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ON DUTY

Journey to the Bottom of the World

Board a G550 to Antarctica's
only luxury camp.

BY RUTH MANGEE





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Clockwise from above:
An ice climbing excursion
during a White Desert
journey; front and side
views of a G550 poised
on Wolf's Fang Runway.



ON DUTY



Imagine reaching the pristine interior of Antarctica without the grueling trek. World record-setting explorers Patrick and Robyn Woodhead founded high-end tour company White Desert to give you precisely this opportunity. Since it was established in 2005, White Desert has worked continuously to elevate each aspect of the journey. You can now complete the crossing from Cape Town to Antarctica in a Gulfstream G550™ (or your own aircraft), touching down on the polar version of a red carpet—the continent's first and only blue ice runway dedicated to private jets.

White Desert has many choices when it comes to selecting its aircraft, but according to CEO Patrick Woodhead, there is no debate: "We're going into the most remote runway in the entire world, so we need something absolutely reliable and with incredible range. It's amazing how all the pilots say, 'Gulfstream.'" Beyond top performance, the G550 provides the perfect vantage for sightseers. "We depart in the evening—in the heat of Africa,

surrounded by the smell of the sea and the grass," Woodhead says. "You head south and nighttime fades and then becomes morning again, except it's a bright, bright morning with 24-hour sunlight. You start to see huge icebergs. That journey, seen through Gulfstream's iconic windows, is a really important element in the trip south." As the plane prepares to land, you'll enjoy another spectacular sight: the Wolf's Fang Runway.

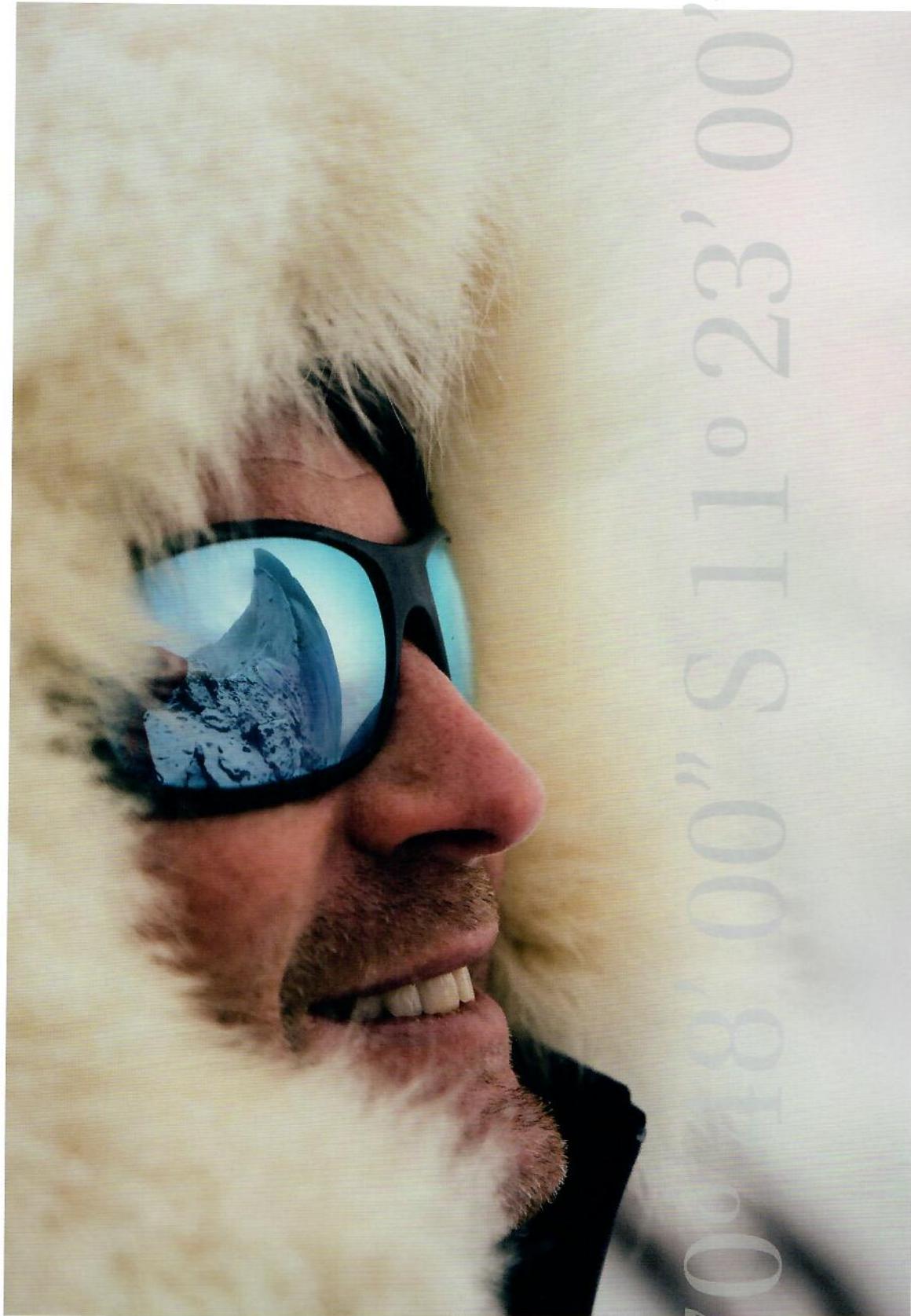
The rare phenomenon of exposed blue ice lends itself surprisingly well to runway duty. Blue ice is formed when snowfall accumulates and compresses under its own weight. This dense surface allows heavy aircraft to touch down on wheels—in this case, enabling White Desert to take full advantage of the robust G550 payload.

Not all ice runways are created equal. While many landing strips routinely experience high winds or (relatively) high temperatures, Wolf's Fang sits at an optimal spot on an ablation zone. A distinctive 3,000-foot-high mountain from the Wolf's Fang range >





Clockwise from right: A client surveys Wolf's Fang peak; a signpost highlights the nearest attractions; the White Desert fleet in action.



70°48'00" S 111°23'00" E

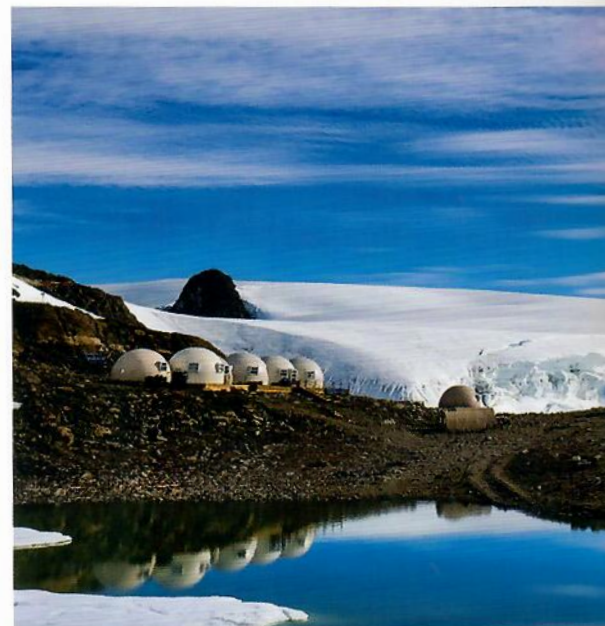
ON DUTY



“We were skiing across the whole of Antarctica—the first time it had been done. We were stuck in a storm, feeling hungry and cold, and thinking, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if we had a beautiful luxury camp here?’”

—PATRICK WOODHEAD

Above: A guide-led rope walk over the glacial vista.
Below: The awe-inspiring Whichaway Camp overlooks a frozen lake.





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Left: Elegant dining in a communal pod. Below: An up-close encounter with an emperor penguin and creche of chicks.



marks the site from a hundred miles off, providing an advantageous landmark for pilots. Prior to each landing, snow groomers rake a corduroy-like texture into the ice, increasing surface friction. Just how effective is this treatment? The groomed runway approximates the conditions of your average asphalt runway on a rainy day. While the landing itself poses few technical challenges, White Desert does offer visiting pilots the chance to shadow a flight from the jump seat. "You just watch how gently our pilots come in," Woodhead says. "They don't really touch the brakes; they just use up the runway. It's all a very, very smooth process."

After deplaning, your next stop is Whichaway Camp, featuring seven luxurious fiberglass sleeping pods. Amenities include a dining room, library, and, coming soon, a sauna. From a distance, the camp evokes a Martian outpost—one overlooking a 200-foot icefall on a frozen lake. Popular itineraries include stops at the geographic south pole, an emperor penguin colony and, Woodhead's personal favorite, iridescent blue ice tunnels.

"When people come to Antarctica, they become an ambassador for protecting Antarctica. It's like seeing the ocean for the first time," Woodhead says. "It's an

incredibly overpowering sensory experience." According to White Desert, the company has achieved carbon neutrality, harnessed renewable energy sources and eliminated the camp's consumption of single-use plastics. "The environmental aspect has got to run through the whole system. It's about really respecting nature," Woodhead explains. At the close of a client's adventure in Antarctica, a G550 is standing by to complete the carbon-offset return flight. It's hard to imagine anything more breathtaking than Antarctica itself, but getting to and from this unbelievably beautiful continent in a Gulfstream only enhances the adventure. ○