

Hubbard Glacier *Alaska*

I was on a cruise ship in Alaska, celebrating my daughter's 40th birthday. From talking to the ship's officers the day before, I knew that the ship might make it into Yakutat Bay, the site of the Hubbard Glacier, in the wee hours of the morning. So, I was up at 4:00 AM and out on the freezing bow of the ship a few minutes later.

I decided to use a medium-range telephoto lens that day because I wanted to capture something different. Most people are so awed by the glacier's massive size they try to capture it all with a wide-angle lens. I was looking for a more intimate image of the famed glacier. But the skies kept pouring down rain and the glacial cold kept throwing up banks of fog. On the plus side, the overcast sky intensified the blue color of the ice, which is caused by blue-green algae.

One thing a serious photographer learns is that bad weather can sometimes be our best friend. It can send enchanting light your way or render an ordinary scene extraordinary. Those are the conditions I found myself in that morning.

With the startling booms and loud cracks of icebergs calving all around us, I peered through my lens. Suddenly, a bizarre landscape of sharp angles, shades of blue, and strange shapes opened to me.

Every so often the fog would break a tiny bit, blessing me with a glimpse of the mountain behind.

I usually do not use a tripod on a moving boat, since the up, down, pitch and yaw pretty well cancel out the stabilizing effect of the tripod. But the cruise ship was stable enough and the bay was generally calm. However, I did not use a cable release, since the weather conditions and ship movement dictated that I keep my eye glued to the eyepiece and my finger on the shutter release.

Once home I cropped the image a little and increased the contrast in the background to bring up the mountain.

I like the sharp angles in the image, as well as the 'dirt', which adds realism. The dirt is actually soil and rock scraped loose as the glacier migrates from the mountains of Canada's Yukon Territory to the sea in Alaska, a distance of some 76 miles and some 400 years.

Technical details: Nikon D200, Nikon AFS 70-200 f2.8@135mm, f8@1/320s ISO 200

