

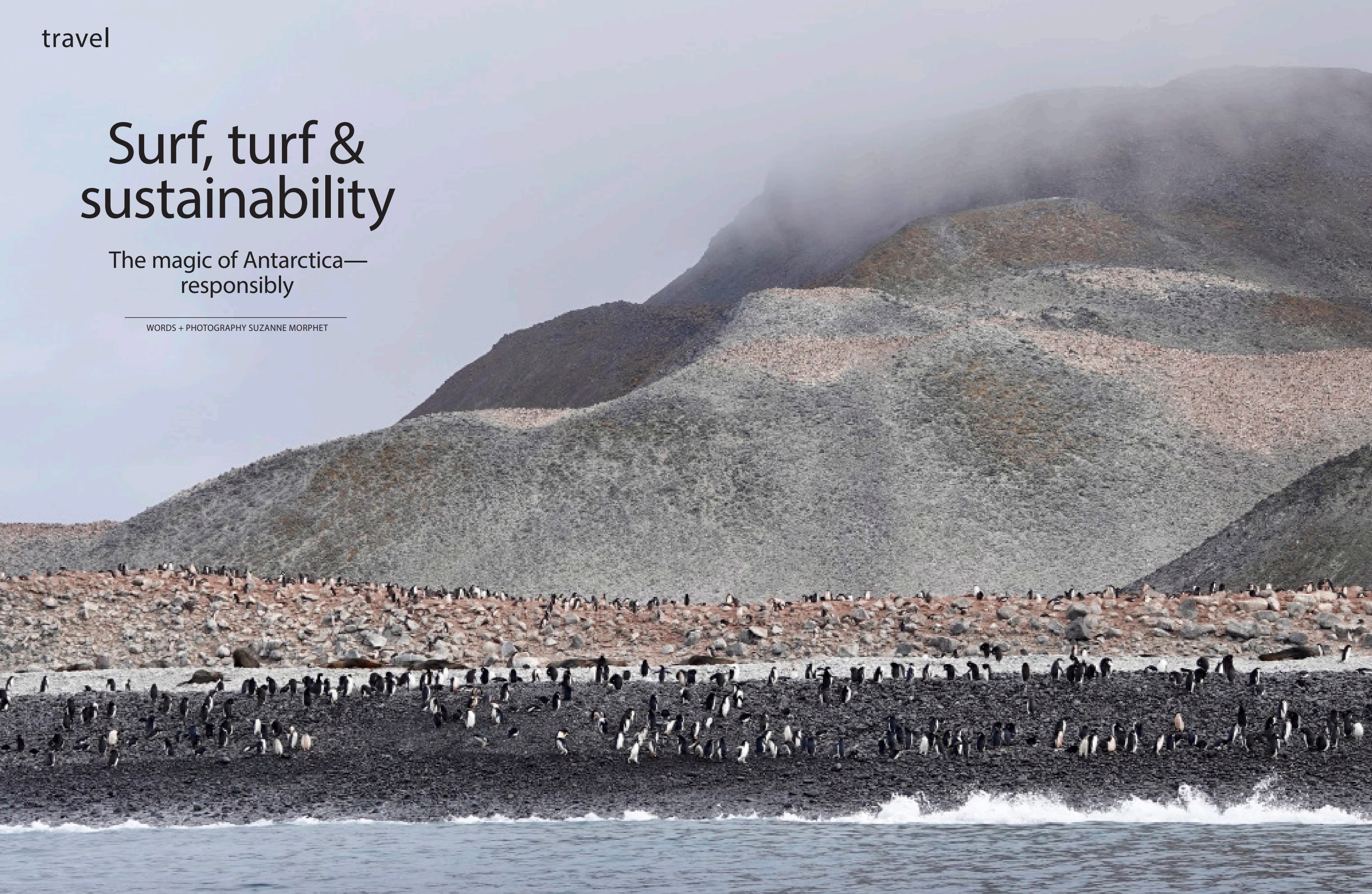
travel

# Surf, turf & sustainability

The magic of Antarctica—  
responsibly

---

WORDS + PHOTOGRAPHY SUZANNE MORPHET



**W**ith climate change in our face every day, you might think twice about visiting Antarctica. It takes multiple flights totalling 17-plus hours in the air from the west coast just to reach the bottom of South America. From there, you either fly another two hours to the Antarctic Peninsula, or you board your boat for a two-day crossing of the Drake Passage. Whatever you decide, it's a long way.

And yet Antarctica was my dream destination, a place I've been pining to visit since long before those two sinister C-words sneaked into our vocabulary.

How could I do it responsibly?

For starters, I would choose a cruise line that is 100 per cent carbon neutral. Then I would pick a fuel-efficient ship with features that reduce emissions.

Finally, I would look for a company that offers active adventures so I could make



**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CAN'T FIX THIS WE CAN!**

**SOME SKILLS ARE IRREPLACEABLE**

**We can help you.**

innov8.ca | 1-800-963-3828

**876 Bay Street**  
**Victoria, BC**  
**V8T 2P6**

**Super Solutions.**

Copiers & IT Services

**BRIGGS & RILEY**

30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

**ZDX**

OCEAN

560 Yates Street | 250.590.6381  
Mon - Sat 10:30 - 5:30pm  
Sun & Holidays 11:00 - 4:00pm  
[www.adventureclothing.ca](http://www.adventureclothing.ca)

**BRIGGS & RILEY**





the most of every day. (The fact I adopted a plant-based diet 18 months earlier would help ease the guilt of travel too.)

Aurora Expeditions, a company that’s been operating for more than 32 years, checks all the boxes. Certified carbon neutral (it invests in biodiversity in Australia and a wind farm in Taiwan), Aurora operates two ships with streamlined designs and an innovative bow—the Ulstein X-BOW®—that allows ships to slice through waves rather than riding up and over them. (The X-BOW also means a smoother sailing.)

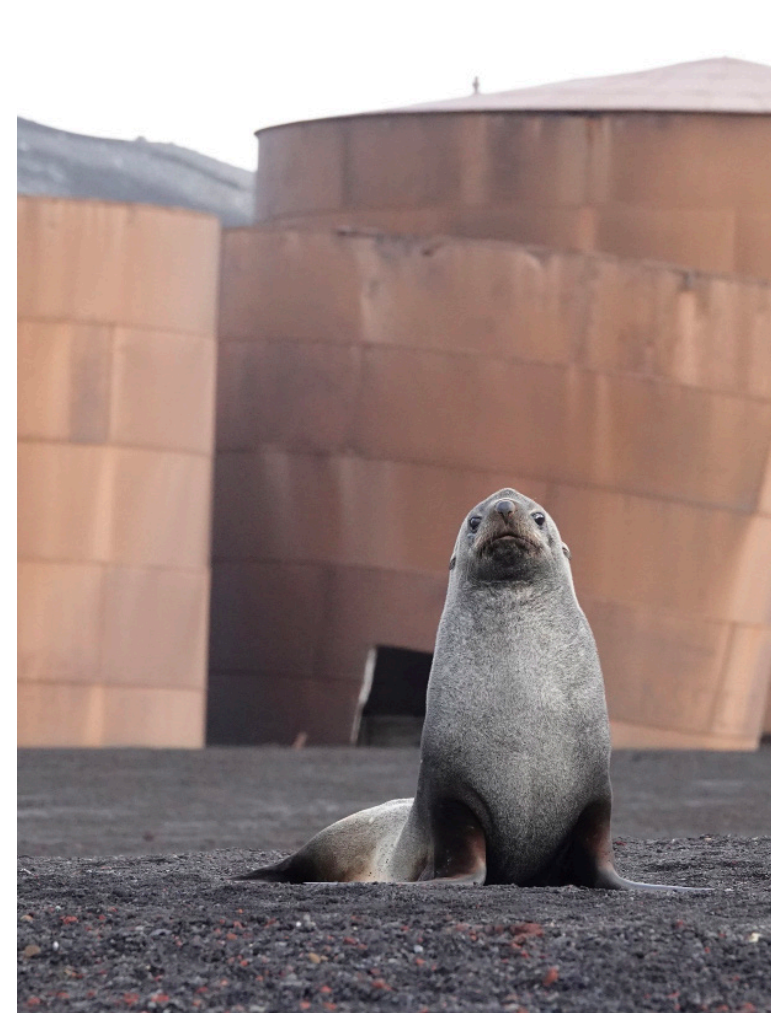
I chose a 10-day cruise aboard Aurora’s newest ship, the *Sylvia Earle*, named for the renowned oceanographer and described as “a floating ambassador for the conservation of the planet.” It’s got a fully equipped Citizen Science Lab where guests can help scientists analyze data or contribute their own. For instance, guests are encouraged to photograph and identify marine mammals for happywhale.com, an organization that helps contribute to our collective understanding of the world’s oceans.

The *Sylvia Earle* also has an enormous “garage” filled with equipment so it can offer activities including snorkeling, kayaking and ski touring.

I thought “sustainable” and “climate conscious” might mean a boat with just the basics, so boarding the *Sylvia Earle* was both a relief and a revelation.

My “standard” cabin had a king-size bed as well as a small sitting area and balcony. Public spaces on the vessel included a well-stocked library, several bars and lounges, a couple of restaurants, two outdoor Jacuzzis, a gym and a sauna with a picture window.

Soon after boarding, the 12 of us who signed up for the snorkeling program were called to a briefing. We’d snorkel twice a day with three guides watching us from two Zodiacs.



We’d be the first group to leave the ship each morning and afternoon. And we’d have time each day to explore on land as well as underwater.

In other words, daily surf and turf!

An added benefit of snorkeling, I soon realized, was that I immediately had a group of like-minded people to hang out with, most of us age 60 or older.

Snorkeling in Antarctica doesn’t feel quite as crazy as it sounds. We wear dry suits and underneath mine, I wore three or four layers of lightweight wool. The water temperature is about the same as the air—between 1 and 4 degrees Celsius, but without the wind chill. When I lowered myself over the side of the Zodiac into the Southern Ocean for the first time, it felt like someone was sticking pins and needles into my face, which was the only exposed part of my body.

But I became so enthralled by the colour and clarity around me that I soon forgot about the pain. The water in the Weddell Sea off the Antarctic Peninsula is intensely blue and crystal clear. It’s thought to be the clearest and cleanest water on the planet.

Two fur seals soon joined in our fun, swimming elegant circles around us, their lithe bodies torquing and twisting with ease. They must look at us in our puffy dry suits and wonder, “What are these strange, awkward-looking creatures?”

In the days ahead, we’d also be captivated by Adelie penguins that “fly” past us at breakneck speed in tight formation. Each time, it felt like they were staging an underwater aerial display just for us.

Small creatures surprised and delighted us too. Tiny translucent sea angels and sea butterflies are pteropods—swimming snails and slugs that appear to have wings.

# Deep down you want to be together.

Ask about double depth burial.

There is a new cost effective and environmentally responsible way to pre-plan funeral arrangements as a couple or family. Double depth burial plots allow for family members to be buried in a single deep plot, rather than individual plots, side by side. Further, our new double depth burial area is in one of the nicest areas of the park in a serene setting. Find out more today.



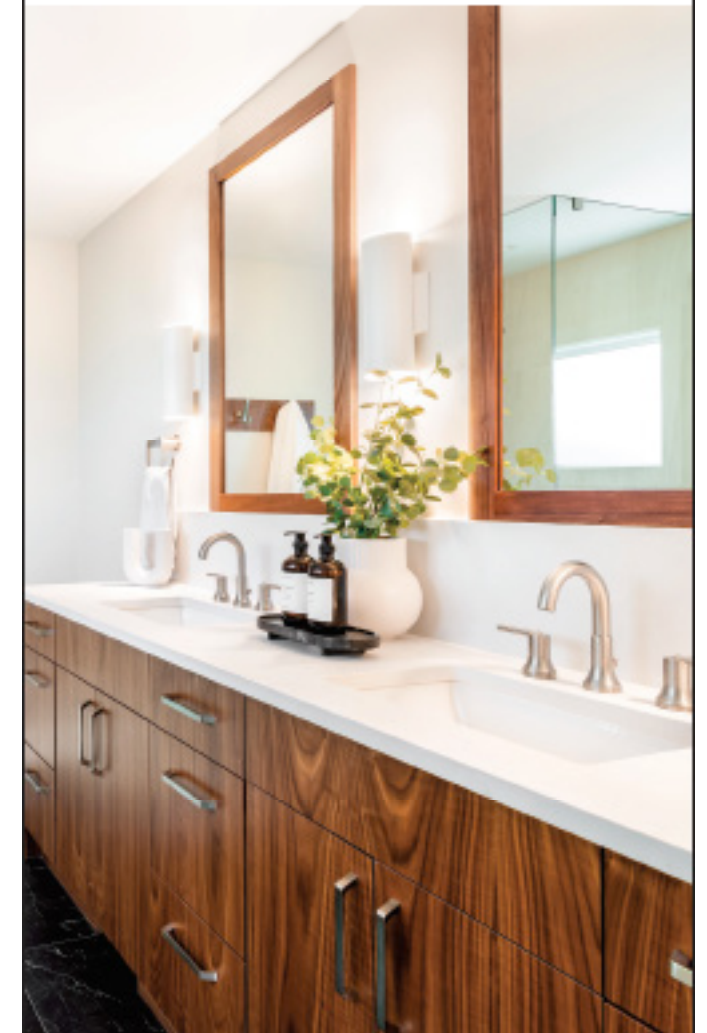
**ROYAL OAK BURIAL PARK**  
A beautiful place to remember

250.658.5621 | robp.ca



# CREATING A SPACE THAT IS UNIQUELY YOURS

| ESTABLISHED IN 1990 |



# MAC RENOVATIONS

DESIGN | BUILD

250.412.8012 | 5285 WEST SAANICH ROAD  
VICTORIA, BC | WWW.MACRENO.COM



“A CONTRACTOR YOU CAN TRUST”  
Visit us on Houzz and follow us on Instagram!



BALLET *or* VICTORIA

# BALLET ROCKS

Ballet Victoria's Kirk Hall  
680 Courtney Street

Friday, Oct 20 & Nov 3 | 7:30pm  
Saturday, Oct 21 & Nov 4 | 2:00pm  
Sunday, Oct 22 & Nov 5 | 2:00pm

balletvictoria.ca | 250.380.6063



Discover a space  
dedicated to your  
personal and professional  
growth with

## HUMAN POTENTIAL LIFE COACHING

@totalblueprint  
www.totalblueprint.org

# BOULEVARD

VICTORIA LIFE AT ITS FINEST

**NEVER  
MISS AN  
ISSUE**

**SUBSCRIBE  
TODAY!**

Receive  
**BOULEVARD**  
mailed directly  
to you  
6 times a year  
for only  
\$15 annually

**CONTACT US**  
blvdmag.ca

Instagram icon Facebook icon

When I lowered myself over the side of the Zodiac into the Southern Ocean for the first time, it felt like someone was sticking pins and needles into my face, which was the only exposed part of my body. But I became so enthralled by the colour and clarity around me that I soon forgot about the pain.

“Once you start noticing these little creatures you’re going to be like, ‘Oh my God...this is incredible,’” said Ana, one of our guides.

“It opens the door to another world,” agreed Edie, her colleague.

One day, I spotted a long, gelatinous tube about the length of my forearm with orange dots along its body. It was a salp, also known as a sea squirt because of the way it propels itself by drawing water in, then squirting it out. Each of the orange dots was a stomach, Edie told me in the lounge that evening over drinks.

“And the neat thing is, they take in carbon dioxide and poop it out and it sinks to the ocean floor.”

Later, I learned that salps and their sinking fecal pellets “play an outsize role in damping global warming,” according to a February 2023 study reported in the research news site ScienceDaily.

Compared with suiting up and plunging into water that’s barely above freezing, our daily walks on land seemed tame. But Antarctica was all that I imagined and hoped for: wind-sculpted icebergs, mountains encased in glaciers, historic huts of early explorers, the rusting storage tanks of a long-abandoned whaling station, and most of all, colonies of braying, honking, squawking penguins, so numerous that on one island there was no room for us to land.

It’s true that travel is the best teacher. And after visiting Antarctica, I’m more passionate than ever about doing my bit to combat climate change.

For more about Aurora Expeditions, see [aurora-expeditions.com](http://aurora-expeditions.com)

## PREMIERE SUITES

Canada's #1 Corporate Housing Firm

**BUSINESS TRAVELLERS** **EXTENDED STAY VISITORS**  
**DISPLACED HOMEOWNERS**

*Life's too big for a hotel room.*

[premieresuitesvictoria.com](http://premieresuitesvictoria.com) 250 595 5639