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# Travel Talks: Polar explorer Patrick Woodhead shares his love of Antarctica

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27 NOVEMBER 2017 BY ELIZABETH FINNEY

Patrick Woodhead, *co-founder of White Desert, loves Antarctica so much he made it his mission to whisk people away to this extraordinary part of the world to share in the experience. White Desert offers a luxury option for those visiting the South Pole, where guests can [experience just 24 hours in Antarctica](#) or up to eight days. Here he divulges the reasons behind his love for this wintry tundra.*

## Where is your favourite spot in Antarctica?



The White Desert dining pod at Whichaway Camp

Stepping in to the interior of Antarctica is one of the most surreal experiences around. Having nothing but ice around you and to every horizon is an extraordinary experience.

The environment can be very harsh and this is why we created White Desert and its Whichaway camp, which is an oasis of luxury and comfort set at the base of a 60 metre icefall.

The beauty of this place on the Schirmacher oasis took my breath away the first time I experienced it and I see it in every one of our guest's eyes when they see it for the first time.

## What are the best high octane activities to do there?



Kite skiing in Antarctica

Kite skiing across the high polar plateau at 20 knots dragging a sled behind you on the way to the South Pole is one of the most exhilarating experiences on the continent. The speed is fantastic but the reality of being the only person for thousands of square miles is very special indeed.

## What tips would you give anyone looking to visit?



Exploring the ice caves

My greatest tip would be to bring the best camera you could. The [icy wilderness of Antarctica](#) is like nothing you have ever seen.

## What is your fondest memory of visiting Antarctica before launching White Desert?



Patrick Woodhead founded White Desert with his wife Robyn in 2006

It has got to be reaching the South Pole after weeks on the ice, as part of my expedition there. The South Pole had been a goal of mine for so long and to arrive at the bottom of the world with some of my best friends was the most fantastic experience I could have wished for. The South Pole means so much for so many with it being the focus of so many adventurers including Shackleton, Scott and Amundsen. This fascination is shared with so many of our guests who get to stand at the bottom of the world and experience this feeling for themselves.

## What should visitors to Antarctica not miss?



An emperor penguin family in Antarctica

An experience not to miss is visiting the Emperor Penguin colony, which is undoubtedly one of the most impressive displays of the animal kingdom. These birds are so regal in their stature and to experience them in their natural habitat is awe-inspiring.

## What are your experiences of the local wildlife?



Flying over mountains on route to the South Pole

Antarctica is a hostile environment and to witness the local wildlife in this environment truly leaves a sense of amazement. When viewing a colony of Emperor Penguins you might catch a glimpse of a Weddell Seal lazing about on the sea ice. You may even be lucky enough to witness the might of a Leopard Seal.

## What drove you to explore this part of the world?



Rocking climbing in Antarctica is not an activity for the faint-hearted

From a very young age I was drawn to adventure and achieving the biggest goals I could set my mind to. Growing up in England and as a boy hearing about the heroic age of exploration I was intrigued to experience what explorers such as Shackleton and Scott went through. I figured the only way to understand it was to follow in their footsteps and that meant [exploring Antarctica](#).

## Is there anywhere specific in the world you're still keen to experience?



Luxury sleeping pods in Whichaway Camp

Places that really draw me to them are places of complex culture and places of geographic beauty. While writing a novel a few years back I spent some time in the Congo Jungle with pygmy hunters. This was in an environment with much political conflict and the experience really opened my eyes to how important it is that as a people we need to work to preserve culture in the face of progress. I am keen to visit places that expose me to more of this and to really understand culture in these changing times.

## What is the one thing you wouldn't go to Antarctica without?



The lounge at White Desert's Whichaway Camp

The handiest tool to help your skin in the harsh Antarctic environment is the Elizabeth Arden Eight-hour cream. With the wind and cold of the glacier, eight-hour cream is a great defence.

All pictures courtesy of White Desert