

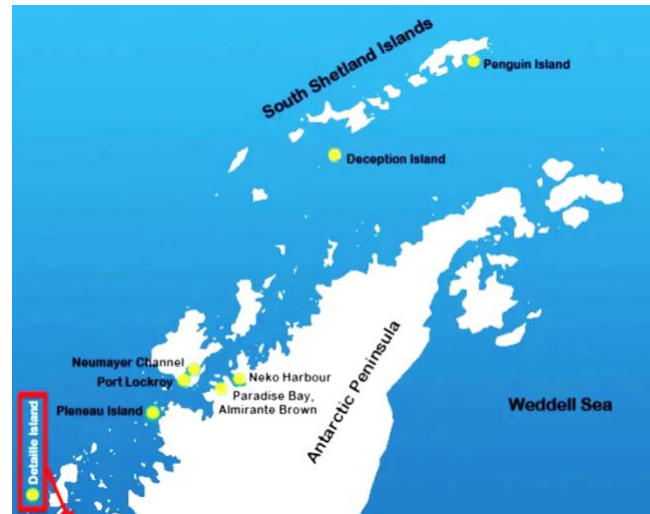
April 2023

A Photographer's Worst Nightmare Comes True in the Antarctic

By Maritta Renz

I'm on day seven of an expedition in the Antarctic. We've been travelling on the [G Expedition](#) ship around the South Shetland Islands. The weather has started to deteriorate over the last couple of days and it's another stormy day. The captain and crew, however, persevere and are determined to find a calmer location for us eager photographers to explore.

Orne Harbour is the day's first planned landing away from rougher waters. It's on the northwest side of the Arctowski Peninsula near the entrance to Errera Channel. Unfortunately, the landing site was closed off with an accumulation of floating ice.



We watched the scouting crew continue around the corner of a stunning island. The island ended with a tall peak that had such a strong powerful presence to it. The zodiac boats found a calmer location on the other side of this point, so the captain repositioned the ship.

The view straight from this point of Danco Island looks to me like the head of a breaching Humpback whale. While on the island, this seemed fitting as we were treated to repeated Humpback whale sightings.

While touring the island, as if Mother Nature suddenly flipped a switch, the winds start to gust and we are quickly called off the island. The zodiac rides to date have been bumpy, wet and fun but I still pull my phone out for occasional pictures. I routinely put my good camera gear into a dry bag, and then tuck that into a backpack that I hang onto around my feet in the zodiac.

Today the crew works hard to steady the zodiacs for our entry, so we hopped in quickly to help them out. This time it's rough and wet enough that I know I'll need to keep my phone tucked in my coat pocket, and I leave my backpack on my back.

Heading back to the ship is the most fun ride ever. Everyone is bouncing around, getting wet and laughing. It's really a blast!

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We face backwards to keep the cold splashing water at our backs. Halfway back I see a bright yellow dry bag floating behind us, so I call to our driver that someone has lost their bag. At that same moment, my heart stops, I realize it's MY dry bag! My backpack unzipped from all the bouncing.

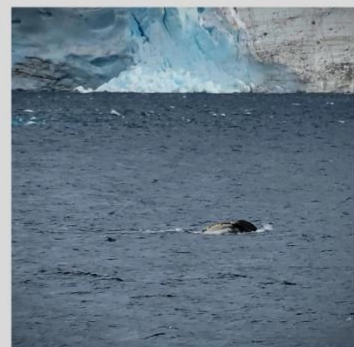
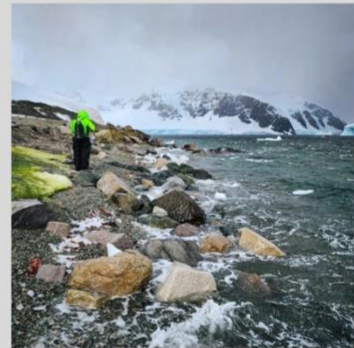
We quickly turn the zodiac around so my husband Norm can grab the dry bag. It's floating so I think my gear should be fine. But when he hands me my bag full of camera gear... I hear the dreaded sloshing of cold salt water.

I always say, "No biggy, sh*t happens." But sometimes some sh*t hurts a little more than others.

I open everything to dry out, but when the inside of your lenses looks like half-empty snow globes the situation is grim. The good news is I can salvage the photos on my memory cards, and this adventure is near the end.

In conversation with a couple of experienced crew members, I learn a very important lesson. Always have a big enough dry bag to fold the closure four times. I folded mine twice, which was not enough to keep the bag closed during an impact into the rough water.

So, if you use a dry bag for your camera equipment, please remember **four rolls minimum!**



@ Maritta RENZ

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