

INTERVIEW

Polar explorer Antony Jinman is only the 12th Brit to have skied to the North and South Poles. On board Swan Hellenic ship *Vega* in Antarctica, he speaks to **Laura French** about his adventures

Q. What drew you to Antarctica?

A. Growing up in Devon where it's all green rolling hills, I was fascinated by the idea of this frozen continent that was totally different, so it became a boyhood dream to come and see it in real life. I was always told expeditions were out of my reach, and that made me want to do them more. So after lots of training, in 2010 I ended up skiing to the North Pole in a team of three.

Q. Tell us more about that expedition.

A. At the start, it was scary. In the Arctic, ice glides together or breaks apart, and you don't know if there's going to be a polar bear around the next corner. We were also hauling 120kg of equipment and food on sledges, and at one point it got to -65C! But after a while, we got used to living in this very narrow margin of safety. Arriving at the North Pole felt like a huge personal achievement.

Q. How did you end up skiing solo to the South Pole?

A. I started a not-for-profit organisation, taking university students to the Arctic for fieldwork and delivering polar science activity days in schools across the UK. I decided to take on and document the South Pole expedition to inspire schoolchildren to learn more about Antarctica. I covered 730 miles – often uphill – so it was a test of ultra-endurance, but there were fewer hazards than in the Arctic. I loved the tranquillity, and it was awesome to stand at the bottom of the planet, 102 years after [legendary British explorer] Scott.

Q. What does your role with Swan Hellenic involve?

A. I'm the corporate expedition leader, which involves training and supporting the expedition team across Swan Hellenic's three polar ships. I got the job after being rescued by a Swan Hellenic vessel on an expedition to Antarctica in 2021. Our team got stranded due to Covid, and *Minerva* was one of only two ships left in Antarctica.

Q. What is most special to you about Antarctica?

A. It's the history, wildlife and remoteness. You learn something new every time. My favourite place is probably the Weddell Sea, which Swan Hellenic sails to; it's home to huge icebergs and isn't often visited by other ships. I also love South Georgia for its king penguins, and there are some amazing locations below the Antarctic Circle too, with icy waters and incredibly scenic channels to pass through.

Q. What's the biggest lesson you've learnt from your adventures?

A. When I started I thought it was all about the destination, but people are right when they say it's about the journey. The beauty lies in what you learn along the way – that's the legacy of these incredible places.



Antony Jinman

corporate expedition leader,
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PICTURE: Oliver Prince