway is named after Wolf's Fang Mountain (Ulvetanna in Norwegian), one of the most iconic mountains in Antarctica, which dominates the runway's skyline.
- Guests staying at Whichaway Oasis then transfer aboard a ski-equipped Twin Otter aircraft (~30 minutes).
- Flights to the emperor penguin colonies take 2.5 hours and the South Pole 7 hours.
- White Desert's state-of-the-art Gulfstream G550 aircraft have 12 luxurious guest seats + 2 bench seats. White Desert performs up to 40 intercontinental flights per season.
- Our fleet of overland transport includes skidoos, specially adapted Arctic Trucks, and BT-67 and Twin Otter aircraft to fly guests within Antarctica.
- All White Desert cargo (i.e. fuel, food, overland vehicles, building materials and operational equipment) arrives either by plane or via the S.A. Agulhas II polar supply vessel, operated by the South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP).

- Once on land, cargo is then be transported a further 800km via overland routes, carried out with specially adapted off-road vehicles and snow groomers/tractors designed to operate efficiently in Antarctic conditions.
- White Desert’s Basler BT-67 is a modernised and uprated conversion of the DC-3, an aircraft with a unique track record and proven dependability around the world for more than six decades; it is specially equipped with skis to land on snow.
- Guest transportation around our camps is provided in Arctic Truck 4x4s which have been specially modified for driving in Antarctic conditions.

The vast majority of our tourists return from Antarctica as members of our Antarctica Ambassadors Programme, which supports conservation efforts for the Continent’s conservation. Furthermore, by using our aircraft to deliver scientists to their stations, we assist in vital, on-going climate change research.



*Figure 1: Guest Itinerary*

### 3. ACCOMMODATION - WHICHAWAY OASIS

- Whichaway Oasis is White Desert’s flagship luxury camp in the Antarctic, accommodating up to 12 people in 6 state-of-the-art, eco-friendly Polar Pods with luxury interiors.
- The camp is situated on ice-free rock at the Schirmacher Oasis and is surrounded by freshwater lakes.
- Each pod is designed to accommodate two guests in first-class comfort in Antarctica’s unique climate.
- At just over six metres (20ft) in diameter each pod is spacious, and has a writing desk, wash area and toilet; beds may be set up as doubles or two singles.

- The pods' exteriors are constructed using cutting-edge materials whilst the interiors have an old-world feel that conjures up images of Antarctica's rich heritage of exploration through sumptuous textures and thoughtful design.
- The rest of the camp comprises a shower pod, kitchen and three centralised pods that make up the reception, lounge and dining room, as well as a yoga pod (new for the 21/22 season) and a sauna.
- Meals are prepared by White Desert's chef, featuring produce from South Africa, bespoke White Desert cocktails and fine wines from the Cape vineyards. The style of the menu is sophisticated without being pretentious and dishes are individually served.
- The bread is freshly baked and the coffee freshly ground.
- In addition to multiple outdoor activities, Whichaway Oasis offers the chance for guests to disconnect and unwind through mindfulness and yoga and is suitable either for exclusive bookings or for individuals and small groups.

#### 4. ACCOMMODATION - WOLF'S FANG (New for 21/22 season)

- Wolf's Fang is White Desert's second luxury camp, accommodating up to 12 people in 6 state-of-the-art, eco-friendly Arctic Tents.
- The camp is situated at the base of the Henriksen Nunataks, which are mountain peaks that project through the glaciers.
- Each tent is heated and designed to accommodate two guests in comfort in Antarctica's unique climate.
- At just over 6 metres (20ft) long and 3.6 metres (12ft) wide, each tent is spacious, and has an en-suite toilet; beds are set up as two singles.
- The tents' exteriors are built using cutting-edge materials whilst the interiors hark back to the polar exploration of old, using leather, canvas and quotes from explorers as inspiration.
- The rest of the camp comprises a central shower unit, a kitchen and a dining & lounge tent.
- Meals are prepared by White Desert's chefs, featuring produce from South Africa, bespoke White Desert cocktails and fine wines from the Cape vineyards. The style of the menu is simple, hearty and served family-style.
- The bread is freshly baked and the coffee freshly brewed.
- The style of Wolf's Fang is more outdoor-focussed with numerous activities and opportunities for exploration. Dining is communal and the camp is well suited to families and groups.

#### 5. WHITE DESERT ITINERARIES (all pricing for 21/22 season)

- White Desert offers the following itineraries for the 21/22 season:
  - Whichaway Oasis
    - Early Emperors \$60,000pp – 6 days, including all activities plus a trip to see the emperor penguins.
    - South Pole & Emperors \$96,000pp – 8 days, as above but including an overnight trip to the South Pole.

- Ultimate Antarctica \$2.965m – this is an exclusive 24-day trip for 12 guests combining visiting the interior of Antarctica with cruising on an expedition yacht along the Antarctic Peninsula.
  - Wolf's Fang
    - Early Emperors \$48,000pp – 6 days, including all activities plus a trip to see the emperor penguins.
    - South Pole & Emperors \$78,000pp – 8 days, as above but including an overnight trip to the South Pole.
    - Virgin Summit \$45,000pp – 6-day trip in the mountains of Queen Maud Land culminating in climbing an unsummitted peak.
    - Explorers Academy \$40,000pp – 6 days of climbing, camping, trekking (more relaxed activities are also available).
    - Greatest Day \$14,500pp – a single day incorporating flights to and from Antarctica, a trek on the ice and a lavish Explorers Picnic.
    - Owners Club \$POA – the only place guests can land their private jet in Antarctica
- Guests need to arrive in Cape Town two days before departure and stay on for two days after their scheduled return, in case of any weather-related changes to their dates of travel.
- All guests receive a full briefing in Cape Town on the day before their scheduled departure.

2022/23 Season dates	
Full Season	15 November to 15 February
Early Emperors	15 November - 30 November
South Pole & Emperors	01 December - 31 January
Explorers Academy /Virgin Summit	01 February – 15 February
Greatest Day	Various
Owners Club	Please get in touch

## 6. HIGHLIGHTS

### EMPERORS & SOUTH POLE (at Whichaway Oasis)

- This eight-day trip combines a magnificent journey to visit an emperor penguin colony with a flight to the lowest point on Earth – the Geographic South Pole (typical temperatures in season  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-13\text{F}^{\circ}$  and below).
- On non-travelling days, guests can tailor their agendas to do as much or as little as they desire, weather permitting.
- More relaxing activities include gentle treks to a series of ice tunnels, picnics with remarkable vistas and Arctic Truck safaris, as well as sauna, yoga, massage and meditation.
- More adventurous activities include the via cordata hike above the giant ice waves, technical rock climbing, abseiling and learning the skills of a polar explorer from expert guides.
- All activities are led by UIAGM-qualified high mountain guides and experienced polar explorers – many of whom hold world records for their achievements – in a ratio of one guide for every four guests.
- After visiting the Geographic South Pole, the Basler BT-67 lands on the High Polar Plateau at our camp named FD83 Expedition Camp (= Fuel Depot at  $83^{\circ}$  South) to allow the crew to rest and refuel the aircraft. Guests have the chance to experience a night under canvas in the midst of this vast and unique wilderness.
- Guests visit an emperor penguin colony at Atka Bay, which was the site of the first episode of Sir David Attenborough's ground-breaking documentary *Seven Worlds, One Planet*, and is home to more than 28,000 adult penguins and their young chicks. Typical temperatures in season  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-4\text{F}^{\circ}$ .
- With no natural predators on land, the penguins are unafraid of humans, allowing visitors the chance to observe the noise and commotion of the colony and to build a unique connection with the natural world offered nowhere else on Earth.
- White Desert follows or exceeds IAATO guidelines that prohibit physical contact and stipulate a safe minimum 5m (16.4ft) distance from wildlife; guests are also advised to sit down to view the penguins and to retreat if they approach closer than 5m (16.4ft).

### EXPLORERS ACADEMY / VIRGIN SUMMIT (at Wolf's Fang)

- This six-day adrenaline-fuelled adventure takes place within sight of the dramatic Wolf's Fang Peak.
- Led by White Desert's expert High Mountain Guides, guests are able to explore the unique mountain ranges of Queen Maud Land, where ancient, kilometre-high rock monoliths rise vertically from the ice. These itineraries include the option to spend the night under canvas in the mountains.
- Guests choose from a range of activities including ice-climbing, abseiling, trekking, relaxed picnics and visiting the surreal tunnels and rivers formed in iridescent blue ice.
- Each year, one itinerary is dedicated to climbing an unsummitted peak, which has previously been surveyed by our guides.

### THE GREATEST DAY (at Wolf's Fang)

- This trip is the only opportunity for guests to experience the interior of Antarctica in a single day.
- Guests can either buy single seats or charter an entire private jet.

- Timetables vary depending on the weather conditions and time of year; however, a typical trip sees the flight departing Cape Town at 0800L and landing on the ice at Wolf's Fang Runway five hours later, after which guests spend approximately four hours in Antarctica and return by approximately 2200L.
- Guests are escorted by polar guides from the jet on an easy walk to the peak of a nearby nunatak peak, where guests experience spectacular views over the entire mountain range and enjoy a champagne summit picnic, with an immense wall of ice as its backdrop.
- As guests board the jet for the return flight home, their drink of choice is served – chilled by ten-thousand-year old Antarctic ice.

#### EXCLUSIVE & BESPOKE PRODUCTS

- All itineraries using White Desert aircraft may be bought exclusively for up to 12 guests. Exclusive trips may also originate and/or finish in Punta Arenas in Chile or Ushuaia in Argentina.
- Certain dates in the calendar are reserved for exclusive purchases.
- Owners of private jets may choose to use their own aircraft. The landing fees include preparing the runway, licensing, pilot briefing and familiarisation etc.
- Bespoke expeditions, for example photographic safaris along the spectacular Antarctic coastline or through the mountains, can also be arranged.
- Only those guests that make it as far as the South Pole – 90 degrees South – are eligible to purchase the following unique keepsakes:
  - White Desert's exclusive Bremont Explorer timepiece, which features a map of Antarctica, a unique '90 Degrees' face, a South Pole timer and an individually engraved date of arrival.
  - The exclusive Ice Compass necklace: crafted exclusively for White Desert, the white gold compass-design piece is set with 66 ethically sourced diamonds and tanzanite gemstones.

## 7. SUSTAINABILITY

- Overall:
  - White Desert is dedicated to introducing guests to the interior of Antarctica, with the mission of encouraging them to support the conservation of this wonderful wilderness by becoming Antarctic Ambassadors. Protecting – and inspiring the future stewardship of – Antarctica's unique environment has always been at the heart of White Desert's purpose.
  - White Desert believes that responsible tourism is a genuine force for good and supports Sir David Attenborough's stance on the transformative power of wilderness travel: "No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced".
  - Robyn Woodhead is Chair of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) Executive Committee, as well as sitting on its Climate Change Working Group; Robyn is also a member of the Virtuoso Sustainability Council.
  - Patrick Woodhead has been part of the UK Government delegation at Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings on aviation matters, as well as Council of Management of National Antarctic Programmes (COMNAP).
  - We employ a specialist Environmental Consultant who shapes internal policy, inspects and advises on all our logistics and systems, and is tasked with continuously reducing our environmental footprint.

- White Desert is a supporter of and contributor to the scientific community of Antarctica through its science logistics programme.
- **Camp operations:**
  - Established and operated under IAATO guidelines and operated to the strictest environmental standards, Whichaway Oasis and Wolf's Fang Explorer are temporary eco-camps rather than hotels and have no permanent infrastructure, so they can be overhauled, upgraded or removed without leaving a trace.
  - Waste is minimised through the processing, selection and repackaging of all consumables before they are flown to Antarctica.
  - All solid waste is transported out of Antarctica at the end of the season.
  - White Desert is working to remove single-use plastic from its entire operation.
  - Only bio-degradable soaps, shampoo and washing up liquids are used in camp.
  - White Desert has pioneered new solar air heaters which reduce camp heating requirements.
- **Emissions:**
  - White Desert was the first aviation operator in Antarctica (including government programmes) to be entirely Carbon Neutral, a status the company has held since 2007.
  - White Desert has established a carbon reporting baseline to enable not only carbon offsetting but to identify and set targets for the reduction of carbon. White Desert is one of the first UK organisations operating in Antarctica seeking to achieve science-based targets which are in line with the Paris Agreement and the UK Net Zero by 2050 goal. We seek continual environmental improvements in our operations using the best available technology.
  - Recognising Antarctica's position on the front line in terms of climate change, White Desert decided right from the very beginning that it was vital to offset 100% of the company's emissions along its supply chain through funding certified replanting and renewable projects in the Amazon, Indonesia and India.
  - White Desert partners with air operators who have signed up to the 'Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation' (CORSIA) scheme, which uses market-based mechanisms to achieve tangible reductions in emissions.
  - In 2021, we are the first operator to use Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) within Antarctica. A significant test quantity (40,000 litres) of SAF produced from waste oils and fats is to be trialled on the continent.
  - We are going to rapidly phase in the maximum allowed '50/50' blend of fuel across our whole supply chain, greatly reducing our carbon emissions footprint, as SAF can provide an 80% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction compared with conventional jet fuel.
  - In addition to carbon reduction, SAF produces lower emissions of particulate matter, soot and oxides of sulphur. This produces fewer contrails, reducing the impact on local air quality. In addition, the reduction of soot is especially significant in Antarctica as its dark colour exacerbates the melting of snow and ice.
  - White Desert continues to optimise its aircraft mix to maximise fuel-efficiency when operating flights to Antarctica.
- **Health & Safety**
  - Whichaway Oasis and Wolf's Fang each have their own trauma doctor, equipped with a full medical kit, oxygen and hyperbaric chamber, who travels with guests to the South Pole and the



emperor penguin colonies in case of any health issues related to the high altitude and challenging environmental conditions of Antarctica.

- All of White Desert’s guides are UIAGM-qualified and have been trained in first aid and rescue procedures, as have other key members of staff.
- Satellite communications are available on all expeditions as well as in camp.
- White Desert has comprehensive Search & Rescue capabilities with back-up aircraft based in Cape Town and in Antarctica, as well as a fleet of surface vehicles. It also has mutual support agreements with other operators in Antarctica.
- Operating its own fleet of aircraft gives White Desert speed and flexibility, should it ever come to evacuating a guest or a member of staff to Cape Town.

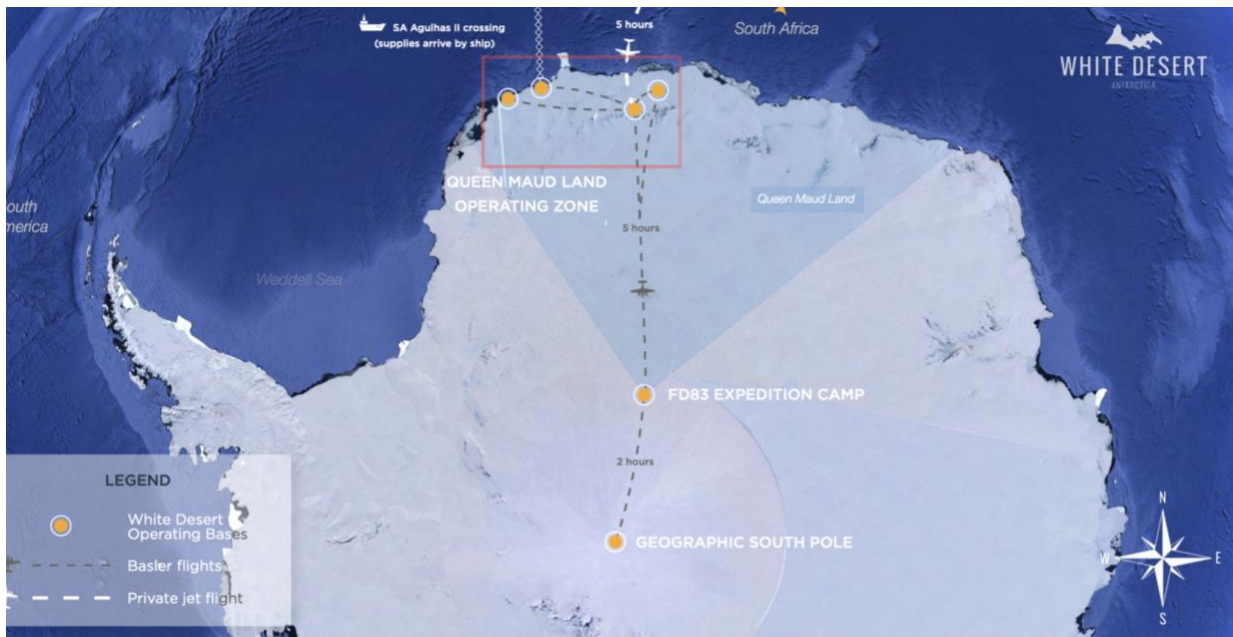


Figure 2: Logistics overview

## 8. THE INDUSTRY

- The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) advocates and promotes the practice of safe, environmentally responsible private sector travel. Its members are competitors who co-ordinate safety and environmental protection.
- More than 100 companies are members of IAATO, which was founded in 1991.
- IAATO’s remit as a self-regulating body includes drawing up protocols and guidelines on safety standards, operations, emergency response, training, communications, environmental protocols, biosecurity measures, Covid-19, guest safety and how to approach and keep a safe distance from wildlife.

- Visits to Antarctica during the 2019/20 season are shown in the table below, but can be summarised as follows:
  - Visitors by sea 73, 670
  - Visitors by air to interior 731  
(shown as “Deep Field Tourism”)

Type of Tourism	Number of Vessels	Number of Departures	Total Number of Passengers
IAATO Traditional Seaborne Tourism Peninsula	36	289	49,806
IAATO Seaborne Tourism Ross Sea / Continental	4	7	514
IAATO Sailing Vessels / Yacht Tourism Peninsula	12	23	165
IAATO Air-Cruise Peninsula	12	78	4,679
IAATO Large Ships / Cruise-Only Peninsula	6	11	18,506
IAATO Deep-Field Tourism	6 Operators	N/A	731

Figure 3, Source: IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2019-2020 Season, [www.iaato.org](http://www.iaato.org)

## 9. AWARDS

White Desert has been recognised for our ongoing efforts to protect Antarctica and was commended at the 2017 Environmental Impact Awards for 'Team of the Year' and 'Project of the Year Award' for our published Initial Environmental Evaluation.



## 10. BIOS – ROBYN & PATRICK WOODHEAD

After expeditions to Antarctica in 2002 and 2005, White Desert was founded in 2005 by Robyn and Patrick Woodhead, polar explorers with several world records under their belts. They had identified the opportunity to introduce their guests to the wonders of the forbidding and rarely seen Antarctic interior, but, despite the challenges, they wanted to provide a level of hospitality and comfort like nothing else on the continent.

### Robyn Woodhead – Founder & Director

Robyn grew up in Cape Town in a family of intrepid travellers. From the beginning, adventure travel was in her DNA. After graduating from the University of Cape Town, she moved to London where she set herself up in the world of travel marketing and PR, going on to found a UK-based luxury travel marketing and advertising agency where she cut her teeth on a wide variety of clients including the European Union, The Centre for Disease Control and numerous high-end travel destinations.

After an expedition to Antarctica in 2005, Robyn turned her attention to the other end of the planet and skied the last degree to the North Pole in 2006, thereby becoming the first South African to reach both Poles.

Robyn has been involved in responsible Antarctic travel since 2006. In addition to her role as a director of White Desert, she has been an active member of IAATO since 2010, joining the Executive Committee in 2017 and becoming Chair in 2021.

Robyn is on a mission to create true “Antarctic Ambassadors” - former high-profile White Desert clients who then go on to make a difference through their own networks, helping to secure the future and protection of Antarctica. She is also a proud mother of Electra and Oscar, balancing work and family life.

### Patrick Woodhead – Founder & CEO

Patrick grew up in England and as a teenager, heard the stories about the heroic age of exploration and names such as Shackleton and Scott. Determined to follow in their footsteps, he joined the youngest and fastest team to



ever reach the South Pole in 2002 and then went on to lead the first ever East to West traverse of Antarctica, covering 1850km (1149 miles) in 75 days.

Outside the polar world, he has been on many successful expeditions, summiting unclimbed mountains in Tibet and Kyrgyzstan, kayaking down uncharted rivers in the Amazon and being part of the team to set the fastest crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. In 2015, he rejoined some of his old teammates to break the record for the fastest traverse of Greenland.

A passionate advocate for the environment, Patrick is a member of the Royal Geographical Society in London as well as being a speaker for The Prince's Trust charity.

He is the author of three best-selling thrillers that have now been translated into 11 languages and when he is not spending time with his family, he enjoys flying light aircraft and hopes to receive his black belt in Tae Kwon Do later this year.

## 11. CONTACT DETAILS

[+1 815 534 4533](tel:+18155344533)

[info@white-desert.com](mailto:info@white-desert.com)

[www.white-desert.com](http://www.white-desert.com)

[www.linkedin.com/company/white-desert/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/white-desert/)

[www.instagram.com/white.desert.antarctica/](https://www.instagram.com/white.desert.antarctica/)

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