

# Epiphany at the End of the Earth: An intrepid traveler gets up close and personal with the planet – and falls in love all over again



**PASS IT ON!**  
Raising kids to be stewards of the Earth is no child's play  
BY SAMANTHA ANDERSON

Parenting in the age of climate change can be overwhelming. As I try to raise my young children to be environmentally conscious citizens, I use the theory of environmental education David Sobel writes about in his book *Beyond Ecophobia* – we must first teach children to love the earth, then we can teach them to protect it.

We are a family who loves the beach and the woods – two environments that Blaine Island has in spades. We get outside every day and keep a running list of things we love – beautiful rocks for our rock collection, changing colors of the sky, hills we run up and dash down, sounds, silence – it's different every day and it never ever ends. Through constant mindful exploration my kids have fallen in love with the planet, and together we work on finding ways we can help take care of it.

Sadly, trash was too easy to identify as a problem – it's everywhere. Trying to pick it all up would make us crazy, so we set reasonable goals. Every time we walk the dog we pick up one piece of garbage, when we go to the beach we fill a small bag as soon as we get there. Once we're done, we're done – we live being outside and feel good that we've done a little thing to help the earth as we enjoy it. Picking up trash helps us think about our own waste, making us more likely to carry reusable bags, containers and silverware, and to buy and properly sort recyclables when we cannot reuse.

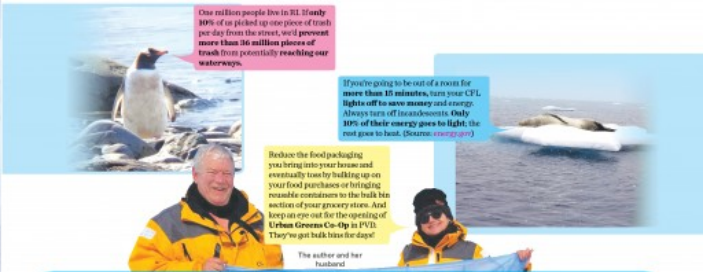
We love leaving our home in Pawtucket for local adventures, but as we watch cars spew exhaust it's been easy for us to see that the way we travel matters. We are a one-car family and prefer to use our bikes or ride the bus

## RELENTLESSLY ENGAGING IN LOVING THE EARTH

wherever we can. On the bus we stretch our legs, enjoy sharing the ride with many different people and delight in going places only buses can go, like the Thorpe Street Tunnel. Bike riding is joyful, there is a freedom being on two wheels, determining our own pace and route, and using our own body's power to get us where we are going. And even my kids know that life is better when you never have to look for a parking spot!

Our closets are constantly evolving. Between growth spurts and changing seasons, life with kids is one wardrobe overhaul after another. It's important to me that my children don't see clothing as disposable. Together we set outgrown clothes to share with younger friends and family members, and we always accept used clothing when it is offered. When shopping we always hit the thrift store first, delighting in the hunt and the discovery of the one-of-a-kind item even more than we delight in keeping the things we buy out of the landfill.

We do not live an environmentally perfect life – there's plastic all over our house, we eat meat. I constantly dream of long plane trips – but we try to make decisions that are good for our planet as often as we can. I talk to my kids about the choices we make and what I find important to consider. Practicing eco-conscious thought processes, taking environmental action and relentlessly engaging in loving the earth motivates our family to make the world a better place. I believe that the world needs in this time of climate crisis its grown-ups who are thoughtfully working to live and care for the only planet we have as best they can, this will inspire our kids to do the same. •



One million people live in 31. If only 10% of us picked up one piece of trash per day from the street, we'd prevent more than 36 million pieces of trash from potentially reaching our waterways.

If you're going to be out of a room for more than 15 minutes, turn your CFL lights off to save money and energy. Always turn off incandescent. Only 10% of their energy goes to light, the rest goes to heat. (Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov))

Reduce the food packaging you bring into your house and eventually toss by buying up on your food purchases or bringing reusable containers to the bulk bin section of your grocery store. And keep an eye out for the opening of Urban Green Co-Op in PVD. They've got bulk bins for days!

The author and her husband.

## EPIPHANY AT THE END OF THE EARTH An intrepid traveler gets up close and personal with the planet – and falls in love all over again BY WANDY OLSON

I got off the plane in Ushuaia, Argentina, located on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, the southernmost tip of South America nicknamed the "End of the World." My journey to Antarctica began there as I boarded my next mode of transportation, an expedition ship named the *Ocean Endeavour* run by Quark Expeditions.

Yes, this was a cushy ship with gourmet meals, a spa and daily yoga classes like one would expect from a pricey cruise. But I also shared space with environmentalists from a span of specialties, including penguinology (who knew this was a career choice?) and glaciology, which was the real reason I chose this particular trip to the seventh continent. I dined with them, attended their lectures and generally felt like their mission was much more than keeping 196 people from all over the world entertained for 11 days. No after-dinner comedians here.

This trip was the real thing, replete with Zodiacs to transport me to land to walk among the gentoo and chinstrap penguins, commune with seals and maybe catch a shot from shore of a whale or two. In hindsight, I wanted the full tourist experience – and an American one at that – but what I got was so much more.

In my defense, I had been studying the region for six months prior to the trip, reading about the great Antarctic explorers' journeys, studying weather stats and trying to get my arms around the impact global warming is having on this very temperature-sensitive part of the world. The Antarctic Peninsula, where I set foot, is one of the fastest warming areas on the planet. And in this rich ecosystem, with its narrow food chain, the balance of nature

is everything. But somewhere along the way, while I was there, my intellect and my experience collided.

It's one thing to know, in a generic sense, that whales are threatened as the krill population declines. This takes on an entirely different meaning after hearing a humpback's wondrous echolocation as it breaches the surface then gracefully dives, after taking a breath, not 10 feet away from me.

It's a fact that glaciers are shrinking as the earth's temperature rises. But hearing the deep moan of one shifting or witnessing the sharp boom of one breaking up before its time caused a visceral shift in my understanding and sadness I can't explain.

At one point I even stopped taking pictures because I knew they could never be big enough – recording time, place and event, but missing the particular magic.

At the close of our journey, the expedition leaders offered the usual list of ways individuals can help the environment, most of which I do anyway: like eschewing plastic, driving less and supporting politicians who accept the critical state of affairs as fact. But aren't cruises notorious for being harmful to the environment? I asked one of our lecturers that very question on my last evening on the ship. His response was that by exposing people to the absolute beauty and fragile ecosystems of the Antarctic, they can't help but view our amazing Earth from an altered perspective. His hope was that we, in turn, would pass this newfound awareness on to others. And I am. After witnessing its beauty, I have no choice. There's greater purpose for me now. •



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