

HOSTS IN THE AIR, FILMMAKERS ON THE GROUND PRISKA AND RUEDI ABBÜHL LIVE THEIR DREAM

By Melanie Heiniger
(Internal Communications)

Penguins in the Antarctic, albatrosses on the Falkland Islands, infinitely vast and untouched landscapes: these sensational images, accompanied by a soothing soundtrack, welcome guests aboard our long-haul aircraft. A film by maître de cabine Ruedi and flight attendant Priska Abbühl is shown as passengers take their seats.

In addition to their joint role as inflight hosts, the husband-and-wife team dedicate their time and energy to observing and documenting the animal kingdom. Ruedi Abbühl has a degree in zoology but was never interested in a career as a researcher: "While writing my doctoral thesis I was working part-time as a flight attendant, a line of work that allows me to explore the world." Shortly after arriving at a destination, he unpacks his camera and uses every free minute to capture the world's natural beauty.

INFLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

SWISS Inflight Entertainment offers a mix of film genres aligned to our network destinations. Hollywood movies, for example, are available to all airlines three months after their cinema release in the USA, which means they are often on board our flights before they appear in European cinemas. The films and TV series are normally shown in their original form but have to be formatted appropriately for the particular entertainment system on board (each of our three types of long-haul aircraft has its own individual system). Together with the latest music and game content, the movies and TV shows are uploaded by SR Technics on to the inflight entertainment server. SWISS shows up to 260 different films and 300 TV programmes per year.



Ruedi and Priska Abbühl with their 2009 boarding film, which featured polar bears... and a lot of good luck!

The idea of presenting these observations as a boarding film for SWISS flights came from Ruedi Abbühl himself. "As a flight attendant I often noticed how weary passengers appeared by the time they boarded the aircraft after going through the hassle of checking in and clearing passport and security checkpoints. Wishing to reduce their tension and enable them to start their journey on a pleasant note, I was inspired to show them nature's silent beauty as a way of spiring them off to another world." This idea immediately appealed to the SWISS Inflight Entertainment team. In the years since 2005, Ruedi and Priska have produced five documentaries and six boarding films for SWISS Inflight Entertainment.



King penguins in South Georgia. For the Abbühls, observing animals in their natural habitat is a source of endless wonder (photo: Priska Abbühl).

Their documentaries are always a co-production. While Priska Abbühl is in charge of the music and directing, her husband is responsible for the pictures. "We invest a great deal of time in the making of each film. For our study of rockhopper penguins we made seven trips to the Falkland Islands," Ruedi points out.

Ruedi and Priska Abbühl work for SWISS on an 80% basis, which allows them to dedicate two full months per year to their love of nature, combined with their passion for flying. In addition to filming animals in their natural habitat, the couple also conduct expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic on behalf of the tour operator PolarNEWS.

Anyone viewing films made by Ruedi and Priska Abbühl soon understands why their eyes sparkle when they talk about their experiences with nature. And it is also immediately clear why they can imagine no other line of work than looking after air travellers and making documentary films.

More information about Ruedi Abbühl and a selection of his films can be found on the Intranet (where at least one boarding film is uploaded) and on the www.naturemovie.ch website. —



The Abbühls in action. There is always a lot to discover while on board an expedition ship in the Antarctic.