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Antarctica tips for first timers

24th January 2017 by Fiona Harper




Antarctica is a dream destination for many travellers. Knowing when to go, how to get there, and the best trips are some of the biggest questions faced for first time travellers to Antarctica. [Skyscanner Australia](#) has done the research and has all the answers first timers to Antarctica need!

Best time to visit Antarctica


That's a no brainer – summer is definitely the best time! Unless you're a penguin – like one of the four penguin species whose bodies are ingeniously adapted to their Antarctic home. Adelie, Chinstrap, Emperor and Gentoo penguins are breeding from November to March with chicks hatching from around January onwards. King, Macaroni and Rockhopper penguins that inhabit sub-Antarctic islands have similar breeding seasons.

November is the start of the Antarctic season though most tour operators don't get underway until December when there's a good 20 hours or so of daylight. It's also when the Antarctic Ice Marathon is held if you're crazy enough to run a marathon at 80 deg South. February and March are generally good times to spot whales like the enormous blue whale (the largest recorded blue whale is over 30m long), southern right, humpback, orca and minke whales amongst others.



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Emperor penguins captured on the Ross Sea in Antarctica. Can't love this more! #BucketList .
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What to do in Antarctica

Wildlife and wild landscapes, including viewing the spectacular southern lights, Aurora Asutralis, are the main Antarctic attraction. Plenty of encounters with sea birds, penguins, whales, dolphins, seals and sea lions are likely. Almost twice the size of Australia, Antarctica has its share of mountain ranges, glaciers, icebergs and islands too.

How to get to Antarctica

It will come as no surprise to learn that there are only two choices to visit Antarctica – by sea or by air!

If you're time poor and prone to seasickness an [Antarctic Flight](#) is the way to go. Flights depart from [Sydney](#) or [Melbourne](#) for a 12 hour return flight over the white continent. Though you won't touch down, you will get a bird's eye view of Mt Erebus amongst other highlights during four hours flying over the ice onboard a Boeing 747.

Compare cheap flights to Sydney

[Antarctica flights from Australia](#)

[Antarctic Logistics and Expeditions](#) fly travellers from Punta Arenas, Chile to their blue-ice runway and base camp on Union Glacier. From base came you can fly to the South Pole and walk around the world in a few minutes or even camp at the South Pole overnight.

Compare cheap flights to Punta Arenas

But the most popular way to explore Antarctica is by sea, with most cruise vessels departing from South American ports in Punta Arenas, Chile or Ushuaia, Argentina. Cruises vary enormously from expedition or research focuses ships to luxury cruise ships with all the bells and whistles.



Chimu Adventures have the only Antarctica cruise departing from Hobart (most depart from Ushuaia, Argentina), making it one of the most convenient options for Australian travellers keen to visit the white continent. Chimu's 26 day expedition cruise retraces the footsteps of Australian polar explorer and scientific researcher [Sir Douglas Mawson](#) on an unforgettable adventure laced with lashings of history.

Compare cheap flights to Hobart

[Chimu Adventures Antarctica cruise](#)

Compare cheap flights to Ushuaia

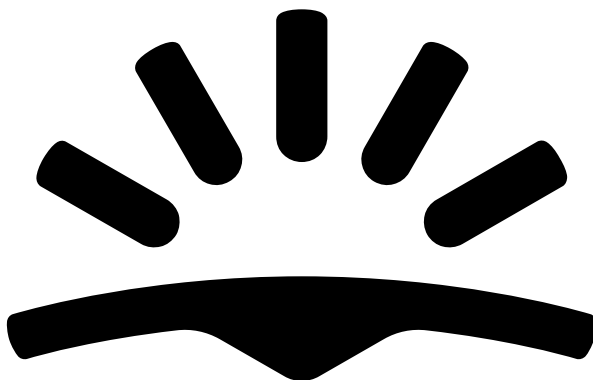
National Geographic and [Lindblad Expeditions](#) have a longstanding history of taking travellers to Antarctica, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands with their 24 day cruise on one of the grandest wild experiences on the planet.

[World Expeditions](#) Antarctic adventures range from budget to luxury. Their Basecamp Antarctic Peninsula trip includes kayaking, rock climbing snowshoeing and even scuba diving! Their Ross Sea Explorer is perfect for Scott and Shackleton wannabe's. Or, if you prefer your Antarctic ice to come with sophisticated fine dining and staterooms their Silver Explorer might be worth a look.



[Abercrombie & Kent](#) also cater well for cashed up Antarctic travellers with luxury expedition cruises aboard their 122 passenger, balcony-suite *Le Lyrial* small ship to the Antarctic Peninsula.

[Silversea's](#) small ice-class expedition ship Silver Cloud will make her inaugural voyage during the 2017 season, promising the elegant style of cruising that keep Silversea a constant red carpet winner on 'best luxury small ship' award lists.



Antarctic tips from the experts

Antarctica is like no other destination on earth so it's worth heeding advice from the experts who know the white continent intimately. Here's some suggestions from Antarctic travel experts for first time visitors to Antarctica.

Greg Carter from Chimu Adventures:

- Antarctica is the perfect place to get away and have the ultimate cyber detox, no emails no

mobile phone reception and is miles away from world problems.

- Consider variables such as the season, types of ships, quality of the expedition along with the speed of the ship, which is important when dealing with the infamous Drake Passage.

Tim Farquhar from Eclipse Travel:

- Bring some small thin gloves to take on the excursions as its easier to take pictures
- Take plenty of pairs of warm socks
- Get a boot size larger than your normal size as you will wear more than one pair of socks
- Take a spare camera battery as they tend to run out in half the time due to the cold
- If you think you might be a bit unsteady on land then take walking poles

Hardy Schneider from Cruise Express:

- Opt for a small ship cruise. It's more expensive but offers landings on the continent rather than a sail-by/scenic cruising
- Don't miss South Georgia Island for its amazing abundance of wildlife.
- Port Stanley offers the opportunity to visit a king penguin colony. These huge penguins are not found on the Antarctic Peninsula.
- Be aware cameras do not like the cold. Cover them in a sealed plastic bag when returning from shore tours to avoid them from fogging up. The cold may cause damage to electronic equipment.
- Gumboots are the way to go. Buy them large so you can wear really warm thick thermal socks and make sure they have a good sole for solid grip.



Becky Carter from Active Travel:

- Consider what time is best for you to travel and what you are hoping to see. For example from November to early December you may see penguin and seabird courting displays, mid-December to January is best for chicks hatching and the midnight sun, February and March is prime season for whale and other mammal sightings as well as chicks leaving the nest.
- Embrace the limited connection to the outside world, taking time to read a book, learn more about the history or speak with on-board scientists and researchers.

Are you ready to start booking your amazing Antarctic adventure? Skyscanner compares the best [flight](#), [hotel](#) and [car hire](#) deals. With no booking fees you'll have more dollars for your Antarctic adventure!

About the author

Fiona Harper is one of Australia's most respected travel writers. Follow her at [Travel Boating Lifestyle](#) as she travels the globe road testing holidays.

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