

across the antarctic circle fly/sail

go guide

don't leave home without it



expedition spotlight

what you see

- Ushuaia - the world's most southerly city.
- The Beagle Channel
- The Drake Passage
- South Shetland Islands
- Antarctic Peninsular's West Coast
- Across the Antarctic Circle
- Historic sites and active scientific stations
- Spectacular mountains, icebergs and active glaciers
- Diverse wildlife - penguins, whales, seals, seabirds
- The Crystal Sound - soaring mountains and small islands
- The Gullet - a narrow twisting channel
- Narrow sheltered waterways and fjords
- Shore excursions as and where possible

what you get

- Small boat - maximum of 56 passengers
- Flight from King George Island to Punta Arenas, Chile (19 Dec 2011 departure), Flight from Punta Arenas, Chile to King George Island (28 Dec 2011 departure)
- 9 nights aboard the Polar Pioneer and use of all public area (open to all passengers)
- All meals onboard ship
- Free tea, coffee, water, juice, fruit, biscuits and cakes
- Twin/triple shared cabins with shared bathroom (option to upgrade to private twin or suite)
- Services of crew: Expedition leader, assistant, naturalist, historian, two chefs, doctor, hotel manager and diving guide (where applicable)
- Lectures, videos, slides and film shows and guide services
- All shore excursions from the ship inc. the use of Zodiacs
- 2-3 Zodiac excursions planned per day - subject to prevailing conditions.
- Medical services: a resident medical officer & infirmary
- Port taxes & port charges imposed by the government authorities
- Comprehensive pre departure documentation and an Expedition Essentials booklet.



on location

Your guide to on the ground...

visa requirements

UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and RSA passport holders don't require a visa for a stay of less than 90 days. Please note that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller.

climate

The climate in Antarctica is very cold and very dry. Temperatures on the Antarctic Peninsular in the summer months (December - March) are slightly

warmer, averaging 5 °c to -5 °c but they have been known to drop much lower. Antarctic experiences some of the strongest winds on the planet, making it feel much colder. In Ushuaia summer temperatures range usually range from 2 °c to 14 °c.

time

Argentina is 3 hours behind GMT and does not observe daylight saving. Antarctica does not observe standard time zones.

money

The currency of Argentina - Argentinian Pesos
GBP£1.00 = ARS6.4 USD1.00 = ARS4.01 (subject to fluctuation). Bring USD for exchange in Argentina and

for tipping and paying for items on board the boat. Visa and Mastercard are also accepted on the ship for bar charges, phone calls and any other personal expenses. Do not bring travellers cheques, they are almost impossible to exchange.

health requirements

It is recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio, if you haven't had a booster in the last ten years. Food and waterborne diseases are more common, so we recommend vaccinations for typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies). Check with your doctor or travel clinic before travelling for the latest vaccination requirements. Vaccinations are your responsibility.

travel insurance

You must be comprehensively ensured to travel on an Antarctic Expedition. Medical Evacuation Charges are not covered on this expedition and therefore we strongly recommend that your travel insurance covers unlimited medical evacuation, as this can cost in excess of USD100,000. Please also ensure that your policy includes cancellation insurance.

final checklist

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visa | <input type="checkbox"/> Passport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ticket/tour voucher | <input type="checkbox"/> Vaccinations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel Insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> US Dollars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flight reconfirmation | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses |

helpful hints

- The glare of the sun from the snow and ice is intense, pack plenty of 15+ sunscreen and lip screen.
- Pack a moisturiser for your hands which can get very dry and chapped from the cold & wet.
- Take a good quality pair of sunglasses, the glare from the water and ice can be quite penetrating.
- A stretch clothesline is handy for drying wet clothes in your cabin
- A ski pole or walking stick can be handy for time spent on the snow and ice.
- Binoculars are great for wildlife watching

polar clothing tips

- Ski clothing is perfect for Antarctica as long as it is waterproof and windproof - this is ESSENTIAL.
- The secret to keeping warm is to wear layers, several light layers is better than one heavy one, each layer traps the heat.
- Wool and silk are better materials than cotton for keeping you warm and avoid tight clothing as it leaves no room to trap in warm air.
- Thermal Underwear may not look glamorous but it's a must!
- Avoid overdressing as it leads to perspiration. Two or three layers underneath your waterproof outer layer will be fine.





across the antarctic circle fly/drive: itinerary

day 1 - ushuaia

Expeditioners will gather in Ushuaia, and have time to explore the bustling community that lays claim to being the world's most southerly town. It sits beneath the spectacular mountains of Tierra del Fuego on the edge of the Beagle Channel. There are plenty of things to keep you occupied while waiting to board Polar Pioneer at 1600 (4pm). You could take a trip to the Lapataia National Park by train or bus, or visit the small museum, which has informative displays about the original inhabitants and the current population of Tierra del Fuego.

Ushuaia is a duty free port with a reputation for its Argentine chocolates, cheap alcohol and leather goods, and is a great place to buy souvenirs and presents. There are a host of excellent restaurants available whether for a quick coffee, or for an excellent meal of king crab or an Argentine barbecue.

Our competent Russian crew will welcome us aboard Polar Pioneer in the afternoon. Sailing down the Beagle Channel, we will settle into shipboard life and enjoy our first meal on board.

days 2 & 3 - the drake passage

Cape Horn, the most southerly point of the American continent, has stimulated the imagination of mankind since Sir Francis Drake inadvertently rounded it back in 1580. Some of us will approach this historic crossing with more than a little trepidation. But despite its reputation, there are many times when the Drake Passage resembles a lake, with lazy Southern Ocean swells rolling under the keel. On the other hand, we sometimes encounter rough crossings with large waves. The size of the waves and the force of the gale will take on gigantic proportions when related around the fire back home.

Polar Pioneer is not a luxury ship, she is homely and strong, built to be a research vessel and refitted to comfortable passenger standard in 2001. The mood on board is definitely casual. At sea we are totally self-sufficient. The days flow by as we travel snugly in our cocoon. A favourite pastime on board is to stand at the stern watching the many seabirds, including majestic albatrosses and giant petrels following in our wake. They rise and fall skillfully, using air currents created by the ship to gain momentum.

During our Drake crossing, we will commence our lecture program about the wildlife, geology, history and geography of the Antarctic Peninsula. We will be given guidelines for approaching wildlife and talk about the implications of the Antarctic Treaty. Antarctica is a photographers' paradise, for the professional and amateur alike. There will be discussions about how to protect your equipment from salt water, and tips about taking good pictures.

Nearing the tip of the Peninsula towards the end of day three, excitement reaches fever pitch with everyone on the bridge watching for our first iceberg. The ocean takes on a whole new perspective once we are below the Antarctic Convergence and are surrounded by the surreal presence of floating ice sculptures. The memory of your first big iceberg sighting is likely to remain with you forever.

days 4 - 9 - antarctic peninsular

Depending on the weather, we will first approach Antarctica near the South Shetland Islands, probably entering Bransfield Strait near the western extremity of Livingston Island. We may pass by historic Smith Island, which is the outer limit of the South Shetlands.

A host of choices is now open to us and depending on the ice and weather conditions the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula is ours to explore. Our experienced leaders, who have made countless journeys to this area, will use this expertise to design our voyage from day to day. This allows us to make best use of the prevailing weather and ice conditions and wildlife opportunities. Because we are so far south, we will experience approximately 18-20 hours' daylight and the days will be as busy as you wish. There is plenty of time for sleep when you get home!

We are always keen to explore new territory, so if the opportunity arises, we will! That's why we call our cruises, "Expeditions of Exploration and Adventure" - who knows where we will go?

Once we arrive in the calmer waters Bransfield, Gerlache and Penola Straits and Crystal Sound, we hope to make landings two to three times a day. To get ashore we will use Zodiacs (inflatable rubber boats). You will have been briefed on the workings of these sturdy craft and their use, during our Drake Passage crossing. Sometimes we will cruise along spectacular ice cliffs, or make contact with whales. In these situations we will appreciate the distinct advantage of being on a small vessel, which gives everyone the opportunity to experience these very special close encounters with wildlife. European, Australian or New Zealander chefs serve hearty meals in our cosy dining rooms. Accompanied by good conversation, they will become a focal point of our shipboard life.

Crossing the invisible line of the Antarctic Circle provides a special highlight. In Crystal Sound the mountains soar from the sea, while small islands provide havens for penguins and seals. At this time of the summer the waters are rich with krill and so we are hopeful of seeing whales, particularly humpbacks and minkes. If ice conditions allow, we will try to travel south through the narrow twisting channel called The Gullet and into the magnificent Marguerite Bay.

A sample of the many exciting places that we would like to visit follows:

Robert Point

A fine example of the South Shetland Islands - a tiny toe of land that is literally alive with wildlife. Here we will find two species of penguins breeding, chinstraps and gentoos. It is not uncommon to find wallows of elephant seals that are 40 beasts strong. Giant petrels nest on the ridgeline. The vegetation consists of mosses, lichens and the only grass species that grows in Antarctica. All this is set against a stunning backdrop of the mountains and glaciers of the surrounding islands.

Half Moon Island

A wildlife rich island tucked into a neat bay at the eastern end of Livingston Island. On a clear day the glaciers and

mountains of Livingston Island dominate the scene. There is a large chinstrap penguin rookery tucked in between basaltic turrets coloured by yellow and orange lichens. Gulls nest on these turrets and there are often fur seals and elephant seals hauled out on the pebble beaches. At one extremity of the island there is a large colony of nesting blue-eyed shags. At the other end lies a small Argentine station that is sometimes occupied by scientists conducting research on the penguin colony and surrounding waterways.

Deception Island

Visiting Deception Island is like making a journey to the moon. We sail through the narrow opening of Neptune's Bellows to enter the flooded volcanic crater. Inside is an unworlthy scene, virtually devoid of life. Glaciers flow down from the edge of the crater, littered by black volcanic ash.

We can explore the lifeless remains of a derelict whaling station and a vacant British base, or climb to the rim of the crater. Steam rises from the shore indicating that the water is actually warm enough for a swim, for those who dare. Outside the crater, if conditions allow, we might land at Bailey Head to explore the enormous chinstrap penguin rookery that featured in David Attenborough's *Life in the Freezer* series.

Paradise Harbour

A protected bay surrounded by magnificent peaks and spectacular glaciers, the rocky cliffs of this unforgettable piece of heaven provide perfect nesting sites for blue-eyed shags, terns and gulls. The serenity of Paradise Harbour envelops us once the sound of the dropping anchor fades from our ears. This is a haven for whales and sometimes we meet humpbacks, orcas and minkes, as well as crabeater seals, as we explore the bay in Zodiacs. Imagine being so close to a whale that when he surfaces to blow, the fishy spray of his exhalation momentarily blurs your vision. Words cannot describe this experience.

Lemaire Channel

If the ice conditions allow, standing on the bow of Polar Pioneer and quietly moving through the narrow Lemaire Channel may be one of the highlights of our voyage. Cliffs tower 700 metres directly above the ship. The water can be so still that perfect reflections are mirrored on the surface. Often gigantic icebergs clog the channel, creating navigational challenges for our captain and crew, and they may even obstruct our passage.

Other places we may visit around the Antarctic Peninsula are:

- Petermann Island
- Penola Strait
- Neko Harbour, Andvoord Bay
- Scientific Base of Vernadsky - Ukrainian
- Port Lockroy, an historic British base that is now a museum and post office
- Aitcho Island
- Argentine Islands
- Fish Islands
- Detaille Island
- Crystal Sound
- Marguerite Bay





across the antarctic circle fly/drive: itinerary

Crossing the Antarctic Circle

Our exciting crossing of the Antarctic Circle at latitude 66° 33' South is a highlight of this voyage. In order to accomplish the extra distance of this significantly longer voyage without compromising the quality of our Antarctic experience, the ship will motor south every night and during meal times. By the time we've crossed the Circle in Crystal Sound, we notice subtle changes in the Antarctic land-and icescapes, and also in the distribution of wildlife. As we head north again, we understand more about the effect of southerly latitudes on Antarctic wildlife.

day 10 - return to ushuaia

From Anvers and Brabant Islands, we head north into Drake Passage and then it's time to head back to Tierra del Fuego, with lectures to complete our Antarctic education. Enjoy the final opportunity to see the seabirds of the Southern Ocean. As we approach the tip of South America, our captain may sail close to the legendary Cape Horn, (weather conditions permitting) before our farewell dinner.

the expedition

This Go Guide gives you a brief idea of what you may experience on your voyage. Our emphasis is on unique wildlife encounters, exploring pristine landscapes, visiting sites of historical interest and the occasional visit to scientific stations. However we stress that this is an expedition style cruise. Our actual program will vary to take best advantage of local conditions, spontaneous opportunities and wildlife. No two voyages are the same; there is always an element of the unexpected. This is true of course for the weather as well, which can vary from thick snow or sleety rain to brilliant sunshine. But, as you will see, whatever the weather, your voyage will be full of wonderful surprises.

antarctic kayaking option

Kayaking in the far-flung corners of the world is an experience guaranteed to refresh your soul. Led by experienced guides, paddling in small groups allows us the opportunity to paddle between ice floes, brash ice and icebergs of all shapes and sizes as well as easy and intimate access to beautiful coastlines in some of the world's most remote destinations. Viewing wildlife from a kayak has many advantages, with our quiet presence allowing us to get closer to animals while still keeping a comfortable distance from them. Paddling sturdy, maneuverable and reliable craft is an exciting, low impact way to explore Antarctica. Contact us for further details.

polar clothing

The choice of clothing for cold climates is a personal matter and largely depends on how susceptible you are to the cold. People often find that it is milder than expected in the Antarctic but it is better to have more warm clothing than needed rather than not enough. The temperatures are similar to most ski fields in winter and if you are a skier then ski clothing is perfectly adequate.

The temperature onboard the boat is between 15°C to 25°C and normal casual attire is fine for life onboard - jeans,

tracksuit, jumpers and boots or trainers etc. It is when we venture outside that there is a big drop in temperature and you'll need to wrap up warm! Underneath your waterproof outlayer you will need 2 or 3 layers - for example, thermal underwear, jumper and polar fleece jacket. Your wardrobe should consist of the following items:

- **Waterproof Jacket**
- **Waterproof trousers**
- **Polar Fleece Jacket or Ski Jacket**
- **Warm Trousers** - Ski, tracksuit or polar fleece trousers
- **Thermal Underwear** - Polypropylene fibres are best
- **Woollen Jumpers/Sweaters**
- **Gumboots (calf to knee-high rubber boots):** We have a good supply of different size gum boots onboard which you are more than welcome to use.
- **Socks** - Thick and thin
- **Mittens & Gloves** - polypropylene or woollen gloves covered with a waterproof mitten are fine.
- **Woollen hat/beanie** and perhaps a balaclava
- **Scarf** or polar fleece neck warmer
- **A backpack/daypack** - for carrying your camera and other gear
- **Waterproof bag** - keep your camera dry.

A comprehensive list of what to pack will be provided in the Expedition Essentials booklet, which you will receive once your booking is confirmed.

tipping

This is a personal gesture and the amount you wish to give the Russian crew is at your discretion. A single contribution can be made at the end of the voyage to be distributed evenly amongst the crew. We suggest USD \$7 per passenger per day. Additional information will be given onboard.

pre departure information

You will receive a pre departure kit containing voyage notes, an Expeditions Essentials booklet and personal details/ medical forms that need to be completed a few months prior to departure and approximately one month before your voyage departs you will receive your final itinerary and other travel documentation relevant to your voyage.

what's not included

- Air transport and airport transfers before and after the cruise
- Visa, passport and vaccination charges and airport departure taxes
- Excess baggage on any flights
- Emergency evacuation insurance
- Laundry, postage, personal clothing, medical expenses, personal travel insurance and items of a personal nature such as bar charges, wine and phone calls
- Optional end of voyage tips

Note: This expedition is run by our Australian Antarctic partners, Aurora Expeditions. Aurora have been taking people to Antarctica for over 18 years and are real specialists in this field.

*The go guide & information contained herein has been compiled with care and in good faith. It is as accurate an illustration as can be given with regard to the proposed itinerary. Circumstances beyond our control such as inclement weather or local conditions could force us to amend the proposed itinerary. This document does not form part of a contract between the client and on the go and their affiliates. Any costs shown may be subject to change but are an accurate reflection of costs at the time of writing this go guide. Please also be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and remain the responsibility of the traveller and not that of on the go.



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