



Eugene Kaspersky

New Year at the South Pole!

Kaspersky Lab
Antarctic Expedition

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From the Author

One of the top-three antivirus vendors in the world with over 300 million users worldwide, thousands of partners in over 100 countries and more than two thousand employees in dozens of local offices. Add in a host of media, analytical and public attention and you have Kaspersky Lab.

It's an organization that demands personal involvement wherever we have a presence. We're not just about branding, presentations and interviews: our guys need encouragement, confidence and a clear understanding of where we as a company are going. It's what drives the system and keeps us moving forward. That's why as you can see in my "Travel Notes" on my blog, I, for one, am frequently on the road.

I've no idea how many countries I've visited, how much time I've spent on business trips and how many miles I've covered. Totting up the distance I've covered, even roughly, leaves me aghast – especially when you factor in my dislike of flying. Even when traveling by train I can't help looking around for the safety belt! However, being positive by nature I tend to look for the best in any situation and despite it being a cliché, I never hesitate to combine business with pleasure!

I'd like to share some of that pleasure with you. This book is the story of one of the most interesting trips of my life. It's an adventure peppered with amusing incidents, fascinating historical and geographical facts and a few hints for any intrepid travelers thinking of following in our footsteps.

All of the photos, plus updates and other information can be found on my blog: <http://eugene.kaspersky.com>. I don't promise to add everyone to my friends list, but I do have a weakness for answering snappy comments.

So, fasten your seatbelts, treat your ears to, say, some Dire Straits, and enjoy the ride!

A Call

Once upon a time, there was a small, multinational group of energetic ladies who decided that a spot of extreme cross-country skiing would be a fitting way to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the British Commonwealth.

Now, the skiing bit was no problem, but making it extreme-style was clearly going to be a lot harder, and for their plan to work they were going to require sponsorship. This is where the story enters the realm of the extraordinary.

It started in Singapore, where Sophia Pang, a long-standing user of Kaspersky Lab software, called the local service desk on the number printed on our box. She told us about a plan for eight women from different Commonwealth countries to ski to the South Pole. It was to be a 40-day, 560-mile expedition across the Antarctic!

Luckily, our customer service teams weren't fazed by such an astonishing request and the idea was passed on from local to regional management. Within a few days, Harry Cheung, Managing Director for KL APAC, heard of the plan and immediately realized its potential. A few days later, Sophia Pang and her team got the call they had been dreaming of informing them that Kaspersky Lab had agreed to sponsor the project.

A while later, the women began their preparations for the trip: they chose their kit, went on a high-calorie, energy-rich diet and trained in sub-zero temperatures with the support of a team of experts. The start date was set for November 21, and they hoped to reach the South Pole on New Year's Day 2010.

Meanwhile...

Harry Cheung, PR Whiz-kid Timur Tsoiev, and Yours Truly were whiling away the time on another trip, in a hotel somewhere in Southeast Asia, perhaps Singapore or Malaysia, I can't recall exactly where.

The talk turned to our "skiers" when Harry suddenly suggested that we should go (in a plane, not on skis) to the South Pole to greet these courageous women with flowers and champagne on New Year's Day. I was immediately taken by the idea and wanted to put the wheels (and wings) in motion.

After a pause to weigh up the publicity potential, Timur, our PR guy, went into overdrive. He suggested taking some journalists along for the ride as this would give us and the expedition some great coverage worldwide. Of course, his idea went down a storm with us.

As Timur developed the idea he warned that if we were taking journalists to the Antarctic we would need PR accompaniment – watching me closely as he spoke. I guess he was driving at something... I wonder what it was...

The Participants

**Eugene
Kaspersky**

Kaspersky Lab



Your most humble servant, Kaspersky Lab's CEO and an inveterate thrill-seeker. Being extremely fond of unconventional marketing, I had no doubt the project would be a huge success and a great opportunity to promote the brand globally, one valuable spin-off being that it opened my mind to many other initiatives that may have seemed a bit weird at first – like our road shows in the provincial Russian towns of Uryupinsk and Kozmodemyansk.

**Harry
Cheung**

Kaspersky Lab



There was no way H.C., the Managing Director of Kaspersky Lab Asia-Pacific, was not going to be on this trip – after all, he came up with the idea in the first place. True to form, he remained a committed supporter of the project, even though living in the tropics, as he does, isn't the recommended way to prepare for the shock of -40°F .

**Alexander
Gostev**

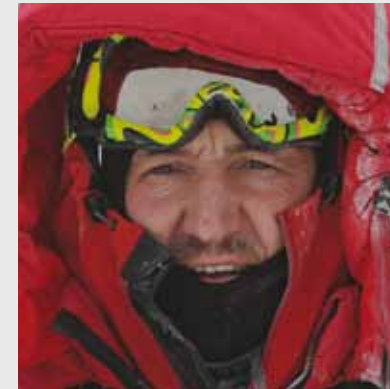
Kaspersky Lab



A.G. is our chief security expert at Kaspersky Lab and the most experienced extreme sportsman on this page. He's always willing to tackle any kind of high-risk sporting mission – including extreme mountaineering. This trip fulfilled a personal ambition for him, and earned him great respect in the extreme sports community.

**Alexander
Blotnitsky**

France Press



A.B. has been a professional press photographer since 1983. His unique pictures chronicled the perestroika era and his career has taken him all over Russia, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, from Arkhangelsk to Vladikavkaz. He was over the moon at the opportunity to join the expedition and the pictures he took in the Antarctic have raised the profile of Russian photojournalism in the wider world.

**Denis
Davydov**

Izvestia



D.D. is an Internet journalist with many years of experience under his belt. Since joining Izvestia nine years ago, D.D. has never looked back, contributing many major articles and covering important stories for the renowned title. He travels the length and breadth of the country with his trusty camera, recording people, places and events as he goes. He dreams of climbing the seven highest mountains on Earth with a 3D camera, and photographing the planet from space.

**Marina
Ten**

Associated Press



M.T. is a talented camerawoman, fully-trained aviation engineer and a mean computer programmer besides! She launched her highly successful career at Izvestia, but also contributes to the Associated Press and TBN Network. She is a huge fan of extreme sports, especially rock climbing, and her unquenchable thirst for travel once inspired her to fly half way around the world.

The Skiers

Felicity Aston



Sophia Pang



Helen Turton



Kim-Marie Spence



Dk Najibah Eradah binti P. A. M. Al-Sufri Pg M-L Kahar



Reena Kaushal Dharmshaktu



Stephanie Solomonides



Kylie Wakelin



The team was led by the UK's 31-year-old Felicity, who was also the founder and chief coordinator of the project. Felicity earned her cold-weather credentials having spent three years in the Antarctic studying the ozone hole before returning to lead expeditions in Siberia, Greenland and the Arctic. By creating such a diverse expedition team Felicity hopes to encourage greater mutual support among women of the Commonwealth.

Sophia Pang is a 36-year-old mother of three from Singapore, and the person that turned the dream into reality. It was her initiative that prompted Kaspersky Lab to sponsor the project. A dedicated fitness-fan, Sophia combines her work as an IT consultant with teaching aerobics and kickboxing. Although she wasn't the first Singaporean to reach the South Pole, she earned the coveted title of the first woman from Singapore to ski to the southernmost point on the planet.

Helen helped instruct the team during training and was with it every step of the way, eventually replacing Barbara from Ghana who sadly had to drop out of the trek unexpectedly. Helen is a 43-year-old expedition leader and outdoor education advisor who lives in the Peak District in the UK. She brought a wealth of experience to the trip, having previously completed expeditions to both the North and South Pole. In 2009 she became a Churchill Fellow, researching the history of polar exploration.

Kim-Marie Spence, a 30-year-old from Kingston, Jamaica, loves trail-running and traveling, having volunteered all over the world from Japan to Israel. She works and strategizes for a regional think tank and has been involved in a number of other social initiatives. Kim hopes that her inclusion on the team will inspire other Jamaican women to realize "the sky's the limit" when it comes to personal achievement.

Era is a 25-year-old Diplomatic Officer at Brunei's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She previously taught mathematics at a secondary school for three years. She is passionate about environmental issues and used her involvement in the expedition to raise awareness of global warming and climate change. Era was the first Bruneian to ski to the South Pole.

Reena Kaushal Dharmshaktu, a 38-year-old freelance outdoor instructor from Delhi, was India's representative. Reena is an extremely experienced mountaineer, having taken part in many challenging expeditions in the Himalayas. She hopes the expedition encourages more Indian women to take up careers in the field of outdoor pursuits, having fought prejudice to do so herself. Reena was the first Indian woman to ski to the South Pole.

Stephanie Solomonides, a 25-year-old IT implementation officer from Nicosia, flew the flag for Cyprus. Endlessly enthusiastic and full of energy, Stephanie hopes that her participation in the expedition raises awareness of all that Cyprus has to offer and inspires other young people to follow her example and push their boundaries in order to fulfill their dreams. Stephanie was the first Cypriot to ski to the South Pole.

Kylie Wakelin, a 36-year-old New Zealander from Twizel on the South Island, has owned a successful boating business in the Mt. Cook National Park for the last 16 years. Kylie recently gained a commercial pilot's license and is planning on making the world of aviation her new fulltime career. Kylie was the first woman from New Zealand to ski to the South Pole.



"Have the time of your lives, but steer clear of mishaps!" said one of the security guards as we were leaving the Moscow office.

...and so we commenced our excursion southwards, getting to know each other along the way and swapping amusing stories of journeys past.

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Waiting for the green light at customs

Flash drives and memory cards were aplenty!

What might the South Pole have in store?



Moscow

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Over the Cordillera,
looking out
for Aconcagua,
the highest mountain
in the Americas.
It's not far from
Santiago.



Santiago

Santiago – the capital of Chile and the largest and liveliest city in the country. It's home to 7.2 million, which is around 41% of Chile's population! It's located in the country's central valley, at the foot of the Andes and on the banks of the Mapocho river. Although Santiago is the capital, most legislative bodies meet in the coastal town of Valparaíso, over an hour's drive to the west.

The city was founded by Spanish Conquistador Pedro de Valdivia in 1541. Back then it was known as Santiago de la Nueva Extremadura, in homage to Saint James and Extremadura, Valdivia's birth place in Spain.

The city boasts South America's largest metro system, at 117 stations, not to mention the continent's tallest building, the Titanium La Portada, at 190 meters – which is set to be overtaken in 2012 by the 300-meter-tall tower currently under construction in the heart of Santiago's financial district. Incidentally, Chile's GDP per capita is the highest in South America.

The city's eclectic mix of colonial and contemporary is very striking. It feels as though Santiago is to Chile what Moscow is to Russia. Judge for yourself...



Santiago

Santiago

33° 27' 0" S, 70° 40' 0" W



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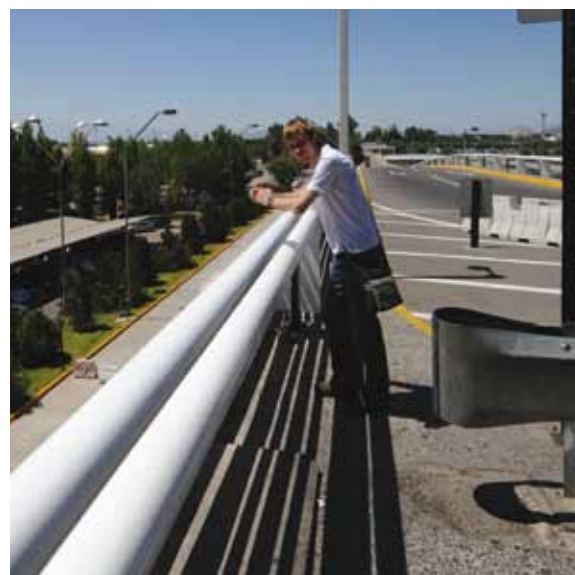
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They keep threatening to rebuild Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport to cope with the increase in the number of flights.

Two hours in the southern hemisphere and everything is going fine and dandy.

Killing time at the airport. The big box contains the satellite dish.

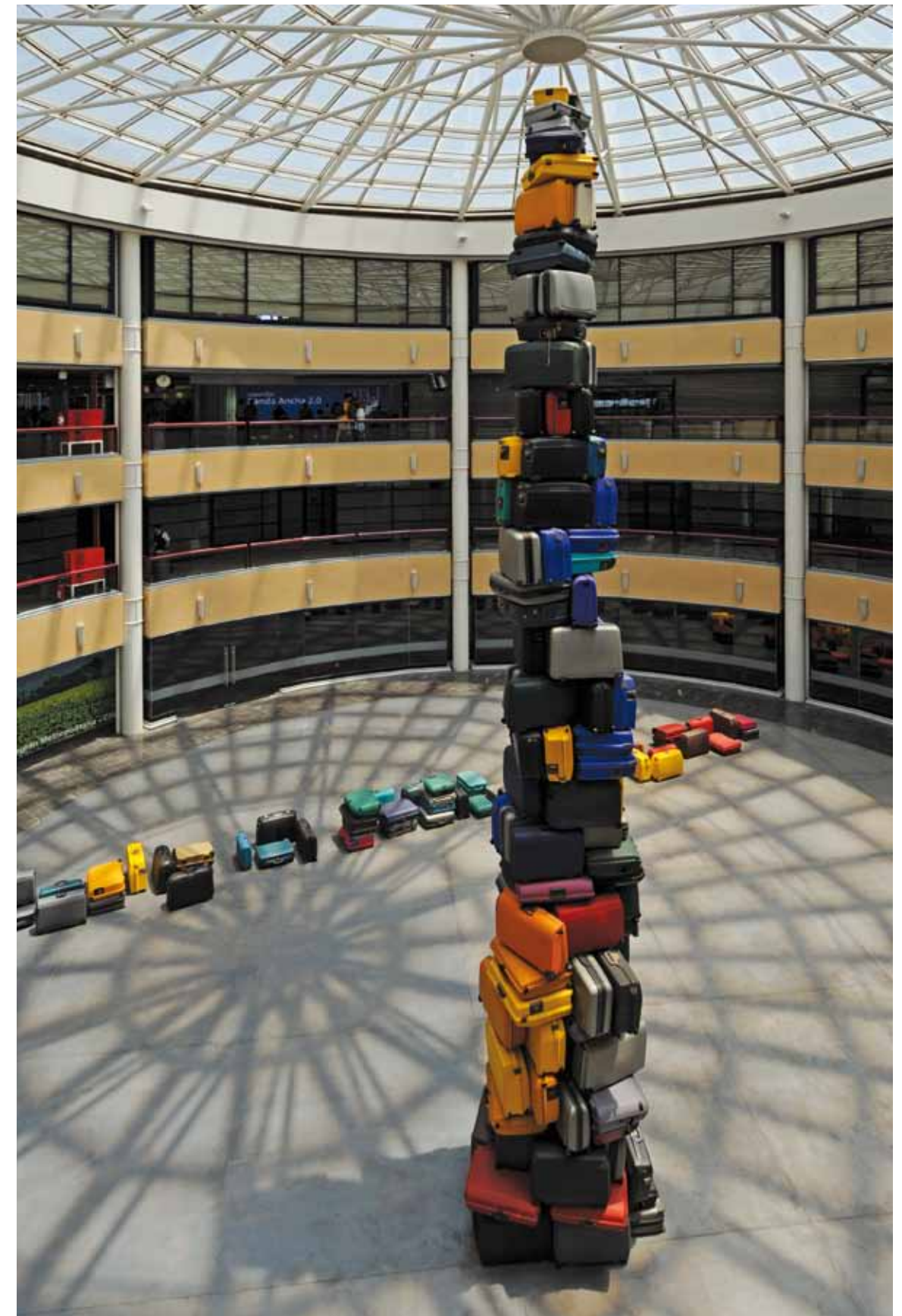


A stopover in Santiago (de Chile) was never part of the plan. We were only supposed to bounce through as one of several hops on our journey to the South Pole for the finale of the Kaspersky Commonwealth 2009 Antarctic Expedition. That was, until I decided not to follow the advice of my dedicated and loving PR team and opted instead to fly Air France. This turned out to be a mixed blessing. The downside was that as soon as we arrived we experienced all the joys awaiting those who miss connecting flights: long lines, confusion, overbooked planes and nobody who could tell us what was going on. The upside was that it allowed us to take full advantage of almost a day and a half absorbing the sights and sounds of downtown Santiago. In any case, we were all inspired by the adventure that lay ahead and everybody was in high spirits. M.T. even bet that she'd be able to get hold of a liter or two of local brew in Punta Arenas, using her unique charm, a swimsuit and a couple of evening dresses.

In the airport we came across an Internet terminal infected by a fake antivirus program! Our attempts to install KAV were brought to an abrupt halt by the staff. Makes me wonder whether they were in on the scam...

Eventually, after seven hours of waiting in the airport our patience and persistence were rewarded. Goodness knows how, but we managed to buy tickets on a flight with a competing airline, so it was tomorrow – Hola, Punta Arenas!

The monument to lost baggage stands proudly inside Santiago Airport. A monument to lost passengers might also be fairly appropriate...



Santiago

Santiago airport is just a 15-minute drive from the city center. There's really no way you can miss it.

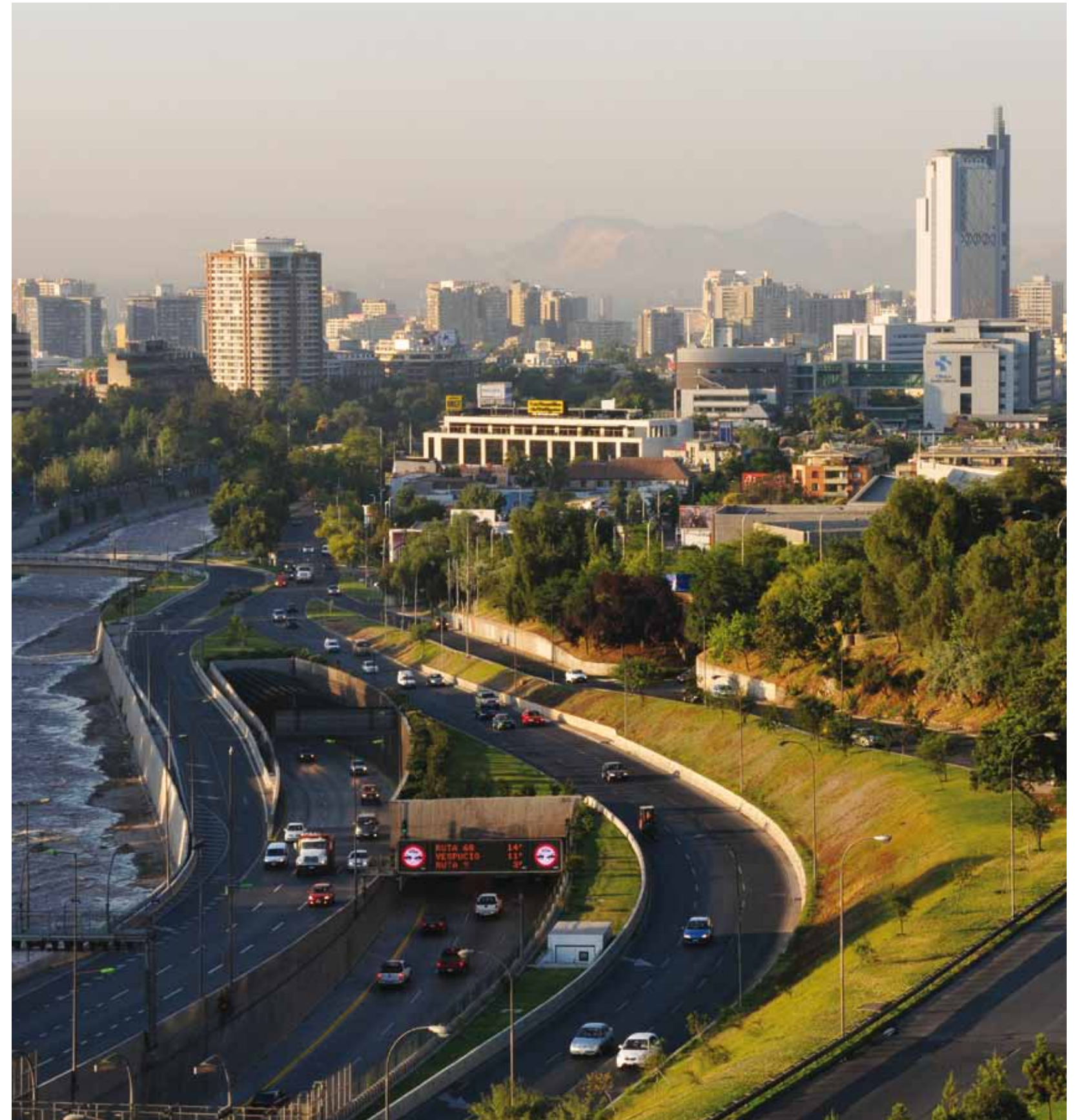




There's no shortage of architectural refinement.

Old buildings sit side by side with modern ones.

As for the traffic, Santiago's highways are a bit like the Moscow Ring Road at night – refreshingly empty.



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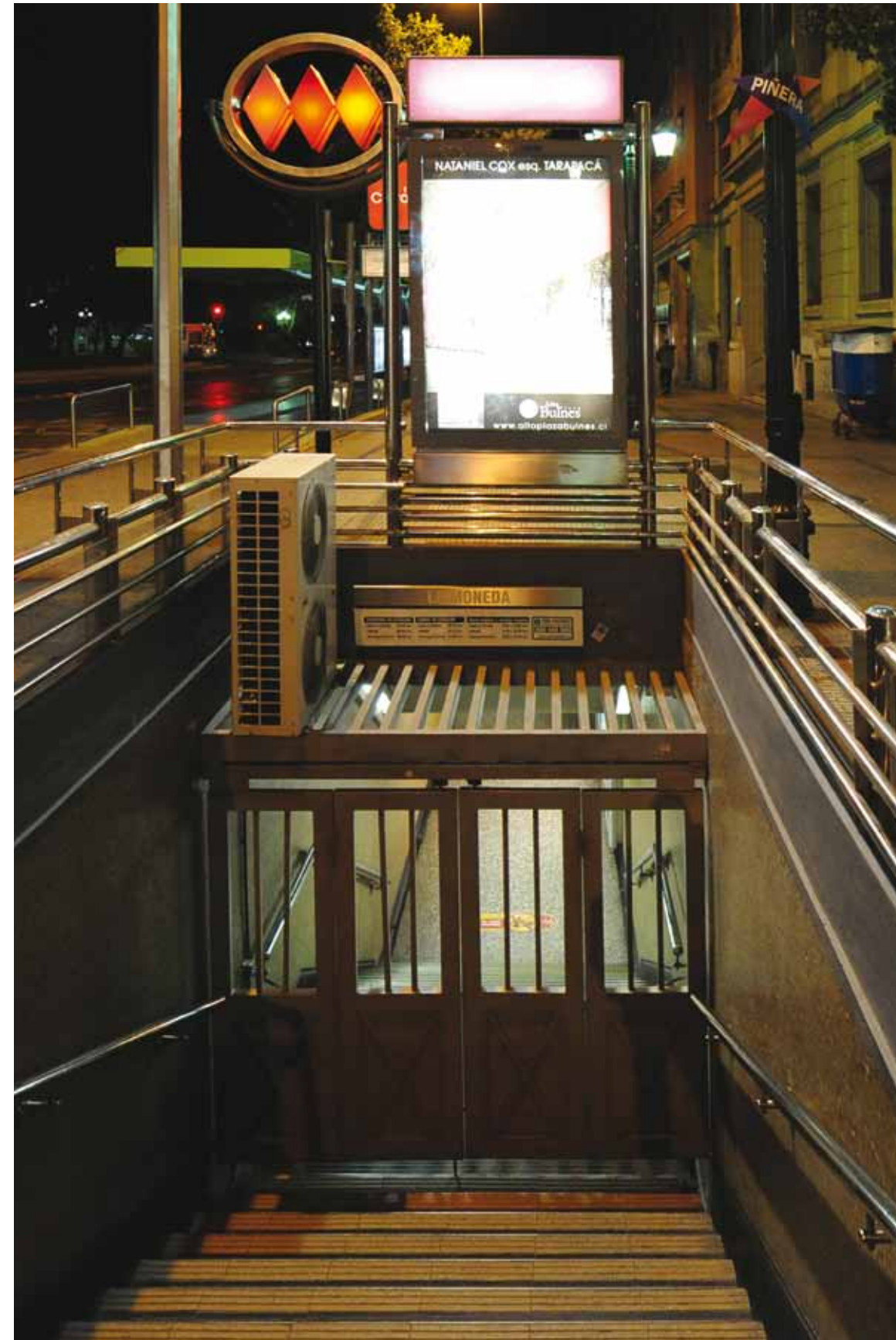
A backstreet bar off the beaten track provides a glimpse of Chilean life and a chance to get to know the locals. Tasty food and interesting acquaintances guaranteed!

Chile and Russia – sometimes it can be hard to tell the difference.



Santiago

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I have a simple rule: if you want to have a good meal and really get a feel for somewhere, find a spot away from the tourist areas and dine with the locals. That's what we did and it certainly paid off. Of all the attractions in our restaurant the video jukebox was especially memorable. Not even A.G. could get it working. Naturally enough, he put this down to its being old-school analogue technology.

The dinner ended with us chatting to the regulars over a few drinks, but we couldn't overindulge as we had to be up and about in time for our flight to Punta Arenas the next morning.

Santiago boasts the largest metro in South America. Alas, we missed the last train.

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Monument to José de San Martín, the leader of South America's struggle for independence.

In Santiago the colonial past blends seamlessly with the modern skyscrapers.



Half of the team managed to make it out of Santiago successfully. There wasn't enough room on the flight for the other half. This left D.D. and me with an extra mission – to experience Christmas, Chilean style. To give you an idea, it was 30°C (86°F) with clear skies outside, just the sort of weather that has you longing to take a dip – hardly associated with the Northern Hemisphere's festive period. Finally (hurrah!) we found ourselves waving Santiago goodbye and heading back to the airport. It was three short flights to Punta Arenas, one of which saw us aloft for just 30 minutes. It's hard to say whether we were lucky to avoid Air France or not this time; then again, we might have spent a couple more unforgettable nights somewhere else in provincial Chile.



Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere. In the background is the 127-meter-high Torre Entel television tower with its observation deck.

Punta Arenas, the capital of Chile's Magallanes and Antártica Chilena Region, is relatively small with a population of just 120 thousand, but is still one of the largest cities south of Buenos Aires. It was founded in 1843 after numerous attempts by the Chilean government to settle on the shores of the Strait of Magellan. Despite its alluring 'Sandy Point' moniker, the climate is inhospitable. It is rumored, though, that there are several decent ski resorts in the mountains nearby. The city claims to be the southernmost city in the world, but Ushuaia in Argentina is clearly located further south. That's why you often see "on the mainland" in the small print after the claim.

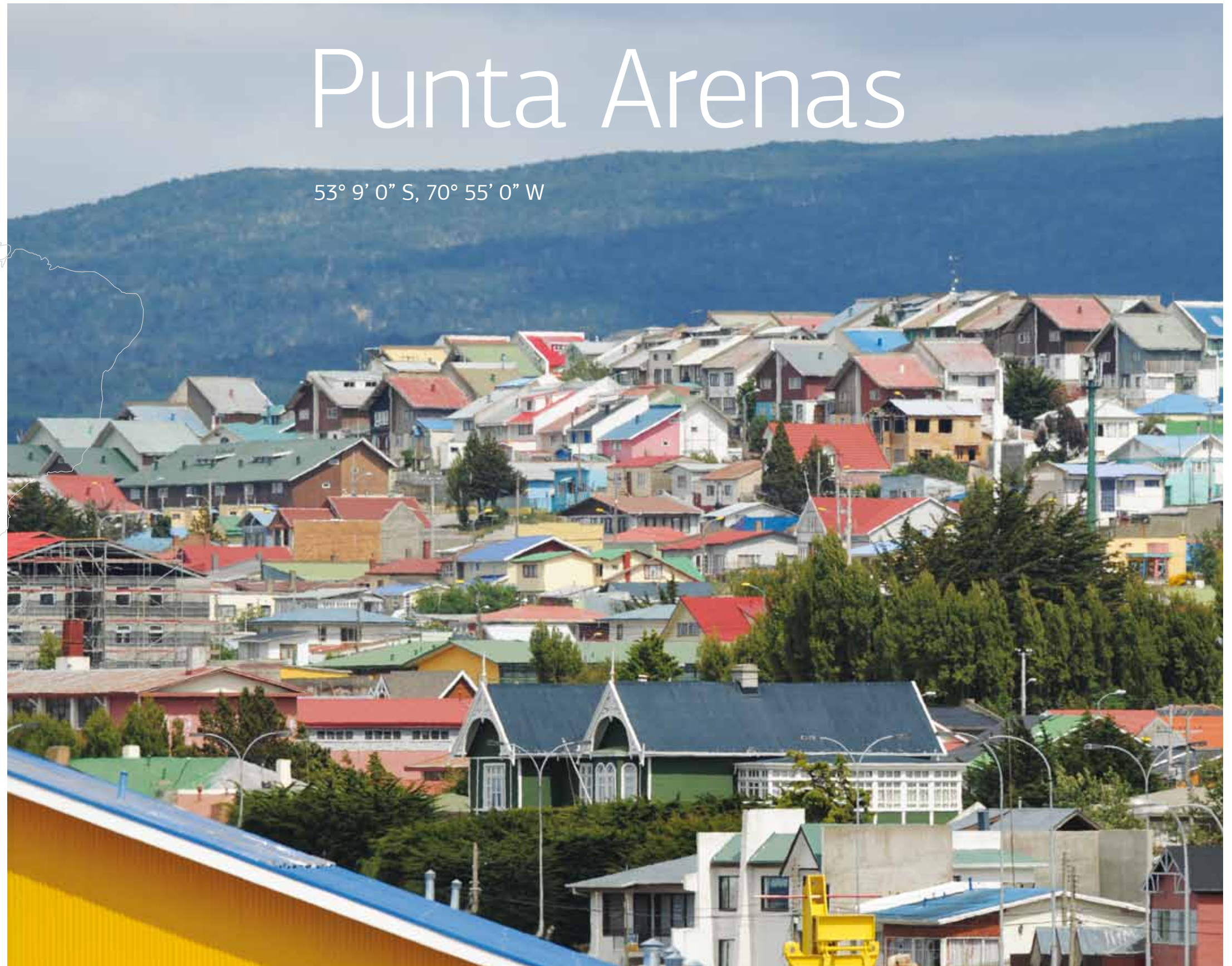
It has become a popular launch pad for expeditions to Antarctica.



Punta Arenas

Punta Arenas

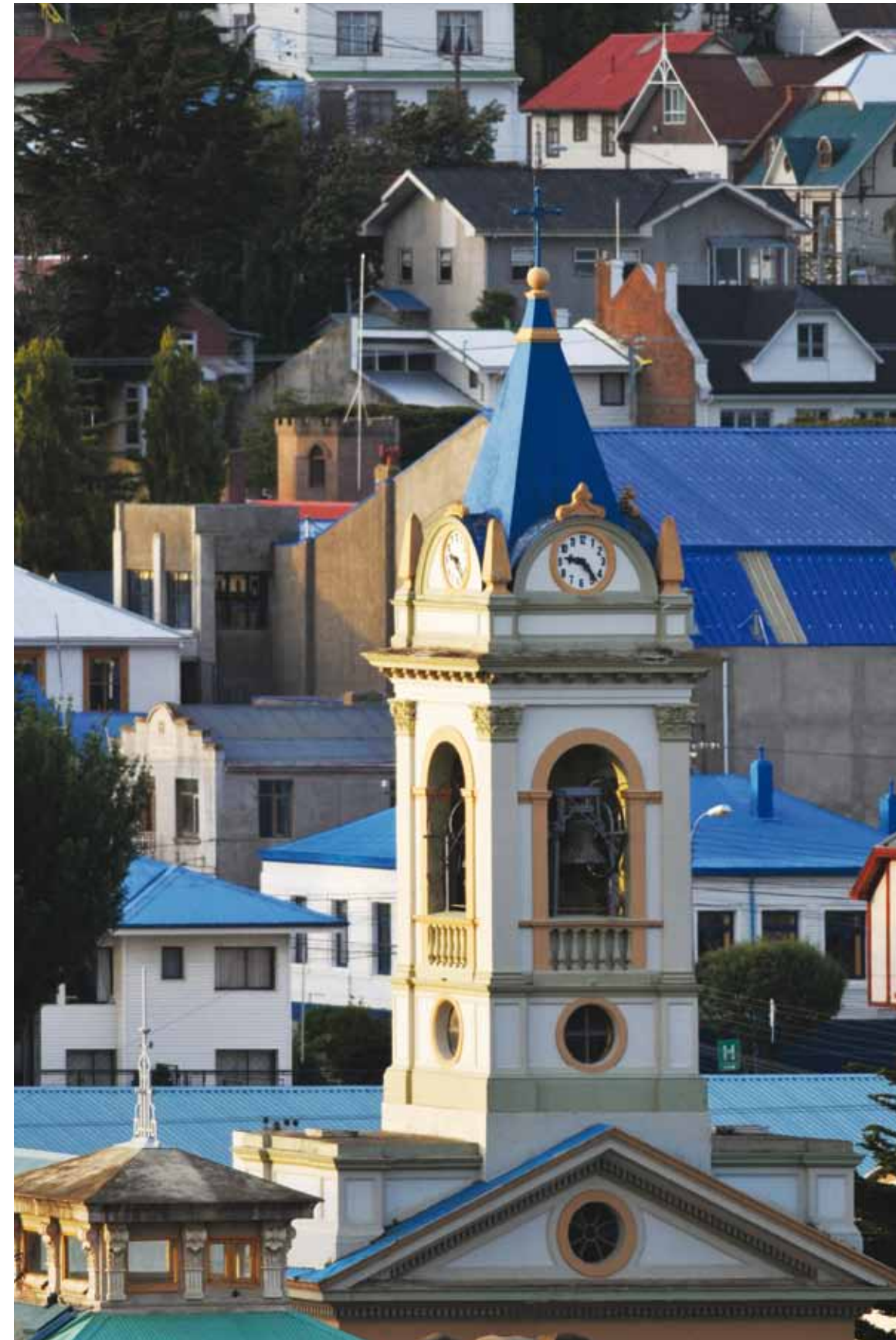
53° 9' 0" S, 70° 55' 0" W





Punta Arenas is a paradise if you happen to enjoy the super-chilled pastime of ship spotting. Proponents of this special art swear it's just as exciting as train and plane spotting, except that everything happens at a much slower pace.

Despite the harsh climate, the city is tidy and the people are friendly here.



We were greeted by wind and snow in Punta Arenas. The former is normal here, but the latter was falling in the middle of the Southern Hemisphere's summer.

If you look carefully, this forbidding land actually has some redeeming features. Firstly, I have never seen such amazing sunsets. Because of the wind, the sky changes so fast that before you have time to take in one stunning vista, your hand is reaching for the camera to take a picture of the next, and before you know it, your memory card is full.

Secondly, you can gaze for hours at the convoys of magnificent ocean-going superliners, giant cargo ships, tankers and fishing boats. It's hard to say what brings them here: their size, the cost of using the Panama Canal, or just the curiosity of their passengers. Their unhurried pace obviously affects the locals too. They are equally as languid and calm.

Finally, the place has its own mystique. You get the feeling that you are close to something very big, unknown, and intensely intriguing, possibly a gateway to another world or a portal to another dimension. It's as though Punta Arenas has, for decades, soaked up the excitement and anticipation of the thousands of people who have headed out to Antarctica from here; and one thing is for sure, Antarctica truly is another world.

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One of the main streets
in Punta Arenas. Lively,
isn't it?



Punta Arenas

Confusion over plug and socket standards almost put paid to our live broadcasts from the South Pole. This setup was our savior!



Electrical Odyssey

All the chaos of last-minute packing in Moscow meant a vital extension cable was missing from our box of electrical goodies. And let's face it nobody wants to risk their health standing right next to an Iridium dish when it's in action. As we searched for the cable, we realized that we were also short of another vital piece of kit, an adapter strip with at least five or six sockets.

All this was necessary for charging the satellite dish itself, the tube attached to it and several laptops. We also had a couple of video cameras, five stills cameras, six walkie-talkies and heaven knows how many other energy-hungry appliances. Without electricity the whole expedition would be reduced to nothing more than an expensive jaunt to see some penguins.

The good news was that we realized the equipment was missing when we were still in Punta Arenas. The bad news was that the local power sockets were different from the American-standard sockets used at the Patriot Hills base and, to make matters worse, all our devices had European plugs.

We immediately set off for the nearest electronics shop. We had no luck at the first place – they didn't have anything in stock that was compatible with American or European standards, and the local standard was of no use to us at all. They have very unusual sockets in Chile in a kind of "L" shape, if I remember correctly. A bit like the old Italian system with three prongs in a row.

However, the good Samaritans in the first shop told us about a competitor who might have what we needed. We emitted a collective 'phew!' and once more set off in search of the illusive items, only to encounter the self same story, right down to the shop assistant's struggling to explain everything in English. So off we toddled to shop number three with heavy hearts. It was getting ridiculous. By shop number four I was getting feelings of déjà vu and feared catastrophe was imminent.

We finally found what we were looking for in shop number seven. So, as they say, all's well that ends well. We cut off the bits we didn't need from the Chilean adapter and added ten meters of heavy-duty cable. Finally we could relax. The resulting contraption is the white thing lying on the table.

Of course, every cloud has silver lining. While we were on our sightseeing tour of the local electronics stores we bought loads of other useful equipment. Even more importantly, we solved the problem of our Polar Christmas tree. It just wouldn't be New Year without a tree... especially if you're celebrating it at the South Pole!

And also, I am now fully qualified to lead guided tours around the electronics shops of Punta Arenas.

Booking requests welcome!

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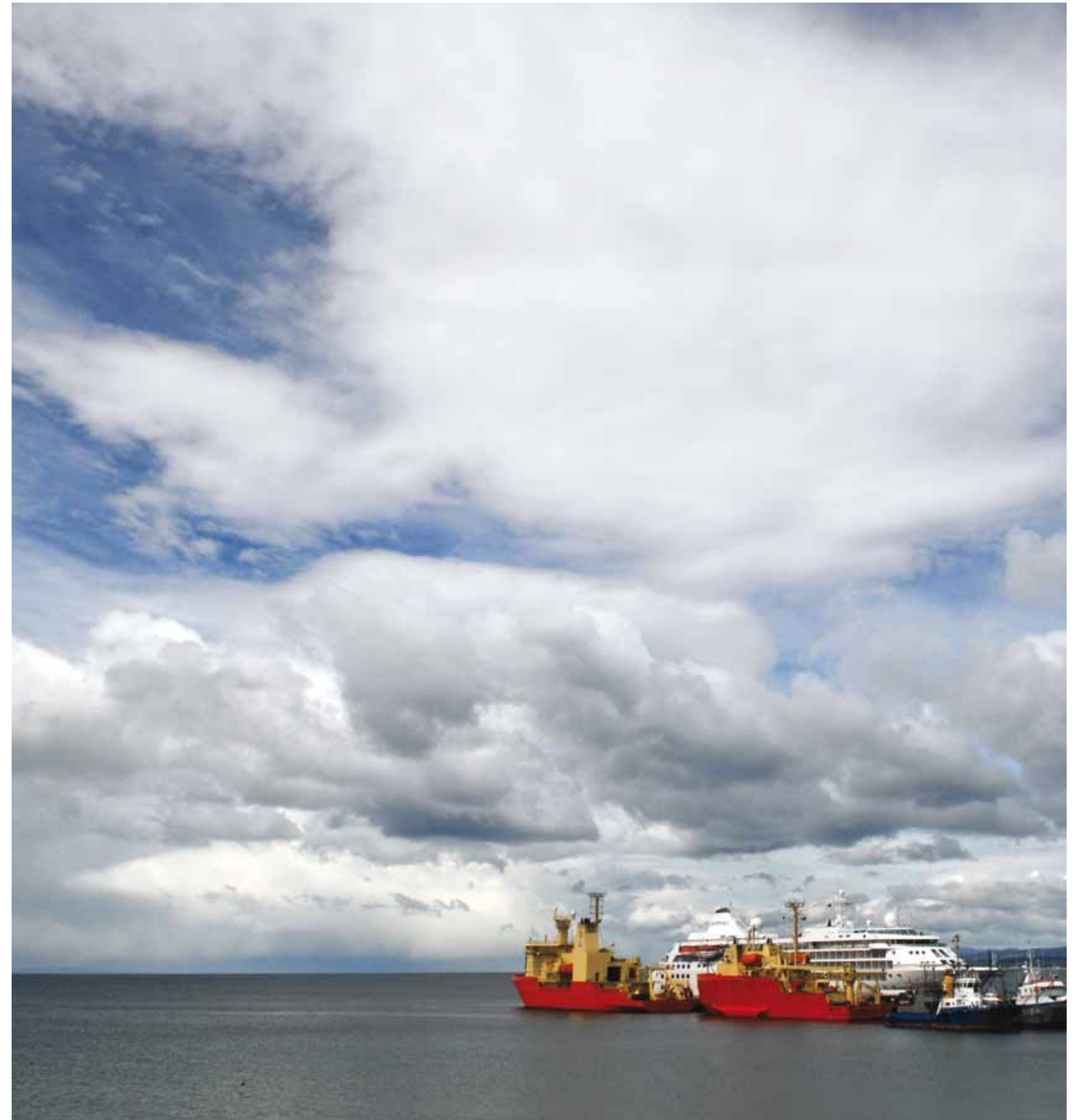
Warehouses and workshops next to a pleasant residential neighborhood.

Punta Arenas is the gateway not only to Antarctica but to the nearby islands. The ferry business is booming.

The vessels went in two by two...



Punta Arenas



The number of piers that have fallen into disrepair and their popularity with the local birdlife was particularly surprising.



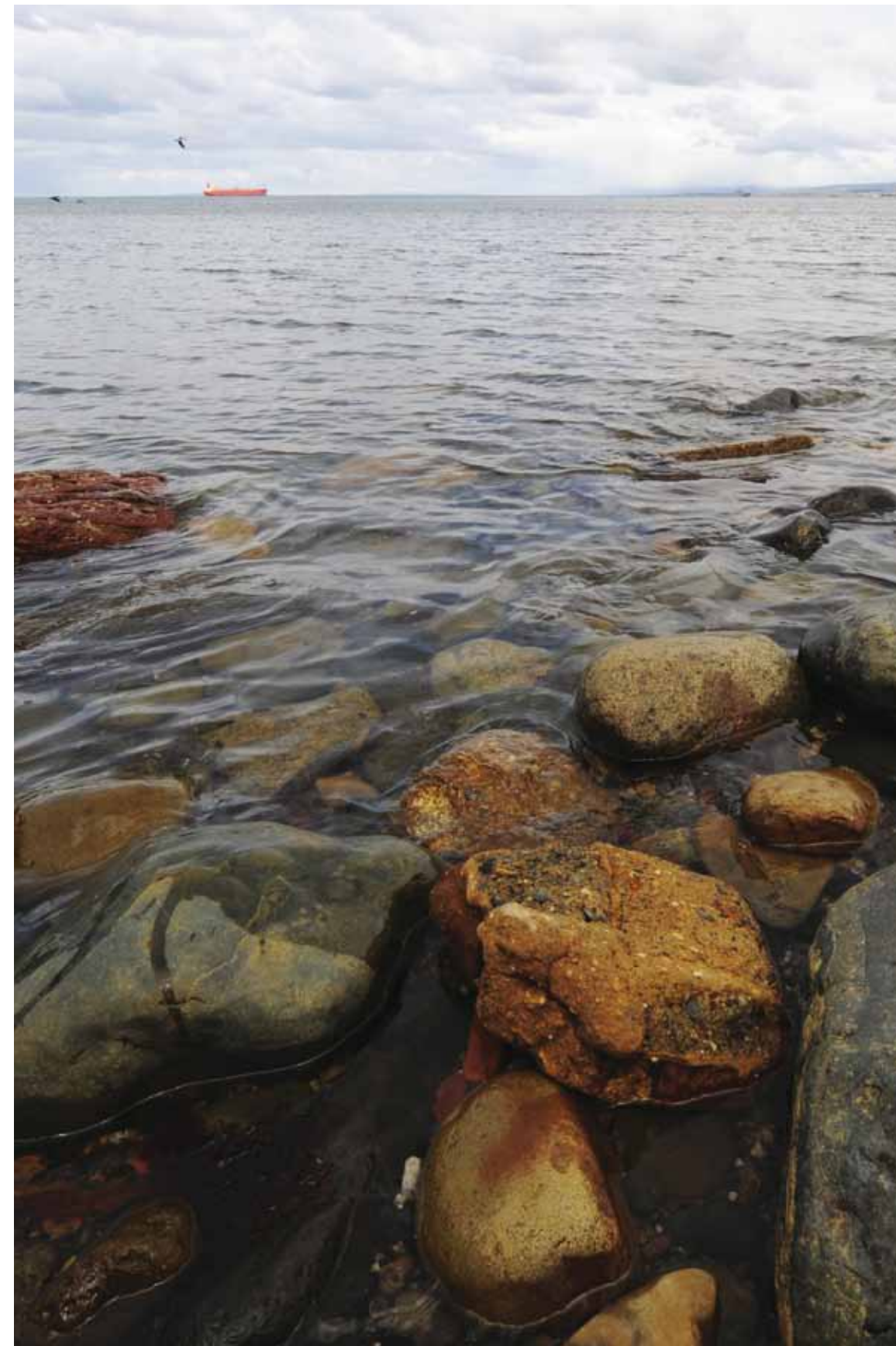
They say that in good weather you can see the ice of Antarctica from the very southern tip of the continent. We didn't manage to verify if this was true, and the team came to the conclusion that it probably depends on when you are there. For instance, during the next ice age Antarctica will be visible with the naked eye from Punta Arenas itself, even in bad weather.

However, when we were there we were more interested in audibility than visibility. I think the satellite equipment that we planned to use to broadcast our 'Hello World' from the South Pole accounted for one third of our luggage volume and weight.

We set up the Iridium dish on the waterfront, or Costanera, and tried to figure out how it all worked. As they were setting it up, A.G. and M.T., standing about ten meters apart, had the following conversation:

— Can you hear me? Any delay?
(After a pause of about five seconds...)
— Yes, no delay.

In the meantime, enjoy some of the views offered by this austere place.



No one felt like taking a dip – the water was freezing.

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It's December –
the height of summer
in the Southern
Hemisphere
and breeding season
for the cormorants.



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Deserted – the Punta Arenas waterfront. The wind blows everything and everyone about.

An example of Chilean rock painting.

Hardy beach grass thrives.





Our first taste of 'encounters of the third kind' in the office of Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions.

Trying on extreme weather gear: -35°C polar temperatures are not to be taken lightly.

A South Pole utopia.



Punta Arenas



Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions (ALE) is a rather curious organization. In 2003 they acquired their competitor Adventure Network International and, as they claim, became the only operator offering logistics services to expeditions heading to the interior of Antarctica, and the South Pole in particular.

The organization has been a private tour operator for over 25 years and is especially proud of its responsible attitude to the fragile ecological balance in Antarctica. For example, half of the instructions we were given were dedicated to rules of conduct upon arrival, and before we got on the plane our shoes were carefully washed with an antibacterial cleanser.

Every year ALE provides services for up to a thousand mountain climbers, most of whom have their sights firmly set on conquering the Ellsworth Mountains in particular Mount Vinson, which at 5,140 meters is Antarctica's highest peak. In addition, ALE supports an annual stream of up to 500 private travelers and 70 organized expeditions to the South Pole.

Russians feature prominently on the wall of honor for Antarctic travelers.



Brown-Menendez palace. Constructed in 1895 by Sara Brown, a Russian emigrant and wife of one of the most influential agricultural tycoons in the country. Currently it hosts Punta Arenas' local history museum and a luxury hotel.

View of the cathedral from the central square.

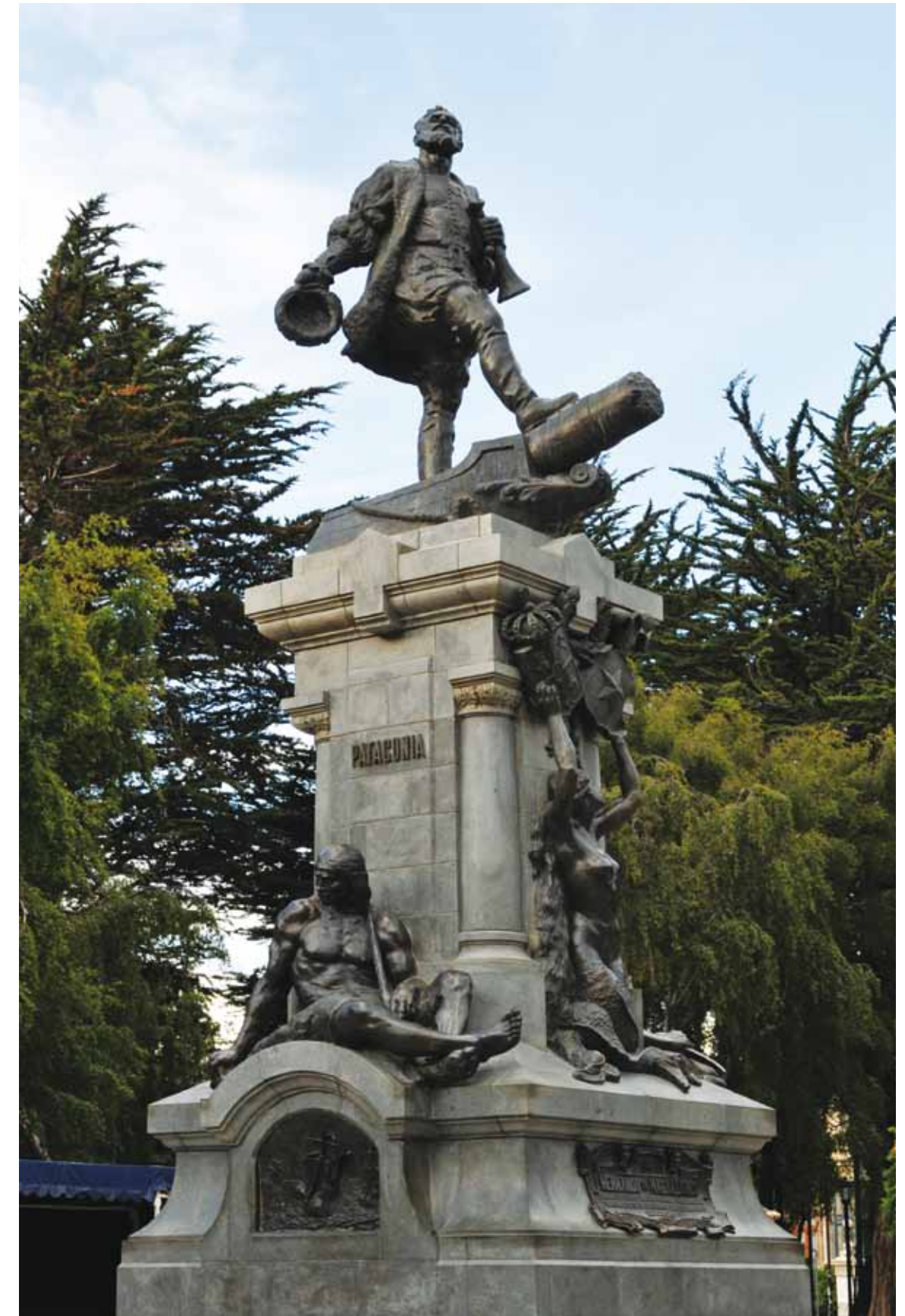


Having got through the first lesson with ALE we all went off to take in more of the sights of Punta Arenas. At times it was hard to believe we were in a remote Chilean province. Clean streets, majestic buildings, vast squares and impressive monuments are not exactly what you expect to find in the middle of nowhere.

These pictures were taken in Plaza de Armas – the city's central square. The impressive bearded figure on the monument on the right is Ferdinand Magellan (1480–1521), the first person to circumnavigate the world. There's a lot connecting him to Punta Arenas.

You would be forgiven for thinking that he was actually from Punta Arenas judging by the number of statues and place names dedicated to him, not to mention the vast number of souvenirs on which he features. The city even bore Magellan's name from 1927 to 1938. It's in any case strange that he should be the main tourist attraction here considering that he never actually set foot in the place; he merely sailed past it on his famous journey almost 500 years ago.

Monument to Ferdinand Magellan, the first person to circumnavigate the world.



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The last night
before setting off
to Antarctica. Feelings
of trepidation... None
of us has ever been
to such a remote part
of the planet before.



Punta Arenas

Antarctica doesn't have much of a sense of humor, as ALE made us realize during our intense briefings that lasted all the next day.



We set off to Antarctica a day later than planned due to inclement weather conditions at our destination.



Traffic jams in Punta Arenas.

We traveled to Antarctica on an Ilyushin Il-76 Air Almaty charter flight, with a Ukrainian-Kazakh crew.



Punta Arenas

Punta Arenas, 10 am. We're sitting around nervously smoking and killing time until we get the green light to fly to Patriot Hills. As usual, it's cold, overcast and windy in the city.

10:40 am. We jump to our feet as soon as the call comes through. At 11:00, with our luggage in tow and the adrenalin pumping, we get in the line for our transfer to the airport.

We were seated in two buses, and within 15 minutes we were passing through expedited passport and customs control. The uniforms seemed as unbothered about liquids as the metal detectors seemed about metal, which I took as a good sign. It's not as if we were going to fly there with no equipment, comm's gear or bottles of Scotch to warm us up on the long, cold southern nights, was it?

At last we were all loaded into the Il-76. Normally this beast is capable of carrying up to 50 passengers in relative comfort; however, the inside of this one looked more like a cargo hold with seats provided as an afterthought. We took off surrounded by piles of luggage – very reminiscent of the second Indiana Jones film.

The passenger compartment had only four windows, which limited our spatial awareness somewhat during takeoff and landing. On the other hand, this may have been for the best, considering the age of the plane and the fact that the airstrip at Patriot Hills was solid ice.

A beast of a plane. A monster of the air. And analogue heaven – not a digital device to be seen.



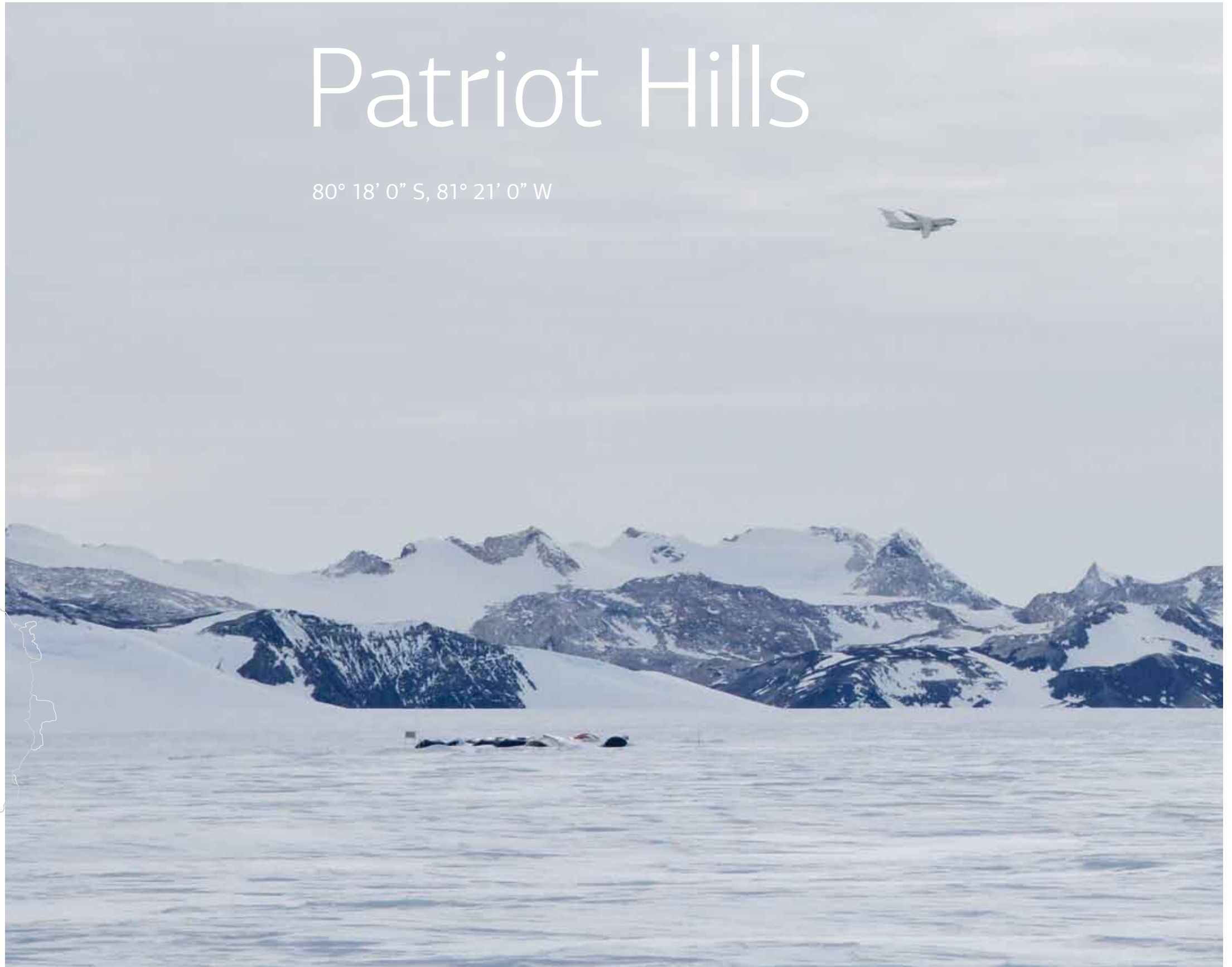
Patriot Hills, operated by Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions LLC (ALE), was the only seasonally occupied private camp in Antarctica, working for the summer months between November and February. For the rest of the year it was decommissioned. The camp's convenient (for Antarctica!) location and unique blue ice landing strip made it a popular spot for many years.

But Patriot Hills as we experienced it has now been consigned to the annals of history. We were among the last travelers to set off to the South Pole from the camp. In January 2010 the base was completely relocated to Union Glacier Blue Ice Runway SCGC, 45 miles to the northwest. They say the weather there is milder.



Patriot Hills

80° 18' 0" S, 81° 21' 0" W



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Seeing the ice of Antarctica for the very first time!

Nearly all of our traveling companions made the most of the five-hour flight by sleeping through it.

We were bewitched by the sight of an infinite desert of snow. The ice floes torn away from the mainland looked like Tetris blocks.



Patriot Hills

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To everyone's relief, our Ilyushin performed perfectly and the landing was soft and quick. I think the lack of windows helped keep any panic in check.

On an ice airstrip the only way to brake to a standstill is to use the reverse thrust of the engines. That's why the runways are much longer.

Our tentative first steps at the bottom of the world.



Finally, we landed. You get a strange feeling the moment you step off the plane. We still couldn't believe we were here. It's not just the quirks of climate and landscape, the endless white desert around you or the sunlight that's so strong you need factor 50 sunblock. The most incredible thing was realizing that you were in the middle of nowhere, thousands of miles from civilization, standing on a 500m thick layer of ice almost at the very bottom of the globe.

But such deep reflections had to be kept short as we had to get on with the task ahead of us – and nobody knew exactly how to go about it. After all, nobody had ever thought about trying to do it before.

That task was setting up an Internet connection capable of sending high-quality photographs and videos back to civilization. Remember that huge case at Santiago Airport and our adventures in Punta Arenas? Well now it was time for the kit to show it could perform out in the field.

Out it all came: cables, satellite dish, laptop, screws, generator, fuel, accompanied by copious amounts of swearing and shamanic rituals! The connection was very, very tenuous and we seriously doubted it could be used to send large amounts of data. But a few practice runs to send some files eventually bore fruit, but more about that later.

Being whisked off to the camp!



Nice summer weather:
-10°C (-14°F), a typical
polar day. Ideal weather
to hang out your washing!





Camp supplies – the tip of the iceberg. Storage space is carved into the ice and supplies are kept there during the polar winter.

Our ride to the South Pole.

The adventurous streak in A.G. saw him want to conquer the nearby hills. A meritorious intention, but they turned out to be 10 miles away. Distances can be deceptive here.



Patriot Hills



A.G. always takes this flag wherever he climbs. It has been all over the place – in the Himalayas, the Caucasus, the Alps, Africa and now... Antarctica.



We were blessed with clear skies throughout our stay at Patriot Hills.

The spartan living conditions were part of the trip's exotic charm.



We were lucky to be here during the polar day, as biorhythms can get all out of sync. Whether day or night, the sun never dips below the horizon. While we were there it was relatively warm (-8°C , -18°F), a little cloudy, and there was no wind. In short, the ideal resort. Honest!

Rooms in the local hotel are detached tents. Each tent is warmed... with your own breath, which in turn is warmed with Blue Label. The system works fine, except that the latter is constantly running out. For all that, a disorientated body sleeps comfortably. It must be the crystal-clear purity of the air and the fatigue of the trip.

We eventually managed to set up a satellite Internet connection, or at least a hint of one. It took ten minutes to download one megabyte. Still, better a small fish than an empty dish. There was hardly anybody else in the camp who could boast such a luxury.

As you'll have gathered by now, our journey to Antarctica was not just for the purposes of salving our idle curiosity about the continent. I suppose you could say we were cheerleaders for the unique Kaspersky Commonwealth Antarctic Expedition. Seven brave women celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Commonwealth with a 560-mile trek to the South Pole – on skis! It took them, as planned, less than 40 days, so our party arrived just in the nick of time to join in the celebrations.

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December

2009



Sunbathing without strong sun block is bad for your health.

When you're waiting for a flight to the South Pole everyone finds their own way of going a little crazy.

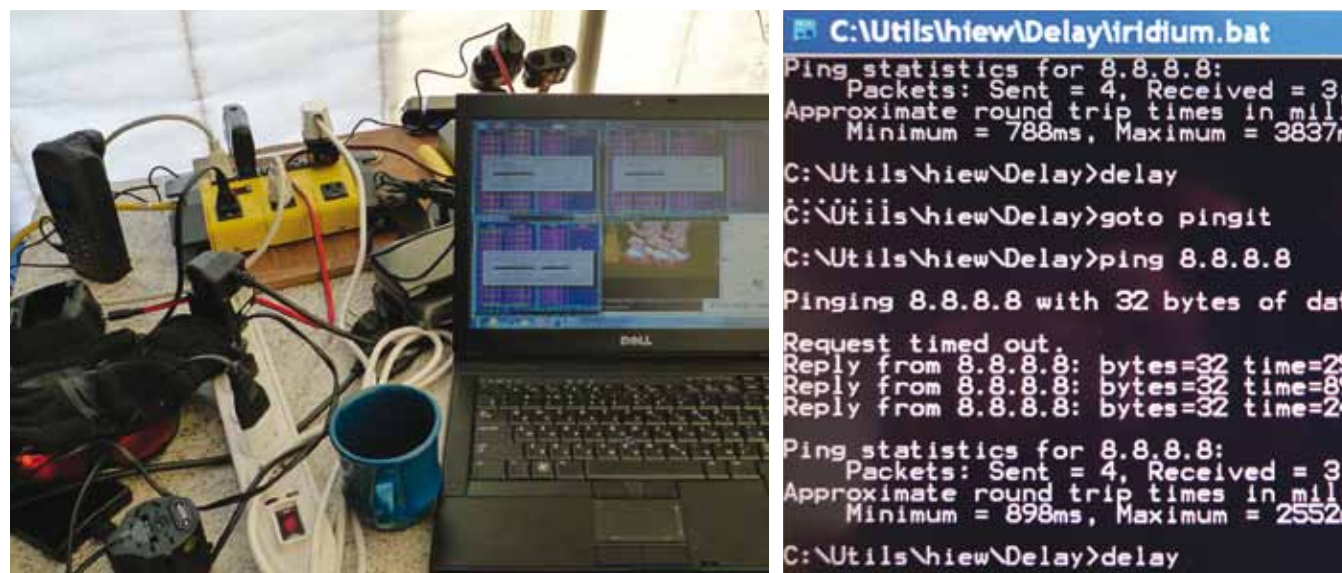
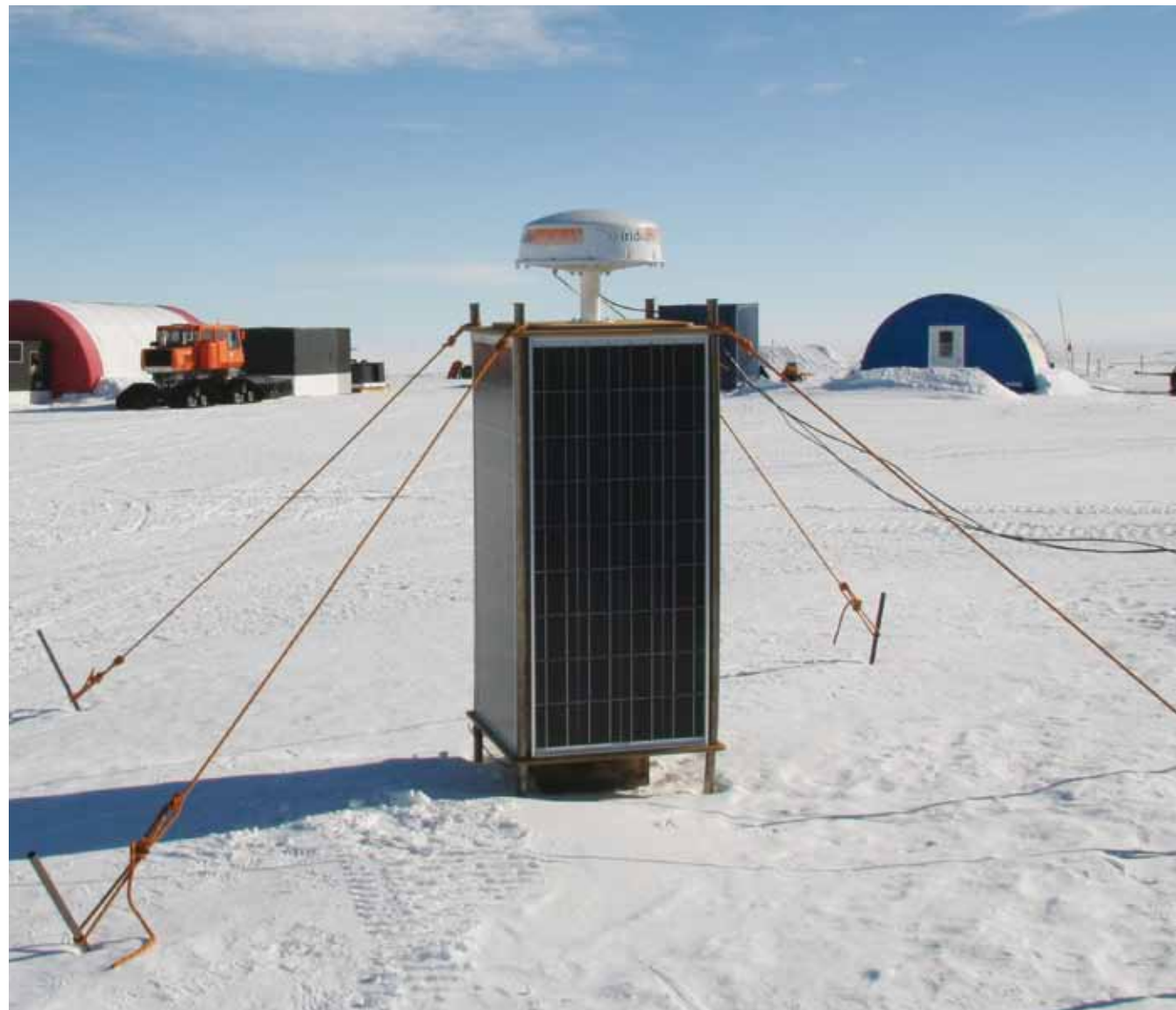


Patriot Hills

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Each megabyte transmitted from Antarctica went through meters of cables and was charged with our nervous energy.



Antarctic Internet

As you've probably gathered, we didn't go to the South Pole for a New Year's Party and a dance around a decorated tree. In the end we hardly even noticed when the clock struck midnight on New Years Eve – there were far too many distractions.

First of all, we had to reach the South Pole and we weren't taking any chances following our adventures with Chilean airports and Air France! Second, we had to meet our team of intrepid skiers. Third, we had to take a lot of photos and videos, and, fourth, beam them back to the mainland. Once we had done all of that, we then had to get back safe and well, but nobody really thought much about that part, which might be why we succeeded.

That fourth task involved dozens of megabytes of photos and hundreds more of videos. With just one plane a week – weather permitting – we could face a 20-day wait for clear skies and the next aircraft; therefore, waiting to take the data out with us was not really an option. You'll be surprised to hear there are no Internet cafes in Antarctica, nor any mobile phone masts. The only way to get data out was via satellite – and Iridium satellites are the only ones that can see the South Pole from space. That's why we dragged an Iridium Open Port and all the accompanying accessories from Moscow. It made no difference if we liked it or not, we simply had no choice.

An excruciatingly slow connection is better than no connection at all. However, in the far south things get even worse. The extreme location was obviously having its effect, with the connection becoming slower and slower or, more frequently, dropping altogether. Indeed, transferring data from the South Pole is a most frustrating business.

At one point we even resorted to shamanic dances with a tambourine to get things going.

Our initial attempts were disappointing. We tried placing the dish and generator in various positions, and experimented with various tricks to speed up the process. We even read the manuals! Just imagine how fed up we were by that stage! Nothing helped. Data transfer was taking place at a snail's pace, then the connection would break off and took ages to restore. The hissing and beeping of a 2400/MNP connection was like manna from heaven to us. At least it proved that something was happening.

We were in the depths of despair when suddenly we had a revelation from above: with what we termed a "shaman ping" we could maintain a connection. Through empirical research we discovered that if we periodically pinged "the village elder" we could get some data out. It seems that our team of magicians had found a way of persuading Iridium that there was life at the South Pole. There indeed was life there, and it desperately wanted to send our fellow earthlings a few megabytes about that life in the Antarctic!

Things started moving then. I wrote a quick "Iridium ping" batch file that periodically sent the magic signal out into space. However, to ensure there was a short pause before the next ping we needed a primitive delay-type utility and I couldn't recall seeing anything of the kind on Windows 7 or XP.

Now we were on a roll and nothing was going to stop us from sending out our data. With the help of good old Hiew, I managed to write a DOS program that created a pause for a few hardcoded seconds and even displayed the elapsed time. It had been some time since I'd written anything in machine code, not to mention INT 21h interrupts! Thanks to Antarctica and Iridium for the trip down memory lane!

It was all plain sailing after that, if that's what you can call one MB every five to ten minutes. We were averaging eight to ten MB per hour, and over three days we uploaded almost half a gigabyte of our most important material.

Even with our "magic ping" we still needed to maintain a round-the-clock vigil to restore the connection if it broke off. They say that no-one has ever sent out professional video footage directly from Antarctica before. So here's to us – pioneers!

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Dr. Jane, the doctor at the Patriot Hills camp, warning us about the medical risks of going to the South Pole.



A polar cafeteria.

The Antarctic is not a free smoking area – all butts in the bin please!

In search of the Snow Maiden.



Patriot Hills may not be a foodies' paradise, but the overall impression of the place was surprisingly pleasant. It seems there is some serious competition among the various chefs on the base. We were offered many different things: vegetables, meat, fish and a few international dishes – almost everything. The only thing we couldn't try was local, Antarctic food. I fondly remember the British meat pies and magnificent spare ribs. We enjoyed desserts too: fruit, berries, pies, and once we even had ice cream!

Basically, everything was delicious! Even the night owls could grab snacks of chocolate or crisps. This was most welcome during our nightly vigils to ensure the Internet connection to the outside world stayed up and running.



Skis are the most popular means of transport here.

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A.G.'s smoke break.

The lucky ones drive snowmobiles.

Flags mark the way at key points on the routes.



30

December

2009

I'd never seen cloud formations like this before – not even at Punta Arenas. By the way, the "hills" in the photo are 25 miles away, though at first glance they look like they are just a short walk away. Pure air and no landmarks make it very difficult to judge distances.



Patriot Hills



The Essentials

A few words about the toilets. At first glance you could be forgiven for thinking it was 'business as usual', if you'll pardon the pun. Upon closer inspection, however, you realize that loos are a bit more complicated out here. After all, visitors have to abide by very strict sanitary and environmental rules. (Besides, it's not as if there are lots of bushes around, and even if there were, the ambient temperatures would make them ittle to precarious to use.)

The amenities at Patriot Hills were perfectly all right, even cleaner and more comfortable than in many restaurants in the world's major cities. There were only two significant restrictions.

The first was that gents were required to use a urinal connected to a barrel for number ones, and a regular lavatory for the other thing. Of course, no such restrictions applied to the ladies' room.

The second was that, instead of water, a special alcohol-based gel is used to wash your hands. These limitations are quite understandable given that nothing is disposed of locally. All waste, including dirty bath water, dishwater water, etc. is flown back to the mainland on the big IL-76 and disposed of there.

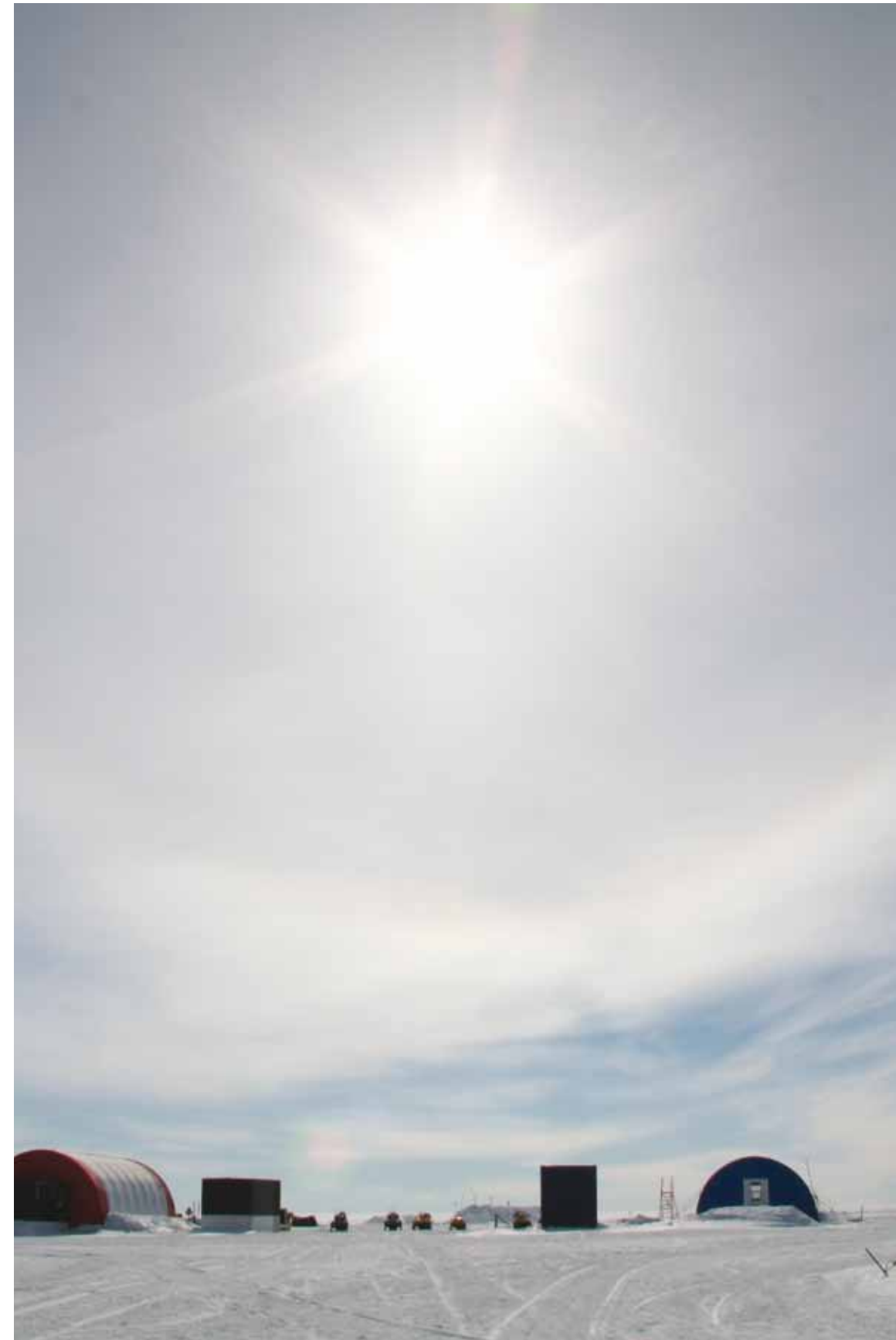
Facilities at the South Pole itself are not exactly sophisticated. At the base, regular amenities are available; the rest of the time it's out to a separate tent where there's barrel for men and a simple "dacha-style" lav for everything else.

It's a different story when you're flying. On all flights men are required to avoid using the bathroom unless absolutely necessary. They are asked to make sure they always have a special bottle with them with a large enough hole for emergencies. It's a bit more complicated for women, but in an emergency there's a rather primitive privy at the back of the plane.



In the Antarctic the sun has to be taken very seriously. The ozone layer here is virtually non-existent.

Take the shot quickly, I'll cover you!



Today we had two reasons to be cheerful. First, while tinkering around with the Internet connection, KIS had downloaded the database updates in the background. Second, the sun produced an unforgettable halo.

We were still at Patriot Hills, waiting for the signal to pack up and head south. It was not too cold (-8°C , -18°F), but it was cloudy and very windy. Any bit of us not kept covered up freezes almost immediately!

We were all hoping that we could leave for the South Pole today – since we wanted to get there in time to see in the New Year. Apparently it's also windy there, and much colder (-25°C , -13°F). In the meantime we busy ourselves with last-minute preparations.

Wherever you look, the view is breathtaking.



Getting the all-clear to fly.

Rugged Antarctic aviators.



The aircraft we flew in to the South Pole deserves a mention. First of all, the cabin is not pressurized. So the air pressure at 4,000 meters, feels like... the air pressure at 4,000 meters. That's why there were special oxygen outlets along the walls, primarily to calm worried passengers. You just stick one end of a tube into the hole and the other end into your nose and breathe.

The windows on the plane consist of a single pane of thin glass and a thick layer of frost soon obscures any view of the polar landscape. The bathroom situation remained similar to last time, with a bucket for the ladies and the men strongly advised to make use of the now familiar 'pee bottle'.



The South Pole – where the Earth's axis of rotation intersects its surface in the Southern Hemisphere. The South Pole is located on the Antarctic Plateau at about 2,800 meters above sea level on a layer of ice estimated to be about 2,700 meters thick. The average annual air temperature is -48.9°C (-56°F), rising to a maximum of -14.7°C (6°F) and falling to a perishingly cold minimum average of -74.3°C (-102°F).

In December 1911 a Norwegian expedition led by Roald Amundsen reached the South Pole, followed shortly afterwards by Robert Scott's

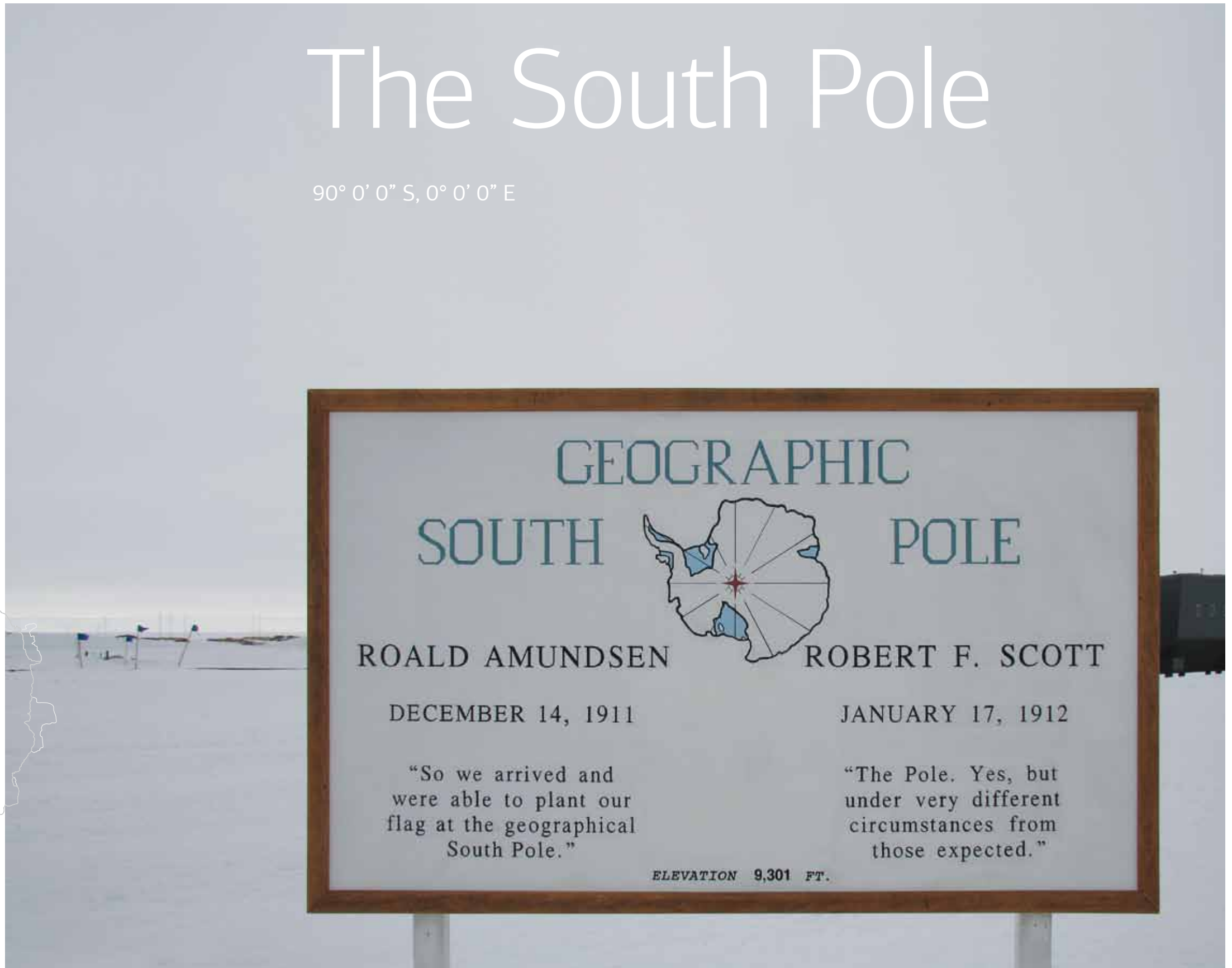
doomed British expedition in January 1912. The first person to fly over the South Pole was Richard Byrd in 1929. In 1958 Edmund Hillary and Vivian Fuchs were the first to complete a trans-Antarctic expedition, traveling in tracked vehicles from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea.

The US Amundsen-Scott South Polar Station was established in 1957. Since 2006, as a result of shifting ice, the station has been located approximately 150 meters from the Pole.



The South Pole

$90^{\circ} 0' 0'' \text{ S}, 0^{\circ} 0' 0'' \text{ E}$



The US Antarctic station is nominally located at the South Pole.

The "real" South Pole, however, is in a constant state of flux and was about 150 meters away when we visited.



The South Pole

Finally, our dream came true and we managed to see the New Year in at the South Pole itself. We landed on the stroke of midnight, Moscow time, exactly as the Kremlin clock began to chime, and at 00:20 Chilean time we took off again – we were keeping a close eye on the New Year as it made its way around the globe!

We didn't really have a proper party – there just wasn't time while we were taking all the photos and shooting videos of our skiers at the Pole. We wanted to capture the whole story: our intrepid heroines, the Pole itself, our own mission and anything else we could point a lens at. It was all done with such great haste that sweat would normally have been trickling down our faces, but given the weather, frost gathered on our brows instead. We wandered around the Pole taking in everything we could, which you can see in our next pics.

The midnight bells are ringing out...



The skiers arrive at the South Pole.



The South Pole



The team members ended up getting emotional with the South Pole – literally.



When greeting the valiant skiers we noticed that despite their arduous journey, they all looked remarkably cheerful. Though in top mood they were safe and sound and looking forward to the “blessings of civilization”, not to mention overflowing with excitement and enthusiasm. It was time to start the long journey home.

Well, not so much “home” as back to Patriot Hills where we’d have to wait out in the cold for a while longer until the shuttle was ready to take us back to the mainland.

01

January

2010

Flag frenzy.



The South Pole



The Christmas Tree Adventure

Back when we were in Punta Arenas, we'd hit on another nice idea. Why not take a small plastic Christmas tree to the South Pole and celebrate the New Year there like we do at home? We headed for the local supermarkets at once – only to have our hopes sadly dashed. It was Boxing Day in Chile – too late! Only Russian tourists (who celebrate New Year instead of the the Western Christian Christmas) would want to buy a tree on 26 December. Our inquiries about where to get a tree were met with expressions of surprise and pity from the locals. The looks in their eyes said everything – we certainly didn't need a Spanish phrase book to get the message.

Market forces being what they are, Christmas trees had, quite naturally, been absent from the shelves for two days already and wouldn't be returning to them any time soon. Tantalizingly, decorated Christmas trees of various colors, shapes and sizes adorned every shop window, and we did try our luck here and there... but any offer we made was firmly but politely rejected.

Not being one who gives in easily, I decided to up the ante, at one point waving a \$100 bill about to show I was serious. For a moment, one potential seller's eyes became dollar signs and cash started jingling in his ears as he thought about the offer, but surprisingly, he still refused. Maybe it was our crazy explanations of why we wanted to take a tree to the South Pole with us that unnerved him, or perhaps he thought we were setting him up somehow and chose not to get involved with us.

We must have irritated half the town – so much so that a couple of days later some sales clerks in a shop we hadn't even been in before jokingly asked if we'd finally managed to find the tree they'd heard we'd besieged the town about. Well actually, we had! Not at first, but

we got there eventually. Downhearted but not defeated, we decided inspiration might come if we bought a bottle of good whisky from the supermarket over the road from the señor who clearly valued timber over wealth. Having chosen the desired fortifying brew, we again ran into the peculiarities of Chilean retail practices, this time concerning the purchase of expensive alcoholic drinks. This is how it goes: After you've chosen the merchandise in the store you take its empty box to the cash point. After paying, you're finally given the desired beverage from the depths of the warehouse.

Being obedient folk, we followed the rules. The process started well and within a couple of minutes we had reached the third stage. But then everything came to a grinding halt. We were standing there waiting for five minutes, then ten, then 15. After 20 minutes of waiting I was seething, and proceeded to spew forth all the colorful Spanish expressions I knew. That didn't seem to help, so we ended up damning Chilean retail systems to hell, got our money back, and left empty-handed. No whisky, no Christmas tree, and so it appeared, no luck.

Then a miracle occurred. The story about these weirdos from Moscow must have spread even further around the neighborhood. Whether he was enchanted by our purchasing power, or patriotically determined to ensure the visitors left with good memories of his home town, a nearby shopkeeper came to the rescue. He must have witnessed the whisky saga. He carefully inquired if the respected señors would be so kind as to consider purchasing his corporate Christmas tree.

Wow! Our luck had turned at last! Within a couple of minutes and for a modest sum in Chilean pesos, the tree was hastily stripped of its decorations and the fortunate fir was on its

way to celebrate New Year at the South Pole. To tell the truth, the owners tried to sell the tree 'as is', together with tinsel and decorations. But, we weren't having any of it: first of all we didn't want to litter the Pole with our festive clutter; and secondly, well, you just try decorating a tree in polar mittens.

While the tree was being enthusiastically dismantled, the neighboring shopkeeper – the one who refused to sell us his tree earlier – was almost in tears when he realized that our motives were pure, the banknote was genuine, and that he'd missed out on the deal of the year. Another one for the series – “The circus left town, but remaining are the clowns”.

The tree did a great job. At the Pole we danced around it in a ring and sang “The Forest Raised a Christmas Tree” in different languages. We left the tree at Patriot Hills on our way back. It was a shame to leave it... but it's another reason to go back!

01

January

2010

Sharing Russian traditions with the British Commonwealth.

The ladies strike a pose.

Literally, the world's remotest Christmas tree.



The South Pole





The ceremonial South Pole.

The geographical South Pole.



The South Pole

There are currently three South Poles – not counting the magnetic one. The first is merely ceremonial – a shiny ball on a pole surrounded by the flags of the countries that have signed the Antarctic Treaty. This is the pole that everyone has headed for ever since Amundsen and Scott.

The second South Pole is the current geographical one. Nothing in this world stays the same, and that goes for the location of the South Pole too. The geographical South Pole is about 150 meters or so from the ceremonial one and is quite unassuming. For some reason only the US flag is planted next to it. Oh, and a Christmas tree decorated with various bits of scrap metal.

Every year, on January 1 there is a new geographical pole, giving us three to choose from on our visit. Each year a humble wooden stake is ceremoniously driven into the snow, as in the photo on the right. We were just a bit too late for the stake-planting ceremony. The station lives by New Zealand time, and we arrived at 10am.

The real geographical pole, and so unassuming.



Not a single tourist leaves the South Pole without taking a tour of the Amundsen-Scott station.

A visitor learns about day-to-day life for US polar explorers.



The Antarctic station at the South Pole belongs to the USA. As you'd expect, it's dedicated to various research projects.

To beat the heavy snowfall, the new station is built on adjustable pillars – as the snow piles up, so the station is raised accordingly. Additionally, the building's design is aerodynamic to protect it from the very strong winds. I should mention that we were very lucky with the weather.

There is a lot of interesting stuff inside the station: a sports room, music room, greenhouse, laundry, etc. For some reason, however, all the tourists make a beeline for the local shop. Alcohol is only sold to station employees, so tourists have to settle for T-shirts and fridge magnets.

Visitors can get a stamp in their passports to say they have been to the South Pole (which I did) and are able to buy gifts and send postcards from the southernmost place on the globe. I lingered quite a while and felt like buying the entire shop so that I would have excellent gifts to give to everybody... but, alas, I had just spent four hours outside in -29°C , and it was pretty windy, so my brain wasn't functioning too well to cope with a shopping mission, which I guess will have to wait till next time.

We were sorry to leave the South Pole. It's not often you get the chance to be part of something like this.



After six hours at the Pole, we got back on the plane and set off back to base – still lightheaded after everything that had happened to us.

On the way back the pilot entered the passenger compartment and asked how we all were, because, as he put it, "it's a little shaky four thousand up, and we've already climbed five".

Don't forget, the plane is not fully airtight. In spite of this, we landed happily and safely at Patriot Hills, just in time for the end of the festive New Year dinner.



At Patriot Hills again.
Setting up a traveler's tent.

Antarctic-hardened women are not afraid of frost.



"Look, my 'Iridium ping' batch file helped KIS successfully update using the satellite connection!"



Icy deserts all around...



Patriot Hills

Suddenly the Antarctic has a strict new working regime. At Patriot Hills our team was waiting for the weather to lift so they could fly back to the mainland. To kill the time, everyone occupied themselves with whatever they could. We are overcome by feelings of serene melancholy, contemplating the Antarctic desert.

Update: still waiting for good weather and passing the time reading 'bash.org(.ru)'. The smokers are seriously considering making roll-ups out of tea as that seems to be the only thing we still have plenty of.

...but sometimes you can see a few tourists, too



Just before we were due to return to the 'mainland', Antarctica decided to show us what it was capable of.

Gusts of wind whipped and tore at everything in sight, but even so, unlike at the South Pole, some still found the weather at Patriot Hills good for a spot of R&R.



03

January

2010

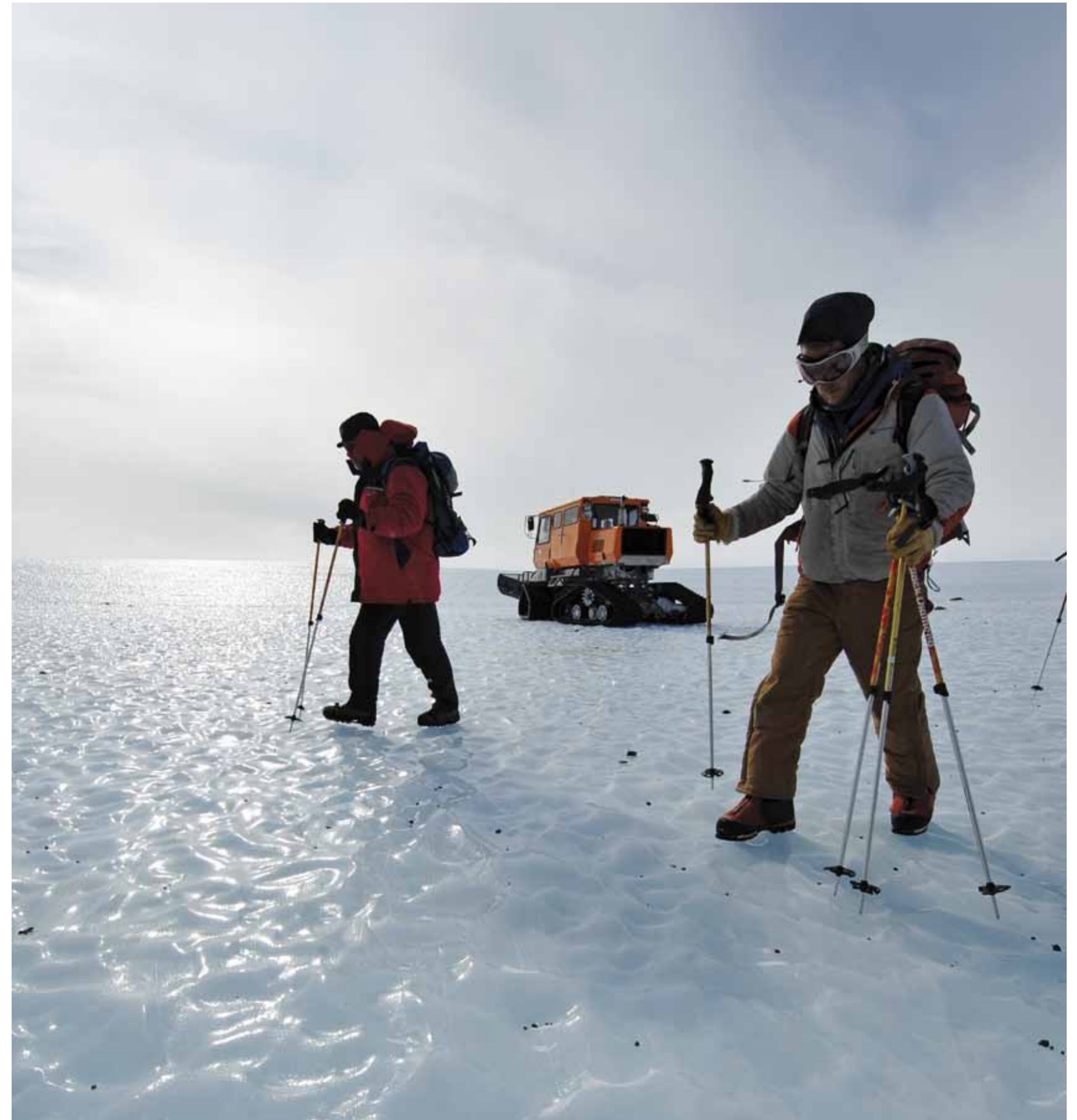


With nothing better to do, some members of the team were seriously thinking of conquering the nearby peaks – the eponymous Patriot Hills themselves.

There's no swimming in this sea – it's only for walking and landing planes on.



Patriot Hills



Flowing water
in Antarctica is a rare –
and delicious – thing.



Water!

Let me tell you about something else that happened at Patriot Hills.

We took a tour around the peaks of the Patriot Hills ridge, and then decided to have a walk on the blue ice surrounding them. It was at this point when one of the team with a leaning towards etymology recalled the word “glaciology” and suggested we should all try our hands at a new skill by studying the various multi-colored ice-bound stones.

For reasons best known to herself, M.T. came to the conclusion that one of the stones we found had obviously come from outer space. After telling us “I want that meteorite!” she grabbed the ice-pick and hurriedly started to hack it out.

A.G., our very own Mountain King, watched M.T. hacking away at the ice for some time, before relieving her of the pick and proceeding to demonstrate how a pit in the ice *should* be cut. After scouring out about ten inches, the icepick broke through into a sub-glacial cavity. A.G. shoved his gloved hand into the hole and announced, to his and everyone else’s astonishment: “Water!” Indeed, we had discovered liquid H₂O just under the Antarctic ice, despite the temperature being clearly well below freezing.

Later on we learned all about the science behind our discovery. At joints between rock and ice, and even though the ambient temperature is way below freezing, water cavities can form when the rock underneath the ice is heated by the sun.

And the water was simply delicious! Fresh, and perfectly chilled!

04

January

2010

A deserted "Chilean
secret military base".



Patriot Hills

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The deserted station reminded us of alien spaceships ... a bit like something from The Thing.



We took a tour around the abandoned base. The personnel had clearly moved out suddenly, leaving everything just as it was. It seems they took only those things with them that they considered to be essential, i.e., alcohol and cigarettes. It instilled in us all a strange feeling. Like the legend of the Mary Celeste, it was as though only ten minutes ago people were still here and life was in full swing. A little perturbing... A quick search on the Internet failed to cast much light on the station's history. It seems the Chileans built the base before setting off from it on tractors to head to the South Pole. They made it, but rumor has it that shortly later the money ran out and the base was closed. Or maybe their plans just changed. No-one seems to have a definitive answer and the mystery prevails. In the meantime, the station is steadily being buried under the snow. Another five years and it will be gone completely, consumed by the ice. Who knows, in a couple of million years maybe our descendants or some aliens will dig it up. I wonder what conclusions they will draw from it about our 21st century lives.

It felt like the Chilean explorers had just popped back to Punta Arenas for a few pints.

04

January

2010



Inside the station.
It seemed everybody
would be back in a jiffy.





Sunspade

Shortly after the deserted station episode, A.B. noticed the beautiful color of the clouds in the Antarctic sky and decided to record the phenomenon for posterity. To be more precise, what he saw was a halo – an optical effect that results in a ring of light appearing around the sun. But to get his shot just right he decided that the sun needed to be covered by something. The solution was remarkably innovative. A.B. equipped A.G. with a spade and instructed him how to use it to best effect.

M.T. found the entire scene so bizarre that she immediately rushed to video it, which just made the whole thing even more absurd.

D.D., who was standing nearby, also thought that the scene was worthy of capturing for posterity and got his camera out too, making the whole spectacle funnier still. In their struggle for photographic excellence, they ended up striking the strangest poses you can imagine. Naturally, I got involved too, capturing the full splendor of this unexpected comedy show.

05

January

2010

Antarctica won't let us go.

No tumble dryers here.

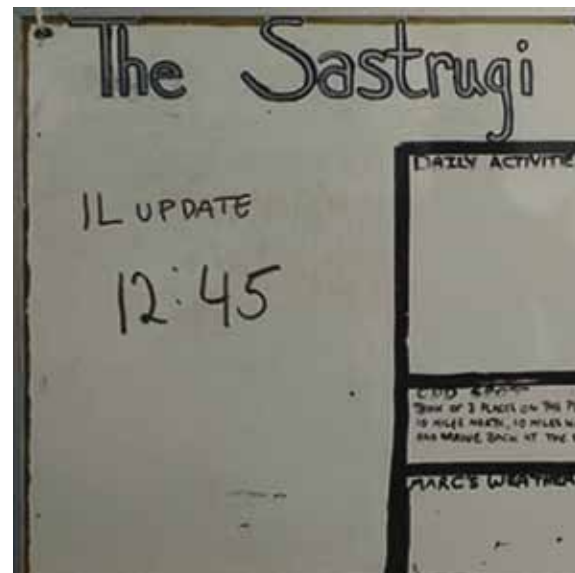
The weather wasn't even thinking about improving.



The harshness of everyday Antarctic life continued. Everyone at the station was still waiting for the weather to improve. We were pretty tired of sitting around twiddling thumbs so we contacted our Moscow colleague Stas Shevchenko, gave him our coordinates, and asked him to order sunny weather and no crosswinds for the next eight hours.



For all the waiting though, it's still wonderful to be here.



Patriot Hills

06

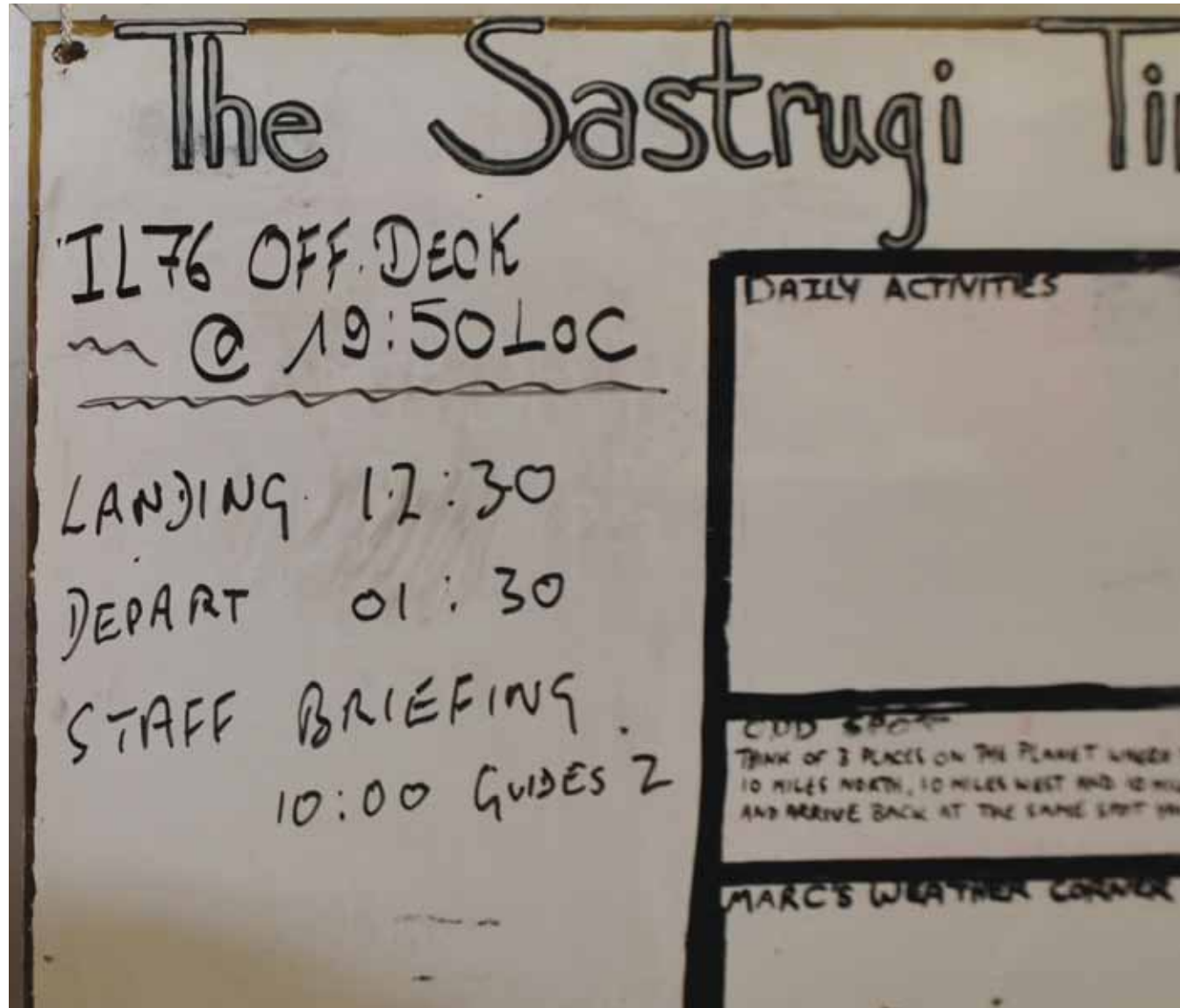
January

2010



At last, a hard frost and sunshine.

The board says we can fly, so we got our kit together in readiness.



Patriot Hills

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"Hi, Eugene from Helsinki! Thanks for the vote of confidence. I've been following your adventures. I'm currently on a business trip but will try to provide some good weather for you. Hang in there and don't get too cold!"

Stas has clearly come up with the goods! The sky's clearing and the sun is breaking through here and there! Hopefully, today we'll start heading north again.

Dismantling and packing up.

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06

January

2010

Good to go, awaiting
our Kazakh comrades
in the Ilyushin.



06

January

2010



Soviet aviation has a lot to be proud of.

An emotional moment – farewell to Antarctica.

Looking forward to getting home and sharing tales of our adventures!



Patriot Hills

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Going Home...

And so our Antarctic adventure has come to an end. I'm sure this story will not be the last of its kind – and I look forward to bringing you photographic-and-text accounts of a few more adventures yet!

Eugene Kaspersky

New Year at the South Pole!

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This is a book about a journey I could easily describe with at least a dozen rhapsodical superlatives, one after the other – probably more; a trip I could go on and on about all day and night, it impressed me so much. It was an adventure that can't be compared to any of the other exotic travels I've been on – of which there have been many.

Here you can find all the ingredients of a perfect adventure in ideal proportions. Missed flights, overnight stays in the middle of nowhere, extreme climatic conditions, fantastic views, interminable waits for take-off, relief

and rapture on getting clearance to fly, even long-winded shopping missions for missing equipment, Christmas trees and whisky. Add a grandiose event, mystifying geography, and overall big time sensuality, and what do you get? Right – Antarctica.

It's bleak yet beautiful. It takes composure and endurance. Folk that get along in Antarctica get themselves an invaluable experience and unforgettable memories that last a lifetime.

But words can hardly describe Antarctica fully. Pictures do it so much better. So, I decided to tell you the

best part of the story of this journey with more than a hundred stunning photos, alongside useful information for future South Pole adventurers.

So get your warmest togs on, fasten your seat belts, and the Moscow-Antarctica flight is ready for take-off!

