

Fire & Ice Cruise: Greenland, Iceland, the Shetland Islands, Scotland, Newfoundland

by Camille Pepe Sperrazza

How many people can say they've been to Greenland?

Not many.

But I have visited two different ports in this country where the scenery is just stunning. Before I went to Greenland, I had imagined what it was like. My imagination was completely wrong. The water was as blue as the Mediterranean. The air was crisp and clean. The sun was bright and warm. The two towns -- Qaqortoq and Nanortalik -- had roads. The people welcomed us with coffee, traditional cake, dancing, and singing. There were bars, cafes, a hotel in Qaqortoq with a bear skin on the wall; and unique dishes such as fried yak, roasted reindeer, and even seal. But the good news is that when you sail on a "Fire and Ice" cruise, as I did, you can eat the wonderful food aboard the ship, just in case yak isn't on your list of favorites.

I sailed aboard the Ocean Princess on an 18-day adventure, that included Greenland, Iceland, Newfoundland, Scotland, the Shetland Islands, and Halifax. I left from New York, August 7, and ended my journey in Dover, England, August 25, 2011.



This fabulous itinerary included three ports in Iceland -- Akureyri, Grundarfjordur, and Isafjordur. The last two are fjords, where the scenery is breath-taking. I admit I never quite understood the concept of a fjord, but after staying in these pockets of water, surrounded by huge glaciers, and seeing how towns are built on the small slabs of land that protrude, I now comprehend the beauty of it all. Years prior, I spent about a week in Iceland's capital, Reykjavik, and was impressed with the European-style food and culture that is Iceland. It was, likewise, the same in these areas. The people of Iceland are so welcoming, so warm, and so sincere. This is truly a wonderful country, with outstanding citizens.

In the Shetland Islands, I explored the ruins of Jarlshof, which may date back to the 9th century. These are Viking houses believed to be up to 3,500 years old. I also got to interact with the famous Shetland ponies. Apparently, they are used to tourists making much ado about them, as they come right over, and wait to be petted. When that person stops, they

stroll down to the next human, and wait to be stroked and fussed over. Rarely does the sun shine in the Shetland Islands, but it was out for us when we visited. The grass was as green as Ireland, and the sheep, roaming freely throughout the emerald earth, were beautiful.

We arrived in Scotland in time to enjoy the world-renowned performance of the Royal Military Tattoo, held on the grounds of the Edinburgh Castle. Here, the bands of sailors and soldiers play drums, bagpipes, and more. There's music, comedy, fireworks, and a spectacular light show. Tickets are extremely limited, as these shows take place only about three weeks per year. Buying in advance is essential, and doing so through the cruise lines is recommended, as it's a good 50-minute ride from where the ship docks in Rosyth, to Edinburgh, the city in Scotland where the event takes place. If you purchase VIP seats, you'll have access to a suite, where after the show, you'll have the opportunity to mingle with the performers, and enjoy some complimentary appetizers that may include the Scotland specialty, Haggis (minced meat and oatmeal, cooked in sheep's bladder). You'll also get a glass of champagne. Perhaps even more important, you'll get transportation all the way up the hill, where the castle is located. Buy the less expensive seats, and you may have to climb the mountain on foot. You'll also have some protection from the weather, should it rain in Scotland, as it often does. No matter what the weather, the show always goes on.

In Newfoundland, we explored the less known area of St. Anthony, on the northern tip. Arctic explorers started journeys to the North Pole here. We visited the L'anse Aux Meadows, a UNESCO World Heritage Site believed to have been occupied by Leif Erikson over 1,000 years ago. This area has lots of icebergs that float in the ocean, and seeing them, as the ship sails the ocean, is a big attraction.

My cruise was aboard one of Princess' small ships. One advantage of small-ship sailing is that you can visit unique ports such as these. You also get to know your fellow passengers, as you're all in the same boat for nearly three weeks, sailing towards the top of the world! But those who are used to traveling via larger vessels, be warned that the motion of the ocean will be a lot more significant on a small ship, and that there may not be as many planned activities as there are on the big boats.

When we got to the Arctic Circle, Princess invited passengers to join the Princess Polar Bear Club, by swimming in the pool for five minutes. We had beautiful weather throughout the voyage, but if you're considering this journey, you do need to bring some warm clothing. Layering is always a good idea.

This particular itinerary is not always offered, but there are cruises to Greenland and Iceland. If interested, please contact me so that I can reserve your space, and provide the information you need to enjoy a wonderful adventure.

For more information or to book a trip, [contact](#) "Commodore" Camille today.

This article was accurate when it was written, but everything in life changes. Enjoy the journey!