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Getting to Know MickeyLive During a South American Celebrity Cruise

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BY

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LEAVE A COMMENT



Leaving Buenos Aires Port

Certain destinations stand out. Taking a cruise that navigates around Cape Horn is one example. While savvy passengers can choose from many South American cruise itineraries, I recommend that you find a vessel that has at least one knowledgeable speaker. On a Celebrity Cruise ship you may be fortunate to meet MickeyLive (Mickey Richardson).

Experts add a layer of firsthand insight that is hard to capture during pre-cruise planning. Being able to listen to someone explain what is about to be seen in real time

is a special bonus. It's equally helpful to have an onboard expert who is not up-selling the ship's excursions or products. Too often, cruise personnel have limited or inaccurate information about the ports of call.

WHO IS MICKEYLIVE ?

I had the good fortune of meeting Mickey on our January 2017 adventure. I boarded the ship in Buenos Aires and disembarked in Valparaiso, Chile. Each sea day, Mickey would provide a recap of what we had seen and also set the stage for what we'd see next. During his presentation, Mickey projected useful maps and diagrams onto the large theater screen.

His audience grew incrementally larger as the days progressed. The line waiting to chat with Mickey during his "open office hours" at the Café al Bacio were impressive. His popularity grew as the ship headed south along the Argentinian coastline and more people wanted to be prepared for Rounding the Horn and the points that we'd pass as we headed north along the Chilean coast.

When we passed by notable landmarks or made our memorable journey Around the Horn, through the Straits of Magellan and the Darwin Ice Fields, Mickey was there to lend his expertise. Many passengers used Mickey's highlighted map to copy the ship's routing onto their own Southern South American map. Mickey sold these maps for a small fee.

This handy souvenir is direct evidence as to why this itinerary stands out from most other cruise tours. The mega ship weaved its way through many narrow passages and passed by terrain that made everyone want to carry a camera.



WHY I WAS CURIOUS...

After Mickey's first lecture, I was intrigued. Mickey successfully combined his

marketing skills and a thorough understanding of modern technology along with his passion for adventure. Out of all of the cruise speakers I've heard, he was by far the most knowledgeable about multiple regions in the world.

I did a Google search. I found almost nothing about Mickey. Mickey was in direct competition with Mickey Mouse. It seemed odd that someone so immersed in modern technology would have such a limited social media footprint.

I remained curious. Why was Mickey's online presence so limited? Why did he share his broad expertise from one cruise to the next and from season to season? What lured him to the sea?

WHAT I LEARNED...

I sat down with Mickey one afternoon to find out.

After I had finished with the basic formalities, I had reached a major conclusion. Mickey would rather talk about amazing places than himself. While he was very comfortable promoting his content knowledge on stage and afterwards, he preferred not to hype his background.

At one point, I politely interrupted and asked what he hoped to accomplish aboard the ship. His answer was simple. Mickey wants to provide the missing tidbits of information that make a difference as passengers sail through beautiful places in the world. His end goal is to bring extra value and to make an impact on travelers' experiences. Based on social media comments from former Celebrity passengers, Mickey is accomplishing his objectives.

Midway through our conversation, Mickey described his comfort level with integrating GPS, Google Earth and his drone videos into his presentations. To this day, I'm intrigued by his videos that captured the Infinity sailing in and out of port. The drone's vantage point put the cruise experience into a totally different perspective. While I see little value in personal drone usage, these short videos provoked a wow response.

Mickey used his college experience in video production to master the art of operating drones. He acknowledged that many encounter a steep learning curve and then chuckled about an expensive drone that crashed. After learning the average cost of a commercial drone and the level of expertise required to operate one, I was surprised that Mickey allowed two boys to control his drone during a shore excursion at El Pedral Lodge in Puerto Madryn.



MickeyLive setting up his drone

To engage Celebrity cruise passengers, Mickey promotes a photo sharing opportunity. Participants submit their prized photos to the Snapshot Rally. Anyone who participates receives a free copy of a PC data disc that features the best photos plus a recording of Mickey's presentations. Guests who don't contribute pictures are charged a fee for this disc. A portion of the money collected for the discs and the maps is donated to the World Wildlife Fund.

Mickey obviously doesn't mind staying aboard the ship for weeks on end. He derives positivity from the surrounding water. While at sea, Mickey candidly admits that his perception is altered. Mickey looks to the sea for answers to his questions. Mickey is content onboard a Celebrity Cruise ship even though he lives in a tiny cubicle. He believes that each of life's segments prepares a person for what will come next.

Mickey continually reminded guests to be kind to their fellow passengers and to wash their hands. Yep, there was a significant amount of GI issues that lingered from the previous sailing. Mickey's upbeat outlook permeated his talks. Early on, he asked the audience to embrace the universal concept of gratitude. While few raised their hands to acknowledge that they were keeping track of being grateful, most left the theater smiling.

Whether Mickey's in the southern or the northern hemisphere, he's on the lookout for wildlife. To entice people to visit Alaska, he shared amazing drone videos that

captured bears up close and personal.

MAGELLANIC PENGUINS AT THE EL PEDRAL LODGE



Penguins at El Pedral Lodge near Puerto Madryn

On this trip, I had the unique opportunity to hang out with Mickey and the Magellanic penguins at the El Pedral Lodge near Puerto Madryn. Mickey provided tidbits of information on the drive to and from the lodge.

Everyone walked at his/her own pace down the dirt road that led to the windy and rocky coastline. The bright sun maintained an ideal temperature for shorts and a T-shirt. These

penguins are not the ones that slip and slide on snow and ice.

These black and white penguins were everywhere. Some penguins posed in their nests while others walked carefree in groups or congregated under vegetation. At the seashore we watched the penguins frolic and dive in and out of the water until predators interrupted their freedom. Mickey added a few words now and then. We had the freedom to absorb this natural environment at our own pace.

The penguins come to this location every September to start their breeding season. They chose this isolated location because it has the correct soil and vegetation for their nests. The penguins build their nests very close to their food source. In March or April, they take a 6,000 km swim back to Brazil.

This colony was first discovered in 2008. At that time, there were only 13 penguin couples. In 2013, the colony had grown to approximately 1,300 couples. A happy couple will go back to the same nest year after year and may live up to 35 years.

These penguins navigate the water with ease. They can float and move forward using their flippers. While swimming underwater,

their speed increases. Like dolphins, they can jump out of the water. When they dive into the water, they're usually searching for food. They can dive up to 97 km deep and stay under for around four minutes.



Penguins at El Pedral Lodge near Puerto Madryn shoreline

While only a select few can participate in this penguin excursion, it was worth the premium fee. The abbreviated commute was a blessing. I was content to stand in awe as penguins waddled here and there.

While it was tempting to impede on these penguins' space, I followed Mickey's warning that the penguins would move their heads from side to side whenever they felt their space was violated. With a zoom feature on my camera, I was able to get more than enough pictures without causing any undo harm.

CLOSING THOUGHTS



Sunrise at Ushuaia

Toward the end of our private conversation, I asked Mickey to talk about his favorite places. He paused. It was clear that his brain was flooded with images. He started to rattle off place after place. By the time my pen could move, I captured Amsterdam and Iceland in the spring. I also got a smattering about New Zealand and Alaska. He ended with glowing description of Ushuaia, Rounding the Horn, the Darwinian Glacier Fields, and the Chilean Fjords. I was ready.

My journey from Buenos Aires to Valparaiso is a land and sea adventure that will remain fresh in my mind for decades to come. I tip my hat to Mickey for filling in the gaps and offering a once in a lifetime penguin adventure.