

STARK CONTRASTS, AS ELLEN RETURNS FROM SOUTH GEORGIA...

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It's quite amazing to be back in Europe now after such an unbelievable experience. The trip south was more than I expected, richer and more incredible than I could ever have thought, more full of life than I could have thought and more immersing than I could have thought. I don't think until I got there that I really understood what the place was really about, and how the place really does belong to the animals. I don't think I was prepared for that feeling of being so close to them, and this was by no means physical, but mental, as with no real fear of humans the wildlife accepts us. You begin to take it for granted when you're there, very quickly it begins to feel normal - but it's not normal for us. Coming home and seeing the rabbits flee to the hedgerows, and the birds take off and hide at the merest hint of disturbance and you realise just how special Antarctica is, and just how rare.

I have experienced a kind of excitement that maybe only a child feels when it experiences something new, to see those birds fly overhead, to see them turn, still airborne and look at you. To feel that they connect with you, that many are older than me. It's a mix of respect, amazement and bewilderment. There are things that I experienced and felt on the island that I did not think I was able to feel. There were moments where excitement took over my emotions, but above all there was the most incredible sense of freedom, complete freedom and that was transmitted without doubt through these incredible and majestic birds.

Life back here is a stark contrast to life in the South. Funnily enough it did not seem as cold back in the UK as I expected, in fact it has been a similar temperature to Antarctica and South Georgia. There are a few more people though, and there is a lot more noise. But then there's a real positive side to that, that it's really great to be back amongst your friends and to be able to share what you have experienced.

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