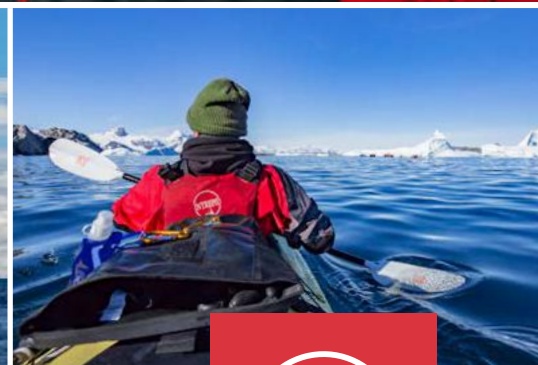


Guidebook

ANTARCTICA

WITH INTREPID TRAVEL



**EXPERT EXPEDITION
LEADERS**

**HIGHEST SAFETY
STANDARDS**

**SUSTAINABLE
TRAVEL**



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Introduction

Intrepid Travel's small group adventures are for travellers of every age, budget and appetite for adventure. With three distinct travel styles to choose from on most land tours – Basix, Original and Comfort – and more than 1,000 itineraries across 120-plus countries, Intrepid Travel's locally led trips have been taking travellers off the beaten track for over 30 years.

Our polar expeditions take place on ships with ice-strengthened hulls and modern conveniences. Our experienced leaders have made hundreds of polar voyages and can teach you all about the history, geography and wildlife of Antarctica – alongside the expert naturalists and ornithologists on board.

Join us, on the adventure of a lifetime.



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ANTARCTICA

At a glance



235 SPECIES

Antarctica's seas and land are home to more than 200 different species, from whales through to a variety of seals. Many types of penguins and seabirds also face the cold conditions on a daily basis.



7,500 MARINE SPECIES

Of the 250,000 marine species that live in our planet's waters, 7,500 are found in Antarctic waters alone – from fish, through to whales and krill.



2 PLANT SPECIES

Less than 1% of the Antarctic continent is not covered by snow or ice and because of this, there is limited opportunity for plant life. There are only two species of flowering plants found: Antarctic hair grass (*Deschampsia antarctica*) and Antarctic pearlwort (*Colobanthus quitensis*).



ICE SHEETS: 90% OF EARTH'S SUPPLY OF FRESHWATER

Ice sheets hold about 77% of the world's freshwater and of this, 90% is held in Antarctica. The Antarctic ice sheet covers a staggering 14 million square kilometres and contains almost 30 million cubic kilometres of ice.



ICE THICKNESS: 4KM

Most of Antarctica is covered in ice – about 98% of it, in fact. In some areas, the Antarctic ice sheet is over four kilometres thick.



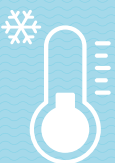
UP TO 4,000 POPULATION

Antarctica's population is mainly made up of scientific research staff. In summer, there could be up to about 4,000 residents, whereas in winter this drops down to about 1,000. There are no indigenous people in Antarctica.



FIRST DISCOVERED: 1820

On the 27th of January 1820, two Russian explorers named Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen and Mikhail Lazarev became the first people to see and officially discover the continent of Antarctica, after spotting an ice shelf at Princess Martha Coast.



AVERAGE ANNUAL TEMPERATURES

Range from -10 °C to -60 °C. Near the coast during summer, the temperature can exceed 10 °C+.

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Conserving ANTARCTICA

Antarctica is probably the only place on Earth where responsible travel isn't just advised – it's compulsory. Here's how it works: tourism is currently concentrated in 2% of the Antarctic (the Antarctic Peninsula) and runs for five months of the year, with about 50,000 people visiting each year.

Tourism in Antarctica is overseen by the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO), which was created in 1991. They work alongside the Antarctic treaty to register tour operators and maintain strict environmental standards (Intrepid Travel is registered through our Antarctic partner, Chimu). Members of IAATO are obligated to operate within the parameters of the Antarctic Treaty System along with IMO Conventions and similar international and national laws and agreements.

ANTARCTICA TREATY

The Antarctica Treaty of 1959 established Antarctica as a zone of peace and science, and activities in the region are still governed by this treaty today. However, the treaty was thought to be too simplistic by some, so since that time has evolved to the Antarctic Treaty System. The Antarctic Treaty is the basis for all the strict tourism and responsible travel

guidelines that are in place today. Those who support the treaty argue that there's no reason the treaty can't keep going the way it has been – adding and evolving laws as issues arise. Those who are critical of the treaty question the effectiveness of the treaty and how it's enforced.

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HOW TO BE A RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLER IN *Antarctica*

You might think the highest, driest, coldest and most remote continent in the world would be immune to overtourism. But Antarctic visitor numbers are on the rise and understanding why is a big part of being a responsible Antarctic traveller.

There are certain environmentalists that would say the best way to protect Antarctica is not to travel there at all. That, simply by visiting, you're spoiling the very 'unspoiledness' that makes Antarctica special. It's not a view we subscribe to at Intrepid Travel. But there are certain things you can do to limit your impact and protect the polar environment.

Read on for our guide to being a responsible Antarctic traveller.

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VISITING ANTARCTICA *Responsibly*



Let's address the elephant in the room: should you go at all? That's a decision everyone has to make on their own. Some conservationists argue that greenhouse gases created by flying to Ushuaia and sailing to the Peninsula are the very things threatening the Antarctic ice sheet. And that's true. Of course, that's true of any flight, and any journey, anywhere in the world. And there are steps you can take to limit that impact, like flying with an airline that offers carbon offset programs.

The counterargument, which many polar scientists make, is that Antarctica has a unique capacity to change and educate people about the environment. Almost a mystical force. Turning average travellers into passionate advocates against climate change.

"You want people to go away as ambassadors, and a lot of them do," says marine scientist Charlotte Caffrey. "A lot of these voyages are life changing. We've had people go home and change their car to electric, or even change their profession."

Ultimately, it's your call. We've always believed in the power of travel to educate and inspire people, so we'll keep leading Antarctic expeditions. But that doesn't mean we're not always looking for new ways to advance our carbon offsetting programs.

LIMITING THE *Impact*

Tourism in Antarctica is overseen by the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO).

You'll learn more about these standards on your trip, but it's good to know that tourism in Antarctica, while growing rapidly, is still controlled: there are only 60-odd vessels registered to bring tourists to Antarctica.



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TRAVEL Tips

Our Antarctic expedition leaders will run through all the rules for safe and responsible travel (we take these things very seriously), but here's some basic info to get you started:

01

WILDLIFE

As a general rule, try to stay at least five metres (15 feet) away from any birds, seals or other wildlife. Keep noise down when you're on the ice, and watch your positioning as a group – don't surround the animals or cut off their access to the sea. Touching or feeding Antarctic wildlife is strictly prohibited.

Of course, the animals themselves don't know these rules, and they can get inquisitive. That's fine – if a penguin waddles up, you don't have to run screaming the other way. Just back up a little and give it some space.



02

DECONTAMINATION

Antarctica is pristine – perhaps the only environment on Earth that exists in perfect isolation – and tour operators are obliged to keep it that way. Foreign contaminants like seeds, plants, soil or bacteria are a massive threat to the ecosystem. That's why you'll be given special boots for all shore excursions. These get decontaminated after every visit, and you won't be allowed on the ice without them.

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03

LEAVE NOTHING BEHIND

It probably goes without saying, but don't leave anything behind on the ice, and certainly no rubbish. Don't engrave anything on the rocks or take anything back with you, as tempting as an Antarctic souvenir might be – that includes rocks, eggs, egg shells, fossils, or even man-made items. Also, be careful of the plants. Some rocks on the Antarctic Peninsula are covered in delicate moss and lichen that can take years to grow back – so watch where you step.



05

GOT A COLD?

It sucks, we know, but the best thing you can do if you come down with a cold is not leave the boat. Viruses and pathogens can have a devastating impact on penguins and other wildlife. It's safer not to risk it. If you feel symptoms coming on, chat to the on-board medical officer. They're in the best position to advise whether you're healthy enough for shore excursions.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography isn't allowed around the animals (it might spook them), so keep that in mind. Otherwise you're free to take as many pictures as you like. Just remember the wildlife guidelines in point 01 – most Antarctic travellers will advise investing in a good long focus lens. You can zoom right in on the animals, while staying safely out of their way.



04



06

RESEARCH

The best thing you can do to help Antarctica? Do your research. Only travel with member of the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators. Read up on the IAATO's visitor guidelines. Learn how to wash your boots properly. Read articles on Antarctic tourism and be aware of the issues. Donate to the Scott Polar Research Institute. Most of all, become an Antarctic ambassador – use this trip to change your day-to-day routine and educate others about the polar environment. That's the real power of being an Antarctic traveller.

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What to pack FOR A TRIP TO ANTARCTICA

How do you pack for a trip to Antarctica, one of the coldest, windiest, driest, most remote places on earth? The first rule of packing for Antarctica is to pack early; Antarctica is one of the most unpredictable places in the world, with little to no ability to buy anything while you're there.



THE ABSOLUTE ESSENTIALS

Layers

While it's tempting to pack lots of bulky sweaters and overcoats, what you really need is a solid combo of short and long-sleeved tops (some thermal, some not). Your ship will be pretty toasty, so having layers to peel off when on board (and put back on when heading out on deck) is smart.

Socks

When in doubt, pack more socks. Packing both thick, thermal socks and thinner, everyday socks is wise. Your thicker socks are great for shore visits, so having a few to rotate is a good move. Your thinner socks are perfect for when you're ship-bound. You'll be warm and sheltered when eating in the dining room, listening to lectures and reading in your cabin, so thermal, woollen socks are overkill when you're not outside.

Waterproof pants

Your ship will provide boots and waterproof upper layers/ a polar jumpsuit-situation, but you will need to bring your own waterproof, insulated snow pants for shore excursions and kicking about on deck while looking for humpback whales.

A tight-fitting, warm hat

Loose hats are a disaster in Antarctica – the wind is so ferocious it can rip hats off unsuspecting heads in seconds. Show that wind who's boss and take one that fits really snugly on your head.

Sun protection

Yep, the sun shines in Antarctica and you'll be mighty sorry if you get burned by it. Make sure to pack your sunglasses (with UV protection), broad spectrum sunscreen and lip balm.

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Gloves

Packing two pairs of gloves is advisable, just in case one pair goes missing or gets wet. One waterproof pair for shore visits is a must. And a thinner, non-waterproof pair for when you're taking photos, or to wear as an inner layer can be handy too.

Moisturiser

Windy and dry conditions mean your skin will resemble a lizard's if you don't moisturise, so slather it on every day while you're away.

Medicine

If you suffer from asthma, diabetes or any other other conditions, ensure you've got all of your regular medications packed. While your ship may stock some basics, it's not a floating pharmacy so it's worthwhile double (even triple) checking your medication is in your luggage before leaving.

While we provide some seasickness medication on board, it's something many people fear when it comes to an Antarctic journey. Before your journey, speak to your doctor about seasickness or anything else that might be worrying you.

Needless to say, once you're down south you won't be able to stop at the shops to buy anything that you've forgotten. So here are some other bits and pieces you should consider bringing:

- A good book or eReader loaded with engrossing reads.
- An iPod or smartphone full of tunes and podcasts.
- Noise-cancelling headphones. In storms and high seas, ice-breaking ships can be noisy places.
- A notebook and pen to summarise your journey.
- Reusable water bottle; reduce single-use plastics by bringing a refillable canteen.
- A camera, spare batteries and SD cards.
- Wet bags and waterproof cases for cameras and other devices. Handy when hopping into (and out of) zodiac boats and kayaks for shore excursions.
- Binoculars. If you're interested in knowing if that's a big rock or an elephant seal in the distance, bring your own binoculars.
- Cash/credit. If you're lucky enough to make a landing at Port Lockroy, don't forget some US dollars, British Pounds or Euro or a Visa or Mastercard to send a postcard or buy a stuffed penguin. All proceeds go towards the upkeep of the station. You may also want to have some cash on hand to tip your leader at the end of the expedition too.
- Ear plugs. Light sleepers should bring ear plugs to counteract snoring cabin mates and noises ships make when breaking through high sea or ice.

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Dressing for shore landings

When you're leaving the ship to land on the Peninsula, you will board Zodiacs to take you to shore. This crossing can be cold and windy so we recommend wearing layers, gloves and a warm hat. While you shouldn't get wet, it's a good idea to keep your camera in a waterproof bag. Life jackets, warm, waterproof jackets and waterproof boots are provided.

Dressing for the ship

When you're out on deck, it can be windy and icy but the temperatures inside the ship are kept toasty warm. For this reason it's a good idea to wear multiple layers, so that you can easily adapt.

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YOUR GUIDE TO TACKLING THE *Drake Passage*

Ushuaia

Antarctic Peninsula

To reach the Antarctic Peninsula you need to sail across one mighty body of open sea – and it's not just any open sea – this is the Drake Passage: the only unhindered flow of ocean on earth.

The Circumpolar flow of the Southern Ocean travels in a clockwise direction around the bottom of the planet, picking up momentum, storms and hurricanes along the way. To make it even more exciting, the most southerly tip of South America and the most northerly tip of the Antarctic Peninsula reach towards each other, creating a landmass funnel the wild Circumpolar currents must then squeeze themselves through. This means it can be a wild ride, so here are our top tips for feeling your best as you cross the Drake Passage.

Take some seasickness medication

Even if you are at home on the sea, there is a chance you may feel queasy at some point crossing the Drake Passage, so it's a good idea to have some seasickness medication on hand, just in case.

Pack a 'Drake Survival' bag before you sail

Going below deck every time you need something isn't ideal. Once your ship leaves the Beagle Channel and you start to enter open water, your stomach may feel funny. So, pack a mini-survival bag that has everything you might want with you (your camera, wallet, spare layers etc). The less you need to go downstairs, the better you will feel.

Keep one eye on the horizon and one hand on a steady rail

This is designed to trick your senses into thinking that you're stable. By staring at the horizon, your eyes and ears recalibrate to make you think you're on steady ground, and the hand on a sturdy surface is meant to do the same. Otherwise, some people swear by lying down on the deck instead...

Limit your booze intake accordingly

It's all too easy to get into the swing of cruise life on your first night; you're leaving the Beagle Channel, everything's plain sailing, the atmosphere is buzzing with anticipation. It may be tempting to have a few champagnes to celebrate this amazing adventure – and that's fine – just be conscious of how it might affect you later on if you are prone to seasickness.

The good news

The good news is, the Drake Passage is finite, and for every moment of sickness you may experience, just remember that you're getting closer to the frozen continent at the end of the world. Plus, it's not all stormy seas. Crossing the Drake Passage gives you the chance to spot rare sea birds like the Wandering Albatross and sight your very first iceberg as you reach Antarctica. As soon as you reach the sub-Antarctic islands and the Antarctic Peninsula, the water becomes calm, and you will start to feel a billion dollars again.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL SNEDIC: *Polar photographer*



For all its natural beauty, Antarctica presents a unique challenge to photographers shooting in extreme temperatures and inclement weather. For Michael Snedic, a professional wildlife photographer and tutor who has been running photography expeditions across the globe for 16 years, the challenges of polar photography might seem imposing, but they can be overcome with preparation and practice.

'I love taking people into these parts of the world and teaching them how to get the best possible photos', says Michael. 'There are lots of photo techniques I teach my photography students during photo expeditions. It is, however, possible to capture some amazing photos from your trip, simply by following a few basic principles.'

HERE ARE SOME OF MICHAEL'S TOP PHOTO TIPS:

KEEP WARM AND WATERPROOF

It might be stating the obvious, but Antarctica is incredibly cold, so it's important to pack correctly to ensure you're kept warm when exploring either from the ship or on a Zodiac. After all, you can't operate a camera if your fingers are too cold to touch the dials and press the shutter button.

While you should pack thermals (both tops and bottoms) as well as a warm hat, Michael recommends packing fingerless glove mittens with a flap that can be pulled from your fingers when you need to adjust camera settings. It's also a good idea to pack extra batteries and a fully waterproof bag or camera backpack that you can fit your camera and lens (or lenses) into. This will protect it from getting wet while travelling on the Zodiac during more turbulent weather and keep it safe from any accidents while embarking or disembarking from the ship.



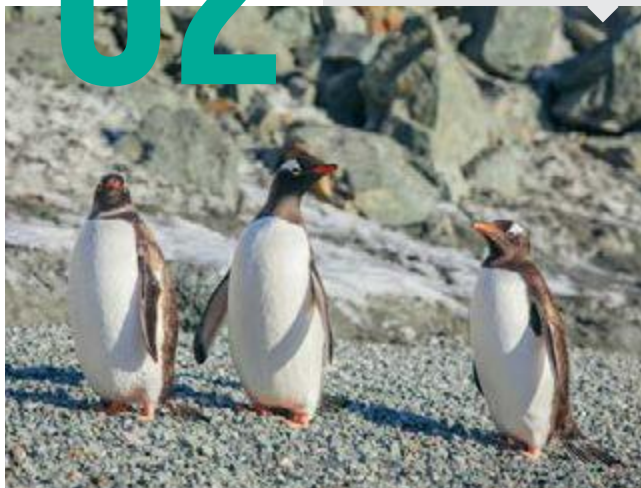
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02

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT



'There's often a bit of downtime on the ship, so it's always a good idea to go on the back deck and practice', says Michael. 'One of the most common mistakes photographers make is forgetting about their exposure. When travelling in the polar regions, you'll be surrounded by plenty of ice, snow and water – all reflective surfaces that project a lot of light into your camera's sensor. The result of over exposure means images can be completely overblown or washed-out.'

'I've seen and heard plenty of stories where people go on these incredible trips but get exposure wrong. So, teaching people the best ways to achieve correct exposure is very important.'

The best way to get around exposure is to practice in a variety of different settings and become familiar with the shutter speed, aperture and ISO on your camera. These settings can all help manage the exposure of your photographs. If you're not familiar or comfortable with this level of detail in your camera, some cameras also have a 'scene' mode with pre-filled settings (such as snow or landscape) that may help adjust your exposure.

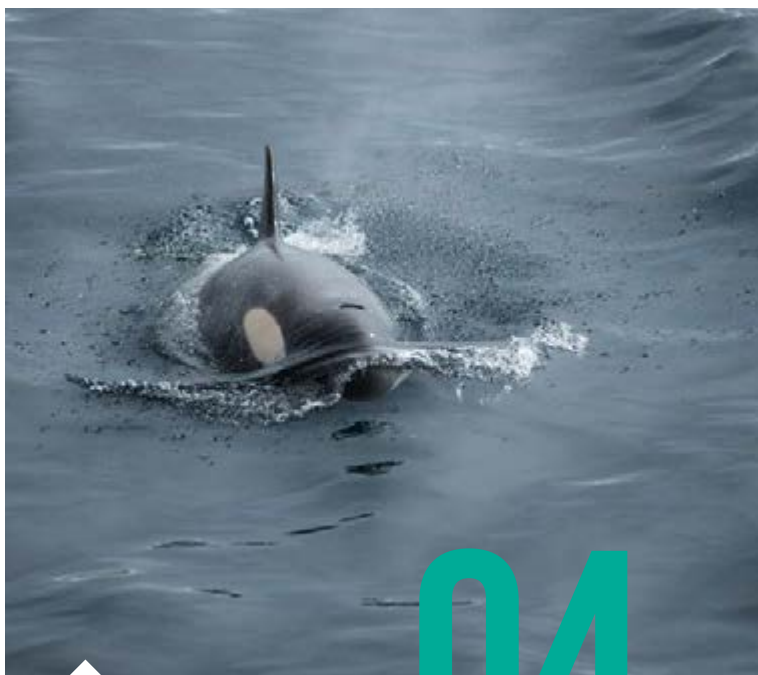


03

EMBRACE THE MOMENT

It can be easy getting lost in taking photos, constantly checking the playback to admire your own handiwork while ignoring the penguins patiently waiting just metres from you. While being ready to snap wildlife at a moment's notice is crucial, Michael always tells his students it's also important to remember where you are, and to take a moment to put the camera down and appreciate the incredible environment.

'I don't think a lot of people realise, and photos don't often do it justice until you are here. It's absolutely amazing.'



04

USE A QUICK SHUTTER SPEED

'Using a wide aperture when you're taking wildlife shots is a good idea', suggests Michael. 'It lets more light into your camera and gives you a faster shutter speed.' This will help blur out the background and can result in some dramatic portraits. Michael also suggests focusing on the animal's eyes when you can. Focusing on the eyes means you keep the animal's face in focus.

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Beyond sightseeing

EPIC ACTIVITIES ON AN EXPEDITION SHIP



Not that Antarctica's stunning vistas could ever get old, but if you are after a way to break up all the sightseeing, there are a number of ways to stay entertained on board your polar ship. Keep in mind, that depending on which itinerary and ship you pick, some of the onboard facilities and experiences can vary. However, here are some of our favourites that commonly appear on many of the ships used by Intrepid Travel.

Go back to school

There is plenty to learn about the nature and history of the region, which is why on Intrepid Travel's voyages you will be joined by a number of industry experts, including marine biologists, naturalists and ornithologists. You'll have plenty of chances to attend formal presentations on a number of topics over the course of the journey, or simply find the time to have a casual chat to one of the experts when you see them around the ship.

Take a dip, or break a sweat

...And we don't mean a polar plunge (although if conditions are right that could be on the cards too). Some ships come with a heated pool, a fully equipped gym and even a day spa – so whether you'd rather treat yourself to a massage, warm up in the gym or spend some time in the pool, you'll have plenty of ways to keep your body happy.

Unwind with a good book

What better way to pass the time on a cold, wintery day than to curl up with a good book and a hot drink? Many of the ships will be fully stocked with a library; it's a great place for some solitary reading time, or an opportunity to meet other like-minded bookworms aboard the ship. If you're really into making friends, some ships even have board games available. Who doesn't love a friendly game of Monopoly?

Embrace your inner yogi

Yes, that's right, you can do a yoga and stretching class at the end of the earth. It doesn't matter whether you're a Zen-master who heads to yoga every week at home, or whether you can barely touch your toes – there's something for everyone. Plus, holding a yoga pose while the boat is moving is a real core workout.

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OPTIONAL *Activities*

If you're interested in partaking in an optional activity like kayaking, snowshoeing, camping or photography lessons, speak to your Intrepid Travel Adventure Specialist at the time of booking to find out more.



POLAR KAYAKING

What to expect

For a kayaking excursion, you'll be split into small groups and get into Zodiacs (with the kayaks being brought behind you). Each kayaking expedition generally runs for between two and four hours, depending on the weather. The weather will also impact the number of kayaking opportunities you will have throughout the voyage. It's essential you have some previous experience kayaking, so you are comfortable doing a wet exit.

Booking in advance

Kayaking can be booked up until the beginning of your trip, but places are limited so we recommend booking sooner rather than later. Simply ask our team when you book your trip and they'll be able to assist you.

Group capacity and kayak information

Each group excursion involves up to 16 travellers. The kayaks are chosen for their stability and the brands we use vary depending on which ship you are travelling on.

Clothing and equipment

All equipment, guides and a dry suit are provided for every traveller who has booked kayaking. If you bring your own suit, it must be checked by the kayaking guide before the activity begins to ensure it is safe. You will be guided as to what to wear under your dry suit before the first excursion.

Safety precautions

You will be guided by a minimum of one cold-water kayak instructor per group and a safety Zodiac will always be close by. All kayakers will be provided with detailed information before the first excursion and will need to carefully follow their guide's instructions. For your own safety, you will need to verify that your travel and medical insurance covers kayaking and sign a waiver before embarking. The minimum age for participants is 16 years.

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POLAR SNOWSHOEING

What to expect

Snowshoes are a lightweight, traditional mode of transport that were originally used by indigenous North Americans in polar terrain. Because of how wide and light they are, they are an excellent method of crossing deep snow and accessing areas that are normally not accessible to people on foot. If you book snowshoeing for your Antarctic expedition, there may be multiple opportunities to enjoy this activity – it all depends on the weather. Each snowshoeing excursion lasts up to three hours and is designed for all abilities, led by an expert guide.

Secure your place

Snowshoeing is offered as an optional activity on many of our Antarctica voyages. Simply ask our team at the time of booking and they'll be able to assist you with further information.

What fitness level is required?

No previous snowshoeing experience is required to participate but it's generally recommended that you have an average level of fitness, as you'll be walking for three hours through the snow. If you enjoy hiking trails and walking you will usually be fit enough to enjoy this activity.

Is equipment provided?

Yes, snowshoes and ski poles are provided, and we recommend you bring and wear clothing that is suitable for the polar regions, such as thermal underwear, a breathable jacket, thick socks, sunglasses and a backpack.

Safety and qualifications

Our highly qualified polar guides have years of snowshoeing experience in polar regions and all hold relevant mountain instruction and safety certifications.

We recommend you ensure your insurance policy covers snowshoeing within a polar region when you book. An additional policy or premium may be required to ensure you are adequately covered.

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POLAR CAMPING

What to expect

When you're visiting Antarctica, there are certain experiences that can take your adventure to the next level; camping on the Peninsula is undoubtedly one of them. After you've finished dinner aboard the ship, travellers who have booked a camping experience will board Zodiacs and be guided by the expedition team to the Peninsula. They will stay with you overnight in case you need assistance with anything. After setting up camp, you'll spend the night onshore (about 10 hours in total) before waking up to return to the ship for breakfast.

Booking in advance

Camping is offered on a selection of Intrepid Travel's Antarctic voyages, so we recommend booking ahead to secure your place. Camping is only available at the start of the season during November and January departures when the snow is soft. Camping in Antarctica is limited to 40-60 people per voyage.

Are you eligible?

Children between 12 and 18 years of age can participate only when accompanied by a parent or guardian, so it's important to check the age requirement for your trip when you book.

What you'll need

Participants need to be prepared for Antarctic conditions and wear appropriate clothing when camping. This includes a hat, gloves, extra thick socks, a windproof and waterproof parka (which we provide) and pants. Intrepid will provide comfortable tents, insulating mats, warm sleeping bags and portable toilet facilities or you can choose to sleep in a bivvy bag.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Don't let the unforgettable experience come to an end when you leave Antarctica – take home the best memories you can by capturing and developing incredible images with an Antarctica photography workshop. This optional activity is perfect if you are passionate about photography, or just passionate about capturing the beautiful landscape and wildlife you will encounter on your Antarctic adventure.

The photography workshop must be pre-booked as limited spaces are available. Please contact your booking agent to check availability and pricing.

What to expect?

To give you the best possible opportunity to capture amazing images, those who participate in the workshops will have dedicated Zodiac and photography guided landings. Your Polar Photography Guide will accompany you and give you tips and tricks on taking that perfect picture.

As a small group, you will be able to capture uninterrupted images of the surroundings and wildlife with ease. Participants have access to forward-facing Zodiacs, which offer stability for capturing shots as well as unobstructed views. You'll also have the chance

to learn more about photography and taking that perfect image in our exclusive photography lectures led by your Polar Photography Guide. Some of the things you can learn about include composition, camera settings, exposure/lighting, wildlife photography, landscape photography and shooting in polar destinations.

On board photography editing workshops give you access to our computers with a range of software that will help enhance your images to make sure they look their absolute best, so your memories can live on in the same manner. Your Polar Photography Guide will teach you how to use the programs and guide you along the way to make your beautiful images even more stunning.

Is equipment provided?

Equipment computers and editing software will be supplied during your voyage. You are required to bring your own digital SLR camera or equivalent with connected cable suitable to transfer images onto a computer.

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LANDING

Sites



One thing is certain – no two Antarctic expeditions are ever the same. That’s partly due to weather, the time of year and the wildlife that is hanging around when you visit – but also because there are almost endless islands and landing points waiting to be discovered.

What is guaranteed is that your voyage will include day trips to shore. What isn’t guaranteed is where those landing points will be. Each trip, our polar experts will determine where the best spots to explore and see wildlife are, based on the weather and sea ice. This means our Antarctica expeditions are unique every time.

Here are some of our favourite Antarctica landing spots you might visit.

Antarctic Peninsula



BROWN BLUFF

A mass of volcanic rock, Brown Bluff towers 678 metres high above the homes of the thousands of Adélie and gentoo penguins who live in this part of the Antarctic Peninsula. You’ll be sure to get some brilliant photos of the penguins set against this dramatic backdrop.



CIERVA COVE

Cierva Cove is one of the most spectacular iceberg locations in all of Antarctica. Picture a giant glacial face, surrounded by serene floating sea ice, only interrupted by occasional calving. The only thing that can improve the view? The chance to spot seals sitting on the ice or humpback whales breaching in the chilly waters.

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DANCO ISLAND

This little island is just over a kilometre and a half long, which means you're almost guaranteed to spot some of the concentrated population of gentoo penguins who live there. With beautiful views of the Errera channel, plus a stop at a former British Antarctica Survey hut, Danco Island has plenty to keep you entertained.



HOPE BAY

Between 1901 and 1904, members of the Swedish Antarctic Expedition spent an entire winter in a hut on the shores of the bay. You can go and see the hut near an Argentine research station called Esperanza Station.



ENTERPRISE ISLAND

Enterprise Island is located in Wilhelmina Bay, a popular spot to see humpback whales. This island was once used by whalers, and a Zodiac cruise around the island will take you past an old whaling shipwreck.



MELCHIOR ISLANDS

A breeding season for male fur seals means tiring fights for supremacy among their species. Melchior Island in Dallmann Bay is used as a recuperation and resting area for the seals.

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MIKKELSEN HARBOUR:

Located on the south side of Trinity Island, Mikkelsen Harbour is a three-kilometre-wide bay surrounded by stunning ice cliffs. It is surrounded by several reefs and is home to a number of iconic Antarctic wildlife including gentoo penguins and skuas and Weddell, Antarctic fur, leopard and crabeater seals.



PAULET ISLAND

Located in the northwestern Weddell Sea, Paulet Island is home to a large Adélie penguin rookery. With a volcanic cone that rises 353 metres, the island reminds you that this was once a very active landscape. If you're interested in a side of history with your penguin-spotting, you might want to visit a historic hut built by members of the Swedish Antarctic Expedition of 1901 to 1904. A cross marks the gravesite of Ole Wenersgaard, who was a member of that crew.



PARADISE BAY

Paradise Bay (also known as Paradise Harbour) is located near the West Antarctic Peninsula. From the bay you can enjoy brilliant views of mountains, glaciers and ice cliffs, with regularly calving icebergs that shelter seals, penguins and seabirds. There are a couple of interesting manmade sites to see in Paradise Bay. One is the Argentine Almirante Brown Antarctic Base, which was opened in 1951 and was more recently partially rebuilt after a fire destroyed it in 1984. It's still used for research over summer each year. Second is Waterboat Point, where two scientists studying penguin behaviour lived in a water boat from 1921 to 1922. You can visit what's left of their camp have been designated an Antarctic historic site.



WILHELMINA ISLAND

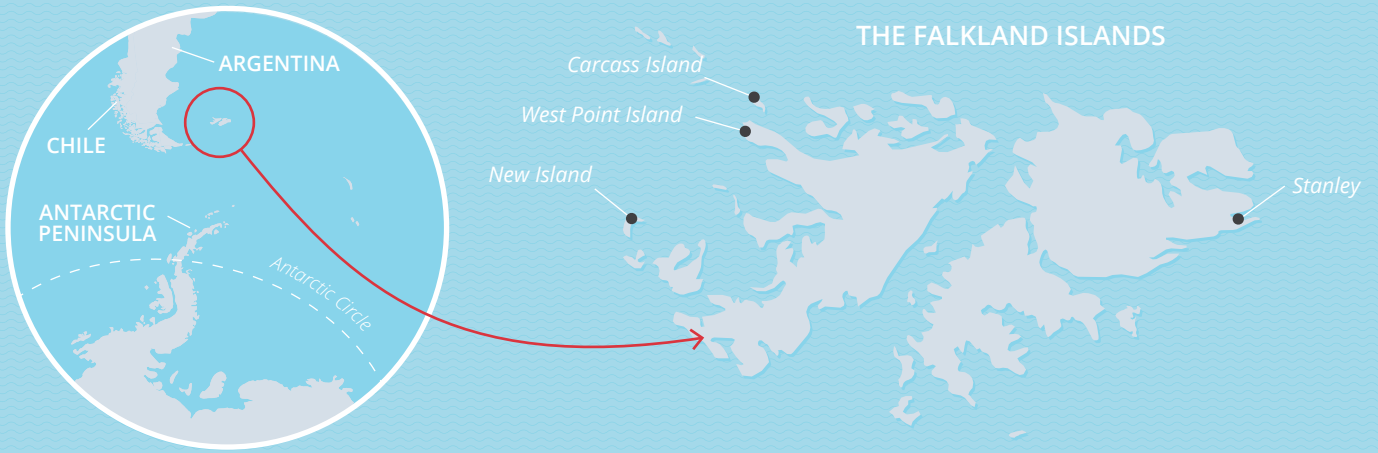
Nicknamed "Whalemina Bay," this protected bay is a popular swimming spot for humpback whales. Surrounded by sharp cliffs and sparkling glaciers, the bay was named after Wilhelmina, queen of the Netherlands from 1890 to 1948. If you're lucky, you may see the humpbacks bubble-net feeding: they exhale while swimming in circles, trapping their prey in a "net" of bubbles, and then swim straight up from below, mouths open. A truly spectacular sight!

LEMAIRE CHANNEL

While not technically a landing site, this picturesque channel is one of the most beautiful places to visit if you venture far enough south. It runs for 11 kilometres (7 miles) between Booth Island and the Antarctic Peninsula and was first discovered by a Belgian explorer in 1898. It's so popular with photographers that it has been nicknamed the Kodak Gap. The Lemaire Channel is unique because until you are nearly inside it, it is largely undetectable, but the sheer ice cliffs and snow-capped peaks of Cape Renard at the northern end are a sight to behold.

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The Falkland Islands



CARCASS ISLAND

Located northwest of West Falkland, Carcass Island is owned by and lived on by British couple Rob and Lorraine McGill. The island was originally named after a Royal Navy ship HMS Carcass, that stopped at the island in 1766. The landscape here is lush and picturesque, with plenty of bird-watching opportunities.

WHAT OUR TRAVELLER'S SAY:

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

BY ERICA HAZEN

Visiting the Falkland Islands was such a unique experience – I have never been somewhere that is filled with so much bird life. It took us about 30 or 40 minutes to hike up to the albatross and rockhopper penguin colonies at Devil's Nose, but it was worth the effort. The Falkland Islands are home to over 85 per cent of the global population of black browed albatross, so seeing them in their colony was a really special moment. The views down to the water are spectacular too!



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STANLEY

Stanley's deep-water harbour has been the economic mainstay of the community since the port's completion in 1845. It was used as a ship repair point for vessels rounding Cape Horn and for the boats that carried fortune seekers to the gold fields of California and Australia. Malvinas is one of the most populated towns in the Falklands, so you can expect to see a fair bit of activity in the area.



NEW ISLAND

New Island is the most southwesterly island in The Falkland Islands and is a designated Important Bird Area. At about 13 kilometres long (eight miles) and 800 metres wide (2625 feet), this nature reserve has steep cliffs that slope down to the sea on the east side.



WEST POINT ISLAND

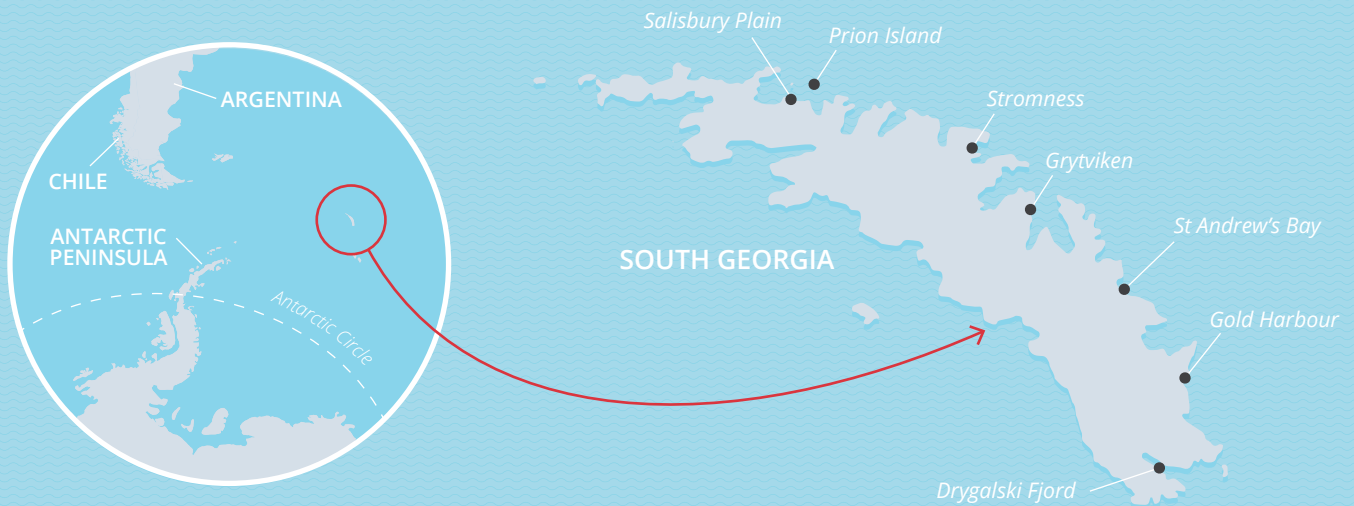
The Napier family has owned West Point Island since the 1860s and run it as a sheep farm. On the island's west coast, black-browed albatross and rockhopper penguins dwell on the cliffs, while Commerson's dolphins can often be seen in the surrounding waters.

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POTENTIAL LANDING SITES



South Georgia



DRYGALSKI FJORD

This is a photogenic and dramatic fjord, with sharp and jagged peaks rising out of the sea. Glaciation never reached the peaks of this fjord, giving it a unique landscape.



GOLD HARBOUR

The backdrop to this harbour is the hanging Bertrab Glacier. King and gentoo penguins call this home, as do rowdy elephant and fur seals.



GRYTVIKEN

Grytviken is one of the few areas of South Georgia that is inhabited by people. Two of the current residents are the curators of the South Georgia Museum, which is located in the former whaling station manager's villa. There is also a church which was built for the whaling community and is still used today.



PRION ISLAND

Robert Cushman Murphy first named this island after the dominant species of bird that inhabits the island – however, there are also lots of wandering albatross nesting in this area too.

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SALISBURY PLAIN

Salisbury Plain is in between the Murphy and Lucas Glaciers and is also one of the largest king penguin rookeries in the area, meaning you can take great wildlife shots with a spectacular, glacial backdrop.



ST ANDREW'S BAY

St Andrew's Bay is home to thousands of breeding and nesting king penguins, making it the largest king penguin rookery on South Georgia. There is also a herd of reindeer introduced by Norwegian whalers that are known to feed on the grass in the area.

STROMNESS

This abandoned whaling station was in full operation the day that Ernest Shackleton and his companions staggered in after a 36-hour trek across the island. There is a small cemetery here, with the graves of 14 whalers.

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TRAVELLER STORY

WHY SOUTH GEORGIA SHOULD BE PART OF YOUR ANTARCTICA VOYAGE

BY WENDY SMITH

I write this as we sail away from South Georgia on the way to Antarctica after the most amazing four days I've ever had travelling.

When heading to the vast, white expanse that is Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic islands may not immediately be on your radar – but there are so many incredible things about this small, unspoilt part of the world. A friend of mine once described South Georgia as “where God goes on his holidays” and I think that about sums it up. Here's why.

Amazing wildlife

We're approaching the coast of South Georgia in a Zodiac: as you get closer, we start to hear the residents (and smell them). The Zodiac pulls up on the beach and we jump out and there are animals everywhere – the expedition team are keeping a keen eye on the fur seals as they can be a bit nasty. The elephant seal weaners (pups only a few months old), are like big docile Labrador puppies and have made themselves at home, among and on top of, the life jackets and walking poles. This is our first taste of the incomparable wildlife you will find on the island.

A path has been marked out to lead us to the main part of the king penguin colony and on the way, king penguins pass us on a regular basis. They seem completely unconcerned about our presence and come within a metre of us. We climb a short rise through the tussock grass and the main colony is spread out before us. There are 150,000 breeding pairs on this beach, plus their chicks and the sight of so many animals in one place is quite overwhelming. Every now and then, in among the penguins, a young male elephant seal moves over the ground like some kind of comical, ungainly slug, raising its head and bellow with annoyance as the penguins invade his space. Overhead, skuas, Antarctic terns and giant petrels soar as they fly out to sea to feed.

This is the reality of South Georgia – biodiversity to rival Africa or the Amazon but numbers of animals unparalleled anywhere else on earth.

Unbeatable scenery

The Antarctic Peninsula has the most awe-inspiring, jaw-droppingly beautiful scenery I have ever seen. South Georgia is the perfect backdrop – even though the island is relatively small, being only 165 kilometres long, within its borders, lie incredible vistas. Mountains rise sharply from the beaches and glaciers forge deep fjords along the coast line and valleys. Slopes covered in tussock



Fascinating history

Like stories out of adventure books of a pre-internet era, South Georgia has been the setting of some remarkable feats of survival and of the brutality of man in his endeavours to exploit the natural environment for financial gain.

After Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* was crushed in the ice of the Weddell Sea, Shackleton and his men were trapped on Elephant Island with little hope of rescue. After some months, it became apparent that they would only survive by rescuing themselves, and so began a tale of unparalleled bravery and endurance.

Shackleton and three of his men took to a tiny lifeboat, the *James Caird*, and made the perilous crossing of the Southern Ocean to South Georgia. They landed on the west coast and then had to make an equally dangerous crossing of the uncharted, mountainous interior of the island. With no climbing experience and little equipment, they successfully crossed the mountain range in just 36 hours and walked into Stromness, exhausted and starving, but without losing a single man.

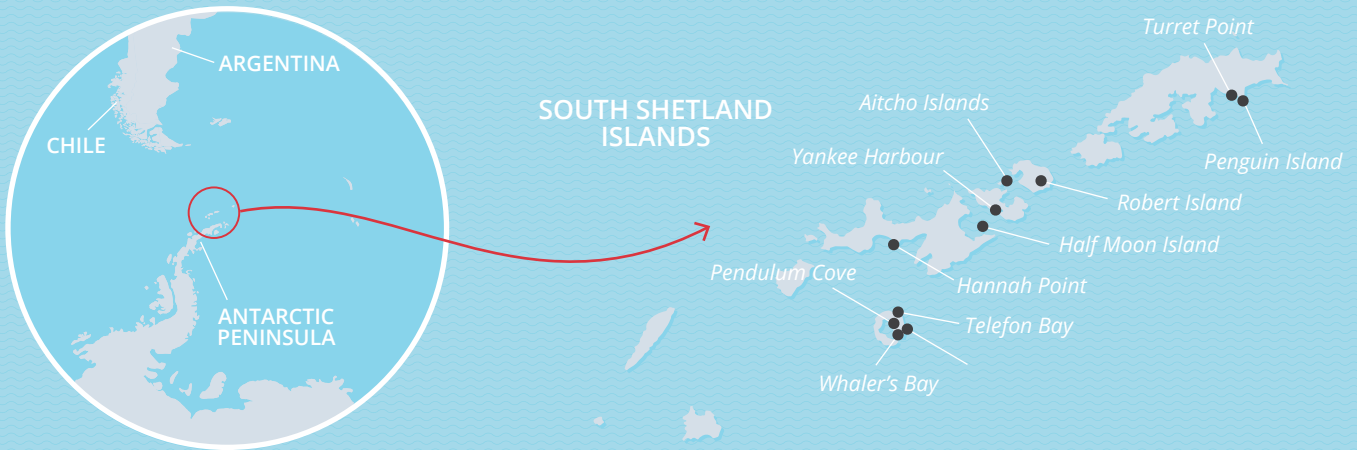
As we stare at these same mountains, and walk around the rusting remains of the whaling stations at Stromness, Leith Harbour and Grytviken, we can hear the ghosts of the men who spent many summers and winters in this harsh environment and imagine the gory carnage of the whale catch being processed on the beaches. South Georgia's history comes to life in these ruins and in the tales of explorers' past.

grass make for perfect nesting sites for albatross and cormorants and were once the habitat of reindeer, introduced by Norwegian sailors as a source of meat. The rocky coastline is the home of kelp forests where fur seals love to frolic and forage. The scenery is undoubtedly the perfect backdrop to the stunning wildlife we have encountered on the way to our final, icy destination.

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POTENTIAL LANDING SITES



South Shetland Islands



AITCHO ISLANDS

This archipelago contains some islands that are so small they are unnamed. It's located in the northern entrance of the English Strait and boasts a diverse range of wildlife including gentoo and chinstrap penguins, which have established rookeries on the islands. Southern elephant and fur seals are also known to rest on the shores here.



BAILY HEAD

Also known as Rancho Point, Bailey Head is a rocky headland on the southeastern shore of Deception Island. It's home to chinstrap penguins who nest around the natural amphitheatre on the island.



HANNAH POINT

Macaroni, chinstrap and gentoo penguin rookeries are located on this point, which is on the south coast of Livingston Island. Due to the popularity of the point with nesting penguins, it's too crowded to visit here at certain times of year.



PENDULUM COVE

This is a very unusual area of Antarctica due to the Geothermal waters found along the shoreline of this cove. Because of the scalding water, you may find yellow algae and boiled krill floating on the surface.

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HALF MOON ISLAND

This crescent-shaped island was known to sealers as early as 1821. Nowadays, Antarctic birds breed here, including chinstrap penguins, shags, Wilson's storm petrels, kelp gulls, snowy sheathbills, Antarctic terns and skua.



PENGUIN ISLAND

Antarctica has two flowering plants, both of which you can find on Penguin Island, making it a colourful backdrop for the chinstrap penguins, fur seals and southern elephant seals who use the island for breeding purposes.



ROBERT ISLAND

A nice spot for Zodiac cruising, this point was known to sealers as early as 1820. Chinstrap penguins, kelp gulls and pintado petrels breed here, and whales may be seen in the surrounding waters.



TURRET POINT

Situated on the south coast of King George Island, Turret Point is a great place to spot chinstrap and adélie penguin rookeries. The beaches here are also often crowded with southern elephant, fur and Weddell seals.

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TELEFON BAY

From the bay, you will have a good view of the most recent evidence of volcanic eruption on Deception Island.



WHALER'S BAY

To reach the secluded Whaler's Bay, you need to pass through a narrow passage called Neptune's Bellows. The bay was used by whalers from 1906 to 1931, but nowadays all you'll find are waddling penguins and lounging seals, as well as rusting remains of whaling operations on the beach. Keep an eye out for steam from geothermally heated springs along the shoreline.



YANKEE HARBOUR

Gentoo penguins have established a rookery at this harbour, situated on the southwest side of Greenwich Island. Here, you can see an abandoned Argentine refuge hut and a large glacier that stretches along the east and north sides of the bay. An abandoned sealing try pot is all that remains of the activity that brought men thousands of miles in tall ships to seek their fortune.

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Wildlife YOU MAY SEE



Undoubtedly, one of the main drawcards for travellers heading to Antarctica is the abundance of diverse wildlife teeming in the icy seas and gathering in momentous numbers around the coasts of the Peninsula and islands. The amount of life in such a cold, dry, harsh environment is truly breathtaking. Here are some of the most interesting flora and fauna you may encounter on the Cold Continent.

PLANTS

Less than one per cent of the Antarctic continent is not covered by snow or ice and because of this, there is limited opportunity for plant life. There are only two species of flowering plants found on the continent, Antarctic hair grass (*Deschampsia antarctica*) and Antarctic pearlwort (*Colobanthus quitensis*).

Antarctic hair grass is predominantly found in South Orkney Islands, the South Shetland Islands, and along the west of the Antarctic Peninsula. Due to recent rising temperatures in the Antarctic from global warming, there has been an increase in the number of seedlings and plants, as well as an extension of where they are growing further south.

Antarctic pearlwort is a mossy plant with bright yellow flowers. It is found on the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia, South Shetland and the Falklands. All Antarctic plants grow slowly and rarely exceed a height of three centimetres (1.25 inches) in total.

In addition to flowering plants, Antarctica is also home to 360 species of algae, 400 species of lichens and 75 species of mosses.

ANIMALS

Antarctica's seas and land are home to more than 235 different species, from whales through to a variety of seal species. Many types of penguins and seabirds also face the cold conditions of their southern home on a daily basis. Of the 250,000 marine species that live in our planet's waters, 7,500 are found in Antarctic waters alone – from fish, through to whales and krill.

In the following pages are some of our favourites that, if you're lucky, you'll spot on your Antarctic adventure.

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Penguins



Possibly the most iconic animal to be found in Antarctica, nothing quite matches the excitement of seeing these sociable little guys waddling across the Peninsula for the first time.

With as many as 17 species of penguins in the southern hemisphere, there are seven species of penguins you might see in Antarctica.



ADELIE

Aside from emperor penguins, Adelie penguins are the only true Antarctic penguin, meaning they live here all year round. Their wings are designed more like fins – small and stiff – to propel them through the water and help them dive to depths of about 100 metres (330 feet) for fishing. Both the male and female penguins share the responsibility of caring for the nests and eggs while they incubate.



CHINSTRAP

Chinstrap penguins get their name from the iconic black “helmet” of feathers that runs around their head, underneath their white chin and around the back of their golden head. Chinstrap penguins’ mating habits are quite dramatic; the males fight for the best nest position and then reserves it for five days – if the female doesn’t arrive in time, he may look for another mate, which can cause all sorts of problems if his original lady shows up later.

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GENTOO

Gentoo penguins are known for being fast swimmers, reaching speeds of up to 35 kilometres per hour (22 miles), which sets them in good stead for hunting krill, smaller fish and squid. They're the third largest species of penguin in the world, so understandably they spend a large portion of their days hunting and eating. Gentoo penguins can be seen at some of the Falkland Islands.



KING

The second-largest penguin in the world is the king penguin. They have fiery golden plumage round their necks and head but are closer to dark grey in colour rather than black like many other species. Male king penguins incubate their eggs on their feet, while covering them with a special pouch to keep them warm. This process takes two months and they must stay on land the whole time, while their female partner fishes at sea and then returns to feed them both. They can only be seen in South Georgia and a few of the Falkland Islands.



MACARONI

Macaroni penguins are some of the most unusual looking penguins in Antarctica, but also one of the most common. They are more rotund than most other species in build, and are famous for their spiky, long bright orange eyebrows, that look like a headband across the front of their face.



ROCKHOPPER

Rockhopper penguins got their name from the way they jump around the rocky areas of the northern Antarctic islands where they are most commonly found. They also have the same shaped eyebrows as a macaroni penguin, but theirs are bright yellow and extend back into a black crest that covers the top of their heads. Rockhopper penguins are found in some of the Falkland Islands.



EMPEROR

The largest of all the world's penguins, Emperor penguins can grow up to 1.2 metres tall (four feet) and weigh up to 45 kilograms (100 pounds). Like the king penguin, male emperor penguins incubate their eggs on their feet, while covering them with a special pouch to keep them warm, while their female partner fishes for two months before returning home to feed them both. They are only found deep in the coldest, rarely visited parts of Antarctica and huddle together in large groups, rotating who stands on the outside of the huddle so they all get a turn staying warm.

Seabirds



ALBATROSSES

One of the world's largest seabirds, the albatross spends most of its time up in the air and can be easily spotted thanks to its long wings. They love to glide behind big ships, so when you're standing out on deck, look up at the skies and you may spot these graceful birds. The largest species of albatross are the wandering albatrosses, who have the largest wingspan of any bird at 3.45 metres (11.5 feet).



CORMORANTS (SHAGS)

Cormorants have long necks, long wings and a wedgetail. They vary in colour from all black, to a mix of black and white and fly in flocks. There are a number of varieties in the world, but the Antarctic cormorant is distinct and also referred to as the blue-eyed shag.



PETRELS

Most species of petrels are smaller to medium sized seabirds (excluding the giant petrel), which have long wings and hooked beaks. Petrels spend all their time out at sea, so are very resilient to the harshest of Antarctica's weather. The only time they will come inland is to breed. While most petrels eat fish, plankton and small crustaceans, giant petrel prey on the eggs and chicks of other birds – or even weak-looking adult birds. Storm petrels are the smallest of the petrel birds and get their name from the biblical story of Peter trying to walk on water. They tend to face into the wind and have the appearance of walking on water, as they skitter across the surface looking for food. They can only be seen south of the Antarctic Circle. In contrast to the others, diving petrels are not great flyers, but are shorter and stouter in shape and spend a lot of time underwater fishing.



WATERFOWL

Commonly known as ducks, there are only two species of waterfowl in Antarctica; the South Georgia pintail, which lives in South Georgia but has also had occasional sightings in the South Shetland Islands and the speckled teal, which is common in the Falkland Islands. Both look like ducks, although the speckled teal has less spots on its stomach.

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SHEATHBILLS

Are rounded and white in colour and can be found walking on the land of the Peninsula or Antarctic islands, including South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. There are two main types of sheathbill; the black-faced sheathbill and the pale-faced sheathbill, who's main differences lie in the colour of their beaks. They eat anything, from penguin chicks to dead seals.



GULLS

Are a category of scavenging coastal birds with broad wings, however the only gull that lives in Antarctica is the kelp gull. It's a large white bird with black wings and a yellow bill and legs, which may be seen nesting on rocks or ledges.



TERNS

Are very similar to gulls and considered by some to be one bird family. The main difference is their flight style, with terns flying more directly and straighter than gulls who soar. The Antarctic tern is also slightly unusual in that it nests alone rather than in a colony.



SKUAS

Are quite similar to gulls and terns, but spend most of their time out at sea, with two species living in Antarctica – the larger brown skua and the smaller south polar skua.



PIPIT

The only songbird in Antarctica is the South Georgia pipit. It's small and red-brown in colour and are difficult to see as the walk through the grasses on South Georgia – so you're better off listening out for them than trying to spot them with your eyes.

Antarctic seals



FUR SEALS

Males can grow up to 180 kilograms (400 pounds), which is much larger than their female counterparts. They are silvery grey on their backs, with brown stomachs and a hairy mane on their neck and shoulders, which is how they got their name. They are commonly found on South Georgia, South Orkney, South Sandwich and South Shetland Islands.



SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEALS

The largest species of seal in the world, the males can weigh up to 3600 kilograms (4 tons). The males are dark grey in colour, whereas females are more brown in colour and have smaller noses. One male will normally have a collection of about 50 females to guard.



WEDDELL SEALS

Males and females are about the same size and are dark grey on their backs and light grey underneath. They are characterised by a small face with huge eyes and light streaky patterns across their whole bodies. Weddell seals breed further south than any other mammal in Antarctica.



CRABEATER SEALS

The most commonly found seal in the world, with a population of up to 70 million. The male and females are both roughly the same size and have a pale, cream coloured fur and pointy face.



LEOPARD SEALS

The only seals that kill other mammals for food, including penguins, other young seal species, fish and krill. The females normally grow slightly larger than the males and are dark grey with leopard shaped spots. Their bodies are long and their teeth are sharp.

Antarctic whales



SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE

One of the slowest moving whales and weighing up to 105 tons, the southern right whale is the only large whale without a dorsal fin. It's black and mottled brown in colour, with some white around its eyes and two separate blowholes.



BLUE WHALE

The largest animal to have ever lived on planet earth, the blue whale can weigh up to 144 tons, with the heaviest one ever recorded clocking in at 196 tons. Blue-grey in colour, the blue whale also has small light spots all over it, and a large dorsal fin. In Antarctic waters, they survive on krill for the summer months, before migrating north for the winter.



FIN WHALE

Has one of the largest, v-shaped fins and ridges all the way from the dorsal fin down to the tail. It's black on top and white on its underside, with unusual asymmetric colouring on its head.

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MINKE WHALE

One of the smallest whales, a minke whale weighs in at around 10 tons maximum. It has a distinct narrow and pointy snout and is dark grey-blue on top and then a light grey on its underside. It often breaches out of the water and also likes to dive under ships – although it's a fast swimmer, so you need to be on the ball to spot it.



HUMPBACK WHALE

Much wider in shape than many other whales, a humpback whale can weigh up to 53 tons. It's generally touted as the easiest whale to identify due to its dark colouring which contrasts with its white under-neck area. Its back has a large hump, with a small dorsal fin and if you're lucky, you'll see one breach completely out of the water, before landing on its back with a huge splash and noise.



SPERM WHALE

Male sperm whales can grow up to 40 tons, while smaller females tend to max out at 22 tons. Interestingly, a third of a sperm whale's weight is attributed to its large, square-shaped head rather than its body. It's normally dark grey or brown in colour, but occasionally a pure white sperm whale will be spotted, which was the inspiration for fictional Moby Dick.



ORCA

Also commonly known as the killer whale, an orca is actually one of the types of dolphins found in Antarctica. With the iconic glossy black back and striking white belly, there is little chance of missing this mammal if you come across it. Males grow up to 9.5 metres (31 feet) in length, while females clock in at 7 metres (23 feet).

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TRAVELLER STORY

KAYAKING WITH A MINKE WHALE

By Bernard Neal

When a minke whale surfaces within 15 metres of your kayak, you need to be ready. Not only with camera in hand (although that certainly would be handy), not only with paddle at the ready to back out of the minke's way (although that would be prudent) – what you really need to be ready for is the breath-stealing, gob-smacking awe of coming face to face with such power and grace.

I was lucky enough to have my camera already in hand as the minke surfaced, and I have watched those 45 seconds over and over again. Every time I replay the footage, my breath just catches in disbelief at the freakish good luck of such a close encounter.

We spotted our minke on the fourth day of kayaking, during our Antarctic expedition. Even before spotting the minke, kayaking in Antarctica had provided me with enough staggering vision to surpass anything I'd seen on any previous trek, hike, tour or holiday. I am 62 years old, and have been a regular traveller since I discovered the joy of leaving home shores at the age of 19. But I have never seen anything like the starkly beautiful Antarctic Peninsula, and its surrounding islands.

Kayaking, we could get up close and personal with a variety of seals, penguins and sea-birds. Many of the seals were playful and inquisitive and seemed to take quite a delight in sliding, rolling and diving around us.

There was an air of tranquillity, of unearthly silence, on those occasions when we stopped our paddling miles away from the mother ship and the motorised Zodiacs and simply listened to the silence. Only, of course, it wasn't really silent at all. The lapping of the sea water against an iceberg, the clinking of chunks in an ice floe, the current twisted them into pseudo riverways flowing with the prevailing current, the squawk of gulls and terns, the gentle plop, plop, plop of a raft of penguins single-mindedly "porpoising" their way back to shore, completely unconcerned with us, and, on several occasions, the muted thunder of an avalanche or a glacier calving.

During the last of our eight Antarctic kayaking sessions, our group was "buzzed" by a persistent and undeterred leopard seal. We had seen many leopard seals over the previous sessions, mostly resting on icebergs, occasionally yawning and stretching. But this afternoon as we circumnavigated Half Moon Island, we became something more than a passing interest for this particular leopard seal. He came within a few feet of individual kayakers several times, each time eye-balling the kayaker with teeth bared. In one instance, he even tried to mount the front of one of the kayaks.

Our guides, Sharon and Keith, saw the potential danger early and had us form together as a kind of loose raft. There was insufficient room for the leopard seal to come between us, but enough for each kayaker to continue paddling firmly and purposefully to get us out of the danger zone. Sharon and Keith became whatever the kayaking version of a sheep-dog is, rounding us up and keeping us moving inexorably to our only "beaching" for the trip. (All the other kayaking sessions had ended with a transfer, one at a time, from the kayaks to a waiting Zodiac.)

It was an exciting way to conclude a magnificent eight sessions of kayaking, and it definitely provided a talking point around the dinner tables that evening. But still, that minke whale...

Sea kayaking is an optional activity on most of Intrepid Travel's Antarctic voyages. Places are limited and prior kayaking experience is preferable. Refer to page 17 or speak to your booking agent to secure your place before you set off.

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THE ANTARCTIC *Environment*

The coldest, driest and windiest continent on earth, there's a reason the wildlife that inhabit Antarctica are exceptional and resilient creatures. With unique geology, an unforgiving ocean and one of our planet's most fascinating eco-systems, Antarctica's environment is one worth understanding.



GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY

The geology of Antarctica is unlike any other continent on earth. Until the last few decades of technological advances, it's been very difficult for anyone to study what is below the layer of ice that covers Antarctica most of the year round.

The Antarctic Peninsula is about 200 million years old and is a mountainous area that stretches back to Lesser Antarctica, before disappearing under the icy expanses of Ellsworth Land and Marie Byrd Land. There are two main mountain chains – one that is located in Lesser Antarctica – and the other which runs along the north-western coast of the Peninsula to form Biscoe and Adelaide Islands, the Palmer Archipelago and the South Shetland Islands. The Scotia Arc connects the South Shetland Islands across to the South American continental shelf. This area has often been known for volcanic activity and movement due to the complexity of the tectonic plates in this area.

When people talk about the South Pole, there are actually a number of different areas they could be referring to. The Geographical South Pole is what most people think of – the southernmost point of the earth's rotational axis. The Magnetic South Pole moves each year based on variations in the Earth's magnetic fields and is the southernmost point where these lines meet. On the other hand, the Geomagnetic South Pole doesn't move, but is a theoretical point near the Russian Vostok station. Finally, the Pole of Relative Inaccessibility is used to measure the centre of Antarctica, based on the distance from the coasts.



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THE COLDEST, DRIEST, WINDIEST PLACE ON EARTH

Antarctica is famously known for being the coldest place on earth. The average temperature in winter is -40 to -70°C (-40 to 94°F) and over summer it ranges from -5 to -45°C (23 to -49°F). The water in the Southern Ocean and the amount of sea ice impacts the temperature of the whole continent.

While an area of sea, snow and ice might sound like it would be wet, Antarctica is actually the driest continent on earth, as well as being the coldest. The majority of the area is classified as a desert, because the annual accumulation of water each year is only about 15 centimetres (six inches), which is not much more than the Sahara Desert. In the summer months, weather can be quite clear and sunny and you would be very unlucky to experience a severe storm.

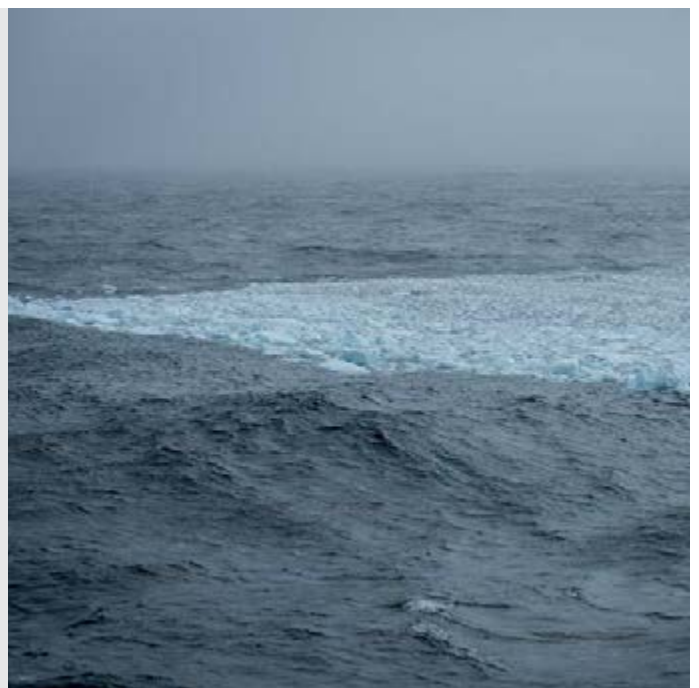
Finally, Antarctica also takes the title of the windiest continent on earth. Interestingly, in addition to global wind currents, Antarctica creates its own wind systems. Katabatic winds are hurricane-strength gusts of wind that burst through glacial valleys and can occur quite suddenly before dying down equally quickly. In 1912, an Australian explorer Douglas Mawson recorded average wind speeds over a two-year period of 72 kilometres per hour (45 miles per hour).

THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

Antarctic waters run at about three kilometres (1.85 miles) deep, with the deepest point clocking in at eight kilometres (five miles).

The Antarctic Convergence is a boundary area that surrounds the continent where the cold Antarctic surface waters meet the warmer subantarctic surface waters. Deep Antarctic waters average about -0.5°C (31°F), whereas the water temperature in the Convergence during summer ranges from 7 to 3°C (45 to 37°F). The water that is located south of the Convergence is technically known as The Southern Ocean.

The Southern Ocean is not exactly a seaside holiday destination – but it is a unique area of biologically dense water that surrounds Antarctica. The ocean water moves rapidly from west to east (around 24,000 kilometres of 14,200 miles in total distance) around the continent due to the westerly winds and the Antarctica Circumpolar Current. In total, it's estimated that 130 million cubic metres of water move with this current every second.



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GLACIERS

Antarctica has a number of different types of glaciers – from large, gushing ice streams to slow-moving glaciers that are attached to their glacial beds. Whether they are located in an ice field, a volcano, or calving into tidewater, glaciers are some of the most beautiful natural sites to witness in Antarctica. About four million years ago, the first Antarctic glaciers reached the coasts of the continent and began producing icebergs, which marked the beginning of the current Ice Age in this part of the world. Today, the Antarctic ice sheet contains about 90 per cent of the world's ice.



ICEBERGS

Icebergs are formed when large pieces of ice 'calve' off large ice fronts. By definition, an iceberg should be larger than 100 square metres (1100 square feet) and more than five metres tall (16 feet). Anything smaller than this is, adorably named, a 'bergie bit'. Most icebergs have between a quarter and a sixth of their volume above the water, with the rest sitting below the surface of the water.

Icebergs can last for up to ten years and drift quite far from the place where it initially calved. The largest ever recorded iceberg was discovered in 2000 and measured 286 kilometres long (178 miles) and 40 kilometres (25 miles) wide.

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GLOBAL WARMING

The Earth is like a giant greenhouse, but instead of glass panes trapping the heat, it traps gases such as methane and carbon dioxide. As the sun's rays shine on the Earth, this blanket of gases (Earth's atmosphere) traps in some of the heat and keeps the planet at a relatively constant temperature. Without it, the Earth would either get too hot or too cold.

When greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere by human activity – such as burning fossil fuels and clearing land – it's as if we're adding extra 'glass layers' to the greenhouse, ultimately raising the temperature inside. If we don't reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Earth will heat to a level that will seriously affect life on our planet.

At Intrepid, we're working to protect our planet and improve the impacts of the way we travel. We became the largest carbon neutral travel company in the world in 2009 and aim to be the first carbon positive travel company from 2020 onwards. We measure, reduce, and offset carbon emissions for our staff and our travellers by purchasing carbon credits with a range of renewable energy projects, such as wind power in India and rainforest restoration in Borneo.

Together with The Climate Foundation and the University of Tasmania, our not-for-profit arm, The Intrepid Foundation is also setting up Australia's very first seaweed platform off Tasmania's eastern coast. Just like natural kelp forests, this

floating platform will cool surface ocean waters and help sink carbon dioxide to the depths of the ocean – just one square kilometre of seaweed can pull in thousands of tons of carbon per year. While this specific regeneration project may be local to Tasmania, its effects will be seen globally.

Some conservationists argue that greenhouse gases created by flying to Ushuaia and sailing to the peninsula are the very things threatening the Antarctic ice sheet. And that's true. But there are steps you can take to limit that impact, like flying with an airline that offers carbon offset programs or travelling with a responsible tour operator, like Intrepid Travel. The counterargument, which many polar scientists make, is that Antarctica has a unique capacity to change and educate people about the environment – turning average travellers into passionate advocates against climate change.

While the issue of global warming might feel overwhelmingly big, we want you to know that solutions do exist. But it's up to us to stand together, and embrace those solutions to help save the planet.

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ANTARCTIC Explorers

The grave of Sir Ernest Shackleton, South Georgia

FIRST DISCOVERY OF ANTARCTICA

Long before it was actually discovered, philosophers claimed the existence of a boreal constellation in the north called Arktos (meaning the Great Bear). From this, they came up with the theory of Antarktos in the south to mirror it. This eventually evolved into the concept of Terra Australis (meaning unknown southern land) – an area that was the object of desire for many early explorers.

Many different Europeans explored the area between 1599 and the late 1700s, with explorers visiting places like the South Shetland Islands, Cape Horn and South Georgia.

James Cook circumnavigated Antarctica between 1772 to 1775, and while he didn't sight land, his ships penetrated the sea ice and the voyage went south of the Antarctic Circle. He was the first to claim with reasonable confidence, that there

was land over the South Pole. The tales of his discovery, as well as his accounts of all the whales and seals in the area began what was known as 'the age of sealers' which occurred between 1780 – 1892. Over this period, there was a high demand for oil from marine animals and many European and North American whalers hunted in Antarctica during this time.

It is alleged that in 1820, a US Sealer by the name of Nathaniel Palmer, was the first person to spot the Antarctic mainland. Records from this period are not very reliable, but it is thought that another US sealer, John Davis, made the first landing on the Antarctic continent in 1821 at Hughes Bay on the northern tip of the Peninsula. If Davis' crew didn't land in 1821, a US whaler, Mercator Cooper definitely landed on the Ross Sea coast in 1853.

Many other sealers and whalers were responsible for discovering other islands in the region over this period.

After sealers and whalers had stumbled upon various parts of Antarctica and its surrounds, proper adventurers started making voyages to the continent with the intent of the glory of discovery, rather than financial gain. Many of these early explorers had one goal; make it to the South Pole. Since that time, the lengths that humans have gone to to explore this untouched part of the world are truly extraordinary.

Roald Amundsen, Norway

The Race to the South Pole in 1911 was between Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott. Amundsen ended up being successful, beating Scott by a month and so became the first man to ski to the South Pole. Funnily enough, Amundsen first intended to ski to the North Pole, but amid preparations learned that an American team had already done it – so headed down South instead.

Robert Scott, UK

Robert Scott was the other contender in the Race to the South Pole in 1911. He made two attempts in total to reach the South Pole, before finally achieving his goal in January 1912 after a tumultuous journey with his team of ponies, who were not quite up to the task. Realising that he had been beaten by Amundsen upon his arrival, Scott is said to have died of 'a broken spirit' before he made it home.

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Mawson's Hut

Sir Ernest Shackleton, UK

Ernest Shackleton had connections with many other Antarctica adventurers of his era. He was aboard Scott's first voyage to the South Pole, before having to return home due to illness. He and Douglas Mawson made the first ever ascent to Antarctica's second tallest peak, Mt Erebus. But Shackleton really made history during his second voyage when his ship went down, and he managed to keep his entire crew alive against all odds.

Sir Edmund Hillary, New Zealand

Edmund Hillary might be famous for being the first man to reach the top of Mt Everest, alongside his Sherpa, but he also has a significant place in Antarctic history. After Amundsen and Scott, he was the third person to ever reach the South Pole and the first to do so using motorised vehicles. He also became the first man to ever stand on both the North and South Pole, after joining astronaut Neil Armstrong on a flight to the world's highest peak at the North Pole.

Sir Douglas Mawson, Australia

Because of the proximity to the continent, Australian explorers have always been prominent in Antarctica, but there is none more iconic than Douglas Mawson. Mawson and Shackleton's ascent of Mt Erebus is legendary, but his contribution to the study of the White Continent is perhaps his most impressive achievement. His studies of geology, cartography, meteorology, aurora, geomagnetism and biology in the region out of his bases at Macquarie Island, Commonwealth Bay and Western Bay still form some of the most important Antarctic studies in history.

Felicity Aston, UK

In 2011, Felicity Aston became the first woman in the world to have crossed Antarctica alone and the first person to do it without using kites or machines. Aston skied 1744 km (1084 miles) across the continent, starting at the Ross Ice Shelf and finishing at the Ronne Ice Shelf at a spot called Hercules Inlet. She pulled two sledges loaded with 85 kilograms of food

and equipment over a 59-day journey. Along the way, Felicity collected two resupplies that had been previously dropped off by air - one at the South Pole, and a second roughly 500 kilometres further north.

Jade Hameister, Australia

In January 2018, Jade Hameister who was 16 years old, became the youngest person in history to ski almost 600 kilometres (373 miles) from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole unsupported and unassisted. She was also the first Australian woman to achieve this feat and the very first woman in history to set a brand-new route to the South Pole, a path through the Transantarctic Mountain Range through the unexplored Kansas Glacier. Hameister's South Pole expedition took 37 days and she chose to undertake it without resupplies by air. This meant Hameister had to travel with a sled weighing around 100 kilograms (220 pounds) at the start - a big ask given she only weighed 60 kilograms (132 pounds).

Following her TEDx talk in 2016, Hameister received an onslaught of online messages from men telling her to "make me a sandwich" - a chauvinistic saying, suggesting a woman's place is in the kitchen. Hameister finished her South Pole journey by posing for a photograph with a sandwich and suggesting that the men that had attacked her online were welcome to eat it if they were capable of completing the same journey to reach it.

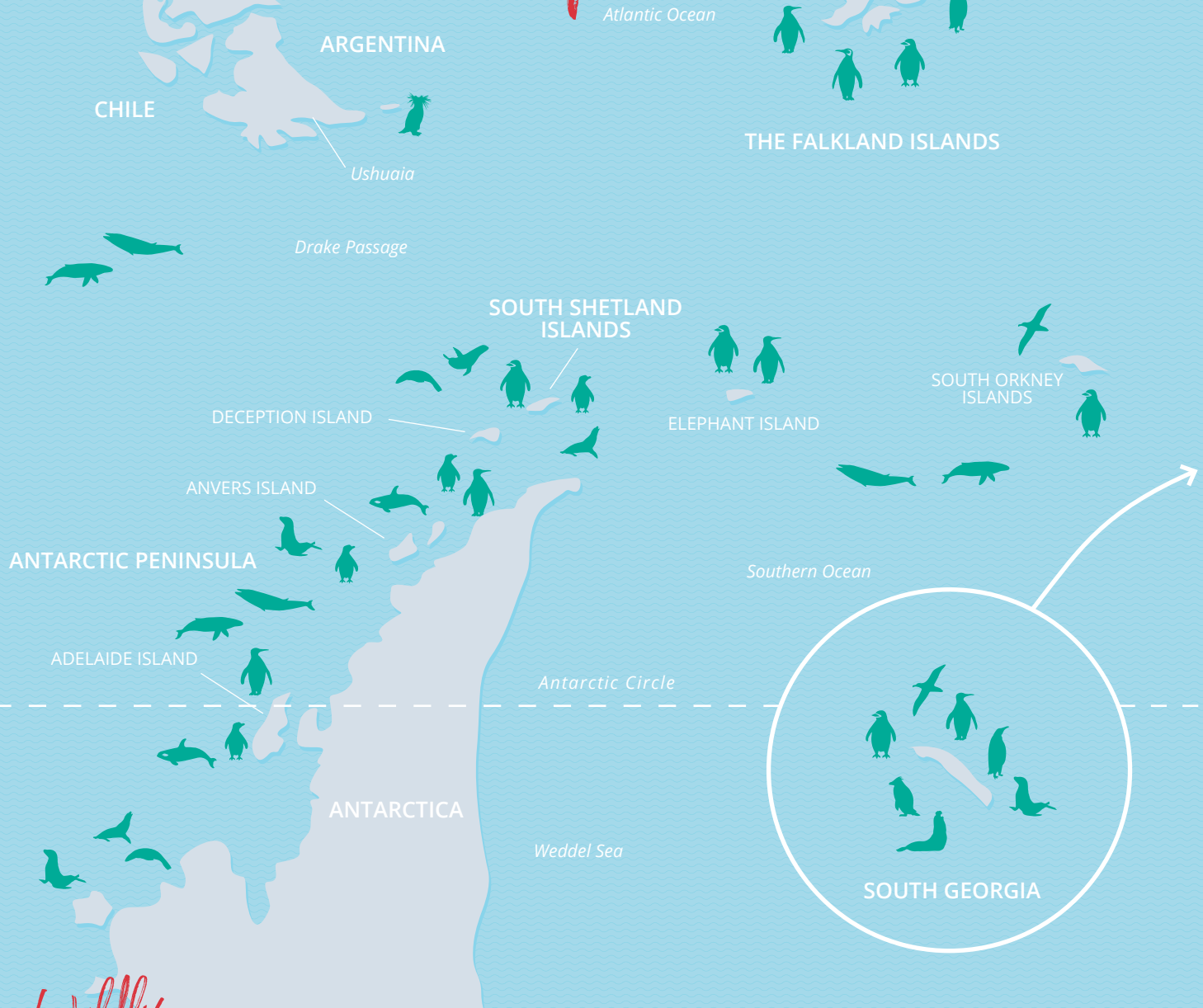
Colin O'Brady, USA

In 2018, Colin O'Brady became the first person in history to walk completely unsupported across Antarctica. Other explorers have previously attempted this before having to call for help, or in extreme cases have died in the attempt. Unlike previous walks across the continent, he received no support, no food drops and no outside help for the duration. He completed the final 123 kilometres (76 miles) with no stops for sleep or rest. The approximate distance that he covered in 54 days was 1,400 kilometres (870 miles), while dragging a sled weighing 170 kilograms (375 pounds).

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WILDLIFE *Map*



Wildlife

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
|  Adelie penguin |  Crabeater seal |  Humpback whale |  Rockhopper penguin |
|  Albatross |  Elephant seal |  King penguin |  Weddell seal |
|  Antarctic orca |  Fin whale |  Leopard seal | |
|  Chinstrap penguin |  Fur seal |  Macaroni penguin | |
|  Commerson's dolphin |  Gentoo penguin |  Magellanic penguin | |

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Wildlife CHECKLIST



Rather than printing this out, download this guidebook on to your phone, tablet or computer and tick off the animals as you see them by tapping or clicking the boxes below.

ANTARCTIC BIRDS

PENGUINS

- King penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*)
- Emperor penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*)
- Adélie penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*)
- Chinstrap penguin (*Pygoscelis antarctica*)
- Gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*)
- Macaroni penguin (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*)
- Rockhopper penguin (*Eudyptes chrysocome*)

ALBATROSS

- Wandering albatross (*Diomedea exulans*)
- Royal albatross (*Diomedea epomophora*)
- Black-browed albatross (*Diomedea melanophrys*)
- Grey-headed albatross (*Diomedea chrysostoma*)
- Light-mantled sooty albatross (*Phoebastria palpebrata*)

PETRELS

- Southern giant petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*)
- Northern giant petrel (*Macronectes halli*)
- Southern fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*)
- Cape petrel, or pintado or cape pigeon (*Daption capense*)
- Antarctic petrel (*Thalassoica antarctica*)
- Snow petrel (*Pagodroma nivea*)
- Kerguelen petrel (*Pterodroma brevirostris*)
- White-headed petrel (*Pterodroma lessonii*)
- Soft-plumaged petrel (*Pterodroma mollis*)
- Grey petrel (*Procellaria cinerea*)
- White-chinned petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*)
- Blue petrel (*Halobaena caerulea*)
- Broad-billed prion, Antarctic prion (*Pachyptila vittata*)
- Slender-billed prion (*Pachyptila belcheri*)
- Fairy prion (*Pachyptila turtur*)
- Sooty shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*)

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STORM-PETRELS

- Wilson's storm-petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*)
- Black-bellied storm-petrel (*Fregetta tropica*)
- Grey-backed storm-petrel (*Garrodia nereis*)

DIVING PETRELS

- Common diving-petrel (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*)

CORMORANTS

- Blue-eyed shag (*Phalacrocorax atriceps*)

DUCKS

- South Georgia pintail (*Anas georgica*)
- Speckled teal (*Anas flavirostris*)

SHEATHBILLS

- Pale-faced sheathbill (*Chionis albus*)
- Black-faced sheathbill (*Chionis minor*)
- Gulls and Terns Brown skua (*Catharacta antarctica*)
- South Polar skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*)
- Kelp gull (*Larus dominicanus*)
- Antarctic tern (*Sterna vittata*)
- Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

PERCHING BIRDS

- South Georgia pipit (*Anthus antarcticus*)
- Vagrants Cattle egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)
- Black-necked Swan (*Cygnus melanocoryphus*)

ANTARCTIC MARINE MAMMALS

SEALS

- Antarctic fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*)
- Kerguelan fur seal (*Arctocephalus tropicalis*)
- New Zealand fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*)
- South American sea lion (*Otaria laveszens*)
- New Zealand (hookers) sea lion (*Phocarctos hookeri*)
- South American fur seal (*Arctocephalus australis*)
- Southern elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*)
- Weddell seal (*Leptonychotes weddellii*)
- Crabeater seal (*Lobodon carcinophaga*)
- Leopard seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*)
- Ross seal (*Ommatophoca rossii*)

WHALES

BALEEN WHALES

- Southern right whale (*Eubalaena australis*)
- Blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*)
- Fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*)
- Sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*)
- Antarctic minke whale (*Balaenoptera bonarerenis*)
- Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)
- Toothed Whales Arnoux beaked whale (*Berardius arnuxii*)
- Southern bottlenose whale (*Hyperoodon planifrons*)
- Sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*)
- Orca (*Orcinus orca*)
- Hourglass dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus cruciger*)
- Peales dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus australis*)
- Southern right whale dolphin (*Lissodelphis peronii*)
- Commerson's dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus commersonii*)

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