

## Would You Go to Antarctica?

If you were looking for adventure and could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go? Would you run with the bulls in Pamplona, or go bungee jumping in New Zealand? Perhaps you would prefer to go diving in the Indian Ocean, or go hiking in the Himalayas.

But if you'd done all that, and you had the time and money, would you go to Antarctica? Considered the last great wilderness on Earth, it's becoming the destination of choice for adventurous tourists. Just a few scientists in research stations share the icy landscape with penguins and other animals which can cope with the low temperatures.

Tourism began in Antarctica in the 1950s and it's still small scale. About 37,000 tourists are expected there this season, and many won't even leave the boat.

But when Juliet Rix visited the frozen continent, she asked herself if she should be there at all. Tourists can cause problems to such a sensitive environment. Her tour guide admitted that all visitors leave a footprint and they all go to the same places, the accessible coastline, which is also where the penguins and seals go to breed.

However, some people believe that if carefully controlled, tourism could be good for Antarctica. It has no native population and it needs advocates. Visitors to the icy continent might be ready to support and even to fund its preservation. And they're likely to join the discussion about global warming, which has led to the melting of glaciers.

According to Rix, guidelines are followed when you're about to set foot in Antarctica and tourists have to disinfect their boots to make sure no alien species are introduced.

And once on land, there's no eating or smoking. Rocks, bones – nothing should be taken as a souvenir and nothing should be left behind.

So if you did go, you would be able to enjoy breathtaking views. You would also have to be very careful not to pollute the environment, and keep your fingers crossed that you were not destroying it for future generations.