



A NATURAL WONDER YOU MUST SEE BEFORE YOU DIE

Alaska's Frozen Jurassic Park

STAGGERING! THERE'S NO OTHER WORD FOR IT. And silent. Utterly, awesomely silent. A freaky, other-worldly, "shh-don't-talk" kind of silence that's broken only by an occasional sound the Tlingit Indians call 'white thunder'. A massive rolling, rumbling sound. Followed by a gunshot-like crack that tells you a glacier is calving.

We're in **Alaska**, North America's Final Frontier, famous for whales and wildlife, teetering peaks and crunching ice. And there's no point exaggerating because everything we've seen so far on this rugged, rocky coast is pinch-me-please stunning!

Take yesterday, for example. We got to ride a **helicopter** (in convoy with five other helicopters) up-up-up into Alaska's spectacular mountains – where we eyeballed jagged peaks, tortured valleys, cascading waterfalls and massive glaciers, before landing on the mighty **Meade Glacier** for a guided walking tour.



You couldn't help feeling a certain reverence as you stepped out onto the ice ... knowing that this surreal landscape had taken thousands of years to form. We clomped around in oversized glacier-boots, gazed into the distance, tasted pure meltwater, tried not to fall down spooky-blue crevasses, and kept muttering: "This is fantastic! Simply fantastic!"



TODAY WE DONNED LONG UNDIES, WARM layers and woolly hats and cruised slowly into the World Heritage Park known famously as **Glacier Bay**. Only 200 years ago, these ancient shorelines were themselves buried under an impossibly-thick icy slab.

And, today, more glaciers meet their end in these chilly waters than anyplace else in the world.

Alaska's 'rivers-of-ice' (like the one we walked on yesterday) began life some 4000 years ago, as frozen snow – 10 times denser than the iceblocks in your fridge. When their packed-down weight got too much they began inching downhill, reshaping the landscape and gathering rubble on the way. And when their front-ends (often kilometres

wide) finally reached the sea, they began breaking up ...

It's called '**calving**'. It happens with a thunderous roar, when a huge chunk of glacier splits off and crashes into the Bay – shooting torrents of water high in the air, and rocking your boat if you're close. When that submerged chunk of glacier pops back up to the surface – behold, an **iceberg** is born!

And it happens every gob-stopping, eye-popping day in Alaska! You've gotta see it ...

