

How Big is Big?

Thursday, March 13, 2008

Dear Nakeya,

We spent the last two days at Perito Mereno Glacier in Argentina.

The glacier was very, very big.

When I am around things that are big, I always have the question, "How big is big?"

When we looked through our camper window at the glacier we could not tell how big it was.



How Big is Big?

When we walked down to the glacier we could not tell how big it was.



How Big is Big?

Even if there were people there, we could not tell how big it was.



We could not tell if it was as tall as a person.



How Big is Big?

Or as tall as a water bottle.



How Big is Big?

When we looked at parts of the glacier, we could not tell how big they were either.

We looked at the mountains and their snow fields that flow down like a river to create the glacier.



How Big is Big?



How Big is Big?

We looked along the top of the glacier.



How Big is Big?

We looked at the front of the glacier.

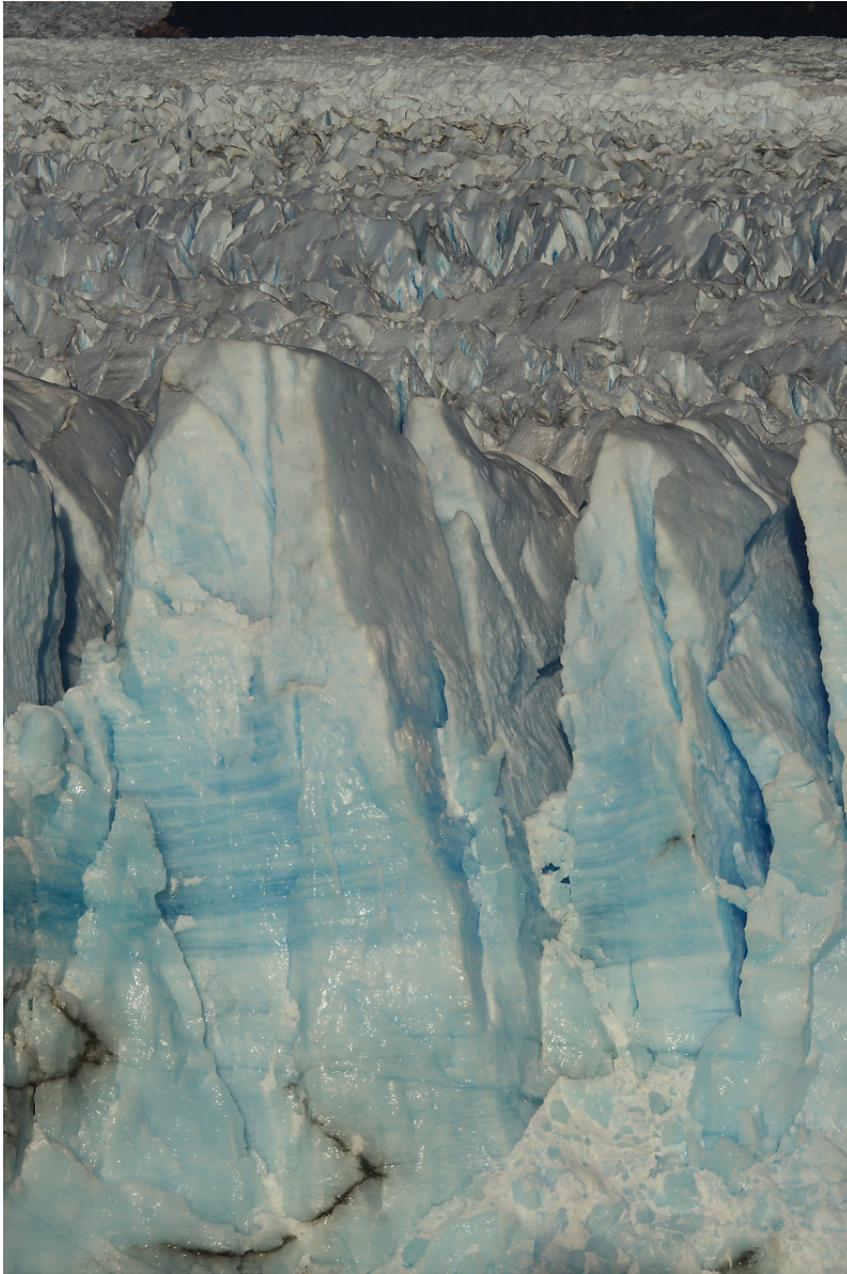


How Big is Big?

And we looked at pieces of the glacier.



How Big is Big?



How Big is Big?

We even looked at the whole glacier.



But we could never tell just how big it was.

We could see that it was big, very big.

But how big is big?

We did not know how to answer that question.

How Big is Big?

Finally, along came a boat.

The boat was on the lake, bringing people out near the glacier.

The boat looked very small next to the glacier.



How Big is Big?

When we looked at the boat we could see it was a big boat.

But how big was the boat?



We decided to create our own way to discover how big the boat and the glacier were.

First, we measured the boat by seeing how many grandpas we could stack up to be as tall as the boat.



The boat was about five grandpas high.

How Big is Big?

Now we knew how tall the boat was.

Next we needed to discover how tall the glacier was.



How many boats could we stack up to be as tall as the glacier?



The glacier was more than five boats tall!

The boat was about five grandpas tall and the glacier was more than five boats tall. That meant the glacier was more than 25 grandpas high!

Now we knew that the glacier was taller than a water bottle.

We knew the glacier was taller than a person.

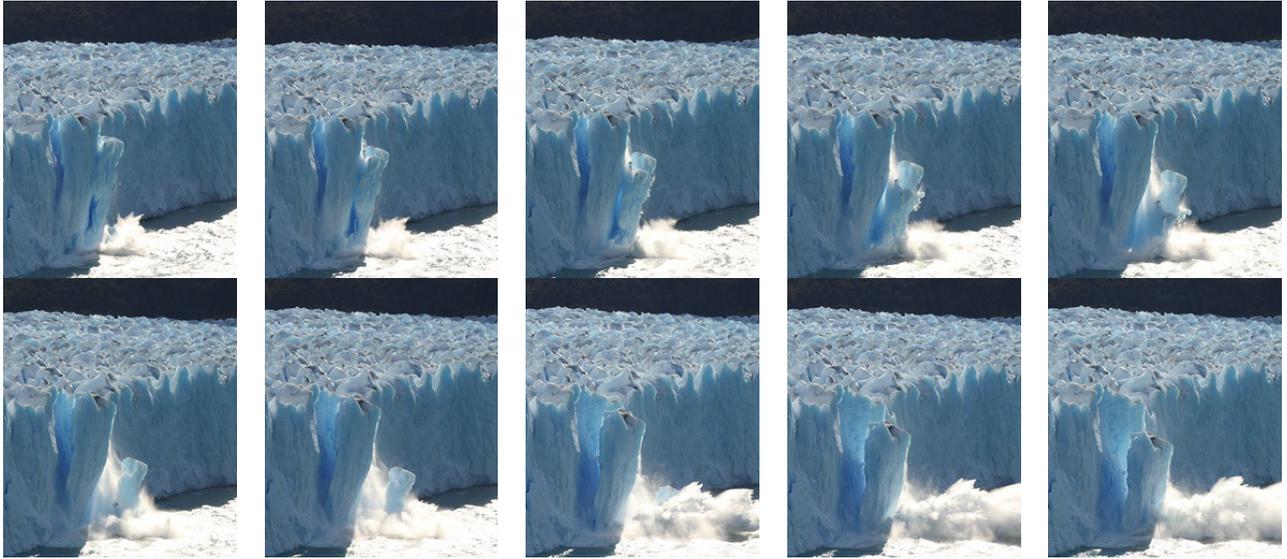
The glacier was taller than five boats.

It was taller than 25 grandpas.

It was a very big glacier.

How Big is Big?

Then we saw a part of the glacier break off and fall into the lake and become an iceberg. We watched the glacier calve. It was an iceberg being born.



At first we didn't know how big the iceberg was as it was falling. Then we remembered the boat, and we remembered the glacier was more than five boats or 25 grandpas tall.

The iceberg was as tall as the glacier, so then we knew the iceberg was very, very big.



And we knew that when an iceberg calved, the chunks of ice flying very far from the glacier were not as big as a snowball, they were as big as a grandpa.

How Big is Big?

After that, every time we watched an iceberg being born, we remembered how big it really was.



How Big is Big?



How Big is Big?



Just like the glacier, the icebergs were very, very big.

How Big is Big?

At the end of the day all the people went home to sleep.



But the glacier did not sleep.

We were camped right above it, and all night long we heard it pop and crack and BOOM!

We knew that every time there was a very big BOOM, another iceberg was being born.

And we knew each new iceberg was very, very big.

But not nearly as big as our love for you.

Love,
Grandpa and Grandma Steph

How Big is Big?

All photos by Douglas Hackney

Nakeya is our four year old granddaughter.

Our Fuso is about two Nakeyas wide, three Nakeyas tall and seven Nakeyas long.

The Perito Mereno Glacier is part of the Southern Patagonian Ice Fields, which cover 13,000 square kilometers / 8,073 square miles, the third largest ice field in the world, trailing only Antarctica and Greenland.

The Perito Mereno Glacier is one of the few glaciers in the world that is not receding.

It is about 4 kilometers / 2.5 miles wide in the valley and has a front about 5 kilometers / 3 miles in width, the extra width of the front is due to its arrowhead shape. The glacier front is up to 55 meters / 180.5 feet tall. The glacier covers an area of 257 square kilometers / 159.6 square miles. Every day the glacier advances about 2 meters / 6.56 feet in the center and 40 centimeters / 1.3 feet on the edges.

Between 1968 and 1988 32 people were killed by flying ice from iceberg calving at Perito Mereno Glacier.



Photo by Jorge Valdes

Douglas and Stephanie Hackney are on a two to three year global overland expedition.
You can learn more about their travels at: <http://www.hackneys.com/travel/index.htm>