

VENTURING MAGAZINE

The Adventure of a Lifetime

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"I want to officially invite you to go to Antarctica" read the Skype text telling me I had been selected for the most amazing adventure of my life.

This was a very personal experience of the breath-taking beauty and fragility of Antarctica. It's hard to adequately describe the wildlife like the pods of Orca killer whales swimming alongside the boat, Gentoo penguins porpoising out of the water, Adelie and chinstrap penguins hanging out on ice shelves, visits by humpback whales nearly every day, leopard seals hunting the penguins, albatrosses and petrels following the boat wake, Weddell seals aggressively protecting their territory and the rare sighting of a sperm whale. Everything in this pristine environment seemed to be living in harmony and unaffected by humans.



Preparing snow bed for camping night

much more. The most interesting and saddest sight was Whaler's Bay on Deception Island where 140,000 barrels of whale oil was produced between 1906 and 1931.

Of course there were the spectacular scenery and ice formations that had to be seen to be fully appreciated. Throughout the trip, I felt like I was living in a huge art exhibit. Only a sculptor could create these spectacular shapes and figures that glistened in the sunlight. Only an artist could paint scenery with so many different shades of blue and a night sky displaying so many bright stars.

The activities were as remarkable as the sights: camping under the stars without a tent, braving the -2°C waters for the most exhilarating polar bear swim ever, climbing the Marshall Glacier in Ushuaia, Argentina, landing on a floating iceberg island, and so



Talking to a penguin



Climbing Martial Glacier

The training aspect of the expedition was called Leadership on the Edge. It felt like we were one large Venturing Crew broken into smaller teams to foster learning and teamwork being led by expert consultants. The purpose for this Antarctic Expedition was to engage and inspire the next generation of leaders to take responsibility to build resilient communities and in doing so, preserve Antarctica. During the trip, scientists and onboard experts trained our international teams to become ambassadors for sustainable leadership and the preservation of Antarctica.

The reality of climate change was driven home when we were woken by the sight of a floating tabular iceberg approximately 1 kilometer square (3280 feet). This iceberg was a magnificent sight but was not supposed to be there. It had "calved" off the Larsen-B Ice Shelf due to the warming of the planet and was now melting in the open seas.



Floating tabular iceberg

The sponsoring organization, 2041, was founded by polar explorer, environmental leader and public speaker Robert Swan, OBE, the first person in history to walk to both the North and South Poles. Swan has dedicated his life to the preservation of Antarctica by the promotion of recycling, renewable energy and sustainability to combat the effects of climate change.

All this was made possible by Venturing

I was invited to apply for this expedition because I had earned the Hornaday Silver Award. I started working on the award as a Boy Scout but was not able to finish before turning 18. Not only did Venturing (and Sea Scouts) give me the bonus of three additional years of adventures, that extra time as an active member allowed me to complete the Hornaday Award.

About M. Robert Marks



Meeting President Obama during
2010 Report to the Nation

Robert has been a member of the Boy Scouts of America since 1998 having earned a number of different awards including Eagle Scout, Quartermaster, Venturing Silver Award, Venturing Ranger Award and the William T. Hornaday Award Silver Medal.

Continuing his Scouting journey in Venturing and Sea Scouts enabled Rob to work at two International Scout Centres: Kandersteg Switzerland and Suncheon, South Korea, work as an intern for the Korea Scout Association, complete the Quartermaster Award and present the BSA Report to the Nation in 2010.

A few of Robert's previous high adventure trips included biking the C&O Canal, backpacking in the Grand Canyon, rafting the Colorado River, climbing the Red Rocks National Park, swimming in Lake Mead, hiking The Narrows and Zion National Park, running the rapids of the New River Gorge, trekking through the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and the Appalachian Trail, sailing the Chesapeake Bay, SCUBA diving in Florida Keys and surfing the Outer Banks.

Currently Robert Marks is a senior at Hanyang University in Seoul, South Korea studying International Business.

If you want to read more about the adventure, visit Robert's blog at 2041.mrobertmarks.com

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